

SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY INVESTMENT PLAN

Report of Director of Education, Work, and Skills

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council has an enduring statutory responsibility to commission sufficient high quality school places. This document is the fourth iteration of our plan and sets out how we will carry out our responsibility, in line with the commitments made in the Borough Plan and School Strategy to ensure there are sufficient places in good and improving local inclusive schools at the heart of the community that children and families want to go to. This means having the right number and type of school places, in the right place, at the right time to meet demand.
- 1.2 We aspire to secure an education and skills system that provides a safe, accessible, secure and stimulating learning environment, which is sustainable and provides value for money, is fit for current and future needs, reduces environmental impact, and supports Stockport children and young people from 2 years to 25 years to achieve their true potential.
- 1.3 The stark reality however is that there continues to be a significant shortfall in government funding, a policy landscape which is failing to address serious issues in our SEND system, all of which is limiting our ability to address challenges and realise the ambitions we have for our residents and schools. There exists a tension throughout this report between what we would do if funding were available and what we are able to do with the funding we have. This tension places significant pressure on our ageing school estate for which we have a minimum £115m back log of condition issues, our school partners, and the Council's cash limit and Dedicated School's Grant budget.
- 1.4 We recently wrote to the Secretary of State to outline that if Stockport were funded like its neighbours, we'd have millions more to support our children. We currently receive around £1,100 per pupil for special educational needs. This is amongst the lowest levels nationally. If we received the same amount as the best-funded local authority, we would receive around £85m more a year for Special Educational Needs. If we received the same funding level as close neighbours in the North West, we would receive between £6m and £21m more every year for Special Educational Needs. This unfairness is compounded by the impact of the wider schools funding settlement. Stockport receives around £7,800 total funding per pupil, inclusive of schools and high-needs funding. This is, once again, amongst the lowest nationally. If we were funded the same amount as the best-funded local authority, our schools would get £190m more a year. If we received the same amount as our best funded neighbours, our schools would get £50m more a year. This funding unfairness compounds our capital funding challenges.

- 1.5 This document sits alongside the Borough Plan, Children and Young People's Strategy, the Schools Strategy, the SEND Strategy, the Skills Plan, and other associated strategic documents. It provides a framework on which a school place plan can be devised for short, medium, and longer-term sufficiency.

THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Effective school place planning is integral to the Council's enduring statutory responsibilities.

- 2.2 Stockport Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places and childcare for its children. There are aspects of the Borough and Economic plan which rely on the successes of our education and skills system, whilst they may not be statutory, we view them as such. Therefore we expand our duty to include:

- Ensuring sufficient childcare and early years provision is available as far as reasonably practicable;
- Ensuring there is pre-16 school provision of sufficient nature, type and quantity is available to meet the needs of all Stockport children;
- Ensuring sufficient post-16 education, skills and training provision is available for all Stockport children;
- Giving priority at all ages to meet the needs of children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils who have been looked after, excluded from education or who come from a low income family up to 19yrs (in some cases 25yrs);
- Support all maintained nurseries, schools and Post-16 education, skill, and training provision to function as high-quality, viable and financially efficient services; and
- Ensuring fair access to educational opportunity and promote diversity and parental choice.

- 2.3 In addition to setting out how Stockport intends to provide a sufficiency of school places, this strategy also intends to support Stockport's key education and employment objectives as defined below (CYP Strategy and Borough Plan);

- An increase in the percentage of children and young people in Stockport attending 'good' and 'outstanding' provision;
- An increase in attainment at Foundation Stage and progress at Key Stage 2 and 4, so that they are in line with statistical neighbour's data and exceed that of national;
- Close the gaps in attainment and progress for pupils from a deprived background, looked after children, children with Special Educational Needs (SEND), and those who speak English as an additional language, so that they are in line with, or exceed national data;
- Ensuring that students can access a range of suitable post 16 provision to suit their needs and that success rates, match or exceed national data;
- Ensuring that Stockport provides 'local places for local children' across all parts of Stockport and that this strategy accounts for; sufficiency, suitability, standards and parental preference issues;

- Reducing the need for children and young people in Stockport to access 'Home to School' transport services;
- Reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions, in line with Stockport's statistical neighbours;
- Increase school attendance and post 16 retention rates;
- Increase education, employment and training for all 16-25 year olds including those with SEND.
- Work together to look at the goods and services we buy to keep the Stockport £ in Stockport and explore opportunities for increased social value, inclusion and corporate social responsibility.

STOCKPORT CONTEXT

- 3.1 Stockport is proud of the quality of education provided by its diverse and high-performing system of schools, colleges, and early years' settings. Stockport is committed to ensuring its residents have access to good local schools which offer a rich and varied learning experience.
- 3.2 Residents have a good choice of schools with high standards; 86% of Stockport schools are rated Good or Outstanding. Furthermore, over 95% of residents have secured a school place at one of their first 3 preferences.
- 3.3 Stockport faces significant challenges in the future due to;
- contrasting pressures created by a falling Key Stage 1 pupil population and a high number of pupils moving through Key Stage 2, 3, and 4;
 - anticipated pupil demand to bubble and shift around the Borough through housing development;
 - Home office contingency accommodation placing acute pressures on surrounding localities;
 - acute condition issues within an ageing school estate;
 - in line with other local authorities nationally, a growing cohort of children with specialised and complex needs;
 - Outline of national policy which casts doubt of the reliability and longevity of future government funding.
- 3.4 Funding for capital investment to maintain and grow the school estate remains constrained by the priorities and focus of Government and as such relies on the Council to better seek economies of scale where possible. Funding pressures means greater focus to maximise the benefits from our investment plans. This includes social value, recognising the importance of social, environmental and economic well-being across our communities by developing our educational establishments.
- 3.5 The LA/Schools receive a series of grants from central government relating to capital funding to support maintenance/development and improvement to the school estate in line with both schools and LA strategic plans / core responsibilities (i.e. ensure sufficient school places across the borough).

The funding streams and narrative are as follows:

- **Basic Need Funding:** Calculated annually based on the capacity of schools in the Borough versus the number of pupils the authority expects to be in each year group/each school/each planning area.
- **School Condition Allocation:** Calculated annually based on pupil numbers in the Spring census. Pupils are weighted according to early years, primary, secondary and sixth form and paid between £115 - £146 per weighted pupil. The Council is only funded for maintained schools, academies receive their own allocation.
- **School Rebuilding Programme:** Government programme funding and delivering the rebuild of 100 schools nationally. Decisions are made based on centrally held data on condition and Government priorities.
- **Special Provision Fund Capital Allocations:** Government grant intended to improve special provision for children and young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans. Allocations are calculated based on demographic growth and local building costs.
- **High Needs Provision Capital Allocation:** Government grant intended to support the provision for children and young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans and those pupils requiring alternative provision. Calculated based on local growth in demographic compared with national growth and funding proportioned across all LAs
- **Developer Contributions:** the LA can seek or secure developer contributions where it is felt necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms (owing to a perceived or demonstrable impact on infrastructure). The LA as yet has not adopted a formal policy on seeking developer contributions however one is proposed but as yet has not been adopted.

LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH THREE LENSES:

ONE: SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

Forecasts

- 4.1 Stockport is forecasted to face contrasting pressures in primary and secondary.
- 4.2 In 2024 the 0-4 years age range population reached its lowest point in a decade. The 0-4 years population is expected to flatten off from 2025 and remains relatively flat for the next 8-10 years. This forecast includes some assumptions about housing development however the nature, size and location of development outlined in the developing local plan will further influence these forecasts.
- 4.3 This fall in population size entering Key Stage 1 is contrasted by extraordinary numbers of pupils in Key Stage 2. This has given primary schools a small period of time to plan and organise themselves. We know that 2024/25 academic year marked the first year whereby the those smaller year groups transitioned from KS1 into KS2.
- 4.4 This reduction in the 0–4-year population will place further pressure on primary schools who are already facing financial pressures. Small, 1 form of entry primary schools are particularly vulnerable however larger schools are not immune. Typically, a 1 form entry primary school only needs a small drop in pupil numbers of around 2-3 pupils before that school struggles to fund the basics required to teach a class. Given the ongoing challenges we face regarding children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the ability of schools to provide a level of support or differentiation is critical to the emerging infrastructure plans discussed later in this report.
- 4.5 Fundamentally any school that is popular and consistently oversubscribed is unlikely to feel these additional pressures however those schools considered less popular in a locality have and will continue to see small drops in pupil numbers.
- 4.6 Within secondary, high numbers of pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to transition into Year 7. Year groups across Key Stage 3 and 4 have limited surplus capacity to accommodate in year admissions.
- 4.7 We know from longer termed forecasts and the low pupil numbers moving through Key Stage 1 into Key Stage 2 that the extraordinary number of pupils entering year 7 will not last and will reduce sharply in 4 years' time.
- 4.8 This short-term pressure of places in secondary phase is acute and time limited. Basic need funding has not been sufficient to consider formal and large scale expansion projects, nor would that have been the best use of financial resources. As discussed in previous investment plans, flexible, time limited expansions in secondary school capacities are most appropriate and have been negotiated at strategically selected schools.
- 4.9 There are negotiated flexible places are at:
 - 150 places at Marple Hall School

- 75 places at Priestnall School
- 75 places at Kingsway School
- 75 places at Cheadle Hulme High School
- 20 places at St James' High

4.10 In the Autumn of 2023 it was confirmed that Bramhall High School site contained reinforced, aerated, autoclaved concrete and since that time there have been a series of mitigations put in place to ensure there is sufficient accommodation for the pupils attending the school. Because of this, Bramhall High School is no longer able to provide the level of school places it had previously offered to the LA. There has been significant work done undertaken in 2024 to ensure we have and continue to have sufficiency in our secondary mainstream schools.

4.11 In the application round for Yr7 entry for September 2024, parental preference shifted considerably resulting in our most popular schools seeing increases of over 30% in preferencing and our less popular schools losing more than 33% of their preferences. From a solely Stockport perspective this meant that we our residents didn't fully utilise all of our Stockport places leaving capacity in our less popular schools. Because we have to keep offering places to whoever applies up to the point a school is full, this issue was compounded by strong preferencing from Manchester residents resulting in more places than ever being allocated to Manchester residents. To ensure that we were able to offer places to our own residents, we had to commission an additional 140 places. We did this with thanks to our resilient and supportive community of secondary schools.

4.12 The continued supply of places up to 2028 in secondary phase will require extensive consideration and negotiation alongside our school leaders. As such a fund of £0.1m, previously agreed by Cabinet will be used to support this. The LA have a small balance of basic need funds which will be used to facilitate this process and assure sufficiency.

4.13 Plans which will be implemented in January 2025 to charge VAT on independent school fees have been widely reported in the media. Approximately 6% (190-220 pupils) of Stockport residents apply for and seek state funded school places at the same time as seeking independent school places each year. This has meant that each year the LA has had to provide 200 more places than it has needed for national offer day. We do not anticipate any further action is needed as a result of this policy change.

TWO: CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND CONDITION

4.14 The effects of poor or irregular maintenance

Poor or irregular maintenance of school buildings can result in:

- disruption of education;
- closure or partial closure of your buildings;
- invalidation of insurance;
- poor value for money;
- unnecessary expenditure to rectify problems which could have been avoided;
- shorter building life;

- risks to the health, safety and welfare of building users;
- legal claims;
- non-compliance with regulations.

Stockport's capital investments responsibilities

- 4.14.1 Stockport has direct capital investment responsibility for 76 schools from nursery to secondary, of which at least two-thirds are over 50 years old and in many cases are reaching end of life.
- 4.14.2 Most schools have been refurbished to some degree during their lifetime and many of these refurbishments are also nearing end of life. The priority over the last few years is that investment has been focused on work needed to maintain the schools in daily operation, such as roofs and heating systems and electrical infrastructure.
- 4.14.3 Our school estate has a predicted £115m backlog maintenance requirement and could be as high as £230m if the replacement or repaired estate is to provide a modern learning environment and meet contemporary expectations over DDA, new building regulations and rising building indices since the assessments were made. This is putting severe pressure on our schools and can act as a barrier to achieving the best learning experience and outcomes for our children and young people across Stockport.
- 4.14.4 As part of our Climate Action Now strategy we are putting climate change at the heart of everything we do. The quality, design and use of our school buildings across Stockport must be improved to address the challenges we face.
- 4.14.5 Maintenance, repair and replacement relating to the fabric of and utilities in school buildings also opens up opportunities to assess the energy efficiency of schools allowing us to make decisions that will contribute to the Council's climate action ambitions.
- 4.14.6 The Capital Programme, which includes the planned spending on education infrastructure over the next year, is published annually in the Asset Management Plan (Appendix 1) and should be read in junction with this report.

Capital Plan delivery

- 4.14.7 Stockport has a professional in-house Infrastructure Delivery Team. The team assist with development of school expansions and new schools by undertaking viability studies and then leading on the delivery of the capital projects through to completion. Through the work of this team school building projects are delivered to a high standard and at good value, ensuring the best outcome from the investment of public funds.
- 4.14.8 The Council is currently delivering £7.3m of maintenance and £6.3M Basic Need investment projects in 24/25 financial year.
- 4.14.9 Stockport uses a mixture of funding sources to finance additional school places. Funding sources available include Basic Need grant from central government; Section 106 contributions from developers; Free School funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and contributions from schools. New school

places must be funded through these means as Stockport has no other grants or funds dedicated to providing school places.

- 4.14.10 Opportunities to access other forms of investment, such as the School Rebuilding Programme and Public Service Decarbonisation Scheme are necessary supplements for the school estate to be maintained, however, these initiatives are currently constrained by the focus and priorities of Central Government which do not always show Stockport as a priority for funding.

THREE: EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT AND INCLUSION

4.15 Effectiveness, and excellence underpinning self-sustained inclusion

This plan relies on the successful implementation of the Schools Strategy and SEND strategy having a strong emphasis on quality practice and best provision, focussing on early prevention, early help, strengths and asset-based approaches to draw demand downstream giving the greatest potential for meeting needs earlier, at a lower level without a need to commission new places. Put simply in the context of sufficiency; regardless of revenue and capital pressures, the sustainable solution to sufficiency is by us collectively **being better, not bigger**.

- 4.15.1 The ongoing work by the school improvement team, supported by the inclusion service, are the key mechanisms by which the Council as a strategic leader can create self-sustained quality practice and best provision across the school estate, both of which are fundamental to local inclusion and supports sufficiency by limiting the extent to which children's needs escalate beyond that which a broad and robust universal offer, or a responsive and impactful SEN support offer can meet.
- 4.15.2 The SEND sufficiency strategy and associated appendices underline the three tenets of sufficiency; **quality practice, broad and bespoke provision, sufficient places**.
- 4.15.3 **Special Educational Needs, and Disability (SEND)**
Stockport currently has a blend of graduated provision to meet the needs of all its pupils.

- **Mainstream** – pupils are supported in class having their needs met by a class teacher or teaching assistant;
- **Mainstream (SEN support)** - pupils are supported within mainstream classes and may need additional support with their learning;
- **Resourced** - pupils attend a mainstream setting but spend some of their time in a support rich environment separate from the mainstream class and receive differentiated learning;
- **Special School** - pupils for whose needs are so significant and complex that they cannot be met in a mainstream or resourced settings;
- **Alternative** - This provision offers appropriate placements for pupils who would not receive suitable learning due to exclusion, illness or other reason. This also applies to pupils who struggle to engage with an academic curriculum and would therefore suit vocational based subjects (currently Stockport has no borough wide vocational provision for children requiring a vocational offer).

4.15.4 Currently approx. 18% of the pupil population has a special education need or disability, of which approx. 5% of the pupil population has an Education, Health and Care Plan which has been historically higher than regional and national levels. The number of pupils with SEND is projected to grow (upper limit) by 2.85% (approx.56 pupils) each year for at least the next 4 years.

4.15.5 The profile of types of SEND (primary need) continues to change with children with Autism being the most common need among the EHCP cohort, accounting for 36.5% of all primary needs. This is followed by Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN), and Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH). Complex compounds of these three needs (Autism and SEMH, or SEMH and SLCN, etc.) result in most of the escalation in provision we see i.e. going from Mainstream to Special or Independent Special.

4.15.6 Driven by higher rates of identification, formalisation of provision and parental preference, Stockport has lacked the necessary blend of provision and sufficient places to adequately meet this demand and those with more complex SEHM and Autism have in some cases had their provision commissioned in schools external to Stockport at significant cost. This is despite Stockport being in the top quartile, nationally, for the number of special school places it has as a proportion of its total SEND population, and in the third quartile nationally for resource base places.

4.15.7 Further to the above, our Skills Plan articulates that we must also prepare to face the same set of challenges in our Post-16/19 system. More specifically what our mainstream, high needs and specialist offer looks like as larger cohorts for Heatons/Pear Tree/Castle Hill move through pre-16.

4.15.8 A final draft of the SEND sufficiency plan 2025-2039 will be published in Spring 2025 however the reflections so far are:

- We have already created a lot of high needs and specialist places (more than many other LAs as a proportion of their SEND population) however it is still not enough based on the scale at which we are having to use expensive independent and non-maintained schools.
- We needed a step change in how we identify early, support and consider how speech and language needs may manifest themselves in later years. The implementation of the balanced system which targets resource into mainstream has and will continue to support this change.
- Autism is a significant driver of the demand for specialist places and more places, and more flexibility is needed across the system to provide for a diverse range of needs and presentations associated with Autism and neurodiversity more broadly
- We need to do more to meet the needs of pupils with MLD in mainstream as too many are in special schools
- We need to improve our earliest identification of SEMH and underlying needs however any progress in this area will still need to be supported by a significant increase in provision and places to stop and reverse a reliance on independent and non-maintained schools
- It remains clear that there is a strong correlation between low-income, multiple forms of deprivation and SEND.

4.15.9 The Council have addressed this problem through the creation of new places that have either been delivered already or are anticipated to be formalised by 2025;

Provision Type	2020	2025
Resource Base (Primary)	94	184
Resource Base or LA Commissioned mainstream/high needs (Secondary)	18	120
Pupil Referral Unit	179	260
Special School (Primary)	252	303
Special School (Secondary)	425, plus 74 post 16	530, plus 104 post 16

4.15.10 A greater emphasis on local provision meeting local need is required, connecting and rooting a pupil within their community. This can be achieved through our schools being better and best, delivering an enhanced mainstream offer underpinned with in some cases nurture provision and resource bases.

4.15.11 Within the constraints of our resources, we are working very hard to strengthen our own governance and decision making, the quality of practice across our schools, and making targeted investment to support better provision. This takes time however and with the financial position of the council worsening, we need to look at how places can provide further relief to this set of circumstances.

4.16 Resource Base plans

4.16.1 The previous School Investment Plan committed to the creation of new resource base places as part of a strategy to ensure mainstream high needs places had sufficient geographical spread. Using the Stockport Family neighbourhood footprints, we committed to ensuring there were at least two primary resource bases per footprint and there was at a minimum of one secondary resource base in the north, west, east and south of the Borough.

4.16.2 In primary:

- the LA has secured the rebuild of Thorn Grove Primary School and Moorfield Primary School. Both schools will have their physical resource base expanded as part of the negotiated agreements with the DFE.
- Two new primary resource bases are now open in Brinnington bringing some much-needed high needs capacity to the locality.
- Delivery of a new resource base at Tithe Barn Primary School will begin in 2025 with places being released from September 2026
- Through investment in the former Lisburne school site, a new resource base attached to Dial Park Primary School will open in September 2025

- We continue to explore ways in which we create further capacity in Reddish, Edgeley, and Cheadle Heath
- We are looking at ways in which a reduction in PAN and repurpose of space in schools could support more high needs places in the school system.

4.16.3 In secondary:

- We have further expanded the size of our resource bases at Kingsway School and Priestnall school
- We are about to deliver the new premises of the resource base at Marple Hall school
- We are working with the DfE to look at opportunities for Bramhall High School in the school rebuilding programme

4.16.4 This plan has repeatedly underlined the importance of excellent local mainstream provision and its role in the sufficiency of both mainstream and high needs places. It is for this reason that we continue to look for ways in which we can support the progression of better and best practice and provision through the principals of resource bases (resource and base).

4.16.5 A revised delivery plan for resource bases, connected to the SEND sufficiency plan, will be published by the Spring of 2025 which will set out the continued ambitions for resource bases in Stockport but also outline ideas and plans to create much broader capacity (in every sense of the word) without having the constraint of capital funding.

4.17 Academisation

4.17.1 Through close partnerships between the LA and existing and new academy trusts, the Borough has seen a number of conversions take place over the last 2 years. These conversions are seen positively and must be viewed as a school improvement activity. Furthermore, the transfer of sites and buildings to trusts has reduced the LA's own risk profile associated with condition need. With trusts being able to access both Condition Improvement Fund and School Condition Allocation, trusts are better placed and better funded to address acute condition need.

4.17.2 In the last 12 months we have seen the creation/growth of three Stockport grown multi academy trusts; Four Rivers, Helix, and Honeycomb (a single academy trust converting to become a multi academy trust). We are incredibly proud of all our home-grown trusts, their commitment, passion, and dedication to providing the very best education experience for our residents. In total we now have five Stockport based multi-academy trusts, four regional or national multi academy trusts and one single academy trust operating in Stockport.

4.17.3 In the last year the LA has facilitated the conversion of 10 schools and at the time of writing this report is actively working towards or about to start the conversion of a further 7 schools. We know that every trust is under pressure to grow and as such expect that each trust will plan alongside the LA as to how they can sustainably develop capacity to expand further.

4.17.4 Through the full cost recovery policy adopted by Cabinet in 2023, the LA has been able to financially underpin its staffing resources to make sure we have the right

level of capacity to fulfil the demands of this work. Not all transfers are straight forward and as a project team, officers are refining approaches, processes and governance to ensure we remain responsive, agile, and robust.

4.17.5 As part of the project team's reflections the final governance arrangements required to complete conversions lacks the agility we need and as such a recommendation of this report will be to streamline this governance and delegate authority to two named officers.

A RESPONSIVE STRATEGY TO GROW AND DEVELOP THE SCHOOL ESTATE

CHALLENGES

- 5.1 Stockport schools are some of the lowest funded schools per pupil in England and central funding for maintenance and condition is insufficient.
- 5.2 Our plans therefore reflect how we intend to utilise the funding we have to best effect. We must be realistic with what we can achieve with the funds we have. Any approach must therefore seek to maximise impact, outcomes and value:
- It must further embed schools in their communities recognising them as anchors and/or hubs;
 - It must seek to sustain, underpin, diversify and fully utilise existing schools' capacity. Drawing on the strength and resilience given by the enhanced team around the school (Stockport Family operating model) and inclusion service;
 - It must recognise that the quality of teaching, the education offer, and school leadership are as important as physical space in terms of parental preference, school place planning and high-quality sufficiency;
 - Where capital investment is needed, it must seek out opportunities to combine projects to achieve economies of scale, greater inclusion and better value.

RESPONSE

Our strategy focuses on what can be achieved with our limited funds:

Strategic focus	How we will do this
Secure sufficient funding through central funding streams and developer contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use our strong understanding of historic trends to predict future needs - Use our understanding of the population forecast for 0-25yrs for the next 5 years to highlight sufficiency issues - Use 5-10yr forecasts to highlight infrastructure requirements - We will articulate our understanding of the Stockport context to Government through statutory returns - We will maximise government funding by providing accurate predictions of need through government returns - We will have a robust developer contribution policy through the new Local Plan - We will articulate our sufficiency needs to central government regional leads to help identify potential bidding opportunities for capital investment initiatives. - We will clearly articulate our social infrastructure needs through our new Local Plan
Prioritise the spend of funding to assure sufficiency from early years, primary, secondary, through to Post-16 in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will use our understanding of the population forecast for 0-25yrs including SEND to identify pressures.

<p>mainstream and SEND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will use our understanding of the risk posed to the Council through lack of sufficiency in each given area to recommend investment plans - We will use our understanding of the nature of solution needed, capital investment or otherwise to provide a robust plan that meets the requirements of the 3 lenses of sufficiency. - We will ensure robust decision making by using our understanding of the costs, site constraints, land requirements and community, political and school response to any given solution to provide accurately costed and supported plans to Board for decision making
<p>Prioritise maintenance and condition work which may impact the accessibility or availability of school places for all children and to ensure safety of our school buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will prioritise budget based on our understanding of the condition and maintenance requirements across our maintained schools - We will challenge schools to ensure leaders take responsibility for their duty to plan and prioritise maintenance works to ensure the learning environment is safe, warm, and weatherproof. - We will risk assess presenting issues and identify those likely to close schools or reduce a school's capacity - We will risk assess issues including safety, fire and asbestos - We will accurately present the site constraints for any given solution and the costs
<p>Prioritise diversification/repurposing of existing school sites that directly reduce the need for external high-cost special school places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will use our strong relationships with partner schools and academies to develop our Stockport response to inclusion and SEND. - We will deliver a blend of provision needed to meet children's needs and predicted pupil forecasts - We will ensure robust training, support structures and SEND and inclusion experts to wrap around schools and localities to support inclusion - We will assess all school sites to identify and address physical accessibility - We will coproduce an agreed School Inclusion Strategy

5.3 Where possible capital investment will be identified and prioritised on the basis that it meets more than one strategic focus. (See 6. Risk based Prioritisation for Investment).

OUR PROGRESS SO FAR

5.4 Since the revision of the School Investment Plan in 2023, the Council has been working with stakeholders across the sector. The Sufficiency Delivery Plan report outlines the scale of the work and achievements we have made over the last year.

RISK BASED PRIOTISATION FOR INVESTMENT

6.1 Stockport has competing priorities for investment which all relate to and impact upon school place sufficiency. Acknowledging the limited funding available, it is imperative that investment is aligned with our strategy and is targeted at key priorities.

6.2 Investment priorities have been identified and feature three key themes;

- **Condition**, ensuring schools are safe and accessible as well as maintaining physical capacity so that it remains operational and accessible.
- **Sufficiency**, ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of our all pupils and learners.
- **Education and Inclusion**, ensuring schools can deliver the national curriculum efficiently and effectively and ensure more complex or enhanced need can be effectively met.

The priorities are as follows:

1. Ensuring our school buildings are safe for staff and children (Estates sub-group)
2. Ensuring our physical capacity remains in adequate condition to ensure school places are accessible (Estates sub-group)
3. Resolving under/oversupply of school places (Sufficiency and Admissions sub-group)
4. Adapting our existing schools to aid operation and efficiency (Education Improvement and Inclusion sub-group)
5. Adapting our existing schools to meet local need (Education Improvement and Inclusion sub-group)

6.3 The priorities listed have been risk assessed based on a simple likelihood/impact based matrix (Appendix 1). The resultant score from comparing likelihood with impact is attributed to a school. School's whose context fits multiple priorities will receive higher compound scores, effectively highlighting the greatest risk, scope for economies of scale and possible value for money.

6.4 **Condition - Safe and operational buildings.**

Methodology to provide a condition rating is based on intensity (Impact) and urgency of need. Intensity is measured as value of surveyed condition need divided by the gross internal area of the school. Urgency (likelihood) is considered by only using surveyed need due within 5 years. Schools therefore have an objective RAG rating based on condition need due within 5 years divided by the area of the school. Schools with an intensity >£500/m² are rated RED; schools with an intensity of £200 - £499/m² are rated AMBER; schools with an intensity <£199/m² are GREEN.

6.5 **Sufficiency - Resolving under/over supply of places.**

Sufficiency has been risk scored using pupil projections. Timing and surplus places (a percentage of the admissions limit) have been used as parameters.

Sufficiency challenges in the next:

- 1-3 years are considered 'probable',
- 3-5 years 'possible' and
- 5+ years 'improbable'.

Surplus places in the range of:

- 0-2% are considered 'intolerable',
- 2-4% 'undesirable',
- 4-6% 'tolerable',
- 6-8% 'acceptable',
- 8-12% 'tolerable',
- 12%+ 'undesirable'

6.6 **Education and Inclusion - Operational efficiency and alignment of need.** For schools where data suggests that the building (condition or layout) creates a barrier to effectively delivering the national curriculum, inclusion, accessibility, and/or performance, officers will make judgment-based decisions on risk scores. The Ofsted inspection grade, % parental preference and proportion of SEND learners will also be considered for each school.

6.7 For each school, under each priority, they will be risk assessed and will receive a risk score. For planning areas that have identified need for more or fewer school places, all schools in that planning area will receive the same risk score. Each priority is weighted so that higher priorities score more. Schools where multiple priorities can be fulfilled will receive higher scores as a result of their compound score. Investment in schools with higher compound scores allows Stockport to seek better value for money and improved outcomes for its residents.

OUR PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMME FOR THE NEXT YEAR

7.1 The asset management plan (**Appendix 2**) should be read alongside this report and details the prioritised projects identified through risk analysis. These include:

- Condition projects at 1 schools totalling £5.912m
- Delivering more Transition Group accommodation totalling £756k
- Delivering 40 new full time alternative provision places £2.5m
- Set aside a budget of £1.5m to expand the number of SEMH special school places

- A £1.699m remodel of the former Lisburne School site to collocate education with a new Family Hub which will release more high needs places in Offerton targeted at neurodiversity and learning difficulties
- Provision for contingency funds for both condition need and SEND places totalling £1.5m

7.2 To deliver the asset management plan, officers will be seeking authority from Cabinet to procure the works and services, and subsequent contract award process.

7.3 Further to the above, officers will be seeking authority from Cabinet to enter into funding agreements and allow specified schools to draw basic need funds from the LA as part of negotiated flexible mainstream places sought to meet sufficiency needs. Allocations previously agreed by Cabinet in January 2023 are:

- St James' Catholic High School maximum £0.367m for 25 places
- Kingsway School maximum £1m for 75 places
- Priestnall School maximum £1m for 75 places

7.4 Finally officers will be seeking authority from Cabinet for continued flexibility in a changing and complex environment. Officers require authority from Cabinet to use basic need and high needs balances to allocate, commit, and deploy financial resources to secure additional places throughout the 25/26 financial year. The same flexibility awarded to officers last year gave much needed agility.

7.5 Any projects taken forward using the above authority from Cabinet will be subject to scrutiny by the LA's engineers and must have approval by the LA's Capital Board.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 Local authorities must plan for and secure sufficient schools for their area in line with their duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 (and any subsequent amendments to that act).

9.2 Section 14 states that a Local Authority shall secure that sufficient schools for providing primary education, and secondary education are available for their area. The schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education.

9.3 'Appropriate education' means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes, and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.

- 9.4 It is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to identify their strategic priorities and have policies to address these in their local plan document. The local plan will include policies relating to the remodelling and expansion of existing education facilities, and developer contributions required to mitigate the impact of new developments, including in relation to local education provision.

EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 This investment strategy seeks to consider and prioritise the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities and where possible provide suitable educational provision in their locality.
- 10.2 An equalities impact assessment has been completed (Appendix 3)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 11.1 An environmental impact assessment has been completed (Appendix 4).

CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 Stockport's physical and socioeconomic landscape is changing. Our local plan, robust intelligence and data can lead us to recommendations of investment that consider sufficiency through the 3 key influencers that will help achieve our ambition of good and improving local schools.
- 12.2 Fundamentally we lack the funding we require to do everything we would aspire to do so therefore we must target our resources to ensure greatest benefits across the school estate delivering a better offer for local families and the local communities.
- 12.3 Increased focus on inclusion and SEND is required to ensure pupils thrive but within a sustainable public budget which has influenced the decisions to prioritise spend in areas of need and expand out differentiated learning offers in line with growing need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 Scrutiny is asked to note and comment on the report.
- 13.2 Cabinet is asked to agree the terms outlined in the strategy and the associated investment detailed in the Education Asset Management Plan (**Appendix 2**).
- 13.3 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Estates and Asset Management, in consultation with members of the LA's Capital Board to procure the works and services, and subsequently determine the outcome of any contract award process for any project specified in the asset management plan.
- 13.4 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Education, Work, and Skills to determine, allocate, and deploy capital funding to projects, schools, or trusts to create additional mainstream, resource base, special school places.

13.5 Further to the above, Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director for Education, Work, and Skills to instruct the Assistant Director of Governance to negotiate terms and enter into funding agreements as necessary with schools and trusts that are linked to the investment and creation of new school places.

13.6 Finally Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director for Education, Work, and Skills and Assistant Director of Estates and Asset Management to instruct the Assistant Director of Governance to negotiate terms and enter into necessary legal agreements required to successfully convert a school into a multi-academy trust.

Consultation to date

- Place planning board October 2024
- Capital Board 10 December 2024
- CLT 7 January 2025

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Risk based assessment model
Appendix 2 – Education Asset Management Plan
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 4 – Environmental Impact Assessment

Anyone requiring further information should contact Christopher Harland on Tel: 0161 521 1707 or by email on christopher.harland@stockport.gov.uk