

Specialist Provision Place Planning: Forward View 2025

Access to Education, Employment and Training



March 2025

Contents

Page 3 **Introduction**

Page 4 **Current landscape**

Page 8 **Current position: EHCPs**

Page 10 **Specialist provision place planning**

Page 12 **Recent projects**

Page 13 **Specialist provision projections**

Page 17 **Looking ahead**

Introduction

The challenge of ensuring sufficient local education provision for children and young people with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) is recognised as a national and local challenge and priority.

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. This requirement is extended for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to 25 years old (as long as they are making educational progress). Local Authorities have duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure sufficiency of school places available to meet the needs of all children and young people living within the authority area, or for whom they have responsibilities. This duty extends to ensure there are enough suitable educational placements and resources available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in the area.

Our ambition for all children in Milton Keynes with SEND is that they will have their needs met with a range of inclusive provision available through our mainstream schools, specialist resource provision, SEND units and special school provision as locally as possible.

As a Local Authority we are currently in the early stages of considering what our new local plan will look like and the city's development until 2050. The New City Plan will take forward Milton Keynes City Council's Strategy for 2050 which set out a bold and ambitious vision for Milton Keynes over the next 28 years. It is currently proposed that between 2022 and 2050 an additional 63,000 homes will be delivered increasing the Milton Keynes population from c.290,000 to 410,000 people.

As a result of significant planned demographic growth, proposed future growth, and despite substantial capital investment in numerous schemes over the years, this document continues to show that there is a need to increase the number of specialist places across the city to meet the projected increase in demand.

This document predominantly looks at school aged children and young people with an EHCP and is intended for use as a guidance document to support both the local authority and education providers in detailing where places are available and in planning where additional places may need to be secured in the future. The information provided in this document may change, not least as a result of policy or funding announcements by the Department for Education.

This document will be reviewed annually to take account of the latest available SEND, housing and population datasets. Comments and feedback about this document are welcomed and can be sent to sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Current landscape

There are currently five maintained special schools and one academy special school in Milton Keynes, providing over 1,000 places across the city. As well as the special schools, there are nine units or resourced provisions in mainstream schools providing a further 167 places for children with SEND.

Needs of children with SEND Support or an EHCP are unique to each individual, however for the purposes of monitoring the demand and future projections it is useful to categorise the needs of children. We will therefore use the SEND code of practice: 0-25 years which sets out four main areas of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND):

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and Physical

We would expect the majority of children to be educated in a mainstream setting. In some cases, children will require access to more specialist settings that provide more bespoke support and education. In this case a child may be educated in a Resourced Provision, an SEND unit within a mainstream school or a Special School.

Resourced Provision:

- children spend most of their time within mainstream classes
- are designated by the local authority specifically for making this kind of SEND provision
- receive specialist funding from the local authority to deliver the appropriate service
- cater for a specific area or areas of SEND (for example specific learning difficulties)
- are usually for pupils with an EHC plan

School	Age Range	Year Groups	Provision Type	Commissioned No. Places*	Specialism
Charles Warren Academy	4-7	R to 2	Resourced Provision	6	Speech, language and communication
Orchard Academy	7-11	3 to 6	Resourced Provision	12	Social communication needs
Shepherdswell Academy	4-7	R to 2	Resourced Provision	8	Speech, language and communication
New Bradwell Primary School	3-11	R to 6	Resourced Provision	24	Social communication needs
St Paul's Catholic School	11-19	7 to 14	Resourced Provision	28	Social communication needs
St Paul's Catholic School	11-19	7 to 14	Resourced Provision	11	Visually impaired
St Paul's Catholic School	11-19	7 to 14	Resourced Provision	10	Hearing impaired
The Radcliffe School	11-19	7 to 14	Resourced Provision	15	Social communication needs

SEND Unit:

- children spend most of their time in separate, specialist classes within a mainstream school
- children require an EHCP to access a place in a SEND unit
- are designated by the local authority specifically for making SEND provision, and sometimes accommodate pupils registered at other schools on a part-time basis
- receive specialist funding from the local authority to deliver the appropriate service
- cater for a specific type or types of SEND (for example Autistic Spectrum Conditions)

School	Age Range	Year Groups	Commissioned No. Places*	Specialism
Priory Common	4-7	R to 2	6 (Sep. 2025)	Social communication needs
Germander Park	2-7	N to 2	8 (rising to 16)	Social communication needs
Bradwell Village	7-11	3 to 6	8 (rising to 24)	Social communication needs
Southwood	7-11	3 to 6	8 (rising to 24)	Social communication needs
St Paul's Catholic School	11-16	7-11	24 (from Sept '25)	Social communication needs
The Woodlands School	11-16	7-11	16 (rising to 24)	High complex needs
Romans Field School	11-16	7-11	16 (rising to 24)	Social communication needs- additional secondary pathway

Special school:

- support children with significant and enduring needs, children require an EHCP to access a place in a special school
- are registered as specialist settings
- receive specialist funding from the local authority to deliver the appropriate service
- ensure that the most vulnerable children in the area can access an appropriate education that is designed around their needs.

School	Age Range	Year Groups	Commissioned No. Places*	Specialism
Romans Field	5 to 11	1 to 6	66	Social, emotional and mental health needs
Slated Row	4 to 19	R to 14	228	Specific learning difficulties
Stephenson Academy	9 to 16	5 to 11	117	Social, emotional and mental health needs
The Redway	2 to 19	N to 14	181	Profound and multiple difficulties
The Woodlands School	4 to 19	R to 14	212	Social communication needs
White Spire	5 to 19	1 to 14	165	Specific learning difficulties

Alternative education

Local authorities and schools have statutory duties in relation to the provision of alternative education as follows:

- a) Education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of permanent exclusion, illness, or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education.
- b) Education arranged by schools for pupils who have been excluded on a fixed term basis.
- c) Pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

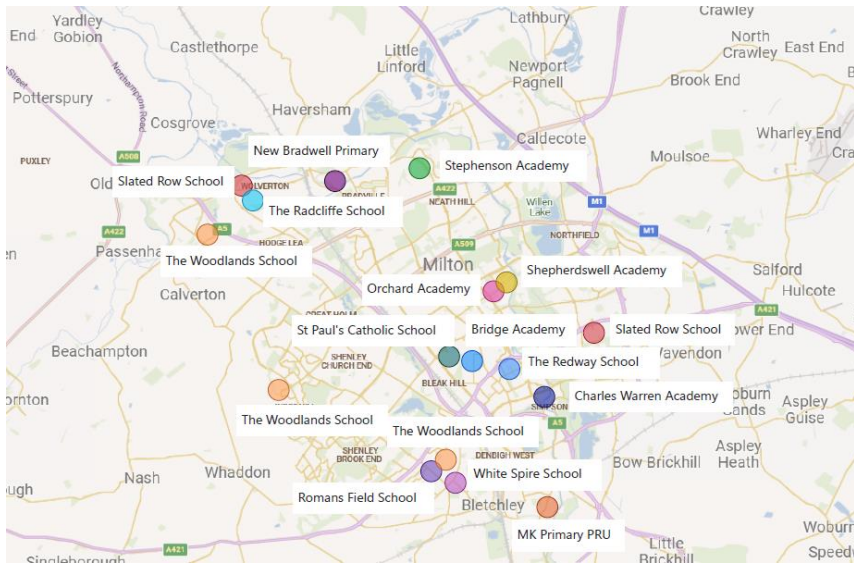
In Milton Keynes we have agreed a collaborative approach to the commissioning and oversight of alternative education provision via the Milton Keynes Inclusion Partnership. The number of places required are agreed and secured in advance through funding from the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) to ensure the local authority's duties in relation to permanent exclusion or illness can be met; however, the Inclusion Partnership enables these places to be used proactively by schools as an intervention strategy, to improve a pupil's behaviour, and therefore avoid the need for schools to permanently exclude.

The alternative provision we have in Milton Keynes are MK Primary PRU for the primary phase and Bridge Academy, which includes Bridge West (primarily focused on children that are unable to access mainstream school due to medical reasons, primarily those with mental health concerns), for the secondary and post 16 phases.

School	Age Range	Year Groups	Commissioned No. Places as at 24/25 academic year
MK Primary Pupil Referral Unit	4 to 11	R to 6	25
Bridge Academy	11 to 19	7 to 14	195

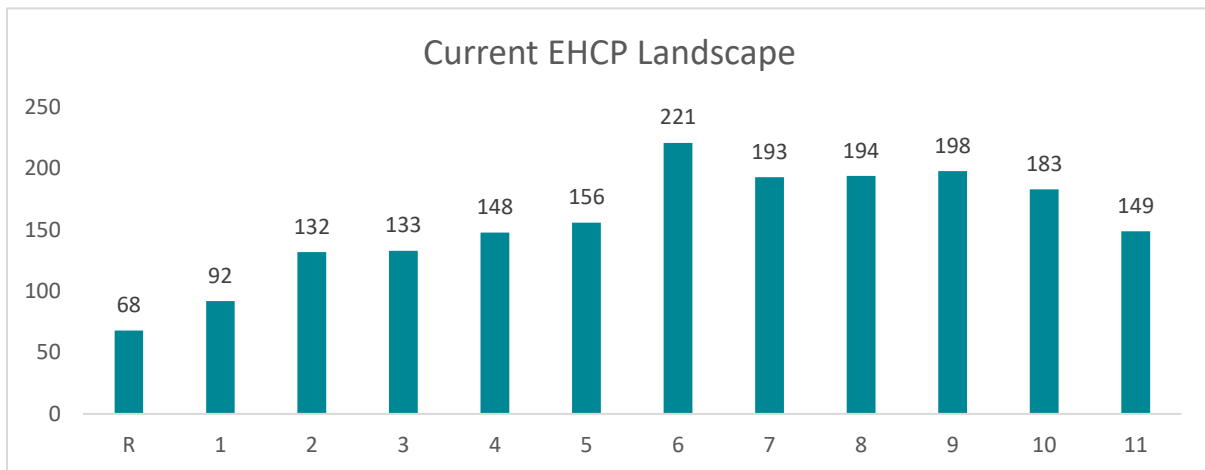
Primary PRU and Bridge Academy are both part of the Stephenson (MK) Trust and have co-located on the same site at Manor Road in Bletchley (Primary, West, and Post 16) in addition to the Central site in Coffee Hall (Key Stage 3 and 4). There is currently a proposal under consideration to amalgamate these schools from 1 September 2025. Admission to alternative provision in Milton Keynes is overseen by a monthly Alternative Education Panel for each primary and secondary phases. The panel comprises senior representatives from all mainstream schools in Milton Keynes and senior officers from Milton Keynes Local Authority. The meeting is chaired by the Milton Keynes Inclusion Partnership Officer.

The below map shows the location of all special schools, SEND units, resourced provision and alternative provision across the city.



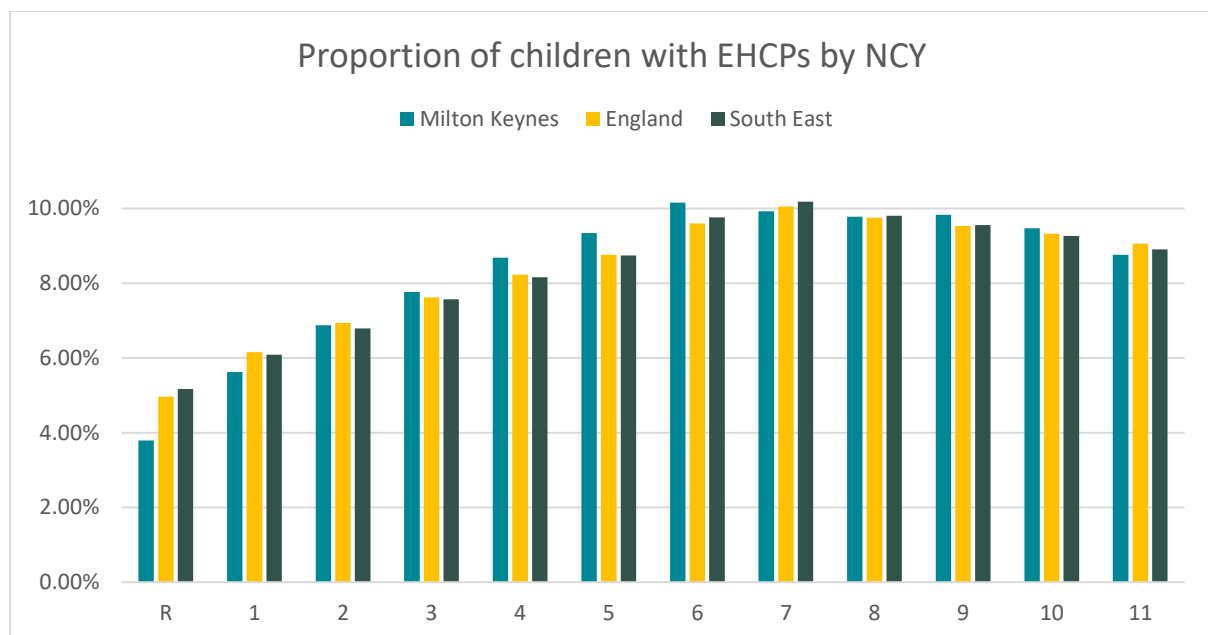
Current position: EHCPs

The current breakdown of children with an EHCP is shown below, by National Curriculum Year (NCY), from year R to year 11.

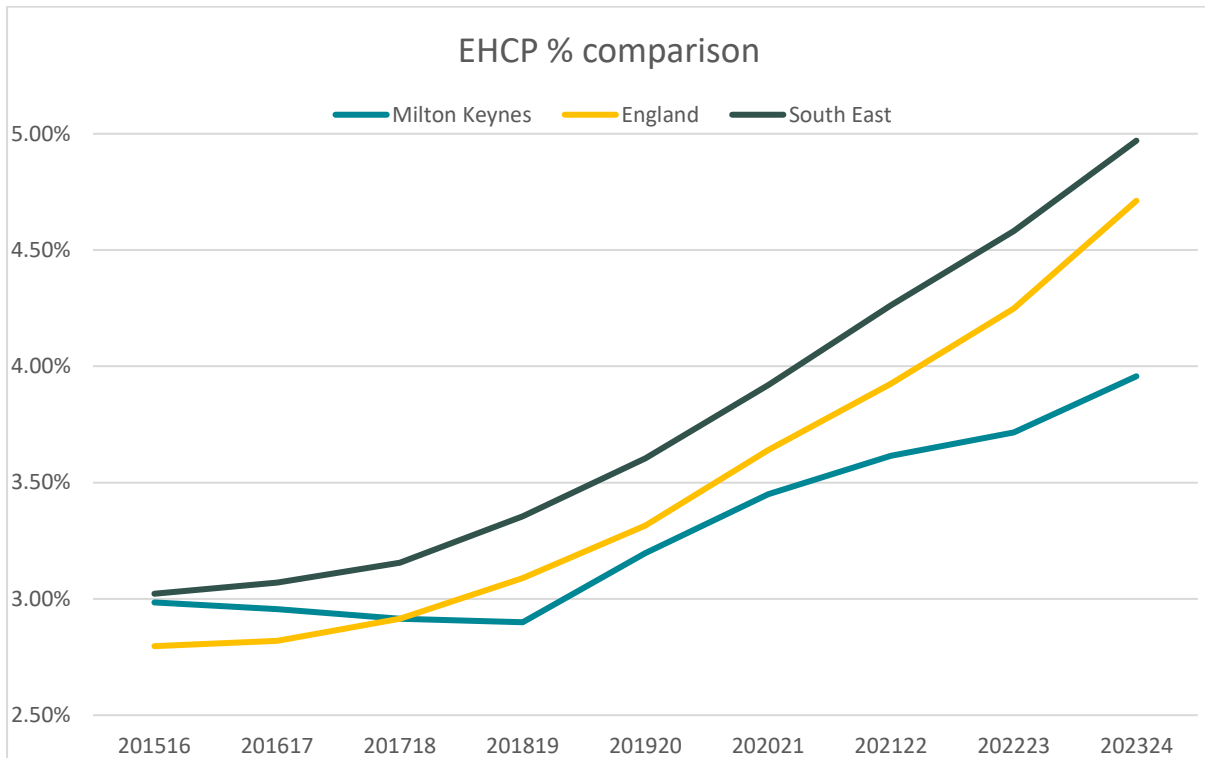


This shows that while there are some year groups requiring more provision, that the demand is present across all year groups. However, not all children will require a specialist place as many are able to access mainstream places.

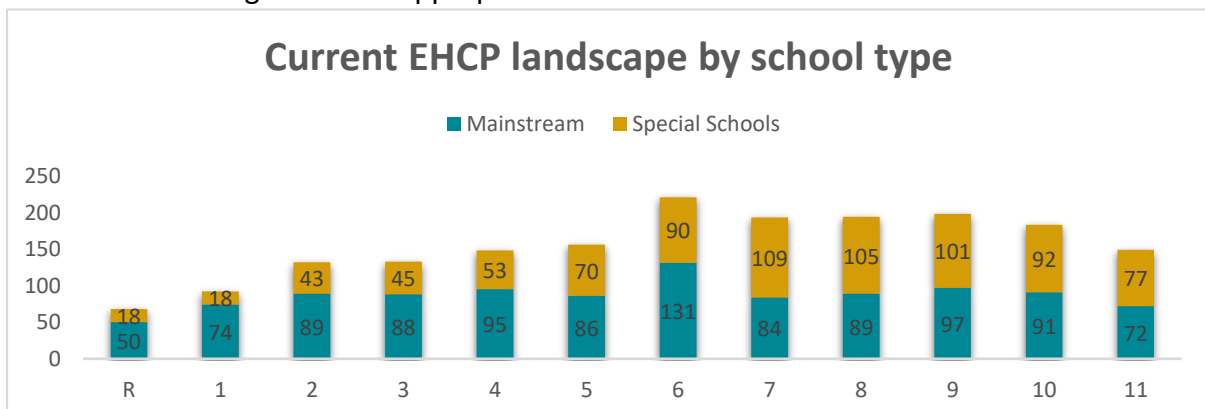
The chart below displays the relative breakdown of EHCPs across year groups for Milton Keynes, nationally and the South East region. This shows that roughly 10% of children with an EHCP in Milton Keynes are in year 6, preparing to move into secondary school. Milton Keynes is broadly in line with the national and regional data but years 4, 5 and 6 are increased.



The rate of EHCPs in Milton Keynes have risen consistently since 2018/19 although slightly behind England and the South East, as shown below. The rapidly growing pupil population and limited capacity of resource within key professions required to progress the EHCP assessments (such as Educational Psychologists) will have restricted the recent rate of growth. This rate is expected to continue to rise in the coming years and likely increase at a faster rate due to the implementation of a new strategy to externally commission the Educational Psychology Assessments required over the next 12 months.



The current landscape of children with an EHCP by school type is shown below, more than half of children with an EHCP are successfully accessing a mainstream setting. Children based in specialist units or resourced provisions are included within the mainstream data. In the primary phase 64.5% of children with an EHCP attend a mainstream school, 5% less than the national average of 69.5%. In the secondary phase 47.2% of children with an EHCP attend a mainstream school, over 5% less than the national average of 52.9%. Our ambition is that as many children as possible with an EHCP are able to have their needs met in a local mainstream setting when it is appropriate to do so.



Specialist provision place planning

As of the 2023/24 summer census, 2.5% of Milton Keynes' children and young people are educated in dedicated specialist provision. An incremental increase in demand is estimated for specialist provision year-on-year. There are two factors contributing to this; an increase in children requiring specialist provision as a result of increased complexity of need and a rise in the number of children and young people moving into Milton Keynes that require specialist provision.

Despite continued growth across Milton Keynes, no new special school has opened since Milton Keynes became a unitary authority (1997), apart from the new build of the Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) provision at The Woodlands School, which was previously sited in Simpson. Special schools in Milton Keynes have expanded through the development of additional classrooms and redesign of spaces; a second site of Slated Row School has been developed at Kents Hill Park, Redway School has developed a transitions department in a separate building, Romans Field School and Stephenson Academy have both been expanded to deliver additional Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) places.

Assessing the capacity of the special school place system is complex. There is currently no 'net capacity' assessment widely available as there is for the rest of the maintained mainstream system and no Published Admission Number (PAN) is required by law. Instead, the local authority and schools work in partnership to determine the maximum number of children that each specialist provision can admit without prejudicing the quality of education.

Due to the complex nature of specialist provision place planning, in summer 2023 a Specialist Provision Place Planning Group was established to ensure that specialist provision place planning is collaboratively and holistically considered by all parties involved in the Local Area SEND Partnership.

The purpose of the group is to provide recommendations through to Director for Children Services, Schools Forum or through to individual admission authorities regarding specialist provision place planning matters. The membership of the group includes representation from a mixture of specialist education provision, mainstream schools and parents/carers. It is the role of all members to act as a strategic system leader for all of Milton Keynes when considering SEND place planning matters.

The planning group has developed a clear set of place planning principles which will guide the way the system operates. These are set out below:

- To always ensure that Milton Keynes City Council can fulfil its statutory duty of ensuring there are sufficient places for children with EHCPs who require them in Milton Keynes.

- The short and longer term availability of specialist provision places within Milton Keynes will be monitored and reviewed on a termly basis by the Specialist Provision Place Planning Group.
- To support community cohesion locally and across Milton Keynes, and to ensure children with an EHCP can access an appropriate school place, the additional school place demand significant new housing places on the SEND sector will be an ongoing consideration within new development areas. Any required mitigations will be agreed via the group.
- When it has been identified that a new specialist provision or additional specialist places are required, the timing and release of school places will be considered by the Specialist Provision Place Planning Group.
- The Specialist Provision Place Planning Group will work in partnership with the sector to maximise the specialist provision available within local mainstream, or special schools, to reduce the need for children to access such places outside of Milton Keynes, aiding in reducing the impact on the School Travel Support (STS) budget, supporting to minimise the cost to the High Needs Block and ensuring holistic value for money.
- All schools within Milton Keynes should work cohesively in partnership with each other, for the benefit of all children and schools within the local area, regardless of differing educational type (SEND/mainstream), models (infant/junior/primary/all-through) or status (academy/maintained) promoting an inclusive practise approach at all times.

Recent projects

As a result of the Specialist Provision Place Planning Group, over the past 18 months there have been several workstreams that have delivered additional specialist provision to the local system:

- The development of additional places with a specialism in Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) across both primary and secondary phases resulting in over 100 additional places when all classes have been opened. Several specialist units within mainstream primary schools, an ASC unit at St Paul's Catholic School and a new secondary pathway at Romans Field School have been opened in September 2024. This has created 24 places in the primary phase and 32 places in the secondary phase. This will rise to 54 primary places and 48 secondary places in September 2025.
- The development of a high complex needs provision operated by The Woodlands School opened in September 2024 for an initial 16 places across primary and secondary, rising to 24 places in September 2025.
- 20 additional alternative education places across Milton Keynes Primary PRU and Bridge Academy (secondary PRU) to aid pressures within the system from September 2025.

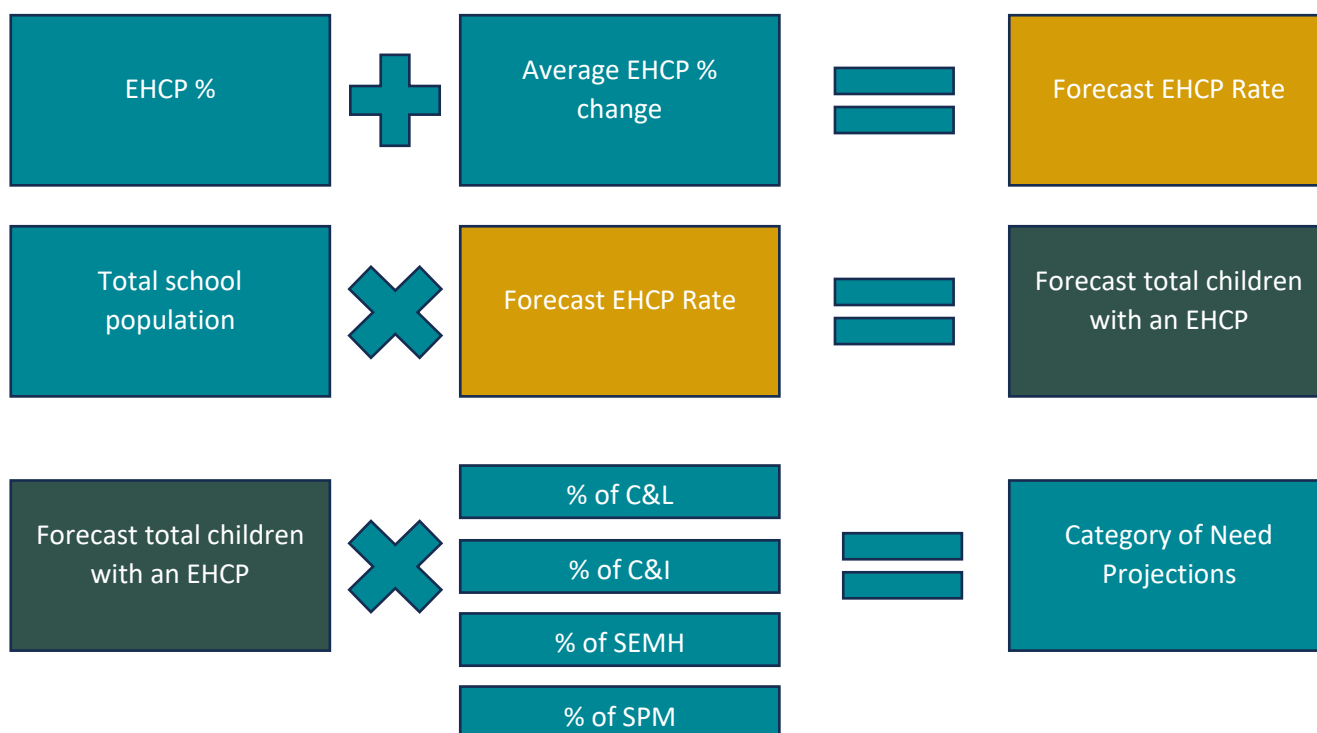
Specialist provision projections

Projecting scale and timing of future demand for education provision is extremely complex due to the number of variables, the vast majority of which are uncontrollable. This complexity is further enhanced in relation to specialist provision due to timing of EHCP assessments, differing levels in complexity of need and changing needs throughout educational life. Given this complexity, it is important to establish a robust and consistent methodology for projecting future demand for school places for those with an EHCP to ensure that, wherever possible, children are accommodated locally.

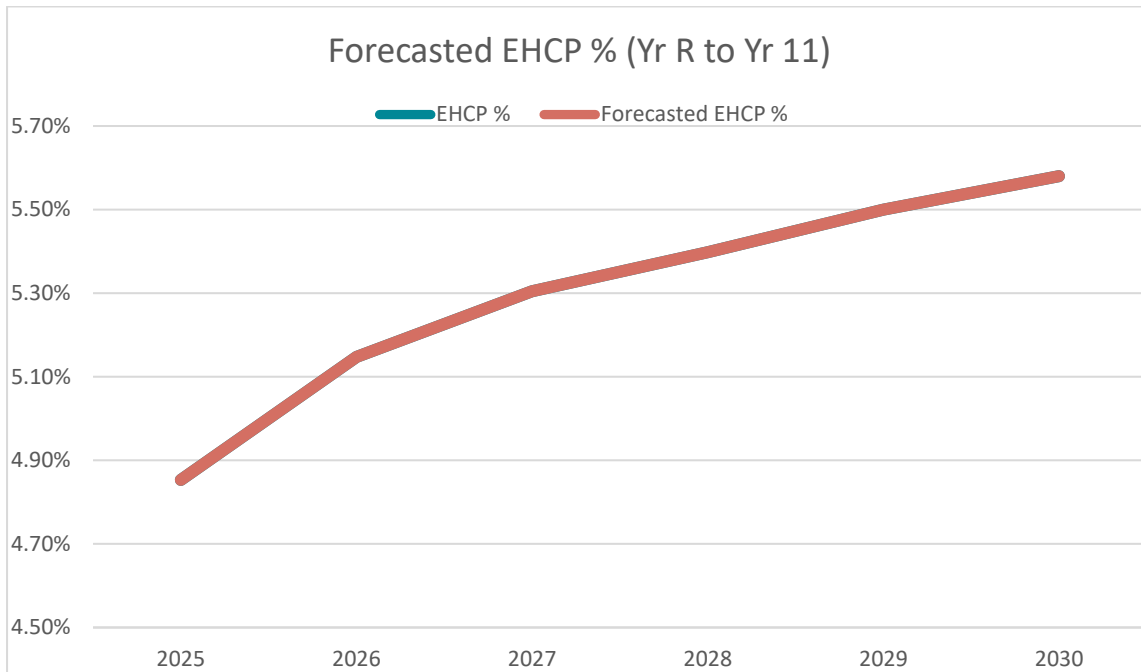
Methodology

The methodology for projecting specialist place demand begins with the overall pupil population as a base. Then, an EHCP rate is determined by reviewing trend data from the previous three years and applied to future years. By multiplying the total pupil population and EHCP rate we are able to produce projections for the total number of children with an EHCP.

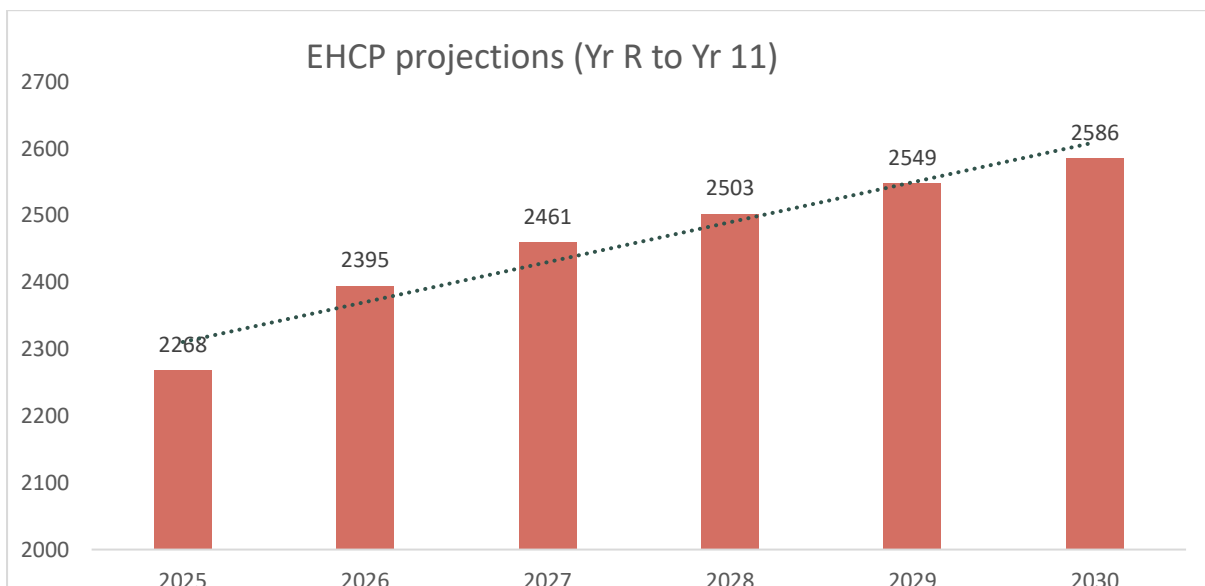
The next step is to determine how many of these children will require a specialist place, and how many can have needs met within a mainstream setting. This is done by reviewing trend information from the previous three years around placement type and taking into account any ongoing/upcoming projects that may impact placements and any children awaiting placement in a specialist provision. These percentages can then be applied to the total number of EHCPs. Finally, data regarding children’s specific needs from the previous three years is used to determine future need trends.



The forecasted percentage of EHCPs shown below, is expected to continue to rise in the coming years, but is expected to increase more prominently at first as the number of assessments taking place is expected to align with demand as well as addressing a current backlog.



The projected number of children with an EHCP is shown below for the next five years, this represents the peak number typically present at the end of an academic year. This is a combination of an increase rate of children with an EHCP as well as a growing school age population.



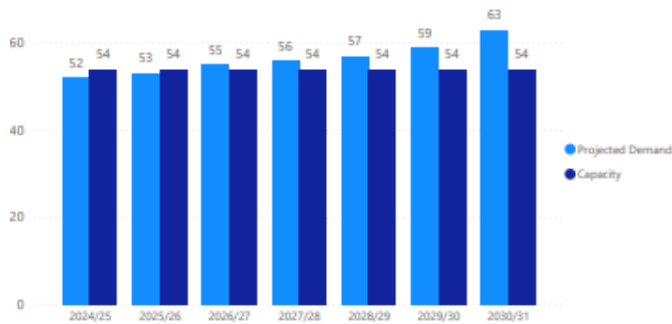
The total number of EHCPs are then categorised into primary and secondary phases before split by category of need. As not all children with an EHCP will require a specialist provision place, the final step is to determine the rate of children that will require a specialist place.

Projected Specialist Provision Demand by Phase and Category of Need

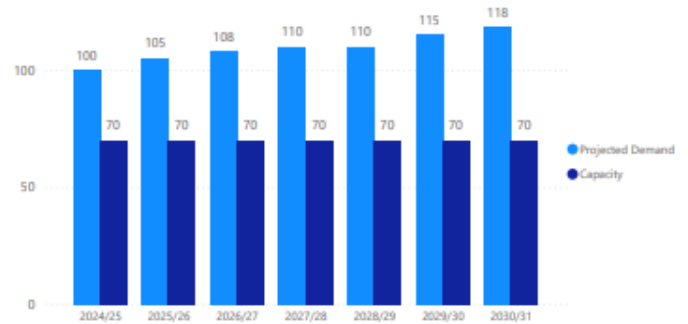
Year

Data source: SEN Projections

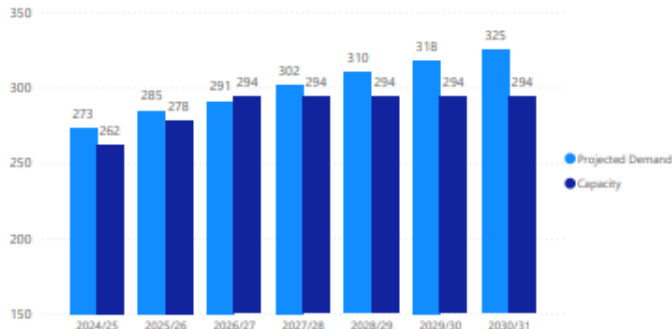
Primary Phase - Cognition and Learning



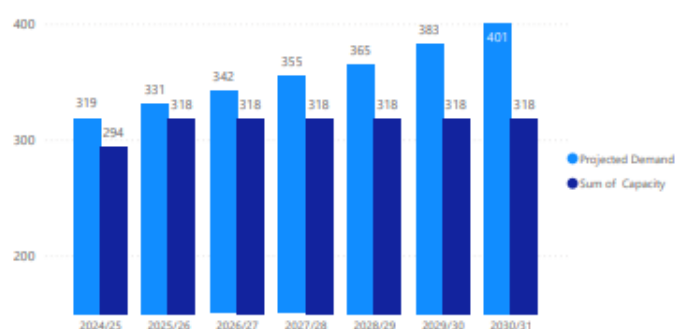
Secondary Phase - Cognition and Learning



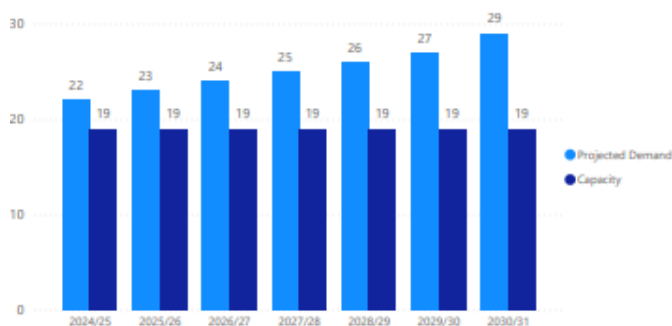
Primary Phase - Communication and Interaction



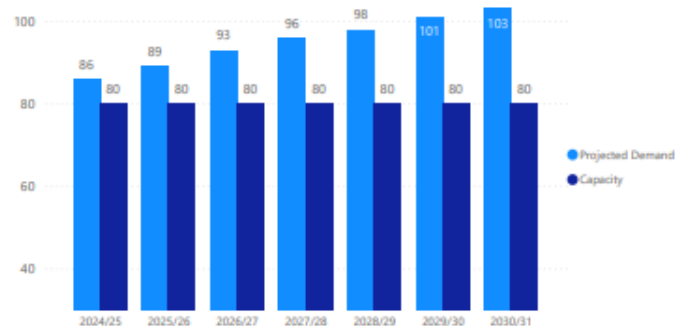
Secondary Phase - Communication and Interaction



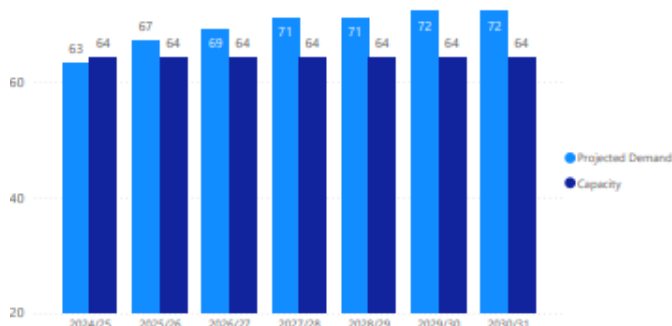
Primary Phase - Emotion, Behavioural, Social



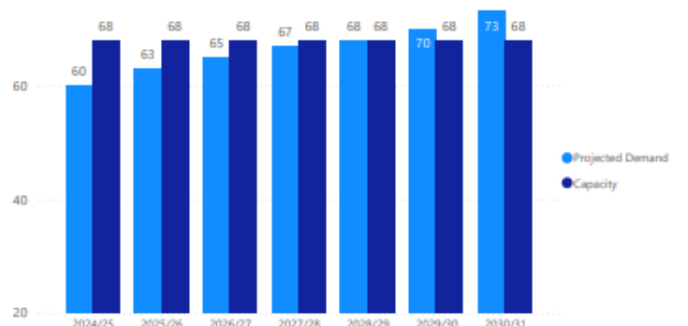
Secondary Phase - Emotional, Behavioural, Social



Primary Phase - Sensory / Physical / Mental



Secondary Phase - Sensory / Medical / Physical



Alternative provision projections (Pupil Referral Units)

The projected demand for alternative provision is calculated slightly differently by using mainstream projections and applying an assumed percentage of children that will access alternative provision (Pupil Referral units).

In the primary phase, numbers accessing alternative provision have maintained a relatively steady position over the past four years at an average of 0.14%. This value has been used to project the level of primary demand in the coming years:

Academic year	Primary projection	AP %	MK Primary PRU demand
2024/25	26658	0.14%	39
2025/26	26521	0.14%	39
2026/27	27201	0.14%	38
2027/28	26906	0.14%	38
2028/29	26404	0.14%	38

As mentioned above the previous four year trend for the proportion of children accessing a place at Bridge Academy (including Bridge West) has increased from 0.65% of secondary children in May 2021 to over 1% in May 2024. If we assume this trend continues we could see up to 1.3% of children in secondary school accessing an alternative provision, the projections are shown below:

Academic year	Secondary projection	AP %	Bridge Academy demand (incl. Bridge West)
2024/25	19543	1.113%	217
2025/26	19825	1.213%	240
2026/27	20123	1.313%	264
2027/28	20214	1.413%	286
2028/29	20240	1.513%	306

The below table shows the five year projections for post-16 demand on alternative provision, the general trend over the last three years has been a decrease in overall number of children as well as a percentage of the post-16 cohort although there has been a rise in September 2024.

Academic year	Post 16 projection	AP %	Post 16 centre demand
2024/25	3697	0.84%	31
2025/26	4019	0.84%	34
2026/27	4129	0.84%	34
2027/28	4278	0.84%	36
2028/29	4361	0.84%	36

Looking ahead - Strategy

Modelling clearly indicates that additional specialist places are required to be developed over the coming years in response to continued growth in the number of EHCPs and wider demographic changes in the school population.

In order to address some of the above key pressure points, the place planning group and the local authority are seeking to progress with the following schemes of work to provide additional specialist places:

Discussions are ongoing with numerous schools and academies in the relevant areas regarding the development of further specialist places.

- **New city plan:** Over the next 12 months, continue to work with stakeholders to ensure there is appropriate land/infrastructure secured in the new iteration of the city plan when established.
- **Follow up review of additional alternative education places:** Carry out follow up review of alternative provision following additional places added and change in approach following proposed amalgamation of Bridge Academy/Primary PRU.
- **Adding additional specialist unit provision:** Following the success of the previous process where a number of unit provisions were established, our strategy will be to continue to progress future Expression Of Interest processes to seek applications from schools/specialist provisions interested in providing additional places for pupils with SEND, particularly focussing on utilising spare building capacity. Our next EOI process live and seeking to add places from September 2026.
- **New mainstream schools:** Explore opportunities to develop specialist unit provision when commissioning and building new mainstream schools in the next five years on sites already secured, where possible, subject to planning permission and site restrictions already in place.
- **Exploration of central government schemes:** Continue to review and explore opportunities to bid on central government led schemes e.g. special school WAVE process/additional SEND capital opportunities over the course of this parliament

The requirement for future SEND places will continue to be monitored by the place planning group with any plans for additional places strategically and collaboratively considered with the sector.

