

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY

2026/2027 to 2030/2031



April 2026

Document Control

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Document Ownership

Role	Name/Title
Author	Jodie Dowle – Pupil Placement Planning Officer
Release Authority	Tracy McKeating - Head of Service Access & Achievement within Children's Services

Distribution:

School Headteachers
Archdiocese
Admissions Team
Academy Trusts
Chair SAPH
Chair SASH

Sefton Council

School Place Planning Strategy 2026/27-2030/31

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1.0 Introduction

Sefton is a confident, connected and inclusive child-friendly borough where children and families thrive. There are over 56,000 young people aged between 0-17 years.

The Education Act 1996 (Section 14) places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area to provide primary and secondary education.

One of Sefton Council's priority actions, as stated in the corporate plan, is to help young people access appropriate education provision which is local. Sefton Council is committed to delivering sufficient, good-quality school places across each of the planning areas.

The Sefton School Place Planning Strategy 2026-2031 sets out the Council's priorities and the principles that underpin the Council's approach to school organisation. The focus is to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet demand for all pupils who require a place, while also maintaining the sustainability of provision where schools may be experiencing falling demand. For the purposes of school place planning, the borough is split into five primary and five secondary school planning areas. This strategy identifies the likely demand in each of the planning areas, available capacity and any planned housing developments which would impact on pupil yield.

This school place planning strategy will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure any new factors that impact on pupil forecasts are taken into consideration and refine the Council's understanding of future need. As with the previous version, there is a strong focus on Special Education Needs.

The data in this booklet is based on data from the 2024/2025 academic year including the School Census January 2025 and May 2025 and the birth data for 2023/2024 academic year from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The pupil projections are the figures supplied to the Department for Education as part of the School Capacity Survey 2025 (SCAP25).

1.1 Sefton Demographics

1.1.1 Population

In Sefton, the population size had increased by 2.0%, from around 273,800 in 2011 to 279,300 in 2021. This was lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%).

[Sefton population change, Census 2021 – ONS](#)

In Census 2021, those aged 0 to 4 made up 5% (13,500) of Sefton's population, the level of 0 to 4 year-olds saw a reduction of 8% from Census 2011. This fall may impact the number of future early years and primary school places required.

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/8068/census-overview-new.pdf>

Falling birth rates frequently correlate with broader socio-economic strain, including housing affordability, employment insecurity and family financial pressure.

Birth data received from the Office for National Statistics for 2024/2025 shows that there were 50 fewer births in Sefton that year compared with the previous year. This was a 2.09% drop in births overall across Sefton, with the largest reduction occurring in Litherland (9.97%), followed by Crosby (7.95%), Southport (2.10%), and Bootle (1.41%). Births in Formby had increased (13.34%) and births in the Maghull and Aintree planning area had increased marginally (2.45%).

Table 1: Births in Sefton

Birth Year	School Entry Year	Total Sefton Births	Bootle	Litherland	Crosby	Formby	Maghull	Southport
2015/16	2020/21	2803	728	342	475	131	310	817
2016/17	2021/22	2732	730	320	423	118	293	848
2017/18	2022/23	2625	666	304	422	150	282	801
2018/19	2023/24	2632	723	301	416	147	323	722
2019/20	2024/25	2447	606	303	367	140	322	709
2020/21	2025/26	2458	627	252	419	134	319	707
2021/22	2026/27	2517	650	264	421	155	325	702
2022/23	2027/28	2345	586	246	373	142	333	665
2023/24	2028/29	2393	570	291	390	156	318	668
2024/25	2029/30	2343	562	262	359	180	326	654

If we look at the birth data in the table above, we can see that the birth rates have dropped significantly since 2018 and the preceding years.

1.1.2 Ethnicity

In terms of cultural diversity, there are a wide range of ethnic groups within Sefton schools, however these numbers are low compared with other parts of the country. White British remains the largest ethnic group amongst school-age children in Sefton. This ethnic group makes up 97.89% of the total number of pupils. Black-African ethnic group makes up 1.5% of school pupils within Sefton schools. (Source: January 2025 School Census)

Applications from non-EU countries remain high. Bootle, Litherland and some wards within Southport seem to be the areas which families move into the most.

1.1.3 Socio-Economic profile

Sefton continues to have significant levels of childhood poverty, with large socio-economic differences across the borough.

Deprivation varies across Sefton, with some communities experiencing substantial

socio-economic disadvantage, particularly in parts of:

- Bootle
- Litherland
- Netherton and Orrell
- Southport

These conditions shape pupil needs in areas such as attendance, attainment, SEND demand, pastoral support, and free school meal uptake.

The proportion of Sefton pupils in primary and secondary schools who are classed as disadvantaged (based on pupil premium figures in January 2025 School Census) is 25% which is in line with the national average.

2.0 Structure and Characteristics of School Provision in Sefton

Within Sefton there are 74 primary schools, 51 of which have a school nursery. There are also 3 maintained nursery schools.

There are 18 secondary schools, 2 of which are single sex (1 boys' school and 1 girls' school). Of the 18 secondary schools, currently 9 of these have 6th form provision.

Of the above schools, 10 of the primaries have a SEN unit/Resource Provision base and 4 of the secondary schools have a SEN unit/Resource Provision base.

There are 5 (non-independent) special schools in Sefton.

In terms of alternative provision, Sefton has one pupil referral unit for primary age pupils and one pupil referral unit for secondary age pupils.

Table 2: School Provision in Sefton

	Maintained	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Academy	Trust Foundation	Total
Nursery	3					3
Primary	21	25	5	23		74
Secondary		3		15		18
Special	2			2	1	5

The denominational sector is very strong in Sefton, particularly in the primary phase where community schools form 46% of the total, 32% of the schools are Catholic and 22% are Church of England. Twenty-three (31%) of the primary schools are now academies; five of these are Catholic and five of these are Church of England (these are included in the denomination percentages above). In the secondary phase, five of the eighteen high schools (28%) are Catholic schools and only one high school (6%), now an academy, has Church of England status.

92% of the school provision within Sefton has been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

2.1 Trends in Pupil Numbers

Sefton School Admissions Team is responsible for co-ordinating phased admissions i.e. to Reception and Year 7 (entry to junior schools at Year 3, where applicable, is usually automatic from the attached infant school). The School Admissions Team is also responsible for processing in-year applications.

Over the past 3 years, applications to Reception, prior to National Offer Day, have increased marginally although primary numbers in general have fallen due to reduced birth rates:

2024; 2612 places were allocated on National Offer Day. 92% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school and 97% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

2025; 2618 places were allocated on National Offer Day. 91% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school and 96% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

2026; 2628 places were allocated on National Offer Day. 90% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school. 97% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

Over the past 3 years, applications to secondary school have fluctuated:

In 2024, 3140 places were allocated for National Offer Day. 87% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school and 96% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

In 2025, 3332 places were allocated for National Offer Day. 84% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school and 94% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

In 2026, 3153 places were allocated for National Offer Day. 88% of Sefton residents were allocated their first preference Sefton school and 96% of Sefton residents were allocated one of their three preferred Sefton schools.

Aside from phased admissions, we receive increasing in-year applications. In addition, there is a marked south-north population movement within Sefton and the movement of families impacts upon the demand for school places in both the origin and destination areas.

With regards to SEND figures, across the past six full academic years, EHCP totals have increased by an average of **18% per year**, with annual growth ranging between **10% and 23%**. Over the most recent three-year period (2022–25), the average increase has accelerated to **20% per year**, reflecting sustained upward demand.

The 2025–26 figure (4,222 as of February 2026) represents an in-year snapshot and will rise further by the July year-end.

2.2 Cross Border Movement

Overall, the number of out-of-borough school age pupils attending school in Sefton is higher than the number of Sefton pupils attending a school out-of-borough, although this does vary by borough (see map below). The figures in the image below are from January 2025 and are provided by the DfE via their School Census Team.



3.0 Strategic Approach to Place Planning

In addition to securing mainstream school places for pupils aged 5 to 16, Sefton Council has related statutory responsibilities in relation to:

- **Children and Young People (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** where the Council must ensure suitable provision to meet the children's needs
- **Early Years Provision** where the Council has responsibility for ensuring sufficient childcare across the borough and provision for children aged 9 months to statutory school age.

- **Post-16 Education and Training** where the Council works in partnership with schools and local colleges to ensure young people aged 16-18 (and up to the age of 25 for those who have an Education, Health and Care Plan) have access to a range of opportunities to continue their education or training at a wide range of post-16 providers or through apprenticeships. This supports young people with their preparation for adulthood.

Sefton Council works closely with Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts to deliver its statutory duties, as well as local Trusts and Dioceses and the Department for Education.

3.1 School Place Planning Strategy Priorities and Principles

The school place planning function requires us to utilise pupil number data from the school census returns, as well as data provided as part of the School Capacity (SCAP) return. This includes net capacity data which is based on teaching accommodation for LA-maintained schools and the funding agreement for academies. The net capacity figure may not always match the overall Published Admission Number for the school, across all year groups, as schools can choose to set a different PAN, depending on demand within the area, or there may be a gradual change in the PAN working through the year groups.

Each year as part of the School Capacity return (SCAP), projections of primary, secondary and SEND pupil numbers are submitted. These are based upon:

- the number of births in Sefton in the relevant year* for Reception year forecasts
- pupil numbers based upon January School Census
- anticipated pupil yield from housing development data**
- trends in the pattern of admissions
- local knowledge from staff processing the school admissions / EHCP applications
- Placement Data and SEN2 data (for SEND forecasts)

*forecasts for later years are based upon birth estimates by calculating a weighted average of the three most recent birth figures available.

** data is taken from Sefton's Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and we use the housing development figures for those with planning permission

For intake years (Reception and Year 7) forecasts, these are based on uptake ratio, and for non-intake years these are based on cohort progression ratios.

The total Published Admission Number (PAN) is calculated using the official planned admission number for each year group in each primary school. This may vary from year group to year group depending on changes made in previous years. Future PAN changes are included where these are known in advance and have been approved.

In terms of SEND sufficiency and forecasting, we capture the most recent changes in Sefton's SEND demand, placement activity and emerging pressures. As part of ongoing improvements to our data and intelligence framework, we have introduced the use of Power BI to support real time reporting and enhanced analysis.

We draw on the latest placement data, primary need profiles and geographical demand patterns, combining these into a concise assessment of risks, pressures, and forward implications. It highlights where demand is rising, which areas of identified need are increasing, and where pressures are greatest across Sefton's localities, phases and provision types.

With regards to Early Years provision, sufficiency monitoring takes place regularly in order to achieve a comprehensive picture of demand and availability across the borough. By analysing the supply of childcare available in each ward area, as well as the uptake, and comparing it with information around demand from parents, potential gaps in childcare provision can then be identified. This is the first step towards developing a strategy for securing sufficient childcare places through working with local providers and tailoring services to the particular needs of children and families.

3.2.1 Ensuring sufficiency of places during periods of growth in demand

Where an area is projected to experience a sustained growth in demand, generally it is more cost effective to provide permanent places if they are needed for the longer term. However, there are times where site and time constraints mean this is not possible and there are also occasions where the bulge in numbers only applies to one cohort of students. In these circumstances, it is better to provide a temporary bulge class.

Where additional school places are needed, the Council seeks to provide places that provide high quality provision. This could be through expanding existing schools (judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted) or through establishing new schools.

3.2.2 Supporting schools and planning areas with falling demand

During periods where demand for school places falls significantly and the number of spare places increases, this can cause difficulties for individual schools particularly with regards to managing staffing requirements and school budgets. In such circumstances the Local Authority will analyse various datasets including recent intake numbers, parental preferences, availability of places within the local area and any planned housing developments in the area. The Pupil Place Planning Working Group, comprised of staff from various departments; Admissions, Pupil Place Planning, Building Services, Planning, SEND and Early Years, would discuss and review the situation and make recommendations, such as those listed below, which would be taken to Leadership for consultation.

3.2.3 Informal capping arrangements

Informal caps can support schools by limiting their intake in a particular year group where demand is below PAN. However, implementing informal caps is not a long-term sustainable solution nor does it allow for good school organisation planning. Informal caps could be a possible solution in an arrangement where two schools work together to manage admissions. For example, where there is agreement to limit admissions in one school to actively facilitate fuller classes in the other. The advantage of informal capping arrangements is that they can be implemented quickly in

response to the current situation and can easily be removed if there is an increase in demand in an area.

3.2.4 Reductions to Published Admission Number (PAN)

A reduction to a school's Published Admission Number (PAN) reduces their official intake, normally by one or more forms of entry. This can help undersubscribed schools to manage their budgets more efficiently, with the aim of the revised PAN being in line with demand. PAN reductions are subject to formal consultation and therefore can take up to two years to implement. They cannot be employed for every undersubscribed school in an area as the local authority needs to maintain some spare capacity for in-year admissions.

There are currently a number of primary and secondary schools in Sefton with Published Admission Numbers below their built or net capacity. This means that we currently have the option to negotiate with schools to increase PANs if there is sustained rising demand in a planning area.

3.2.5 Utilising Spare Capacity for Alternative Use

With schools which have spare capacity which is unlikely to be required in the longer-term, this space can be used, and remodelled if required, for alternative use, such as for children with SEND or as a special satellite provision. Any long-term alternative use of spare capacity must be agreed by the local authority, to ensure the places are not likely to be required to support either local demand or demand in neighbouring planning areas. The use of spare capacity in the mainstream school estate for additional SEND places is currently being explored. This would deliver value for money by repurposing current buildings to meet identified areas of demand.

3.2.6 Amalgamation

Amalgamation is where two schools join together to form one school. Typically, this would involve an infant and junior school merging to become one primary school. However an amalgamation can also be used to join two schools together in the same area where the existing schools are undersubscribed. Amalgamated schools benefit from the same opportunities as federated schools, but also benefit from operating from only one site, which offers additional economies of scale.

3.2.7 Removing Capacity from the Primary Estate

Sefton Council works collaboratively with schools in identifying solutions for a local area where a school reorganisation is considered to be the best way to ensure the sustainability of local provision. Legislation provides the Council with the authority to close community schools or to require them to amalgamate (and to instruct community schools to expand). It does not have the same authority over academies, foundation or voluntary aided schools, as this sits with the DfE's Regional Director. The Local Authority undertakes informal consultation with stakeholders on proposals to cease provision to ensure their views are considered before any decision to proceed to formal consultation is taken in line with the relevant statutory guidance.

4.0 Childcare and Early Years Sufficiency

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on the Local Authority to secure sufficient childcare places (so far as is reasonably practical) to enable parents to take up or remain in work, or to undertake education and training leading to work, and to play a strategic role in facilitating the childcare market.

Childcare is defined under Section 18 of the Childcare Act 2006, as any form of care for a child. This includes education and any other supervised activity for a young child, apart from a school during school hours for a registered pupil who is not a young child.

Section 19 states that the definition of a young child is “from birth to immediately before 1st September following the date the child is five”. Childcare does not include care provided by a parent or step-parent of the child (or a person with parental responsibility), a foster carer or a relative of the child.

Previous entitlements for parents and carers included 15 hours of free early education for 2-year-olds in low/no-income households or who are vulnerable and all 3 and 4-year olds, and 30 hours for 3 and 4-year olds from working families.

In March 2023 the government announced an expansion of these entitlements to include 15 hours free early education for children aged 9 months upwards from September 2024, with all children aged 9 months upwards from working families able to access 30 hours of free early education by September 2025. This was a significant change for the sector which has adapted, and many providers have already started delivering these new entitlements.

The past two years have seen the roll-out of capital funding for extended Early Years entitlements and also the Wrap Around offer to working parents. This has placed a further duty on the Local Authority to secure places for children from 9 months old from September 2024.

A number of our primary schools have applied for Early Years capital funding or School-based Nursery grant to create or expand childcare/nursery provision. We have been working closely with these schools to support them where we can. We have set up an Early Years and Wraparound Childcare working group to discuss any grant applications which we receive, and we have input from various staff members across the Early Years Team, Pupil Place Planning and Property Services.

Pre-school provision is provided through a combination of maintained nursery schools, nursery units in primary schools, private nursery provision and a variety of playgroups across the borough.

Currently in Sefton there are 54 nursery schools/maintained nursery schools, there are 60 Private, Voluntary and Independent Provision and there are 70 Child-minders.

Sefton Council is continuing to work very closely with Schools and Private, Voluntary and Independent providers to meet the targeted demand associated with the free entitlements for 9 month-olds to 4 year-olds, via applications received for Early Years capital funding as well as School-based nursery applications.

The map below shows the current Early Years settings across the borough of Sefton: The settings are split by School Nurseries, Private, Voluntary and Independent settings and Childminders:

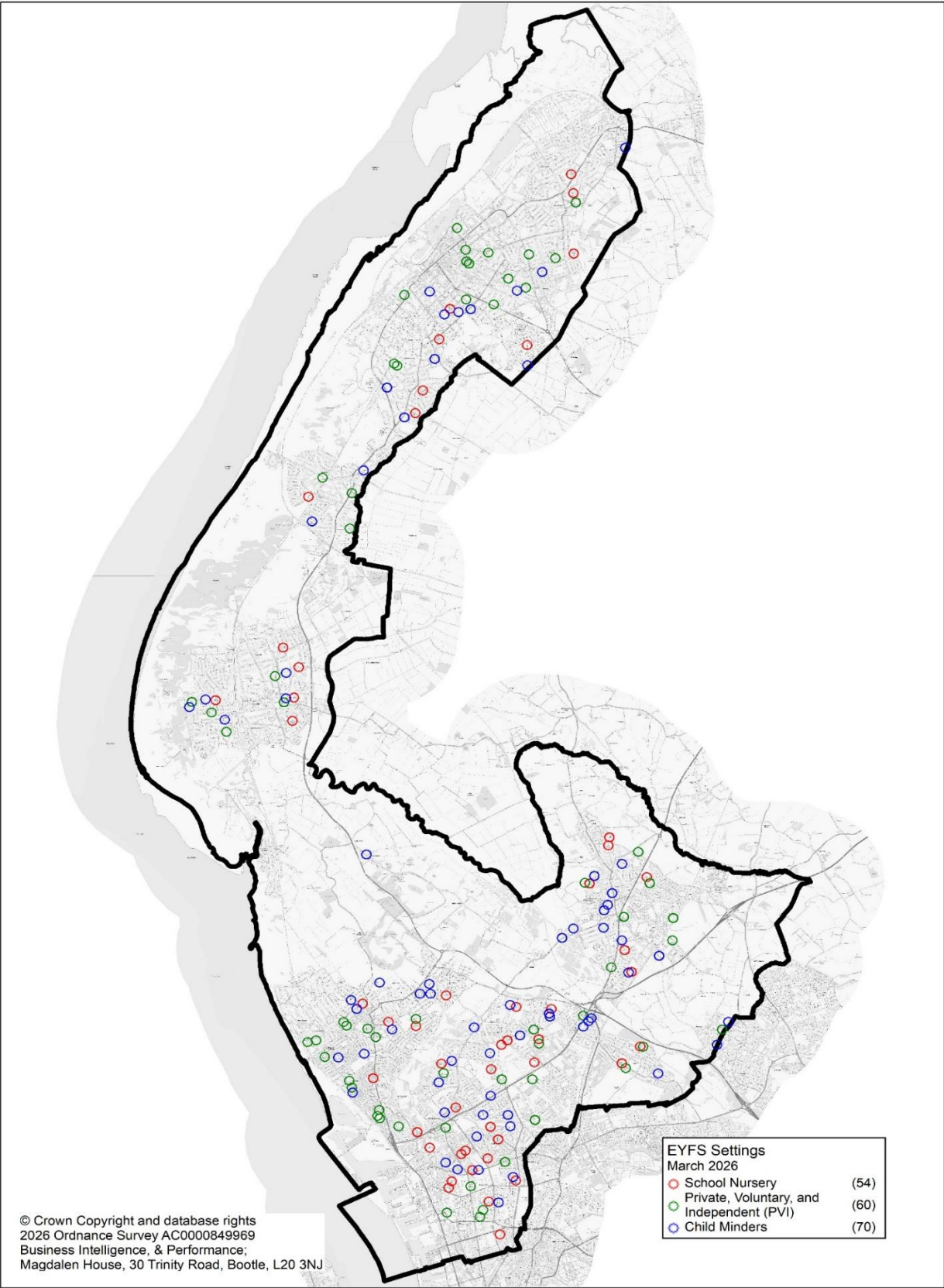


Table 3: Overall physical capacity of childcare places varies across the wards:

Ward	Physical Capacity under 2's	Physical Capacity 2 year olds	Physical Capacity 3 year olds
Ainsdale	29	53	107
Birkdale	17	60	203
Blundellsands	90	79	158
Cambridge	12	15	24
Church	89	124	181
Derby	48	129	281
Dukes	111	120	187
Ford	59	49	218
Harington	67	65	145
Kew	30	36	120
Linacre	28	54	128
Litherland	31	54	160
Manor	8	28	64
Meols	1	20	130
Molyneux	43	51	158
Netherton and Orrell	32	70	168
Norwood	51	68	121
Park	29	57	179
Ravenmeols	24	26	161
St Oswald	44	77	247
Sudell	15	43	164
Victoria	62	94	213

Identified Gaps

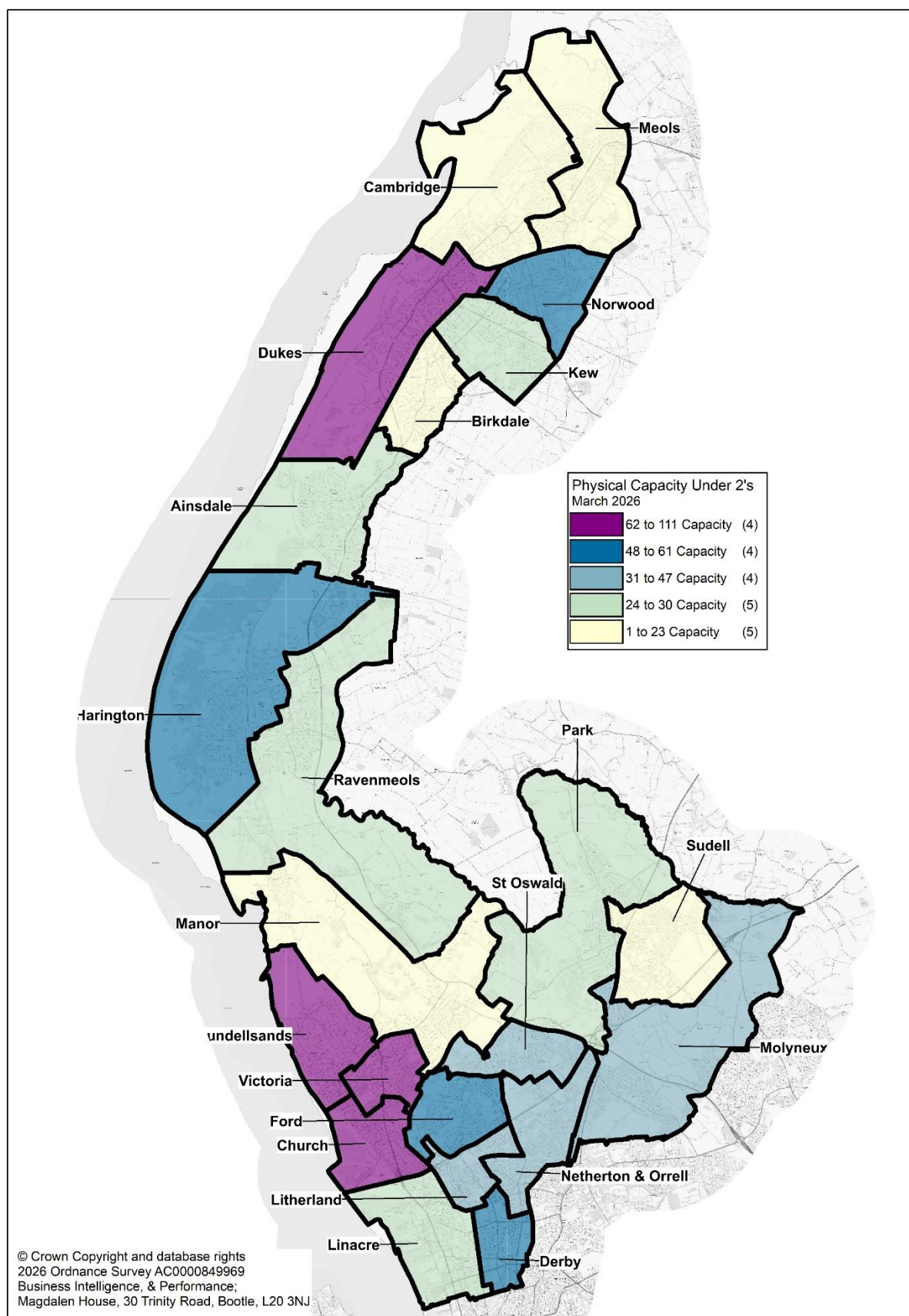
Findings from our latest Childcare Sufficiency Assessment indicate that across Sefton as a whole, there are vacant childcare places available, however they may not always be at the setting parents or carers would prefer as some settings have no places available. Availability of places does vary across wards.

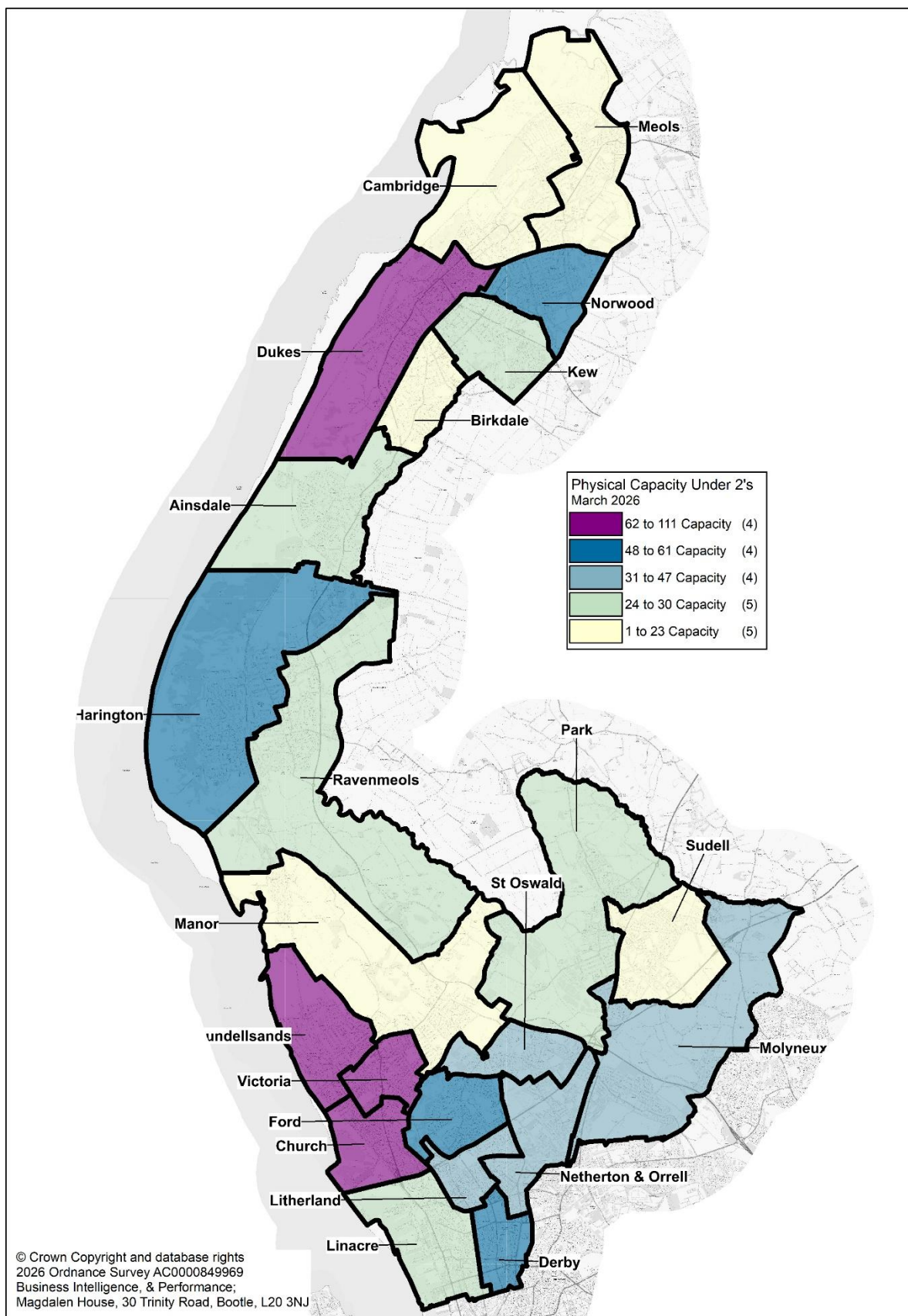
In general, there are sufficient places for 3 and 4 year-olds across Sefton. However, in relation to places for children 2 years and younger, there are particular areas in the borough that have low sufficiency.

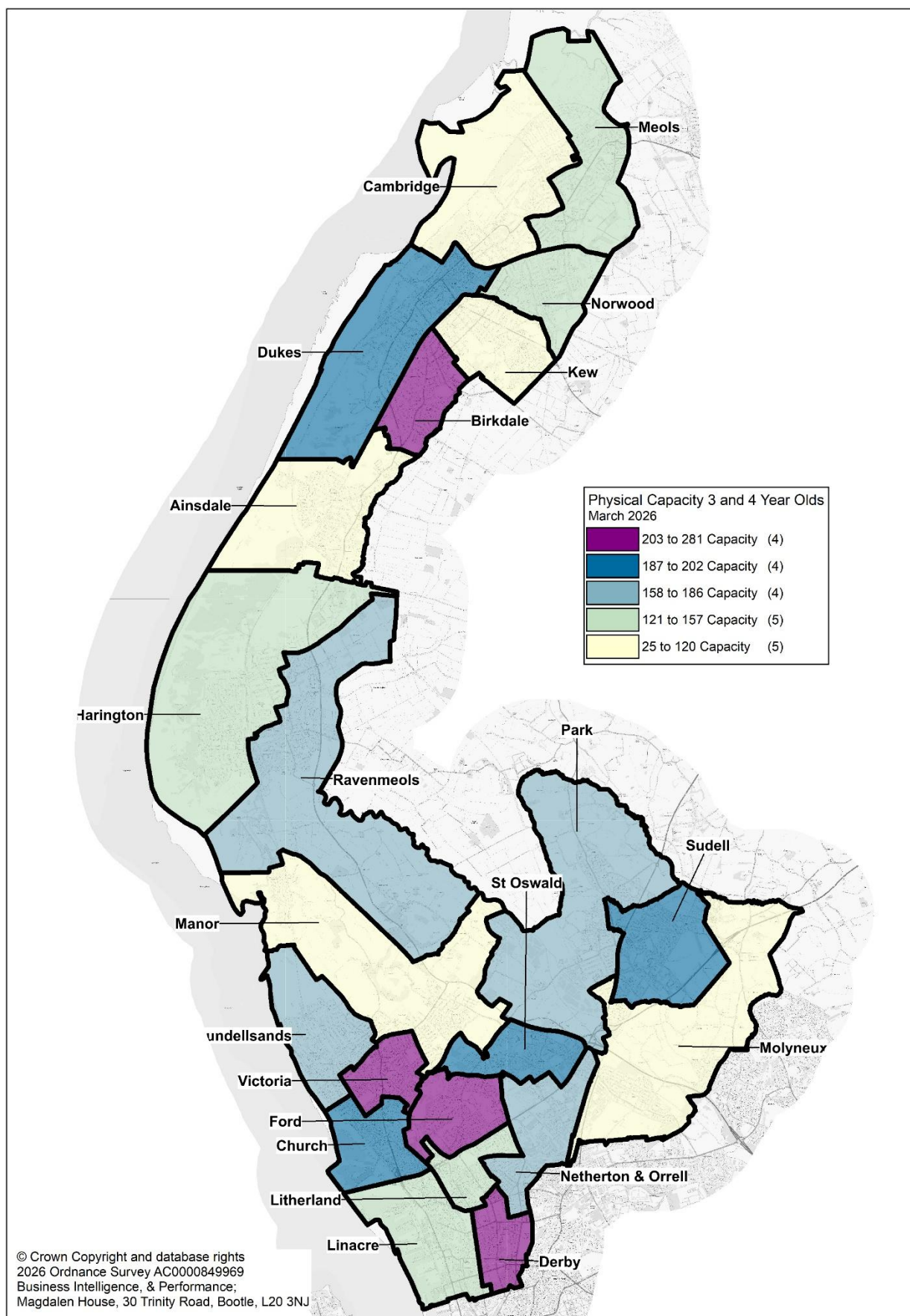
There are limited choices available for atypical hours of childcare (outside 8am to 6pm on weekdays and weekends). The Early Years funding team provide a broker service to provide support to parents who might encounter difficulty in finding a suitable place.

There are a small number of provisions who cannot meet demand for wraparound childcare. These settings will be supported as part of the childcare expansion for Wrap Around Childcare.

The maps below illustrate the physical capacity of childcare and early years provision across Sefton, for under 2 year-olds, 2 year-olds and 3 to 4 year-olds.







5.0 Primary Phase Sufficiency

5.1 Overall demand for primary places across the borough

Overall demand for primary places has fallen in recent years due to a decline in the birth rate.

There are currently 392 surplus reception places across the borough, equating to approximately 13%. Southport has the most significant level of over-capacity, accounting for nearly half of all surplus places. This is followed by Bootle and Litherland, where surplus places exist alongside a small number of schools with waiting lists, largely driven by parental preference rather than overall demand.

Other areas are comparatively closer to balance, particularly Crosby and Maghull/Lydiate/Aintree/Melling.

Table 4 below sets out primary school capacity in terms of overall Published Admission Numbers across all year groups and compares this against projected pupil numbers for reception to year 6 annually, from 2026/27 to 2030/31 with calculated surplus places and surplus percentages at whole-borough level.

Table 4: Primary School Forecasts Against Overall Published Admission Numbers:

Whole borough	Dataset	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
2026/2027	Overall PAN	3020	3035	3155	3155	3155	3170	3170
	Projection	2768	2731	2770	2957	2909	3064	3106
	Surplus	252	304	385	198	246	106	64
	Surplus Percentage	8.3%	10.0%	12.2%	6.3%	7.8%	3.3%	2.0%
2027/2028	Overall PAN	3035	3020	3035	3155	3155	3155	3170
	Projection	2581	2800	2758	2799	2990	2934	3084
	Surplus	454	220	277	356	165	221	86
	Surplus Percentage	15.0%	7.3%	9.1%	11.3%	5.2%	7.0%	2.7%
2028/2029	Overall PAN	3065	3035	3020	3035	3155	3155	3155
	Projection	2663	2614	2830	2787	2833	3022	2956
	Surplus	402	421	190	248	322	133	199
	Surplus Percentage	13.1%	13.9%	6.3%	8.2%	10.2%	4.2%	6.3%
2029/2030	Overall PAN	3065	3065	3035	3020	3035	3155	3155
	Projection	2654	2696	2641	2854	2819	2862	3053
	Surplus	411	369	394	166	216	293	102
	Surplus Percentage	13.4%	12.0%	13.0%	5.5%	7.1%	9.3%	3.2%
2030/2031	Overall PAN	3065	3065	3065	3035	3020	3035	3155
	Projection	2654	2696	2732	2675	2896	2856	2896
	Surplus	411	369	333	360	124	179	259
	Surplus Percentage	13.4%	12.0%	10.9%	11.9%	4.1%	5.9%	8.2%

Across all five years, the borough continues to show overall surplus primary capacity, with the largest surpluses consistently in Reception and KS1, and much tighter margins in Years 5 and 6.

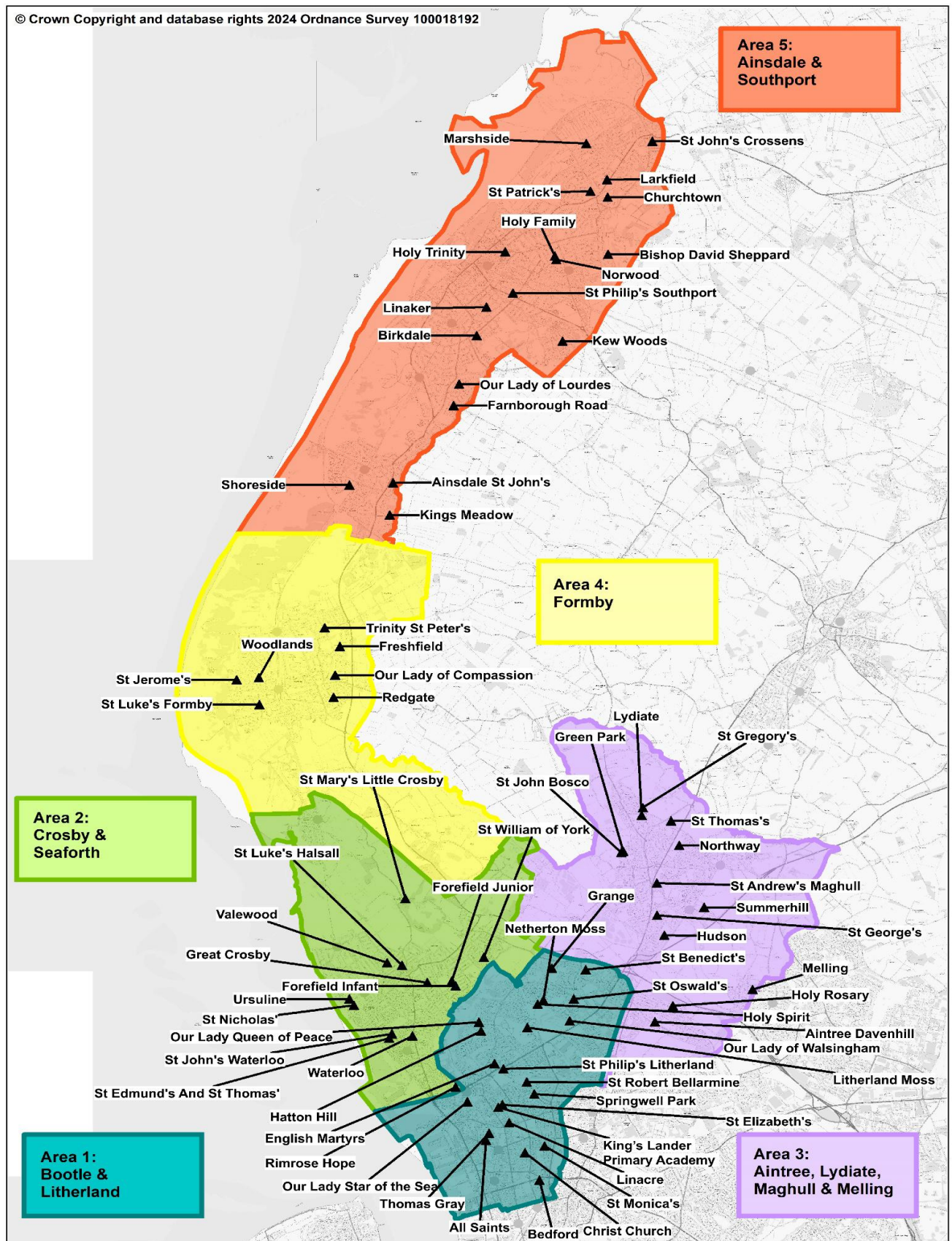
Reception PAN remains broadly stable (around 3,020–3,065), while projected numbers decline.



This points to ongoing pressure on reception intakes, likely driven by falling birth rates. Continued surplus at this level feeds through the system over time.

Key Stage 1 has structural surplus capacity, which supports flexibility, including mixed-age flexibility but also suggests scope for PAN reductions or reconfiguration in some areas. In Key Stage 2 (years 3 and 4) surplus remains, but margins begin to tighten, indicating these year groups may become more sensitive to localised demand changes.

Map of Primary Schools and Planning Areas in the Sefton Area

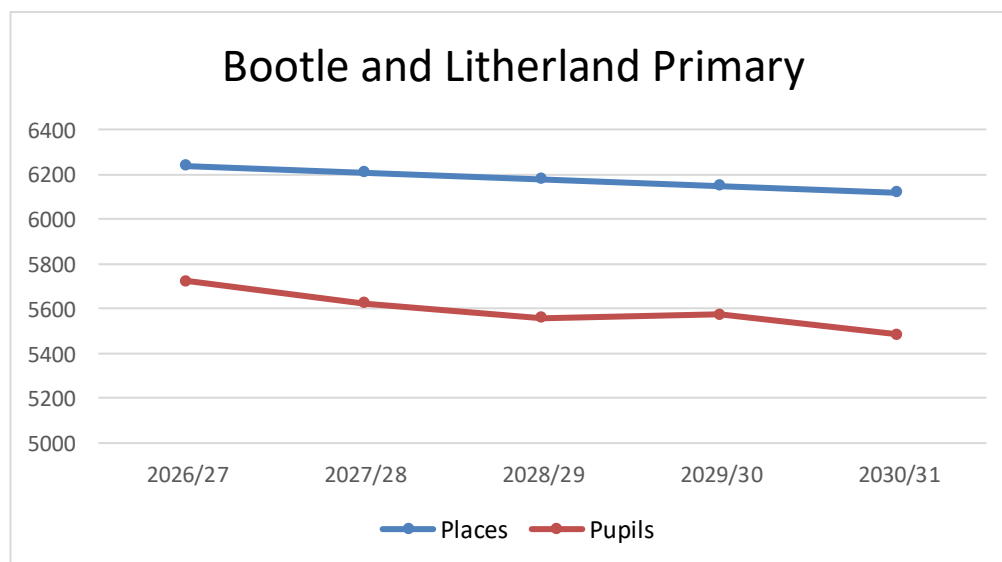


5.2 Bootle & Litherland Primary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Bedford Community Primary Linacre Community Primary Netherton Moss Community Primary Springwell Park Community Primary The Grange Community Primary Thomas Gray Community Primary Christ Church CE Primary St Oswald's CE Primary All Saints Catholic Primary Holy Spirit Catholic Primary Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary	St Benedict's Catholic Primary St Monica's Catholic Primary St Robert Bellarmine Catholic Primary Hatton Hill Community Primary King's Lander Primary Litherland Moss Primary St Philip's CE Primary English Martyr's Catholic Primary Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Primary Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary
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The total (physical) net capacity for Reception to Year 6 is 6508. The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Reception to Year 6 are shown in total PAN column below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026/2027	6240	765	773	772	867	778	879	888	5722
2027/2028	6210	712	791	782	785	872	797	884	5623
2028/2029	6180	736	737	801	795	790	896	803	5558
2029/2030	6150	734	762	747	815	801	812	902	5573
2030/2031	6120	731	760	772	760	821	823	818	5485



Demand

The forecasts predict a gently declining demand for primary places in the planning area. Pressure is localised to upper Key-Stage 2 cohorts, with particular tightness in Year 6.

Planning Implications

This planning area has adequate surplus capacity to absorb fluctuations. The LA will continue to monitor in-year arrivals, Key-Stage 2 pressure and local housing development applications.

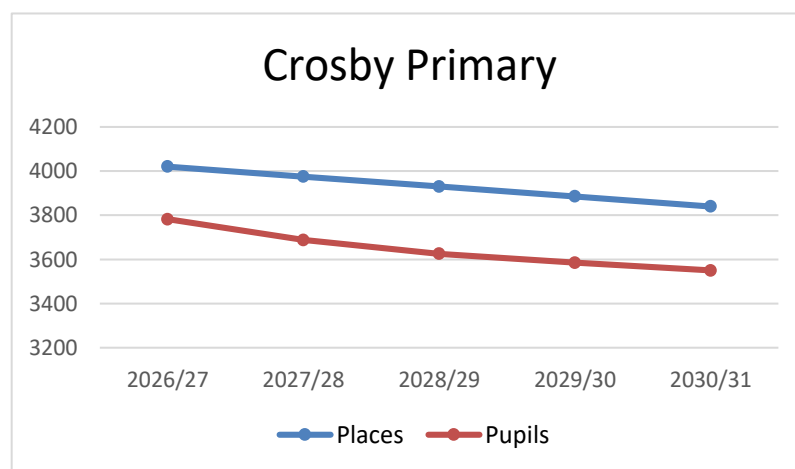
5.3 Crosby Primary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Forefield Infant and Nursery School Forefield Junior School Great Crosby Catholic Primary Rimrose Hope CE Primary St Edmund's and St Thomas' Catholic Primary St John's CE Primary St Luke's Halsall CE Primary	St Mary's Catholic Primary St Nicholas' CE Primary St William of York Catholic Primary Ursuline Catholic Primary Valewood Primary Waterloo Primary
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The total (physical) net capacity for Reception to Year 6 is 4084.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Reception to Year 6 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026/2027	4020	513	517	482	540	560	577	593	3782
2027/2028	3975	480	514	520	489	545	561	579	3688
2028/2029	3930	497	482	517	526	494	546	563	3625
2029/2030	3885	494	499	485	523	531	495	558	3585
2030/2031	3840	494	497	503	492	529	533	502	3550



Demand

The forecasts predict a consistent decline of 232 pupils over the next 5 years. Pressure is concentrated in Key-Stage 2 and eases over time.

Planning Implications

The LA continues to monitor the extensive housebuilding in the Crosby and Thornton area. This could increase pupil numbers across all year groups. The LA is currently planning for any localised lift.

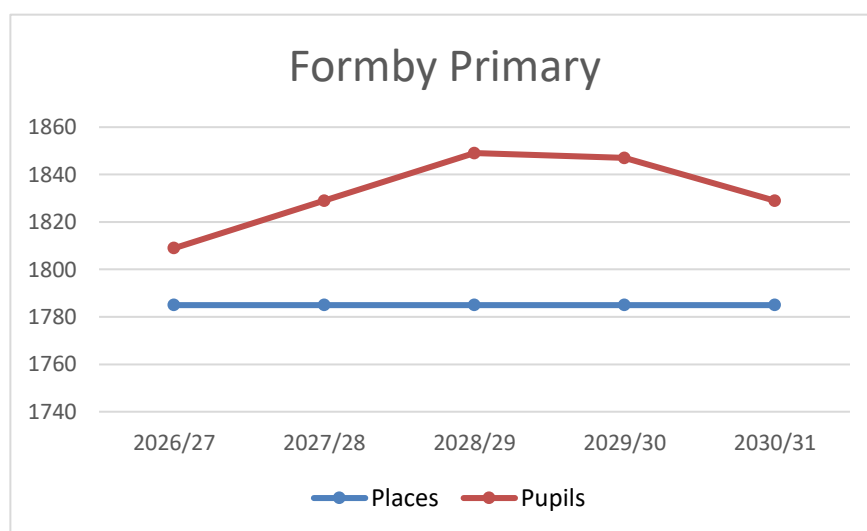
5.4 Formby Primary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Freshfield Community Primary Redgate Community Primary Woodlands Community Primary St Luke's CE Primary	Trinity St Peter's CE Primary Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary St Jerome's Catholic Primary
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The total (physical) net capacity for Reception to Year 6 is 1784.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Reception to Year 6 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026/2027	1785	246	237	268	272	266	261	259	1809
2027/2028	1785	229	250	245	280	282	275	268	1829
2028/2029	1785	235	233	259	256	291	292	283	1849
2029/2030	1785	235	239	241	265	266	301	300	1847
2030/2031	1785	234	239	247	249	276	275	309	1829



Demand

Forecasts show a moderate rise in the total number of primary pupils in Formby followed by stabilisation.

Figures show larger cohorts in Years 4–6 compared with Reception and Year 1. This aligns with the fact that families tend to move into Formby later on, rather than at reception entry. The in-migration of older primary pupils creates localised KS2 strain.

Planning Implications

The total number of pupils remains very close to but slightly above the overall Published Admission Number, indicating manageable but persistent pressure. There is no immediate need for expansion and the LA will continue monitoring the planning area housing developments.

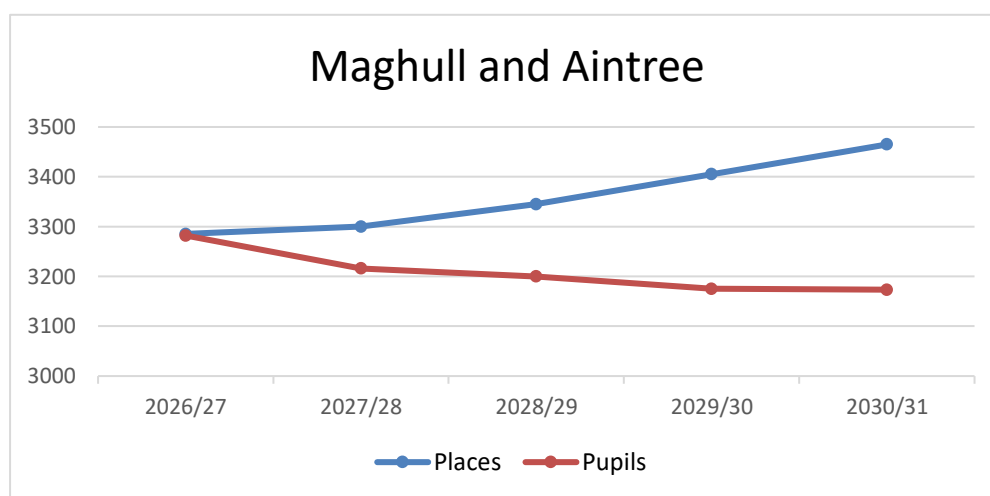
5.5 Maghull & Aintree Primary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Aintree Davenhill Community Primary Green Park Community Primary Hudson Community Primary Lydiat Community Primary Melling Community Primary Northway Community Primary Summerhill Community Primary	St Andrew's CE Primary St Thomas' CE Primary Holy Rosary Catholic Primary St George's Catholic Primary St Gregory's Catholic Primary St John Bosco Catholic Primary
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The total (physical) net capacity for Reception to Year 6 is 3680

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Reception to Year 6 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026/2027	3285	473	455	469	470	462	460	493	3282
2027/2028	3300	442	470	455	466	465	461	457	3216
2028/2029	3345	455	439	470	453	461	464	458	3200
2029/2030	3405	453	451	438	467	447	459	460	3175
2030/2031	3465	455	453	454	439	464	449	459	3173



Demand

Pupil projections show a gradual downward trend. Cohorts are balanced, with no spike in upper Key Stage 2 (unlike other areas).

Planning Implications

The area retains comfortable surplus capacity which improves resilience. There is extensive housebuilding in the area which is expected to increase numbers and has led to school expansion, due to commence soon, within the planning area to accommodate additional pupil yield.

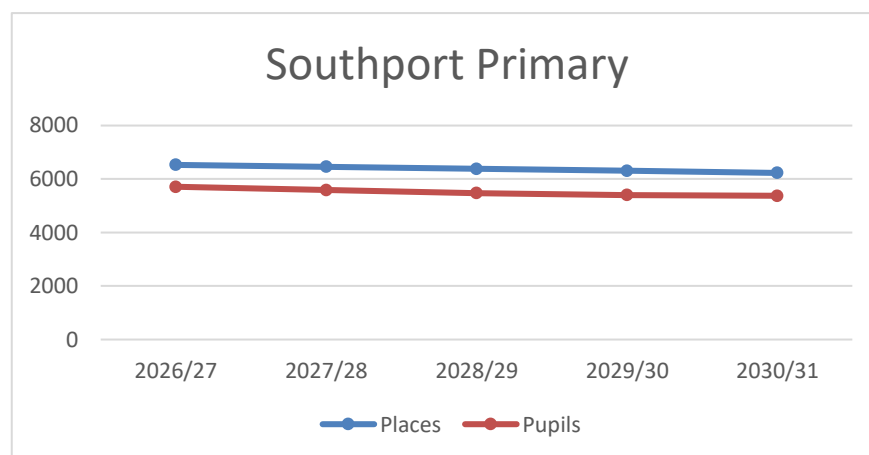
5.6 Southport Primary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Birkdale Community Primary Churchtown Community Primary Farnborough Road Community Infants Farnborough Road Community Juniors Kew Woods Community Primary Kings Meadow Community Primary Larkfield Community Primary Linaker Community Primary Marshside Community Primary Norwood Community Primary	Shoreside Primary Ainsdale St John's CE Primary Bishop David Sheppard CE Primary Holy Trinity CE Primary St John's CE Primary St Philip's CE Primary Holy Family Catholic Primary Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary St Patrick's Catholic Primary
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The total (physical) net capacity for Reception to Year 6 is 6755.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Reception to Year 6 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2026/2027	6530	771	749	779	808	843	887	873	5710
2027/2028	6455	718	775	756	779	826	840	896	5590
2028/2029	6380	740	723	783	757	797	824	849	5473
2029/2030	6305	738	745	730	784	774	795	833	5399
2030/2031	6230	740	747	756	735	806	776	808	5368



Demand

Forecasts show an overall sustained reduction over the next five years. The upper Key Stage 2 year groups remain consistently larger which reflects local migration.

Planning Implications

Local developments near the West Lancashire border are being monitored for potential uplift in demand.

6.0 Secondary Phase Sufficiency

6.1 Overall demand for secondary places across the borough

According to School Census data for the past three years, overall secondary pupil numbers in Sefton have reduced slightly. However, there are still some secondary planning areas where sufficiency is tight. This could be due to migration as well as the fact that some of our secondary schools are very close to neighbouring boroughs.

Table 5 below sets out secondary school capacity in terms of overall Published Admission Numbers across year groups 7 to 11, against projected pupil numbers for these year groups, from 2026/27 to 2030/31 with calculated surplus places and surplus percentages at whole-borough level.

Whole borough	Dataset	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
2026/2027	Capacity	3144	3114	3128	3123	3198
	Projection	3140	3245	3132	3082	3096
	Surplus	4	-131	-4	41	102
	Surplus Percentage	0.1%	-4.2%	-0.1%	1.3%	3.2%
2027/2028	Capacity	3144	3144	3114	3128	3123
	Projection	3208	3155	3172	3090	3056
	Surplus	-64	-11	-58	38	67
	Surplus Percentage	-2.0%	-0.3%	-1.9%	1.2%	2.1%
2028/2029	Capacity	3144	3144	3144	3114	3128
	Projection	3208	3226	3082	3130	3065
	Surplus	-64	-82	62	-16	63
	Surplus Percentage	-2.0%	-2.6%	2.0%	-0.5%	2.0%
2029/2030	Capacity	3144	3144	3144	3144	3114
	Projection	3102	3215	3154	3041	3105
	Surplus	42	-71	-10	103	9
	Surplus Percentage	1.3%	-2.3%	-0.3%	3.3%	0.3%
2030/2031	Capacity	3144	3144	3144	3144	3144
	Projection	3185	3118	3152	3111	3015
	Surplus	-41	26	-8	33	129
	Surplus Percentage	-1.3%	0.8%	-0.3%	1.0%	4.1%
2031/2032	Capacity	3144	3144	3144	3144	3144
	Projection	3008	3202	3047	3110	3085
	Surplus	136	-58	97	34	59
	Surplus Percentage	4.3%	-1.8%	3.1%	1.1%	1.9%
2032/2033	Capacity	3144	3144	3144	3144	3144
	Projection	3008	3022	3133	3006	3084
	Surplus	136	122	11	138	60
	Surplus Percentage	4.3%	3.9%	0.3%	4.4%	1.9%

Unlike with the primary sector, the secondary table above indicates a consistently tight balance between capacity and projected demand.

Some of the secondary schools do take over their Published Admission Number to accommodate additional pupils where required. These schools do have the physical capacity to do so.

Some of the secondary academy schools in Sefton have started to cap or reduce their intake numbers in Year 8 to 11 as they are unable to admit further pupils after the entry year due to their internal school organisational arrangements. This can make planning future places difficult as the situation may change on a yearly basis. Sixth Form numbers are not included in the secondary figures as there are no planned admission numbers for Years 12 and 13.

We will continue to monitor the secondary numbers and work closely with Schools, Academies, Academy Trusts and Archdiocese, with regards to amending PAN where needed, or utilising any surplus capacity for other needs.

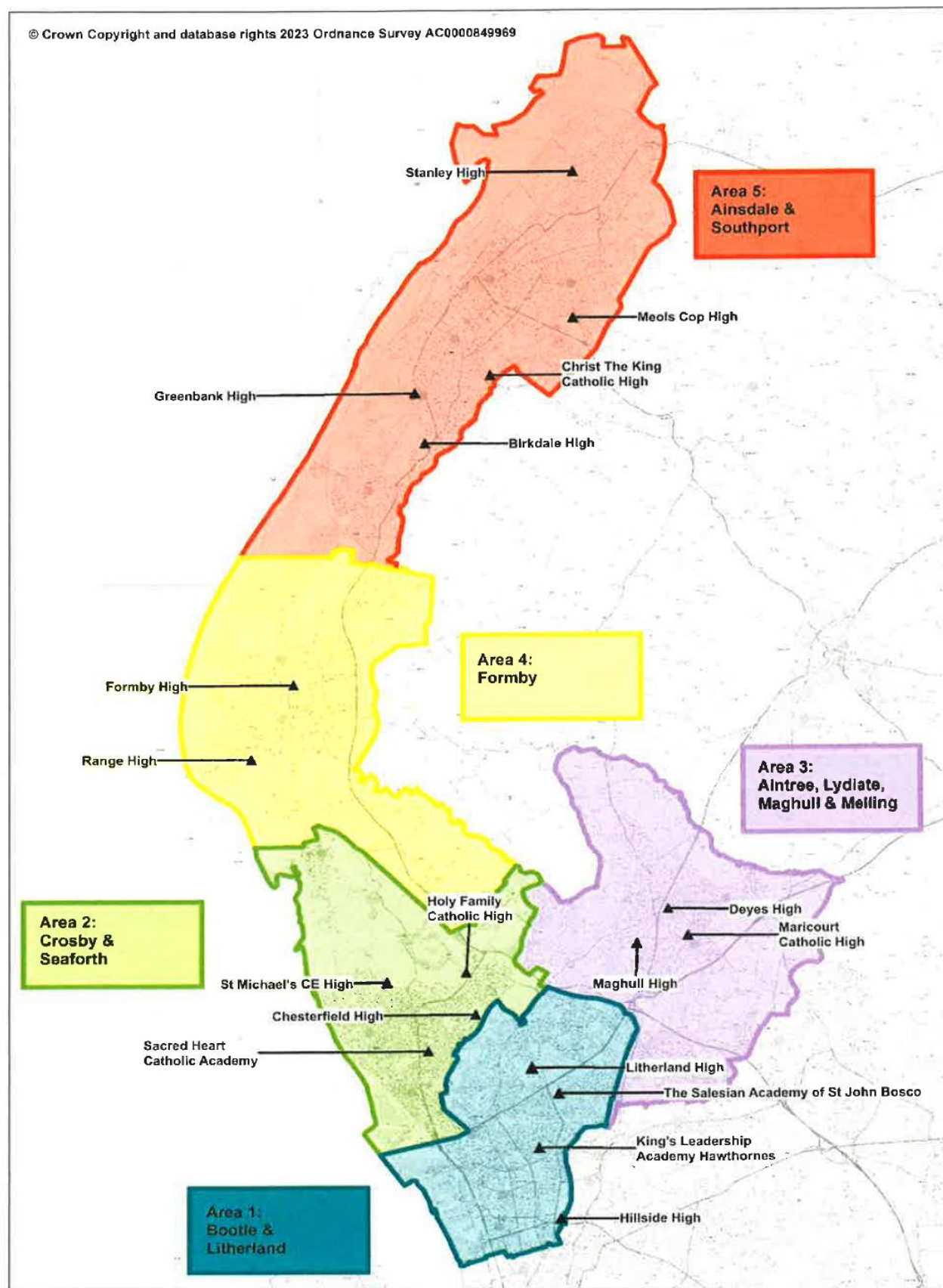
We have recently used some of our basic needs funding so as to enable two of the secondary schools to take over their agreed admission number for the next two years, due to a shortage of places within that planning area.

We would need to consider that lower current primary numbers will work their way up to secondary, however, we must also consider extensive housebuilding being undertaken and would therefore need to future-proof our schools to ensure continued sufficiency.

With regards to any further planning applications in the future for housing developments, we will look to secure section 106 funding from the developers in order to expand our secondary provision where it is most needed.

As with the primary phase, the secondary phase is also split into five planning areas as illustrated on the map on the following page.

Map of Secondary Schools and Planning Areas within Sefton



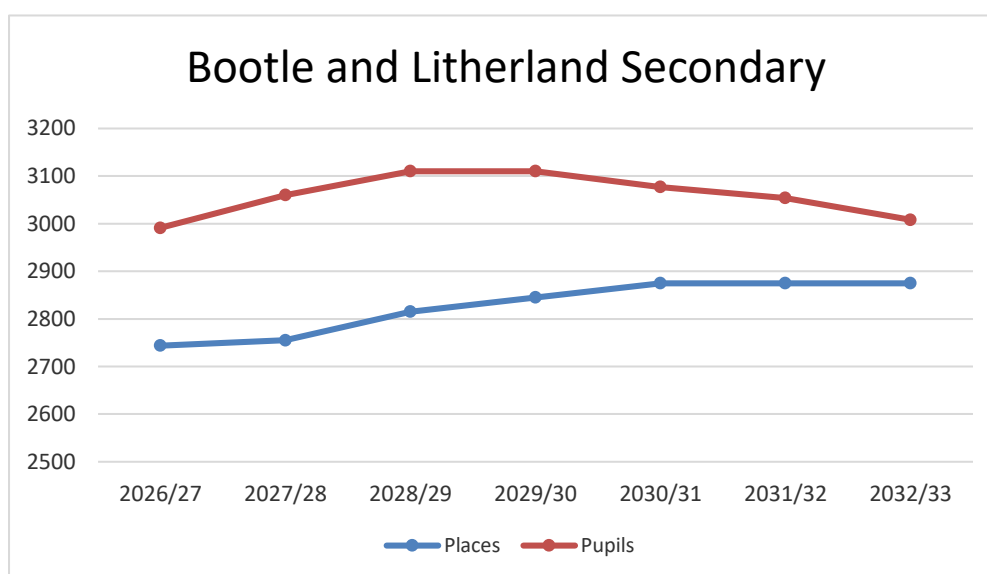
6.2 Bootle and Litherland Secondary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Hillside Kings Leadership Academy Hawthornes The Salesian Academy of St John Bosco Litherland High
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The total (physical) net capacity for Y7 to Y11 is 3529

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Year 7 to 11 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2026/2027	2744	602	656	610	568	555	2991
2027/2028	2755	624	616	651	597	572	3060
2028/2029	2815	621	640	611	637	601	3110
2029/2030	2845	595	637	636	599	643	3110
2030/2031	2875	614	609	631	621	602	3077
2031/2032	2875	579	629	604	617	625	3054
2032/2033	2875	579	593	624	591	621	3008



Demand

Forecast pupil numbers are consistently higher than the total PAN, indicating a continuing shortfall in available secondary places. The pressure is persistent, not a one-off anomaly.

Planning Implications

Basic Needs funding has been used to temporarily increase secondary places within the planning area. However, given the persistent gap between PAN and forecast, future adjustments may still be required. The shortage of places will also add to in-year admissions pressure.

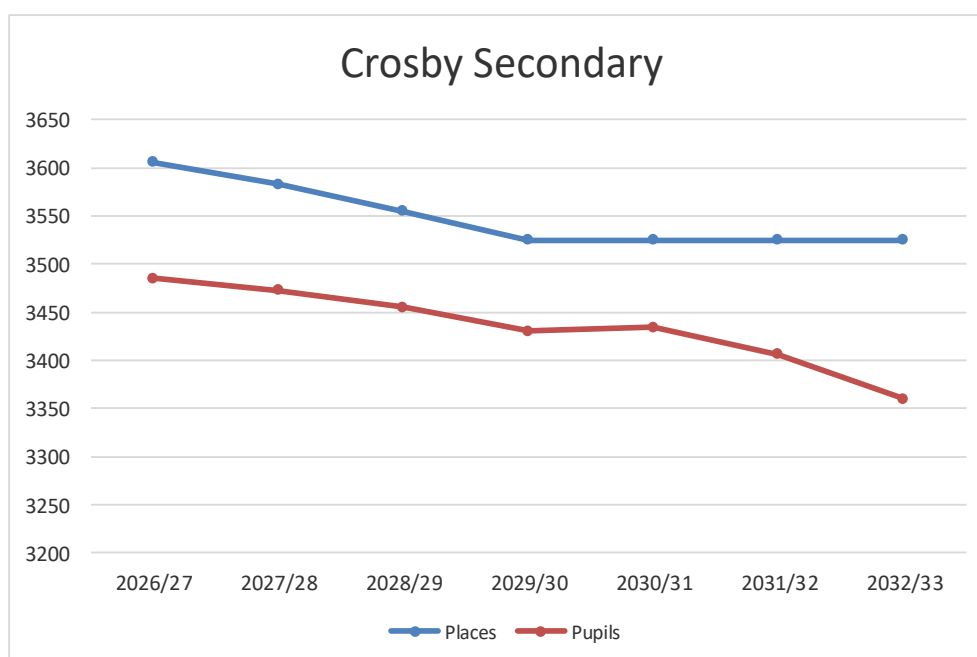
6.3 Crosby Secondary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Chesterfield High St Michael's CE High Academy Holy Family Catholic High Sacred Heart Catholic Academy
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The total (physical) net capacity for Year 7 to Year 11 is 4368.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Year 7 to 11 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2026/2027	3606	706	706	701	693	679	3485
2027/2028	3583	724	699	688	682	680	3473
2028/2029	3555	718	717	681	670	669	3455
2029/2030	3525	700	711	699	663	657	3430
2030/2031	3525	717	693	693	681	650	3434
2031/2032	3525	678	710	675	675	668	3406
2032/2033	3525	678	671	692	657	662	3360



Demand

Forecasts show a gradual downward trend and cohort sizes remain relatively stable.

Planning Implications

There is sustained surplus capacity across all forecast years which provides strong resilience for in-year admissions and mobility shifts. Crosby and Thornton areas are experiencing significant housebuilding, which could alter future demand.

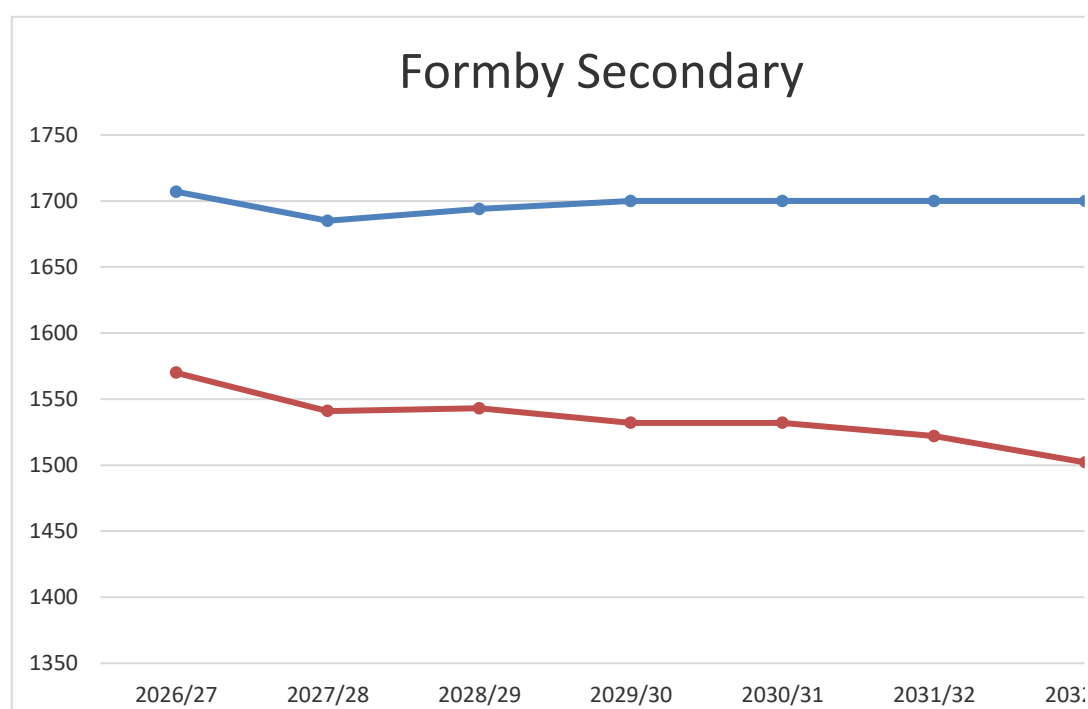
6.4 Formby Secondary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Formby High Range High
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The total (physical) net capacity for Y7 to Y11 is 1748.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Year 7 to 11 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2026/2027	1707	317	322	298	300	333	1570
2027/2028	1685	325	316	298	304	298	1541
2028/2029	1694	322	324	291	304	302	1543
2029/2030	1700	312	321	300	297	302	1532
2030/2031	1700	323	311	297	306	295	1532
2031/2032	1700	305	322	288	303	304	1522
2032/2033	1700	305	304	298	294	301	1502



Demand

The forecasts demonstrate a gradual downward trend in pupils numbers, which is modest but steady.

Planning Implications

Formby Secondary planning area shows sustained surplus capacity each year. This will allow for a strong ability to absorb in-year admissions for the most part. The LA will continue to monitor housing developments and migration, particularly because Formby traditionally attracts families with older children.

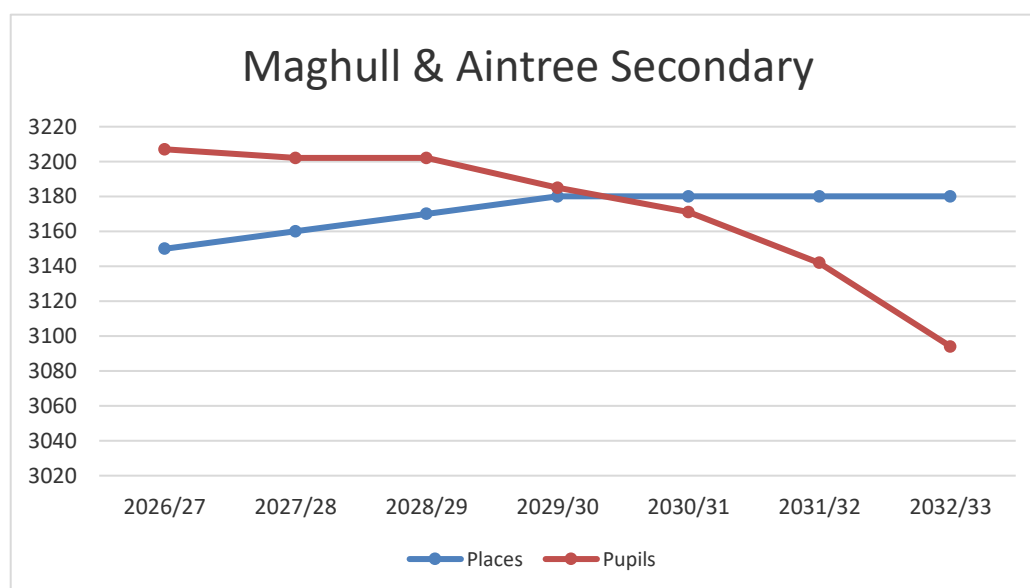
6.5 Maghull Secondary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Deyes High Maghull High Maricourt
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The total (physical) net capacity for Y7 to Y11 is 3593.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Year 7 to 11 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2026/2027	3150	644	663	627	639	634	3207
2027/2028	3160	663	640	652	621	626	3202
2028/2029	3170	659	659	629	646	609	3202
2029/2030	3180	630	654	647	622	632	3185
2030/2031	3180	651	626	643	641	610	3171
2031/2032	3180	615	647	615	637	628	3142
2032/2033	3180	614	611	636	609	624	3094



Demand

For the first four years, forecast demand is consistently above PAN. This indicates sustained short-term strain in the system—though not extreme—requiring careful in-year admissions management. Year-group numbers remain broadly balanced, with no specific year showing acute pressure or decline.

Planning Implications

Extensive housebuilding in the area may increase demand. The LA continues to carefully monitor housing development applications.

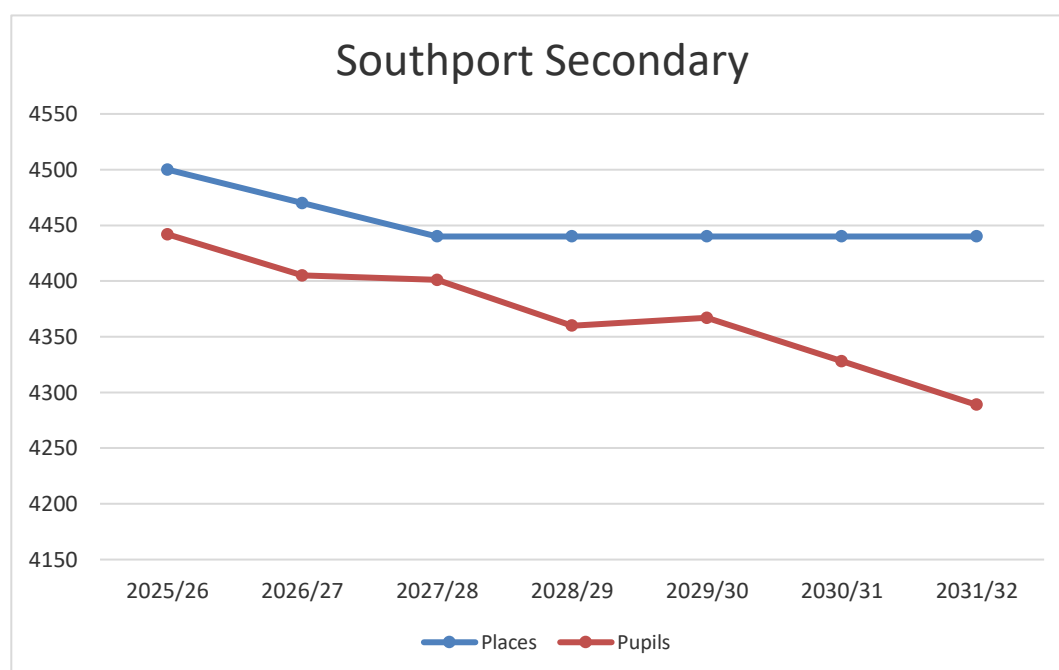
6.6 Southport Secondary Planning Area

Schools in Planning Area	Birkdale High Greenbank Meols Cop Stanley High Christ the King
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The total (physical) net capacity for Y7 to Y11 is 4784.

The overall total Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Year 7 to 11 are shown below, along with the forecasts by year group which were submitted as part of the SCAP 2025 return:

Year	Total PAN	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
2026/2027	4500	871	898	896	882	895	4442
2027/2028	4470	872	884	883	886	880	4405
2028/2029	4440	888	886	870	873	884	4401
2029/2030	4440	865	892	872	860	871	4360
2030/2031	4440	880	879	888	862	858	4367
2031/2032	4440	831	894	865	878	860	4328
2032/2033	4440	832	843	883	855	876	4289



Demand

Projected totals fall steadily over the 7-year period. The overall Published Admission Number remains above the forecast totals in every year.

Planning Implications

Decline is gradual, not sudden, which is helpful for phasing strategic responses. Stronger decline appears after 2028/29, which aligns with the fall in primary numbers entering secondary.

7.0 Post-16 Sufficiency

The Education and Skills Act 2008 requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. The Council does not have a duty to manage places in this phase, but nevertheless works in partnership with schools and local colleges to ensure young people aged 16-18 (and up to the age of 25 for those who have an Education, Health and Care Plan) have access to a range of opportunities to continue their education or training at a wide range of post-16 providers or through apprenticeships. This supports young people with their preparation for adulthood.

There are currently 9 secondary schools offering sixth form provision, as well as 2 Further Education colleges within the borough.

School census figures from the past 5 years indicate that sixth form numbers on roll within Sefton have been reducing year on year. This would indicate that increasing numbers of post-16 pupils are opting for alternative provision such as Further Education colleges.

Across the borough of Sefton, there are sufficient places for children in local sixth form settings in the borough, as well as further education providers within Sefton and surrounding areas, providing excellent opportunities for high-quality educational experiences for post-16 students.

8.0 SEND Sufficiency

As with other Local Authorities, we are seeing increasing demand for SEND places for ages 0-25.

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to arrange suitable education for children who cannot attend school due to illness, exclusion, or other reasons. Funding for this statutory responsibility is provided primarily through the local authority's High Needs Block (HNB), as set out in the Department for Education's guidance on supporting children unable to attend school for health reasons. This guidance confirms that alternative provision for pupils with medical needs must be funded from the high needs budget.

Sufficiency planning must include the expansion of a special school through a prescribed alteration to create an additional 120 places. This enlargement is required to support the Council in fulfilling its statutory duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, which obliges local authorities to arrange suitable full-time education for children and young people who are unable to attend school due to illness.

The expansion will ensure that sufficient specialist capacity is available for pupils who are too unwell to access mainstream or existing special school settings. Increasing the number of registered places will strengthen continuity of education, enhance safeguarding arrangements, and support improved long-term outcomes for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans and those identified as SEND support.

Many SEND pupils are being educated in mainstream schools, however not all of these children are having their needs met.

Sufficiency Considerations

Further pressures on local provision were identified through the following:

45 children with EHCPs are currently educated within Complex Education (COMP ED). These children remain on roll at a mainstream school due to attending complementary education and have been identified as requiring a specialist provision to meet their needs.

The borough consistently receives a high number of children moving in from other local authorities with existing EHCPs. On average, around 80 children per year move into Sefton with an EHCP, adding to demand on already stretched services.

The SEND Sufficiency Plan includes:

A cohort analysis, showing how EHCP numbers and identified needs are changing month by month.

An early risk assessment, identifying hotspots in need, geographical pressure points, and cohort movement to highlight potential pressures in 2026–27.

A preparatory evidence base to inform the next full SEND Sufficiency Plan (due in late 2026).

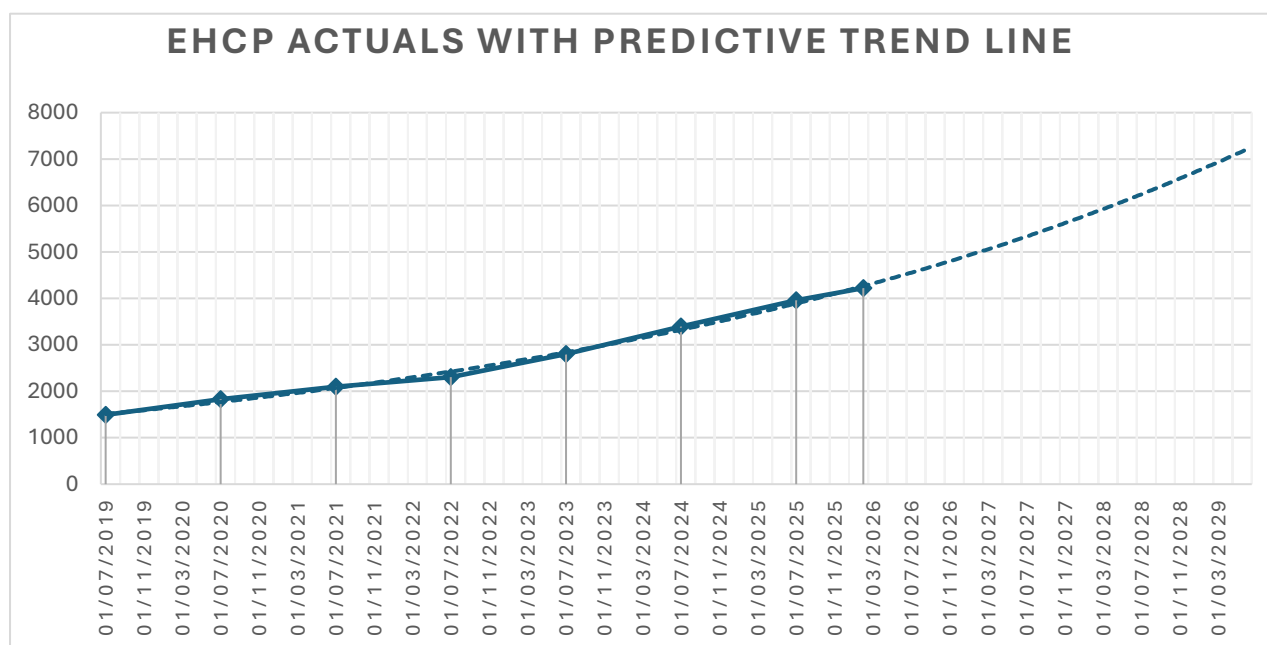
EHCP Growth and Forecast Trends (2018–2026)

Across the past six full academic years, EHCP totals have increased by an average of **18% per year**, with annual growth ranging between **10% and 23%**. Over the most recent three-year period (2022–25), the average increase has accelerated to **20% per year**, reflecting sustained upward demand. The 2025–26 figure (4,222 as of February 2026) represents an in-year snapshot and will rise further by the July year-end.

Academic Year End	EHCP Actual Totals	YoY% Change
2018-19	1492	NA
2019-20	1829	↑ 23%
2020-21	2101	↑ 15%
2021-22	2305	↑ 10%
2022-23	2802	↑ 22%
2023-24	3392	↑ 21%
2024-25	3960	↑ 17%
2025-26	4222	incomplete year

Academic Year End	Prediction based on 3-year average trend (20%)	Prediction based on 6-year average trend (18%)
2025-26	4752	4354
2026-27	5702	5137
2027-28	6842	6062
2028-29	8210	7153

The trendline below illustrates year-on-year **percentage increases**. This trendline shows that EHCP totals have been increasing at approximately **18–20% per year**. The graph shows a projected forecast which shows that the demand increase will increase sharply in the next 3-5 years.



Primary Needs

For primary needs identified in relation to children in Sefton, the most prevalent needs are:

- Speech, Language and Communication (SpLangComm)
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Over 2019 to 2025 all three more than doubled in absolute counts, but their **growth profiles diverge**: **ASD** has **moderated** from earlier peaks, while **SpLangComm** has **increased** in the most recent years.

Actuals

Academic Year End	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PD	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SLCD	SPLD	VI
2018-19	592		13	256	3	6	41	18	165	210	106	74	8
2019-20	733		15	308	6	13	55	22	168	274	139	83	13
2020-21	848		16	329	5	16	67	23	159	336	193	92	16
2021-22	925		17	329	8	16	73	28	158	385	252	94	19
2022-23	1103		19	353	11	27	94	27	150	528	367	102	20
2023-24	1262		19	387	17	29	102	27	144	723	545	115	21
2024-25	1439	1	22	416	19	29	100	26	133	887	730	131	26
Mid-Year 02/2026	1519	2	21	422	19	34	105	22	130	978	797	146	27

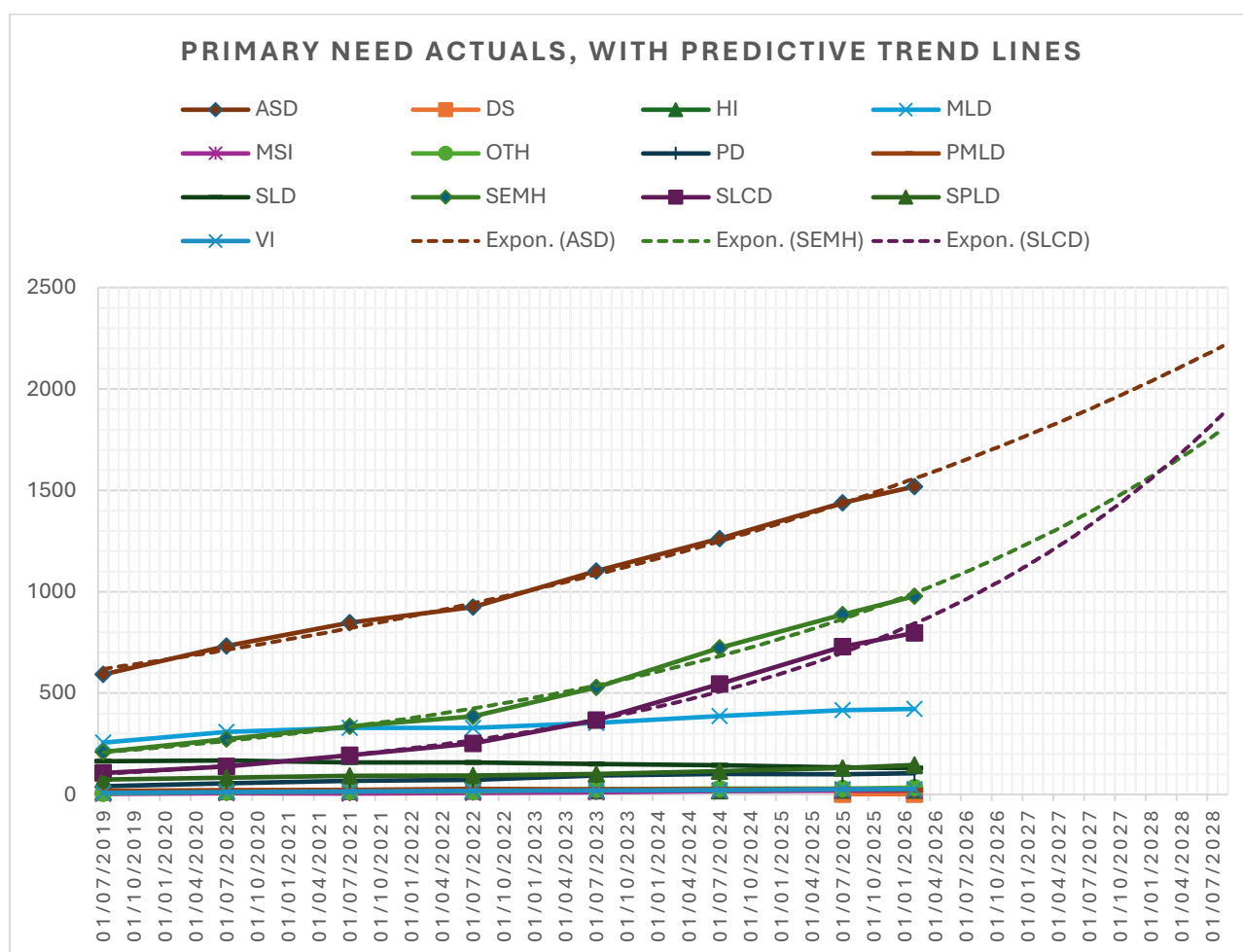
Percentage Change Year on Year

Academic Year End	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PD	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SLCD	SPLD	VI
2018-19													
2019-20	24%		15%	20%	100%	117%	34%	22%	2%	30%	31%	12%	63%
2020-21	16%		7%	7%	-17%	23%	22%	5%	-5%	23%	39%	11%	23%
2021-22	9%		6%	0%	60%	0%	9%	22%	-1%	15%	31%	2%	19%
2022-23	19%		12%	7%	38%	69%	29%	-4%	-5%	37%	46%	9%	5%
2023-24	14%		0%	10%	55%	7%	9%	0%	-4%	37%	49%	13%	5%
2024-25	14%	100%	16%	7%	12%	0%	-2%	-4%	-8%	23%	34%	14%	24%
3-Year YOY % change	16%	100%	9%	8%	35%	25%	12%	-2%	-6%	32%	43%	12%	11%
6-Year YOY % change	16%	100%	9%	9%	41%	36%	17%	7%	-3%	27%	38%	10%	23%

Predictions based on 3-Year Average of Year-on-Year Percentage Change

Primary Need Predictions Based on 3-Year Average of Year-on-Year Percentage Change													
Academic Year End	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PD	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SLCD	SPLD	VI
2025-26	1669	2	24	449	26	36	112	25	125	1171	1044	147	29
2026-27	1936	4	26	485	35	45	125	25	118	1546	1493	164	32
2027-28	2246	8	28	524	47	57	140	24	110	2040	2135	184	36
2028-29	2606	16	31	566	63	71	157	24	104	2693	3053	206	39

Primary Need Trends and Forecasts (ASD, SEMH and SLCD as Major Growth Areas)



The line chart above illustrates how identified primary needs have increased since 2019. Sefton's primary need pressure point is no longer ASD only. The most recent increases show SEMH and SpeechLangComm matching or being above ASD's increase rate. Our SEND plan therefore suggests there is a need to create further capacity for secondary SEMH and early years/KS1 SpeechLangComm capacity, while maintaining targeted ASD growth and pathway quality.

Whole Borough EHCP Demand by Locality and Ward (RAG Heatmap 2025)

PCN	Locality	Wards	Ward boundaries post May 2026 (name changes)	Neighbour hood	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	% Increase from Jan - Dec
Southport and Formby PCN	North	Cambridge, Norwood, Meols	Cambridge, Norwood, Meols	North Southport	434	446	446	454	462	467	472	476	478	481	487	489	12.67%
		Duke's, Kew	Duke's, Kew	Central Southport	325	331	336	335	336	339	345	345	349	354	355	359	10.46%
		Ainsdale, Birkdale	Ainsdale, Birkdale	Ainsdale	330	333	333	337	338	351	354	357	358	361	361	360	9.09%
		Ravenmeols, Harington	Formby East, Formby West	Formby	276	280	284	286	288	289	293	295	287	291	293	296	7.25%
South Sefton PCN	Central	Victoria, Blundellsands, Manor	Great Crosby, Blundellsands, Thornton & Hightown	Crosby	360	373	381	385	388	394	401	404	410	415	414	414	15.00%
		Park, Sudell, Molyneux	Lydiate & Maghull East, Maghull East, Aintree & Maghull South	Maghull	333	347	349	362	368	379	383	389	402	403	406	407	22.22%
	Central/South	Church, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell, St. Oswald, Ford	Waterloo, Litherland, Netherton South & Orrell, Netherton North, Ford	Seaforth & Litherland	1071	1097	1105	1118	1126	1145	1162	1176	1190	1196	1215	1223	14.19%
	South	Linacre and Derby	Bootle West and Bootle East	Bootle	577	593	604	611	619	630	635	644	641	653	649	654	13.34%
				Sefton Total	3706	3800	3838	3888	3925	3994	4045	4086	4115	4154	4180	4202	13.38%
				Out of Borough	31	29	26	22	22	21	20	20	22	17	20	22	-29.03%
Grand Total					3737	3829	3864	3910	3947	4015	4065	4106	4137	4171	4200	4224	13.03%

Whole-Borough EHCP Demand by Locality and Ward (RAG Heatmap 2025)

This heatmap uses RAG (Red, Amber, Green) colour-coding to show the distribution and monthly movement of Sefton-resident EHCPs across 2025. Red areas indicate higher numbers of EHCPs, while green areas show lower numbers.

The heatmap shows an increase of demand in Maghull. This aligns with the data showing that Maghull has the highest percentage increase across the year (+22.22%), making it Sefton's fastest-growing locality for new EHCPs. Close behind are Crosby and Seaforth & Litherland, both showing increases in demand.

Percentage of Primary Needs by Locality & Ward (RAG Heatmap, Placement Report, Feb 2026)

Locality	Neighbourhood	Ward Name Changes Post May 2026	Wards	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PD	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SLCD	SPLD	VI	Total
North	North Southport	Cambridge	Cambridge	41	0	0	7	1	1	4	0	3	24	21	3	0	105
		Norwood	Norwood	95	0	0	20	0	2	5	2	0	61	43	5	2	235
		Meols	Meols	48	0	0	16	0	1	4	1	5	38	26	7	0	146
	Central Southport	Duke's	Duke's	25	0	1	15	0	0	2	0	2	35	19	1	1	101
		Kew	Kew	97	0	1	16	4	2	7	2	5	68	49	5	1	257
	Ainsdale	Ainsdale	Ainsdale	76	0	0	22	1	1	7	0	6	33	23	7	0	176
		Birkdale	Birkdale	65	0	1	14	3	1	6	0	8	42	39	2	3	184
	Formby	Formby East	Ravenmeols	68	0	1	18	1	3	3	1	7	46	27	11	3	189
		Formby West	Harington	41	0	0	8	1	1	6	2	8	24	7	9	1	108
Central	Crosby	Blundellsands	Blundellsands	36	0	0	10	1	1	3	0	5	23	24	2	1	106
		Great Crosby	Victoria	49	0	0	25	0	1	2	1	4	25	20	12	0	139
		Thornton & Hightown	Manor	61	0	2	14	0	2	7	1	5	44	24	8	1	169
	Maghull	Lydiat & Maghull West	Park	32	0	1	12	0	0	3	2	4	20	18	3	1	96
		Maghull East	Sudell	64	0	3	13	0	1	3	0	4	23	38	5	0	154
		Aintree & Maghull South	Molyneux	62	0	0	12	2	4	3	1	3	28	34	9	0	158
Central / South	Seaforth & Litherland	Waterloo	Church	51	0	1	27	1	2	4	0	2	42	22	12	0	164
		Litherland	Litherland	88	2	2	23	1	0	3	0	5	50	45	9	2	230
		Netherton South & Orrell	Netherton & Orrell	103	0	2	23	0	4	3	1	9	52	52	7	3	259
		Netherton North	St Oswald	101	0	2	41	2	2	7	1	7	43	69	9	3	287
		Ford	Ford	106	0	1	34	0	2	9	1	11	69	46	5	1	285
South	Bootle	Bootle East	Derby	92	0	1	20	1	1	9	3	10	76	59	6	1	279
		Bootle West	Linacre	115	0	2	32	0	2	5	3	15	107	87	8	3	379
		Out of Borough		27	0	1	7	0	1	2	2	10	46	22	3	1	122
		Total		1543	2	22	429	19	35	105	24	138	1019	814	148	28	4328

This table shows the raw number of pupils with EHCPs in each primary need category across Sefton's wards. These figures highlight the absolute scale of demand within each locality and underpin the proportional analysis on the following page, which shows how each need type contributes to the overall profile of each ward. The colour scale here applies on a ward-by-ward basis, allowing easy comparison of need intensity within each individual ward.

Percentage of Primary Needs by Locality & Ward (RAG Heatmap, Placement Report, Feb 2026)

Locality	Neighbourhood	Ward Name Changes Post May 2026	Wards	ASD	DS	HI	MLD	MSI	OTH	PD	PMLD	SLD	SEMH	SLCD	SPLD	VI	Total
North	North Southport	Cambridge	Cambridge	39%	0%	0%	7%	1%	1%	4%	0%	3%	23%	20%	3%	0%	105
		Norwood	Norwood	40%	0%	0%	9%	0%	1%	2%	1%	0%	26%	18%	2%	1%	235
		Meols	Meols	33%	0%	0%	11%	0%	1%	3%	1%	3%	26%	18%	5%	0%	146
	Central Southport	Duke's	Duke's	25%	0%	1%	15%	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	35%	19%	1%	1%	101
		Kew	Kew	38%	0%	0%	6%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	26%	19%	2%	0%	257
	Ainsdale	Ainsdale	Ainsdale	43%	0%	0%	13%	1%	1%	4%	0%	3%	19%	13%	4%	0%	176
		Birkdale	Birkdale	35%	0%	1%	8%	2%	1%	3%	0%	4%	23%	21%	1%	2%	184
	Formby	Formby East	Ravenmeols	36%	0%	1%	10%	1%	2%	2%	1%	4%	24%	14%	6%	2%	189
		Formby West	Harington	38%	0%	0%	7%	1%	1%	6%	2%	7%	22%	6%	8%	1%	108
Central	Crosby	Blundellsands	Blundellsands	34%	0%	0%	9%	1%	1%	3%	0%	5%	22%	23%	2%	1%	106
		Great Crosby	Victoria	35%	0%	0%	18%	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%	18%	14%	9%	0%	139
		Thornton & Hightown	Manor	36%	0%	1%	8%	0%	1%	4%	1%	3%	26%	14%	5%	1%	169
	Maghull	Lydiate & Maghull West	Park	33%	0%	1%	13%	0%	0%	3%	2%	4%	21%	19%	3%	1%	96
		Maghull East	Sudell	42%	0%	2%	8%	0%	1%	2%	0%	3%	15%	25%	3%	0%	154
		Aintree & Maghull South	Molyneux	39%	0%	0%	8%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	18%	22%	6%	0%	158
Central / South	Seaforth & Litherland	Waterloo	Church	31%	0%	1%	16%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	26%	13%	7%	0%	164
		Litherland	Litherland	38%	1%	1%	10%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	22%	20%	4%	1%	230
		Netherton South & Orrell	Netherton & Orrell	40%	0%	1%	9%	0%	2%	1%	0%	3%	20%	20%	3%	1%	259
		Netherton North	St Oswald	35%	0%	1%	14%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	15%	24%	3%	1%	287
		Ford	Ford	37%	0%	0%	12%	0%	1%	3%	0%	4%	24%	16%	2%	0%	285
South	Bootle	Bootle East	Derby	33%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	3%	1%	4%	27%	21%	2%	0%	279
		Bootle West	Linacre	30%	0%	1%	8%	0%	1%	1%	1%	4%	28%	23%	2%	1%	379
	Out of Borough			22%	0%	1%	6%	0%	1%	2%	2%	8%	38%	18%	2%	1%	122
	Total			1543	2	22	429	19	35	105	24	138	1019	814	148	28	4328

Needs-Pressure Spotlight on Maghull

Across the three Maghull wards, there are **408 children and young people with an EHCP** in total

- **Park – 96 children**
- **Sudell – 154 children**
- **Molyneux – 158 children**

Most Prevalent Primary Needs in Maghull

ASD - 158 children – 39% of all EHCPs in Maghull

ASD represents the single largest need type, forming almost two-fifths of the entire cohort. This indicates a sustained and concentrated demand for autism-specific provision across primary and secondary phases, including specialist autism bases and mainstream support tailored to social communication profiles.

SpeechLangComm - 90 children – 22% of all EHCPs in Maghull

SpeechLangComm is now the second-largest need group in Maghull. At over one-fifth of the cohort, this highlights a strong requirement for early language intervention pathways, SALT capacity, and KS1/KS2 communication-focused specialist resource.

SEMH - 71 children – 17% of all EHCPs in Maghull

Nearly one in five children have SEMH as their primary need. This is a significant finding because SEMH is the fastest-growing primary need borough-wide. This suggests rising behavioural, emotional and mental health complexity within mainstream settings.

Out of Borough

This section provides an important indication of the areas where Sefton's local SEND sufficiency appears to be most limited. Our out-of-borough cohort shows a distinctly different need profile compared with pupils supported within Sefton's own wards, highlighting the types of specialist provision that families are accessing outside the borough.

Key features of the OOB cohort include:

- The lowest proportion of ASD, suggesting that, relative to other needs, more ASD pupils are now being supported more in-borough, Nevertheless, there remains a need to create further places." Some children presenting with both ASD and SEMH needs will require access to specialist ASD teaching provision."
- Joint lowest proportion of MLD, indicating that most pupils with moderate learning difficulties remain in local provision
- The highest proportion of SEMH, reflecting needs that currently exceed available SEMH capacity within Sefton
- The highest proportion of SLD, showing a reliance on external specialist settings for pupils with significant and complex learning needs

All of these pupils have Sefton as their Home Local Authority, meaning these placements were commissioned externally because their needs required specialist provision that is not currently available within the borough. This pattern provides a clear signal of the types of provision Sefton may need to strengthen or expand to reduce reliance on Out-of-Borough placements.

Current Provision Primary Schools

Name	Provision	Places	Criteria
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	24 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Freshfield Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	28 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Hudson Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	36 places 2026-27; 39 pupils have been allocated	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Waterloo Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	38 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Waterloo Primary School	SEN Unit for Cognition and Learning	8 places across KS2	Identified Cognition and Learning needs. EHCP
The Pines based at Redgate Primary School	SEN Unit for complex needs	42 places	Identified complex needs EHCP
The Grange Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	30 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
The Grange Primary School	SEN Unit for SEMH	8 places	Identified need of SEMH EHCP
The Grange Primary School	SEN Unit for Speech, Language and communication difficulties (SLCN)	24 places	Identified need of SLCN EHCP
Thomas Gray Primary School	SEN Unit for Social Communication	42 places	Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a communication and interaction including autism and/or social of cognition and learning and/or

			social, emotional and mental health needs
Bishop David Sheppard Primary School	SEN Unit for Social Communication	16 places	Identified need for social communication needs. EHCP
Marshside Primary School	SEN Unit for Autism	28 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Kings Meadow Primary school	Resource Provision for Speech, Language and Communication needs	10 places	Identified need for SLC needs. EHCP Open to Speech and Language Therapy services

Current Provision Secondary Schools

Name	Provision	Places	Criteria
Meols Cop High School	Resource provision for Autism	10 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Meols Cop High School	Resource provision for SpLD	12 places	Identified needs around SpLD EHCP
St Michaels Church of England High School	Resource provision for Autism	10 places	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
St Michaels Church of England High School	Resource provision for Cognition and Learning	18 places	Identified needs around Cognition and Learning EHCP
Formby High	SEN Unit for Cognition and Learning	40 places	Identified needs around Cognition and Learning EHCP
Holy Family Catholic High School	SEN Unit for Cognition and Learning	40 places	Identified needs around Cognition and Learning EHCP

Current Provision Special Schools

Name	Provision	Places	Criteria
Rowan Park (Including Rowan Tree and Rowan High)	Severe Learning Difficulties and/or complex health needs Nursery to yr 14 (ages 3 -19yrs)	317	Identified need of SLD and/or complex health needs EHCP
Merefield	Severe Learning Difficulties and/or complex health needs Nursery to yr 14 (ages 3 -19yrs)	107	Identified need of SLD and/or complex health needs EHCP
Presfield	Autism – Yr 7 to Yr 14 (secondary provision only)	116	Diagnosis of Autism EHCP
Crosby High	Moderate Learning Difficulties – Yr 7 to Yr 14 (secondary provision only)	141	Identified need of MLD EHCP
Newfield	Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties - Yr 1 to Yr 11 only From September 2026 (New places)	130 45 Total: 175	Identified need of SEMH EHCP

Meeting SEND Demand (2026–2029)

1.Special Provision Capacity Expansion

- Develop SEMH provision at Newfield School, creating 45 places.
- Add 120 additional secondary SEMH places at Newfield School.
- Increase secondary ASD provision at Rowan High School by 80 places, alongside 28 primary ASD places.
- Expand SLD/Complex Needs provision at Merefield School by 40–60 places, including 16 places from January 2027.
- Create 40–50 secondary ASD SEND Unit places through school expansion.
- Establish 12 secondary SEMH places at Waterside Alternative Academy.

- Increase provision across the full educational pathway—from primary and secondary education through to post-16—by 150 places at Presfield School.

2. Resource Bases SEND UNIT and Early Intervention

- Develop Early Years and Key Stage 1 Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD) hubs, providing 60 places.
- Expand primary ASD units by 30 places, including 10 places from January 2027.
- Create 20–30 primary SEMH hub places to address emerging needs at an earlier stage.

3. Create a Borough-Wide Graduated Hub Model

Create graduated hub model with family support providing layered specialist support for pupils and their families, ensuring needs are met holistically and reducing the need for high-cost or crisis placements. These would include

- Early Years Hub
- ASD Support Hub
- SEMH Support Hub
- Complex Needs Support Hub.

4. Increase Inclusion Capacity in Mainstream Schools

Strengthen Ordinarily Available Provision, develop SEND workforce and create a peer-school network.

5. Targeted Locality-Based Expansion

- Prioritise Maghull, Crosby, Seaforth & Litherland, and North Southport for new capacity.

6. Reduce Out-of-Borough Placements

- Maintain funding for 15–20 places annually and establish rapid-response commissioning

7. Establish a 3-Year Capital and Commissioning Plan

- Deliver places through capital expansion, commissioning, workforce planning and phased timelines.

In line with the SEND reforms, our ongoing sufficiency expansion programme aims to:

- Secure provision that offers value for money, supporting the national commitment to a more sustainable SEND system
- Secure provision when and where it is needed, ensuring children and young people (CYP) can access education locally and in a timely way
- Commission a range of provision that is robust, resilient, flexible, and creative, mirroring the national requirement for a graduated, well-sequenced continuum of support

- Ensure that children and young people (CYP) placed in independent and non-maintained special schools, including out-of-borough placements, have clear pathways to positive outcomes, reflecting the national emphasis on accountability, quality, and long-term progress
- Make best use of available funding sources to create new provision in areas of high need, aligning with national capital funding priorities and local sufficiency duties

To meet rising demand and maintain alignment with the SEND reforms, we will review forecasts and plans annually, ensuring the Local Area has the resources needed to meet projected requirements. Strong partnership working for example with the NHS, schools, children, parents and voluntary sector will help prevent reactive measures and enable proactive, forward-looking planning key expectations within the national reform programme.

Our SEND and Inclusion Strategies emphasise the need to continue supporting mainstream settings so they can effectively meet the needs of children and young people (CYP) with SEND. This aligns with the national SEND and AP Implementation plan, which places a strong focus on early identification, support within mainstream provision, and building a more inclusive system. We have been developing local provision in partnership with groups of schools to improve outcomes for CYP with SEND.

Next steps will include:

- Further detailed consideration of the Early Years, Post-16, and Alternative Provision sectors
- Design of a specific SEMH strategy in collaboration with schools and other partners
- Strengthen SEND place planning by utilising key evidence on demographic change such as population forecasts, birth rates, and planned housing developments to provide more robust pupil number projections for the coming years.

Appendix 1

SEND Demand Forecasting

The forecast of future SEND demand is based on a trend-based statistical model using six years of historical Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) data and primary need categories. The model calculates both a 3-year average growth rate (20%) and a 6-year average growth rate (18%), and applies these to project future EHCP demand

The same approach is used for each primary need type (ASD, SEMH, SLCD,) by calculating average year on year increases and applying these to estimate future need. This identifies SEMH and Speech, Language and Communication as the fastest-growing need

Locality-level demand is forecast using monthly 2025 ward data, which highlights high-growth areas such as Maghull, Crosby and Seaforth & Litherland

By comparing projected demand with current specialist provision, the model identifies sufficiency gaps, particularly in SEMH, SLCD, secondary ASD, and complex-needs places, forming the evidence base for the proposed expansion of 400–540 specialist places over the next three years.

Appendix 2

SEND Need Types Table

SEND Type	SEND Sub-Type	SEND Code
1) Cognition and Learning	Moderate Learning Difficulties	MLD
	Severe Learning Difficulties	SLD
	Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties	PMLD
	Specific Learning Difficulties	SpLD
2) Social Emotional & Mental Health Difficulties	—	SEMH
3) Communication and Interaction	Speech, Language & Communication Needs	SLCN
	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	ASD
4) Sensory & Physical Needs	Visual Impairment	VI
	Hearing Impairment	HI
	Multi-Sensory Impairment	MSI
	Physical Disabilities	PD
5) Other Difficulty/Disability	—	OTH

9.0 Priorities and Implementations

- Continued identification of opportunities to manage sufficiency across the whole local authority estate
- Continue to monitor and support those planning areas experiencing or anticipated to experience growth and high demand to ensure the sufficiency of local places is maintained
- To support sustainability of individual schools and planning areas experiencing falling demand
- Continue to review and reduce PANs where schools are persistently under-subscribed, particularly in Reception and KS1
- Act on Reception trends early to prevent surplus being carried forward into later year groups
- Maintain close monitoring of upper KS2 hotspots to ensure small borough-wide surpluses are not masking localised pressure
- Support schools to repurpose unused classrooms (e.g. SEND provision, nursery or specialist support) to mitigate financial and operational impact

- Encourage and support schools to establish resource-base provision where gaps exist, expanding the range of local specialist support within mainstream pathways
- Continue to work with primary schools, PVI's and childminders to create and expand childcare provision across the borough, in those wards where sufficiency is currently lowest
- Continue to work with colleagues across the local area to understand SEND capacity and sufficiency in mainstream schools, including resource-base provisions supporting the national ambition for high-quality mainstream inclusion
- Work with the SEND Joint Commissioning Group to understand future requirements, in line with the reforms' focus on strong, integrated local partnerships and joint planning across education, health, and care
- Identify gaps in provision from 0–25 and co-design solutions with key stakeholders, reflecting the SEND reforms' aspiration for co-production and clear local inclusion partnerships
- Continue to develop and implement strategies for increasing the level of SEND provision within the borough to meet children's needs. An increase in local SEND places in the borough will lead to a reduction in the use of out-of-borough placements and placements in independent non-maintained special schools

In terms of pupil forecasting, we are working towards implementing strategies to improve how we forecast and manage the demand and supply of school places within Sefton.

To address the challenges of SEND secondary provision the Council has undertaken feasibility studies on council-owned assets to identify opportunities for developing additional SEND provision locally. This work is critical to ensuring that capital investment is targeted effectively and delivers long-term benefits.

Sites deemed viable will be prioritised for redevelopment, subject to planning approval and compliance with Department for Education (DfE) guidelines.

The preferred sites include:

- One site in the south of the borough – proposed for autism/complex needs
- Two sites in the south of the borough – proposed for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision for primary and secondary
- The preferred sites were previously used as schools, making them well positioned for educational redevelopment.

These assets will be repurposed and refurbished to create additional in-house provision, thereby expanding capacity within the local authority's existing infrastructure.

10.0 Conclusions

This strategy has set out the responsibilities the Council holds with regards to school place planning for early years, mainstream and specialist provision. It marks a departure from previous strategies which have been focused mainly on sufficiency of provision and moves towards a strategy based on the sustainability of provision that can adjust to both increases and decreases in demand for mainstream and specialist places.

Despite overall borough surplus across primary places, upper Key Stage 2 operates close to full capacity, limiting flexibility for in-year admissions, mobility, or unexpected growth.

The Local Authority will continue to work in partnership with schools to develop and implement actions identified as necessary to respond to both identified need and changes in demand to ensure the Sefton school estate can support current and future educational use.

Sefton Council continues to face significant pressures in meeting the rising demand for specialist education places. At present, a high number of children and young people with SEND are educated outside the borough because we do not currently have a sufficient range of specialist provision locally. Many families would prefer their children to attend Sefton's maintained special schools, given their strong reputation and established links with health and social care partners. However, these schools do not currently have the net capacity to meet the full level of need across the system.

Over the next two years, our strategic priority is to build a more sustainable and efficient local SEND system, ensuring children can be educated closer to home and in settings that are better connected to local services. To achieve this, we will significantly expand our in-house specialist offer through a combination of increased special school capacity, a wider network of SEND resource bases/Units within mainstream schools, and a more coherent local inclusion pathway from early years through to post-16.

A key element of this work will involve early identification of children who may be able to transition back into local provision. We will undertake a detailed review of all children currently educated in out-of-borough or independent settings, with an initial focus on pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. By working closely with parents, schools, and health partners, we will develop individual transition plans so that children entering Year 7 can access places in our maintained special schools or appropriately supported mainstream settings, where this is in line with their assessed needs.

Our approach will be fully aligned with the new national SEND frameworks, ensuring that emerging and expanded provision meets the Exceptional, Strong Standard, or Expected Standard descriptors. This will include a focus on:

- **providing high-quality teaching and therapeutic support**
- **ensuring settings have a robust understanding of need and effective use of evidence-based interventions**
- **strengthening multi-agency working and integrated support pathways**
- **offering consistency, clarity, and transparency for families**
- **building trust and confidence through a more responsive and accessible local offer**

By increasing the sufficiency of high-quality local places, we will reduce reliance on costly independent placements, create more stable long-term pathways, and support earlier intervention. This will also improve educational continuity, reduce travel time for children and young people.

Our aim is to develop a coherent, sustainable SEND system that allows more children to remain within Sefton, supported by provision that is designed around their needs and delivered by settings that meet the highest national standards. Our success will be measured by being able to confidently ensure families have access to the right help, at the right time, in the right place and that all children with SEND are able to thrive within their local community.

Sefton **School Place Planning Strategy 2026-2030**

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To provide any comments on the School Place Planning Strategy, please email: school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk