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Statutory duties

Last Modified February 13, 2020



School organisation

Blackpool Council has a duty to ensure there are enough school places for the young people who live in Blackpool. We also have to make sure these places are of good quality with enough capacity to allow parental choice and diversity.

There are currently around 19,000 young people living in Blackpool who require compulsory education.

Over recent years, Blackpool Council and the government have invested heavily in school buildings, with around £50m invested over the last five years.

In Blackpool, there are currently 31 primary schools, six secondary schools, two all-through schools, three special schools and one Pupil Referral Unit.

Since the introduction of the Academies Act 2010 and the Education Act 2011, Blackpool has seen a high percentage of schools becoming Academies, either through conversion or sponsorship.

While maintained schools continue to be managed by local authorities, the Department for Education monitors academies and free schools through the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Council's duty to make sure there are enough school places applies across all types of school.

School places

The monitoring of the number of school places is a continual and complex process. Many factors can affect this, from changes in birth rate to the movement of people into and out of the town.

There are also a large number of new houses under development and planned within the town and in the surrounding areas of Wyre and Fylde over the coming years.

Our latest pupil number projections tell us that we reach a peak of pupils starting primary school in Reception in September 2019. This peak will move through into the secondary sector, with the highest number of pupils in Year 7 anticipated in September 2025. Beyond these dates, we expect numbers to gradually reduce.

The conclusions and recommendations from the review of pupil places are as follows:

- **Primary sector:** Enough places currently exist, but the forecast reduction in pupil numbers means that there are likely to be too many primary places, particularly in the south of the town. The local authority will therefore object to any requests to increase primary provision in the town. We have invited primary schools to tell us if they could reduce their published admissions number, particularly in the south of the town. We would prefer a reduction of numbers in three form entry schools, but will consider all options. If schools do not volunteer to reduce their published admissions numbers, we will consider other solutions, including the possible closure of one or more schools
- **Secondary sector:** We currently do not have enough Year 7 places in Blackpool schools for the number of pupils in each year at Blackpool primary schools. However, some parents choose to send their children to schools in Lancashire, and this means that there are enough places in Blackpool for the children that want them. Blackpool's Year 7 numbers are likely to increase until 2025, and new houses are being built in the town and across the border. We may therefore see a shortage of Year 7 places for one or more years, before numbers start to go down again. The local authority is therefore unlikely to agree to requests for permanent reductions in published admissions numbers. We may also need extra places for Year 7 pupils for a short period of time. We

would first try to use any existing space in schools, before building anything new. We have invited secondary schools to tell us if they could manage a temporary increase in Year 7 admission numbers during the academic years 2023/24 to 2026/27, particularly in the north and central of the town.

- **Special sector:** The new Lotus School will allow 48 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs to go to school in Blackpool rather than in other areas. The number of pupils going to the existing three special schools is continuing to grow. This is causing problems, both from the size of the buildings and also the money available to pay for them. We are working with schools to see how more children with special educational needs and disabilities can go to a mainstream school. We are therefore not recommending any action to increase the size of the existing special schools.

If you would like to receive a copy of the full school organisation plan, please contact us at schoolaccess@blackpool.gov.uk

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