

Children and Families Committee

16 September 2024

Report to Committee on the recently submitted Schools Capacity return (SCAP)

Report of: Claire Williamson, Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration

Report Reference No: CF/26/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

Purpose of Report

1. This paper reports on the outcome of the 2024 primary and secondary mainstream forecasts which will be submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The forecasts will ultimately inform the amount of Basic Need grant awarded to the authority for the 2027/2028 academic year. Notification of any award is usually received around April / May of the following year.

Executive Summary

2. Each year local authorities have a statutory duty to submit information relating to individual schools and planning areas. This return is called the SCAP (**S**chools **C**APacity) return and is submitted to the ESFA between June and July, closing date for 2024 submission was Friday 26 July.
3. The SCAP return consists of 6 different pieces of data with the main emphasis on the pupil forecasts, 5 years for primary (2024 to 2028), 7 years for secondary schools (2024 to 2030). The forecasts submitted will determine the amount of Basic Need monies that the authority receives from the ESFA to provide any additional pupil places required and which are not covered by section 106 monies received from developers.
4. Due to the lead in time needed to facilitate school expansions, the Basic Need allocations are always notified in advance. The allocations for the 2026/2027 Basic Need Allocation have not yet been released by the ESFA; the most

recent Allocation was for 2025/2026 year, which was £2,442,238.00 and was following the 2022 SCAP return.

5. In addition to mainstream forecasts, the Authority is required to submit forecasts for Special Education Needs pupils in both Special Schools and Resource Provision. The forecasting periods are the same, 5 years for primary and 7 years for secondary.
6. This report summarises the mainstream primary and secondary outcomes.
7. For Special Education Needs pupils in both Special Schools and Resource Provision, please see in 'Background Papers' the Revised Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan 2024/24 to 2030/31 which was approved by Children and Families committee on the 29 April 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

8. Note that the SCAP return was completed and submitted prior to the deadline of 26 July 2024 and acknowledge the information provided.

Background

9. Local authorities are required to plan for pupil places by Planning Areas that have been agreed with the DfE. Cheshire East has 29 planning areas for primary and 12 planning areas for secondary. Generally, these planning areas are centred around main towns but due to the geographical nature of Cheshire East some of the rural primary schools form a planning area of their own. i.e. Disley, Kettleshulme, Wincle and Bosley.
10. As mentioned the SCAP return consists of 6 different pieces of data: -
 - Published Admission Numbers (PAN) – This is reported by school and is the number of children usually admitted to each year group.
 - Schools Net Capacity – This is reported by school and is a calculation of the total number of children that a school can reasonably be expected to accommodate.
 - Planned Places – This is reported by school and is any local plans to add or remove places from a schools Net Capacity over the next 3 academic years.

- Pupil Forecasts – This is reported by planning area but split into 2 sections the pupil forecasts and Section 106 contributions from developers: -
 - i. Pupil Forecasts are prepared in two parts. First part is referred to as the Basic Need and these figures are calculated using a variety of data including, birth rates, GP Data, average pupil intakes, transfer rates for secondary schools and migration of pupils between neighbouring authorities. The second part is referred to as ‘With Housing’ and these figures include the additional pupils anticipated from new housing developments. New developments are only included in the forecasts once planning permission has been granted and any section 106 agreement has been signed. The anticipated additional pupils are added to the basic need element to produce the final anticipated numbers on roll for each school which are then reported to the ESFA by planning area.
 - ii. The SCAP return also requires the authority to separate out the number of pupils that have been included in the forecasts but have been funded by section 106 contributions even though those contributions may not have been received yet.
 - Commentary – A written report on the planning areas, detailing any current projects or any future plans which impact on the availability of places overall. This can include school expansions, new free schools, reduction in schools’ capacity or school closures.
 - Forecast Methodology - A written statement detailing the forecasting model and data used to produce the forecasts.
11. It should be noted that pupil forecasting required on the SCAP submission relates to all primary and secondary schools regardless of status, including the Studio School at Knutsford Academy and Crewe UTC. Although two sets of forecasts are produced, Basic Need and With Housing, it is the with housing figures that are submitted to the ESFA.
 12. Summary of the anticipated position for the primary planning areas over the next 5 years is included in appendix 1. This summary shows that of

the 29 planning areas 4 are indicating a shortfall in places either immediately or within the next 5 years. Sandbach planning area shows the highest shortfall but expansions at Sandbach Primary Academy and Wheelock Primary are already underway and will provide an additional 210 places, which will remove any anticipated shortfall. Both expansions are anticipated to be completed by April 2025. It should be noted that whilst a planning area may not indicate an overall shortfall there could be an individual school within the area with a shortfall, but the shortfall is offset by neighbouring schools having surplus places.

13. The summary provided in appendix 1 also identifies areas with large number of surplus pupil places, this includes Macclesfield and Crewe. This could be due to the falling live birth rate or migration to other parts of the council boundary. Further analysis is currently being undertaken.
14. Summary of the anticipated position for the secondary planning areas for years 7 to 11 only, is included in appendix 2. This summary shows a number of planning areas indicating a shortfall within the next seven years. Shavington planning area is showing the largest shortfall, but this is being addressed with expansion that is currently under way which will provide an additional 150 places.
15. It should also be noted that the large surplus places shown at Crewe and Knutsford are in part due to surplus places within the UTC and Cheshire Studio School. For instance, the UTC has a capacity of 400 for years 9-11 but only has 183 on roll and Cheshire Studio School has a capacity of 150 for years 9-11 but only has 54 on roll.
16. Appendix 3 summarises the anticipated position for the secondary planning areas for years 7 to 13. Although the shortfalls appear higher than the overall totals for years 7 to 11, the 150 additional places being provided will still have some impact to reduce these numbers. A small number of schools do tend to admit more into their sixth form than the official net capacity figures allow for but because pupils utilise the same spaces as the other year groups this doesn't seem to impact greatly on their capacity. Again, the large surplus of places shown at Crewe and Knutsford are in part due to surplus places within the UTC and Cheshire Studio School. For instance, the UTC has a capacity of 800 for years 9 - 13 but only has 256 on roll and Cheshire Studio School has a capacity of 300 for years 9 to 13 but only has 120 on roll.

17. Apart from being a statutory requirement to submit forecast information to the EFSA the forecasts inform the 5-year forward plan for pupil place planning purposes. The 5-year plan, as detailed in appendix 4 shows the expansions that are underway including when they are due to complete, and potential future need for places.
18. The SCAP Submission portal, COLLECT, opened to local authorities on Thursday 6 June 2024 and deadline for submission was Friday 26 July 2024. After the closing date, the ESFA review all the data submitted and will come back to the authority with any queries. Once the ESFA are satisfied that all the information is correct the Executive Director of Children’s Services will be asked to sign off a form to attest to the accuracy of the final SCAP data submitted by the local authority, this is usually late November.

Reasons for Recommendations

19. Submission of the annual SCAP return is a statutory duty required of the Local Authority.

Other Options Considered

20. No other options available. The SCAP return is a mandatory duty based on very specific data sets that are submitted in a form laid down by the DfE.
21. The option to do nothing and not increase mainstream and special school provisions across the borough would result in a failure to meet our statutory duties as a commissioner of school places and incur increasing costs for out to borough SEN places.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing and not increase mainstream and special school provisions across the borough	This would result in a failure to meet our statutory duties as a commissioner of school places	High

Consultation and Engagement

22. The SCAP return is based on data produced annually by the School Organisation and Capital Strategy Team and no consultation on the outcomes is necessary.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

23. The Local Authority as the Strategic Commissioner for school places has a statutory duty (under section 14 of the Education Act 1996) to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the demands of its residents in the area. The DFE have issued guidance for Local Authorities in May 2024 School capacity (SCAP) Survey 2024 as to how the SCAP return should be submitted.
24. The requirement to submit the SCAP return by the deadline of 26 July is mandatory. Failure to submit by the deadline will risk the Authority's entitlement to Basic Need Allocation. SCAP is a statutory collection under the Information as to Provision of Education (England) Regulations 2016.
25. The information contained within the SCAP return should form part of the overall picture from a suite of reports that include the SEN provision and should align with Children and Families capital programme.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

26. Combined Basic Need Allocation and Section 106 contributions from developers may be insufficient to provide the additional places to ensure sufficient places for pupils' resident in Cheshire East.
27. If there is any shortfall in funding an assessment would need to be made regarding the scope of the scheme, if additional funding is needed would have to be found within the existing capital programme and any necessary approvals would be required by Children and Families committee.
28. If further funding is required and there is no existing budget available, then schemes would need to be prioritised and decisions made by committee as to which schemes can be removed/delayed within the Children & Families capital programme and/or the wider capital programme to allow certain schemes to proceed.

Policy

29. Local Authorities are under a duty to ensure sufficiency of school places in their area (section 14 of the Education Act 1996). Submission of the mandatory SCAP return by the given deadline will support the Council in meeting its duty to provide sufficient school places.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

30. An Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary as pupil forecasting is a statistics exercise used to assess the provision of sufficient school places across the borough regardless of pupil characteristics.

Human Resources

31. There are no increased human resource implications for the Council.

Risk Management

32. The requirement to submit the SCAP return by the deadline of 26 July is mandatory. Failure to submit by the deadline will risk the Authority's entitlement to Basic Need Allocation, and in consequence, its ability to meet this statutory duty.

Rural Communities

33. There are no direct implications for rural communities although providing sufficient places in rural schools will ensure that pupils can stay in their local community.

Children and Young People / Cared for Children

34. Providing sufficient school places for all children and young people resident in our area is a statutory duty.

Public Health

35. There are no direct implications for public health, however providing sufficient places in their local community could improve a child's social and emotional wellbeing.
36. By providing local school places the distances which some children may have to travel to attend school should be reduced thus reduce congestion on the roads and therefore reduce emissions, improving the air quality and making a better environment to live in.

Climate Change

37. Forecasting future pupil numbers helps ensure that sufficient pupil places are available in the correct places across the borough to meet demand. Providing adequate places means that more pupils can attend their local school and reduce the need to travel.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Joanne Prophet, School Organisation and Capital Manager joanne.prophet@cheshireeast.gov.uk Mobile 07890 321801
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - 2024 Primary Shortfall/ Surplus by Planning Area Appendix 2 – 2024 Secondary Shortfall/Surplus for years 7-11 by Planning Area Appendix 3 – 2024 Secondary Shortfall/ Surplus for years 7-13 by Planning Area Appendix 4 – 5-Year Plan
Background Papers:	Report to Children and Families Committee, Monday 29 April 2024 87. Revised Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan 2024/25 to 2030/31 following the Department of Education Safety Valve Intervention Programme https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s116728/DSG%20Report.pdf