

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee

20 March 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	School place planning update for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Brian Grady, Director of Education
Lead Councillor	Graeme Hoskin, Lead Councillor for Children Ruth McEwan, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the continued roll-out of the Additionally Resourced Provision programme across Reading is noted2. That an ACE Task and Finish Group be established to receive updates on the options for the development of new special school provision.3. That ACE Committee delegates the formation and agreed membership of the Task and Finish Group, to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Lead Councillor for Public Health and Education and the Leader of the Council

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council has statutory duties to promote the wellbeing, safety and achievement of Reading children and to promote high standards that help all children to fulfil their potential. The School Place Planning Strategy 2022-2027 appended to this report sets out how Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council delivers sufficient school places in the context of the Council's statutory duties, ensuring that school place delivery supports the achievement of the best outcomes for Reading children.
- 1.2. The Strategy confirms that there are more than sufficient primary school places, and with the delivery of the new secondary academy, River Academy from September 2024, sufficient secondary places, for the duration of the Strategy. The Strategy has been updated with the latest capacity and census data and is added as a background paper to this report.
- 1.3. In contrast to the sufficiency challenge of previous years, and reflecting the national context of school place demand, the focus is shifting from the need for plans to deliver an increasing number of mainstream school places across phases, to:
 - securing a sustainable school system of sufficient mainstream school places through effective school organisation and;

- meeting the rising challenge of sufficiency of specialist provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision and the pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.
- 1.4. Mirroring the national picture, Reading is experiencing significant demand and financial pressures regarding school places for children with SEND. Significant progress has been made over the past year in securing more local school places for children with SEND in Additionally Resourced Provision in local mainstream schools. Development of further new provision for children with SEND is necessary, to both deliver sufficiency and to help reduce the financial pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant. Based on current plans, it is predicted that Reading will be short 234 places for children with SEND who require a non-mainstream setting from September 2024. This report sets out proposals to deliver these places by utilising spare capacity in primary schools in Reading, exploring changing the designation of primary school provision to special provision, and sets out time frames for next steps.

2. Context and current position

- 2.1. Participation in the Department for Education Delivering Better Value programme has enhanced our needs analysis and financial projections. This enhanced analysis is Based on projected EHCP numbers and planned mitigations regarding demand and provision, from September 2024, Reading would need 1184 places for children and young people with EHCPs outside of mainstream school places.
- 2.2. Children with SEND who need more specialist education than can be provided in mainstream settings, can access education through either an Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) or a special school. ARPs provide additional specialist facilities on a mainstream school site for a small number of pupils, (ARPs in Reading are planned to be up to 40 places). ARPs typically provide for a specific need such as speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), moderate learning disability (MLD), hearing or visual impairment (HI/ VI) or autism (ASC). ARPs vary widely in how they are delivered, reflecting the local approach to inclusion. Pupils can spend a varied amount of their time in mainstream classes, accessing a mainstream curriculum, attending the ARP facilities for individual support, to learn a specific skill (for example braille for VI pupils), to receive medical or therapeutic support or to access specialist equipment. Pupils in an ARP are on the roll of the mainstream school.
- 2.3. Special schools are schools which are “*specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with SEND*” (section 337 of the Education Act 1996). The number of places in a special school usually ranges from around 50 (often catering for a broad range of needs including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)) to over 250 (often for ambulant pupils with moderate learning difficulties) and cater for all ages. Special schools vary widely in the curriculum and programmes of study they offer, in some the curriculum is mainstream while in others it can be quite different. Life skills and developing personal independence plays a big part.
- 2.4. Special schools and ARPs require more area per pupil place than mainstream schools because: pupils are taught in smaller groups, averaging around 8 to 12 and as low as 4 to 6 where pupils need extensive support; staff to pupil ratios are higher, particularly in a special school where 2 or 3 teaching assistants or support staff work alongside the teacher or give support in a separate space; and multi-agency meetings are common during the school day requiring confidential meeting rooms (these can involve several people in special schools). These areas can also be used for the delivery of individual intervention and therapy sessions.
- 2.5. As of academic year 2022/2023, there were 6 ARPs in Reading schools, representing 101 places (41 primary, 60 secondary). There were no ARP places for children with SLD, complex ASC or SEMH needs in Reading or special school satellite provision. a further 116 places have been successfully secured and have led to an avoidance of at

least 10 independent special school places since September 2023 (a cost avoidance of circa. £490,000/annum).

- 2.6. Work has been undertaken with school leaders and Governing Boards to further increase Additionally Resourced Provision capacity across all key stages and priority geographical areas within Reading. As set out in the table below, there are now 408 ARP places either established or planned, including a number of places where initial conversations have confirmed initial expressions of interest for further capacity for September. The creation of additional ARP places (assuming an average cost of £24,500, and a difference between this and the average independent placement (£77,000) of £52,500) is expected to avoid spending of circa £9.8m/annum.
- 2.7. Timeframes for establishing new special school provision mean that independent non-maintained special school (INMSS) places will continue to be needed in the short term.
- 2.8. From September 2024, if all proposed ARPs open, and if Hamilton school increases its intake to 64 children, there will be 800 places available for children in ARPs (408) and MSS (392). New all-through INMSS provision is currently being explored, with a possible 140 places in total for which Reading children would be given priority from September 2024. Plans are therefore in place to secure 940 places in INMSS/ARP/MSS for Reading children, against a projected need of 1184 places, leaving a shortfall of 244 places. At any one time, there are typically 4% of children with an EHCP in Alternative Provision (generally owing to the children being Looked After and awaiting a permanent placement, and/or owing to insufficiency of suitable places), the 244 projected shortfall is expected to be reduced by circa. 10 places. This leaves a current projected shortfall of 234 places.
- 2.9. Our most significant areas of need at primary level are ASC and SLCN, with SEMH and MLD just behind. At secondary, this shifts to our largest areas of need being ASC and SEMH, with MLD next and SLCN significantly reduced (a factor most likely attributable to children either having been diagnosed with ASC or their unmet SLCN needs now presenting as SEMH needs). Many of our primary children with ASC as their primary area of need meet the criteria for SLD as there is a significant cohort who are pre-verbal and need support with personal care needs e.g. toileting and feeding.

Table of Additionally Resourced Provision Established, New and Planned

Name of provision	MAT or Maintained	Location	Need	Capacity	Age range	Established/New/Proposed
Blessed High Faringdon	Maintained	West	ASC	40	11Y-16Y	E
Christ the King	Maintained	South	ASC	21	5Y-11Y	E
Southcote	Maintained	West	SLCN	12	5Y-11Y	E
Kings Academy Prospect	MAT	West	MLD	11	11Y-16Y	E
Katesgrove	Maintained	Central	SLD	10	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 23
Southcote - Dragonflies	Maintained	West	SLD	10	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 23
SMAS Bumblebees	MAT	West	SLD	12	4Y-11Y	N - Jan 24
SMAS The Hive	MAT	West	MLD/SEMH	11	4Y-11Y	E
Oxford Road	Maintained	West	SLD	10	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 23
Wilson	Maintained	West	SLD	12	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 23
Highdown	Maintained	West	VI	5	11Y-16Y	E
EP Collier	Maintained	Central	SLCN	12	4Y-11Y	E
Whitley Park - Oaks	Maintained	South	MLD	20	TBC	N - April 24
Whitley Park - Acorns	Maintained	South	SLD	20	4Y-8Y	N - April 24
Norcot	Maintained	West	MLD	10	3Y-4Y	E
Norcot	Maintained	West	SLD	12	3Y-4Y	N - Sept. 23
Snowflakes	Maintained	North	ASC	12	3Y-4Y	E
Dingley's Promise	PVI	East	PMLD	18	0Y-4Y	E (but 6 places added Sept. 23)
Blagdon	Maintained	South	SLD	12	3Y-4Y	N - Sept. 23
The Wren	MAT	West	ASC & SEMH	12	11Y-16Y	N - Sept. 24
TVS@Ridgeway (satellite)	MAT	South	ASC	21	4Y-13Y	N - Sept. 24
River Academy	MAT	North	MLD	35	11Y-16Y	N - Sept. 24
Thameside Garden Room	Maintained	North	MLD	8	4Y-11Y	E
Thameside Rainbow Room	Maintained	North	SLD	10	4Y-11Y	E
Manor	Maintained	West	SLD	10	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 24
New Christ Church	MAT	Central	SLD	12	4Y-11Y	N - Sept. 24
Micklands	Maintained	North	TBC	10	4Y-11Y	P
Redlands	Maintained	East	TBC	10	4Y-11Y	P
Alfred Sutton	Maintained	East	TBC	10	4Y-11Y	P
			Total places	408		

3. Strategic asset review of schools

- 3.1. Using a Strategic Asset Review approach has identified options to convert spare capacity in Reading primary schools to Special School provision, potentially adding the places needed to meet demand.

- 3.2. Our strategic approach to reviewing our school assets has focused on three main dimensions: school standards and attainment, school spare capacity and school financial stability.
- 3.3. **School standards and attainment:** The Reading Annual School Standards and Attainment report for academic year 2021/2022, presented to Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 12 July 2023 provided the first publicly published attainment data for three years. It identified that Reading children were clearly impacted from the loss of schooling during the period of the pandemic. This is reconfirmed by the Annual School Standards and Attainment report being presented to this ACE committee for academic year 2022/2023, where Key Stage results still demonstrate a need for improvement. Increased support and challenge to schools with outcomes below or at national averages has been put in place and longer-term work to build school leadership capacity and school to school partnerships is underway. Ensuring we maximise school resources through the most effective school organisation and partnerships are priorities for the year ahead.
- 3.4. **Spare Physical School Capacity:** A school asset management strategy approach has been adopted, which has mapped spare capacity in Reading schools by planning area. This mapping also identified temporary buildings on school sites, which are not included in the formal capture of spare school capacity. Removing or reusing temporary buildings has been taken into consideration in delivering increased numbers of Additionally Resourced Provision, alongside considering the overall formal spare school place capacity. Aggregation of reducing classrooms has enabled some school sites to develop Additionally Resourced Provision and gives options to repurpose school sites for special school provision.
- 3.5. **Financial viability and sustainability:** There are a number of Reading primary schools facing financial difficulty, predominantly due to either falling pupils rolls or the higher cost associated with the increased number of pupils with SEND. The school organisation approach set out in the School Place Planning Strategy has a commitment to promote federations between schools, both to address any quality issues and to address the future financial viability of particularly smaller and one form of entry primary schools. This includes a stated commitment to work towards the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools. Attainment data, combined with a financial and school place planning context indicate the need for an amplifying of this principle and a heightened priority. Federating community schools could increase leadership capacity and formalise school to school support. By consolidating the functions needed to efficiently manage schools across a federation, and by strengthening school leadership through the appointment of Executive Headteachers supported by Heads of School, both sustainable models of school provision and strengthened leadership can be secured.
- 3.6. Planning area summaries and actions are set out below. A map of primary school locations which also identifies forms of governance can be found in Appendix 2.
- 3.7. **Planning Area North: Caversham Park; Caversham; Emmer Green; Micklands; St Annes RC; St Martins RC; Thameside; The Heights; The Hill.**
- (11.4% surplus place capacity against DfE recommended 5%).
 - The highest proportion of schools facing financial difficulty (all but two of the schools facing financial difficulties 4 experiencing school place issues/falling rolls; one school where children with SEND are contributing to finance pressures).
 - The highest proportion of schools with modular building capacity, beyond the formal surplus place capacity
 - Lowest area of SEND need, so although there is spare building capacity, consideration of use to meet needs of children with SEND would involve transport cost calculation
 - 8/9 of schools are at national or above KS2 RWM (the one school below national average is the one school impacted by high proportions of children with SEND)

Actions:

- *Expansion of Thameside Additionally Resourced Provision, utilising spare capacity*
- *New Additionally Resourced Provision at Micklands, utilising spare capacity*
- *Explore development of new special school to utilise spare capacity*
- *Consider Federating, freeing up spare capacity and contribution from north area schools to school standards /school to school support (Single Academy schools and two VA Diocese Schools in terms of local school governance context).*

3.8. Planning Area East: Alfred Sutton; Katesgrove; New Town; Redlands; St John's.

- (4.5% surplus place capacity against DfE recommended 5%).
- One school facing financial difficulty
- 3/5 of schools are at national or above KS2 RWM

Actions:

- *Expansion of Katesgrove Additionally Resourced Provision*
- *New Additionally Resourced Provision at Alfred Sutton and Redlands, utilising spare capacity*
- *Resource sharing agreement secured as a precursor to Federation between Alfred Sutton and Redlands.*

3.9. Planning Area Central West Schools: All Saints CE Infants; All Saints Junior; Battle; Civitas; Coley; EP Collier; Oxford Rd; Southcote; St Mary All Saints; Wilson

- (8.5% surplus place capacity against DfE recommended 5%).
- 5/9 of schools are at national or above KS2 Reading Writing Maths

Actions:

- *Expansion of Additionally Resourced Provision utilising surplus place capacity at EP Collier, Oxford Road, St Mary All Saints, Wilson.*

3.10. Planning Area West Schools: Church End; English Martyrs; Manor; Meadow Park; Moorlands; Park Lane; Ranikhet; St Michael's Primary School

- (16.1% surplus place capacity against DfE recommended 5%).
- One of the highest areas of SEND need
- One school facing financial difficulty due to School organisation – falling rolls
- Reading Borough Council maintained primary special provision, Holybrook Special School, is in this planning area but is significantly site restricted.
- 5/8 of schools are at national or above KS2 RWM

Actions:

- *New Additionally Resourced Provision at Manor, utilising spare capacity*

- *School reorganisation options, including Federations to consider developing school to school support to increase consistency of standards*
- *Development of new special school options, or the expansion of Holybrook Primary School, including through spare capacity.*

3.11. Planning Area South Schools: Christ the King; Geoffrey Field Infants; Geoffrey Fields Junior; New Christchurch; Palmer; Ridgeway; Whitley Park

- (22.6% surplus place capacity against DfE recommended 5%).
- One of the highest areas of SEND need
- 0/6 of schools are at national or above KS2 RWM

Actions:

- *Development of new special school options, including through spare capacity*
- *New Additionally Resourced Provision at Whitley Park, utilising spare capacity*
- *Development of new provision options needs to consider south planning area as a priority.*
- *The RBC Social Inclusion Board and Place Based Pilots work on reducing inequality are focusing community-based actions in this area and BFfC officers are working to support the maximum impact of this work for local schools.*

- 3.12. It is important that all options to create new special school provision are considered fairly and equitably. The three areas of consideration in developing a shortlist of options have been school standards and attainment; the needs of children with SEND; and School financial sustainability. Change options have been prioritised to the three highest ranked opportunity areas: North, West and South. Options have also been restricted to community schools as they are the schools where we are able to make decisions.
- 3.13. As is set out in the report above, significant progress has been made to secure sufficient school places for children with SEND in Reading through ARPs; however, the creation of an additional state-maintained special school provision within the borough is a critical next step towards sufficiency. A new special school would bring a number of benefits, not least the controllability of place costs. However, there are significant challenges in establishing new special school provision.
- 3.14. Where a local authority identifies the need for a new school, section 6A of Education and Inspections Act 2006 places the local authority under a duty to seek proposals to establish an academy (free school) via the 'free school presumption'. Academisation would lead to the loss of a Reading Borough Council asset (school site) on a peppercorn rent for 120 years.
- 3.15. However, it is possible to apply to the Secretary of State for 'consent to publish' proposals to establish a new school under section 10 of EIA 2006. With Secretary of State consent, local authorities may publish proposals under section 10 for a community, community special, foundation or foundation special school to replace one or more existing maintained school. In addition, under section 11 of EIA 2006, certain proposals for a new maintained school can be made outside of competitive process and without requiring the Secretary of State's consent. Other proposers e.g. a diocese or other relevant religious authority or charitable trust, may publish proposals for a new foundation, voluntary controlled or foundation special school which replaces one or more foundation or voluntary schools with a religious character. Further legal advice will be sought on school opening options to inform decision making.

- 3.16. Should a suitable school site be confirmed, it may be an option to expand an existing special school to share the identified school premises, adopting a satellite approach, as an alternative to establishing a new academy.
- 3.17. The option of establishing a satellite school at a Reading secondary school, potentially offering an additional 40 secondary school places, is also being explored.
- 3.18. Closures of schools are deeply challenging and traumatic events for local communities. Resistance of the current community to change is a clear risk. This risk can lead to local campaigns to save local schools through academisation of local community schools.
- 3.19. Site suitability and adaptability are currently being tested and capital and consultation timelines need to be planned into any final proposal, alongside community engagement. Additionally, plans to manage the expertise and recruitment challenges will need to be addressed, as well as establishing whether local school leadership teams are willing to lead special provision as opposed/or in addition to mainstream provision.
- 3.20. It is proposed that an ACE Task and Finish Group be established to receive updates on the options being considered for the development of a new special school, prior to further update reports to ACE Committee.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
 - People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 4.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 4.4. The approach being taken to deliver sufficient school places for children with SEND contributes to both the 'Thriving Communities' and 'Inclusive Economy' strategic aims. It seeks to ensure that all children with disabilities are provided with meaningful equality of access to the full range of educational opportunities available to Reading children. Through this, this approach seeks to reduce inequality within society.
- 4.5. As reported to ACE Committee through the Annual School Standards report, the approach set out on this report contributes to our work with schools tackling a range of risks of disadvantage, removing physical and non-physical barriers for Reading children to engage in learning for example by ensuring our schools focus on developing inclusive curricula and inclusive learning.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

- 5.2. It is not foreseen that there will be adverse environmental implications associated with this strategy. If all Reading schools were made fully accessible to children with disabilities, this could plausibly cause a reduction in CO2 emissions as the use of taxis to transport children with SEND out of Reading to access provision could be reduced. In addition to this, if existing capacity in mainstream provision were adapted for more specialist provision and made accessible to children with SEND in Reading, this could obviate the need for the construction of new buildings, further limiting the carbon impact of school place provision.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Extensive informal pre-statutory consultation and formal statutory consultation will need to be undertaken for any significant change to school organisation.
- 6.2. Dedicated engagement sessions will need to be held with the parents of current pupils impacted by any proposed change, Reading Families Forum and Special United, Reading's forum for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability.
- 6.3. The consultation will include impact monitoring proposals, so that Councillors can be assured of the impact of any newly adopted Policy and amend it if there was deemed to be an adverse impact on disadvantaged families, pupils with protected characteristics or any other at risk group.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is relevant to the decision, and will be undertaken as proposals are developed further.
- 7.3. The decisions being sought will have a positive differential impact on people with protected characteristics of age and disability (access to school provision for children with SEND).

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. Reading Borough Council holds a duty under the Education Act 1996, Section 14 to provide sufficient school places for local children.
- 8.2. Where a local authority identifies the need for a new school, section 6A of EIA 2006 places the local authority under a duty to seek proposals to establish an academy (free school) via the 'free school presumption'.
- 8.3. It is possible to apply to the Secretary of State for 'consent to publish' proposals to establish a new school under section 10 of EIA 2006. With Secretary of State consent, local authorities may publish proposals under section 10 for a community, community special, foundation or foundation special school to replace one or more existing maintained school.

- 8.4. Under section 11 of EIA 2006 certain proposals for a new maintained school can be made outside of competitive process and without requiring the Secretary of State's consent. Other proposers, e.g. a diocese or other relevant religious authority or charitable trust, may publish proposals for a new foundation, voluntary controlled or foundation special school which replaces one or more foundation or voluntary schools with a religious character.
- 8.5. The procedural requirements for carrying out a closure or a significant change for a local authority maintained school are set out in statutory guidance, underpinned by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) as amended by the Education Act (EA) 2011 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 20133 (the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations).

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. As identified through the DBV programme and as evidenced in the further enhanced modelling set out in Appendix 1, it is predicted that Reading would be short of places for children with SEND who require a non-mainstream setting from September 2024.
- 9.2. Participation in the DfE Delivering Better Value programme established a future demand and financial forecast which confirms a significant financial pressure for the Dedicated Schools Grant, driven through the significant increase in Education Health and Care Plans from April 2022, and the increased demand pressures leading to more INMSS places being used, in the absence of other more cost effective school places being available.
- 9.3. The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report relate to the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block. In December 2022, HM government extended the Statutory Override for the Dedicated Schools Grant until 2025-26. This means that Reading Borough Council does not need to account for the current budget pressures in the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block within the overall Reading Borough Council accounts. However, Reading Borough Council retains responsibility for the DSG and to ensure that the deficit is managed as effectively as possible, a High Needs Block Deficit Management Plan has been developed and agreed by the Reading Borough Council's Director of Finance and the Executive Director of Children's Services. The Plan is subject to monthly monitoring and will be the subject of future updates to ACE Committee.

10. Timetable for Implementation

- 10.1. Statutory processes must be followed for opening and closing schools. For the opening of a new school, there is an expectation from the Department for Education that the time between the publication of a proposal and its proposed date of implementation should be less than three years.
- 10.2. The proposed ACE Committee Task and Finish Group would convene following the March 2024 ACE Committee, initially for a period of six months with the intention of further updates on proposals being brought forward for the summer and autumn ACE Committee dates for any relevant decisions.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1. School Place Planning Strategy 2022-2027, December 2023 refresh

Appendices

Appendix 1: SEND place planning needs analysis update

Appendix 2: Maps of Reading Primary provision and numbers of Education Health and Care Plans by area

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report relate to the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.

In December 2022, HM government extended the Statutory Override for the Dedicated Schools Grant until 2025-26. This means that Reading Borough Council does not need to account for the current budget pressures in the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block within the overall Reading Borough Council accounts.

1. Revenue Implications

There are currently no General Fund implications of this report, as stated above.

2. Capital Implications

Reading Borough Council received a grant of £6.2m for capital spending on SEND projects since 2020, with £1.2M allocated to projects by the Reading Borough Council Property and Assets Team over the past two years. Requests for capital works received from schools to deliver Additionally Resourced Provision places, totalling £849,200, have been considered on a business case basis through the SEND Strategy Steering Group and by the Reading Borough Council Assistant Director for Property and Assets. The business cases focus on three key areas: safe and appropriate outside space, toilet facilities (to include changing facilities) and works to improve acoustics. Investing capital grant with maintained schools who open ARPs, will create a network of high-quality specialist provision distributed across Reading and, it is proposed, enable the overwhelming majority of children with SEND to attend their local school.

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure			TBC
Funded by DfE SEND Capital Grant		£849	TBC
Total Funding			

Appendix 1: SEND place planning needs.

The current situation in SEND 0-25

As of November 2023, there were 1959 CYP aged 0-25 with EHCPs for whom BfC is responsible. This represents an increase in EHCPs of 12% since January 2023. If EHCP numbers continue to rise at this rate, we anticipate there being 2194 EHCP plans by September 2024. As previously reported to SEND QAIC (October 2023), this projected increase is supported by data collected by the EY team, who have already identified 44 children due to start Reception in September 2024 who are either already in the EHCNA process, or for whom evidence is being gathered ahead of an EHCNA request being made.

Based on current data from the SEN2 EHCP forecast 2022-23 in Reading on average 46% of CYP with an EHCP aged 0-25 have their needs met in mainstream provision. This leaves 54% of children with an EHCP in Reading placed in: alternative provision (AP) (4%), independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS) (5%), maintained special schools (MSS) (37%) and additionally resourced provisions (ARPs) (8%).

Based on projected EHCP numbers for September 2024, from September 2024, Reading would need 1184 places for CYP with EHCPs outside of mainstream settings. From September 2024, if all proposed ARPs open, and if Hamilton school increases its intake to 64 children, there will be 800 places available for children in ARPs (408) and MSS (392). The breakdown of ARP places by age is 64 EY, 232 primary and 112 secondary places. Currently, an ARP place costs on average £22,500/place. From September 2024, this will average at £24,500/place/annum (as schools on old SLAs are brought into line with new ARPs). MSS places are more variable in terms of price but £35,000/place is a reasonable assumption. Fewer children are eligible for transport at an ARP/MSS because most children would be under distance to their nearest ARP (especially as the number of ARPs across Reading increases).

New all-through INMSS provision is currently being explored, with a possible 140 places in total for which Reading children would be given priority from September 2024. These places average at £77,000/child (plus transport costs where applicable).

This means that there will be 940 places available in INMSS/ARP/MSS for Reading children, but a projected need of 1184 places, leaving a shortfall of 244 places. As at any one time, there are typically 4% of CYP with an EHCP in AP (generally owing to the CYP being CLA and awaiting a permanent placement, and/or owing to insufficiency of suitable places), the 244 projected shortfall could be 'mitigated' by circa. 10 places. This still leaves a projected shortfall of 234 places.

Our most significant areas of need at primary level are ASC and SLCN, with SEMH and MLD just behind. At secondary, this shifts to our largest areas of need being ASC and SEMH, with MLD next and SLCN significantly reduced (a factor most likely attributable to children either having been diagnosed with ASC or their unmet SLCN needs now presenting as SEMH needs). Many of our primary children with ASC as their primary area of need meet the criteria for SLD as there is a significant cohort who are pre-verbal and need support with personal care needs e.g. toileting and feeding.

Our secondary schools have a lower proportion of children with EHCPs than our primary schools (34% vs. 58% respectively). We have an increased need for ARP/MSS provision at a secondary level, and work is underway to establish the most effective model: ARPs at secondary may not be appropriate for children with significant additional needs (especially sensory needs) owing to curricula and environmental constraints. Satellite schools are being explored as an alternative for secondary, with one KS3 satellite provision opening September 2024.

A refined view: the current situation in SEND 5-16 (statutory school age)

Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council remains responsible for CYP with EHCPs aged 0-25 and, as per the above, place planning must consider the needs of this group accordingly and data relating to this group reported on. However, it is a concern of this author that the 0-25 data set can lack refinement and is liable to greater variance whilst simultaneously failing to focus on our most significant cohort – children of statutory school age. Below, only data relating to children of statutory school age (5-16) is displayed and modelled, in contrast to the 0-25 data detailed above, to provide colleagues with a more granular understanding of the challenges facing SEND in Reading.

Live (as of 30/11/23) data was used to populate a '2023' column in Tables 1, 2 and 3 (thus ensuring these data points have a high level of accuracy). A figure of 12% was then assumed for year-on-year growth in EHCPs (by total and per placement type). 12% was chosen as this is our current annual growth figure and 2023 is not felt to be an anomalous year (e.g. it is not a 'Covid' year – years that were included in the DBV data set and could plausibly be said to account for the under-projections resulting from that work).

Table 1, below, contains a yearly (2023-2030) breakdown by placement type of where our children of statutory school age with EHCPs are/are likely to be placed. An annual increase of 12% (by total and per placement type) has been assumed.

Table 1. A breakdown by placement type of where our children of statutory school age with EHCPs are/are likely to be placed, assuming consistent growth in demand of 12% year on year.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ARP	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Special School	403	451	505	566	634	710	795	890
INMSS	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Mainstream	690	773	866	970	1086	1216	1362	1525
AP (unplaced)	10	11	12	13	15	17	19	21
Total	1363	1527	1711	1917	2147	2405	2694	3016

Figure 1, below, represents the data in Table 1 graphically.

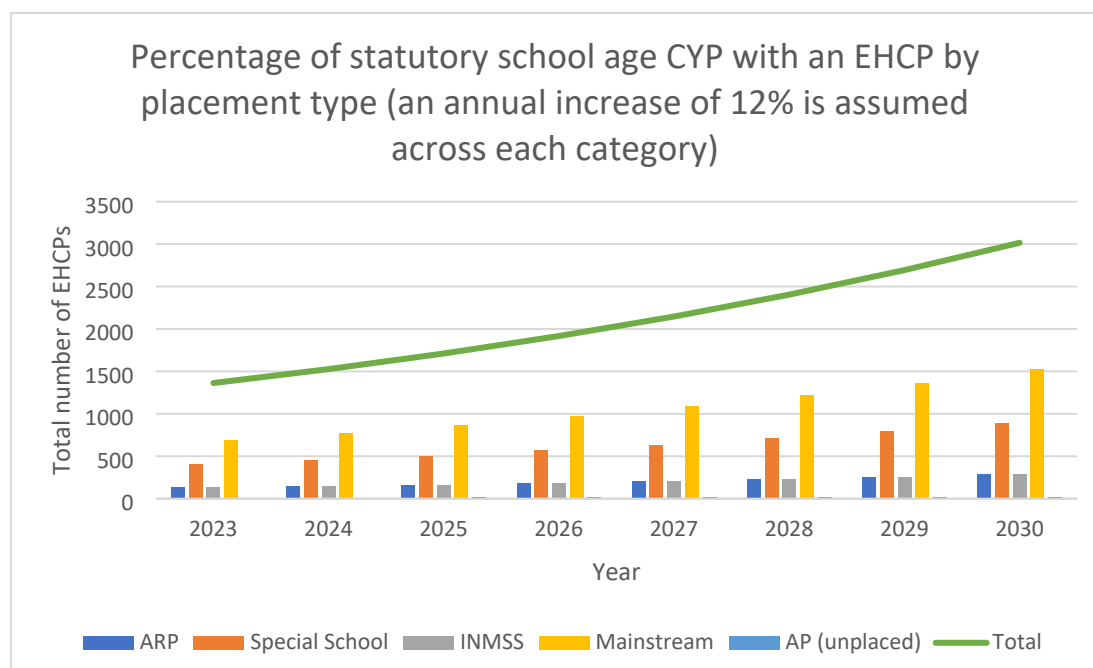


Figure 1: A line graph illustrating the breakdown of placement types for children aged 5-16 with an EHCP

What is of note when 5-16 data is compared to 0-25 data, is that the proportions of children placed in each type of placement vary. There are significant cost implications associated with this variance. For children aged 0-25, the placement breakdown types are as follows:

- 46% mainstream,
- 4% AP,
- 5% INMSS,
- 37% MSS and,
- 8% ARPs.

However, for children aged 5-16 the breakdowns are as follows:

- 51% mainstream,
- 0.7% AP,
- 9.5% INMSS,
- 30% MSS and,
- 9.5% ARP.

The data relating to projected need in special (MSS, ARPs and INMSS) was then compared to current and projected capacity within special, with both mitigated and unmitigated 'supply' projections provided.

It should be noted, that for the 'mitigated supply' assumptions, the 110 places added in MSS have assumed 10 places being added to Hamilton school and a 100 place special school being created on the site of a Reading primary school. It should be further noted, that conservative growth in ARPs followed by a flat-lining (when all schools who would like to participate can be assumed to have opted in) is also assumed. It may be that these assumptions are overly conservative. However, a rough calculation of the potential capacity of either of the identified primary sites suggests the assumptions are plausible.

Table 2: A table depicting actual and projected need for 5-16 places in special, with an assumed mitigation of sustained growth of ARPs and the addition of 110 places in MSS.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
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ARP places available	161	344	364	384	404	404	404	404
MSS places available	403	413	513	513	513	513	513	513
Total places available	564	757	877	897	917	917	917	917
ARP places needed	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Children in INMSS	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Special School places needed	403	451	505	566	634	710	795	890
Total places needed	663	743	833	934	1046	1172	1313	1470

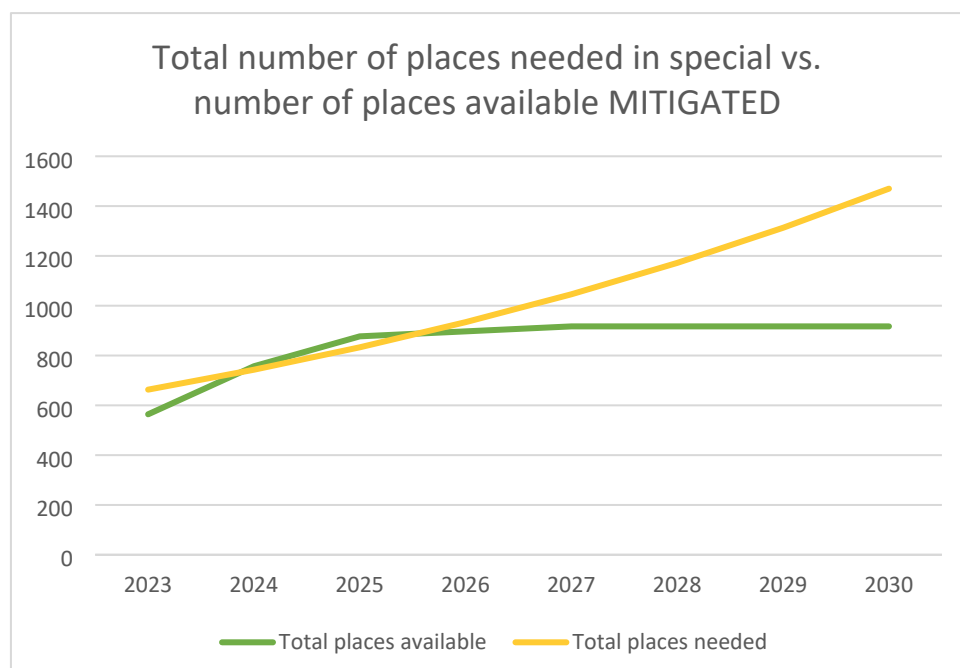


Figure 2: A line graph depicting the disparity between supply (mitigated) of, and demand for, places in special for children aged 5-16.

This mitigated forecast – which still shows a *significant disparity between supply and demand from mid-2025 onwards* – can now be compared with the unmitigated supply forecasts illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 3 below.

Table 3: A table depicting actual and projected need for 5-16 places in special, with no assumed mitigation.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ARP places available	161	344	344	344	344	344	344	344
MSS places available	403	413	413	413	413	413	413	413
Total places available	564	757	757	757	757	757	757	757
ARP places needed	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Children in INMSS	130	146	164	184	206	231	259	290
Special School places needed	403	451	505	566	634	710	795	890
Total places needed	663	743	833	934	1046	1172	1313	1470



Figure 3: A line graph depicting the disparity between supply (unmitigated) of, and demand for, places in special for children aged 5-16.

As can be seen in Figure 3, with no mitigation, demand for special school places for children of statutory school age will exceed demand *in a sustained way* from early 2024. To be clear, demand **has** already exceeded supply, and the only reason that we are not facing large numbers of unplaced children with EHCPs in Reading is because mainstream schools are holding onto children whilst they wait for places in special, and children are being placed in INMSS.

The mitigated forecast shows a shortfall of 553 places in special by 2030. This compares to the unmitigated forecast of a shortfall of 713 places in special. Whilst both shortfalls are significant, a difference of 160 additional places in MSS and/or ARPs equates to a cost avoidance of £7,520,000/annum.

It is proposed that the combined impact of the RISE team, changes in the way that we fund Reception and Year 1 children and the uncoupling of ARPs from the EHCP system will mitigate demand for EHCPs. However, it is unlikely that the impact of these changes on demand for EHCPs will be felt before mid-2024.

Table 4, below, contains a yearly (2023-2030) breakdown by placement type of where our children of statutory school age with EHCPs are/are likely to be placed. However, instead of assuming consistent growth of EHCPs (as per Table 1), Table 4 models decreasing demand for EHCPs, based on the combined assumed impact of the RISE service, the proposed changes to funding for children with high needs in Reception and Year 1 and the impact of more money being given to schools overall (via ARP funding).

Table 4. A breakdown by placement type of where our children of statutory school age with EHCPs are/are likely to be placed, assuming decreasing demand for EHCPs year on year.

Growth Rate (%)		12	10	8	6	4	4	4

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ARP	130	146	160	173	183	191	198	206
Special School	403	451	496	536	568	591	615	639
INMSS	130	146	160	173	183	191	198	206
Mainstream	690	773	850	918	973	1012	1053	1095
AP (unplaced)	10	11	12	13	14	15	15	16
Total	1363	1527	1679	1814	1922	1999	2079	2162

Figure 4, below, represents the data shown in Table 4 graphically.

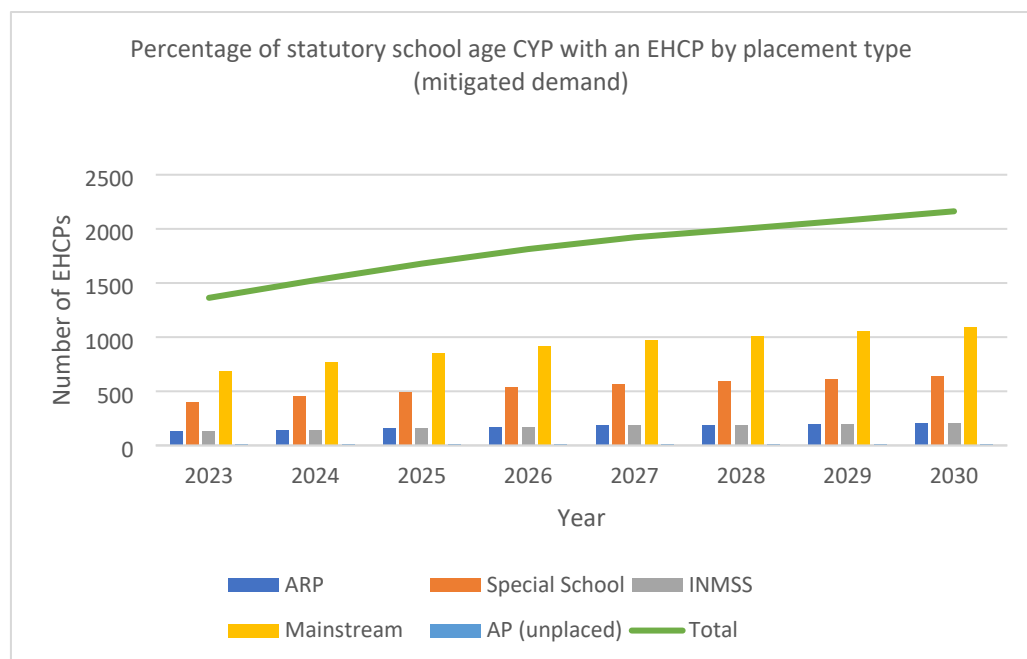


Figure 4: A line graph illustrating the breakdown of placement types for children aged 5-16 with an EHCP, assuming mitigated demand year on year.

As can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 4, even a conservative estimate of the impact of mitigating demand for EHCPs has the potential to reduce the Company's financial liabilities e.g. for INMSS places significantly. What is more interesting, however, is if the projected impact of mitigating supply (by increasing ARP and MSS places) is combined with the projected impact of mitigating demand for EHCPs. Table 5(below) and Figure 5 (below) both model these combined projections.

Table 5: A table depicting actual and projected need for 5-16 places in special, with assumed mitigation of both supply of places and demand for EHCPs.

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ARP places available	161	344	364	384	404	404	404	404
MSS places available	403	413	513	513	513	513	513	513
Total places available	564	757	877	897	917	917	917	917
ARP places needed	130	146	160	173	183	191	198	206
Special School places needed	403	451	496	536	568	591	615	639
Children in INMSS	130	146	160	173	183	191	198	206
Total places needed	663	743	816	882	934	973	1011	1051

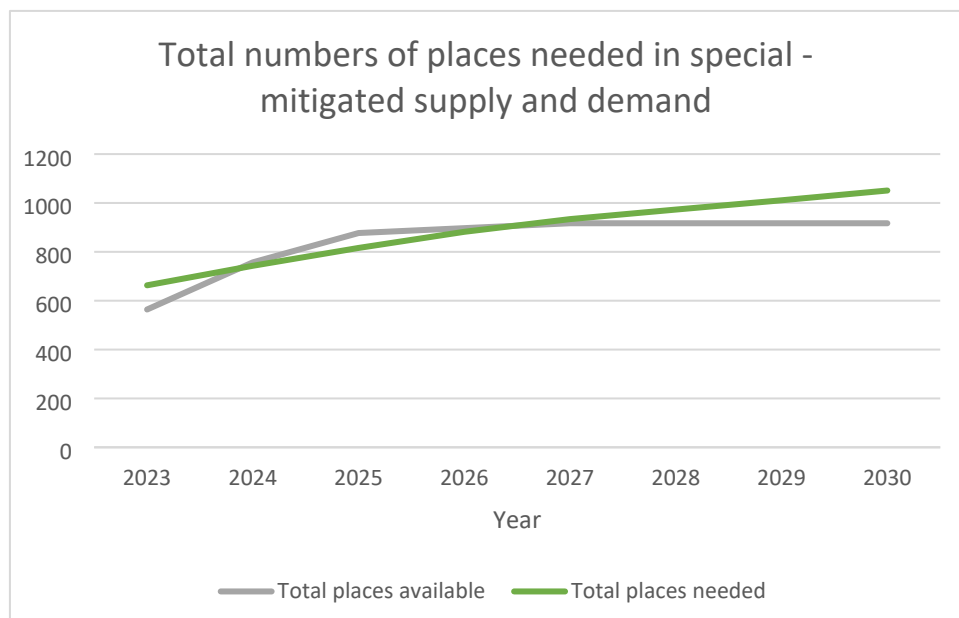
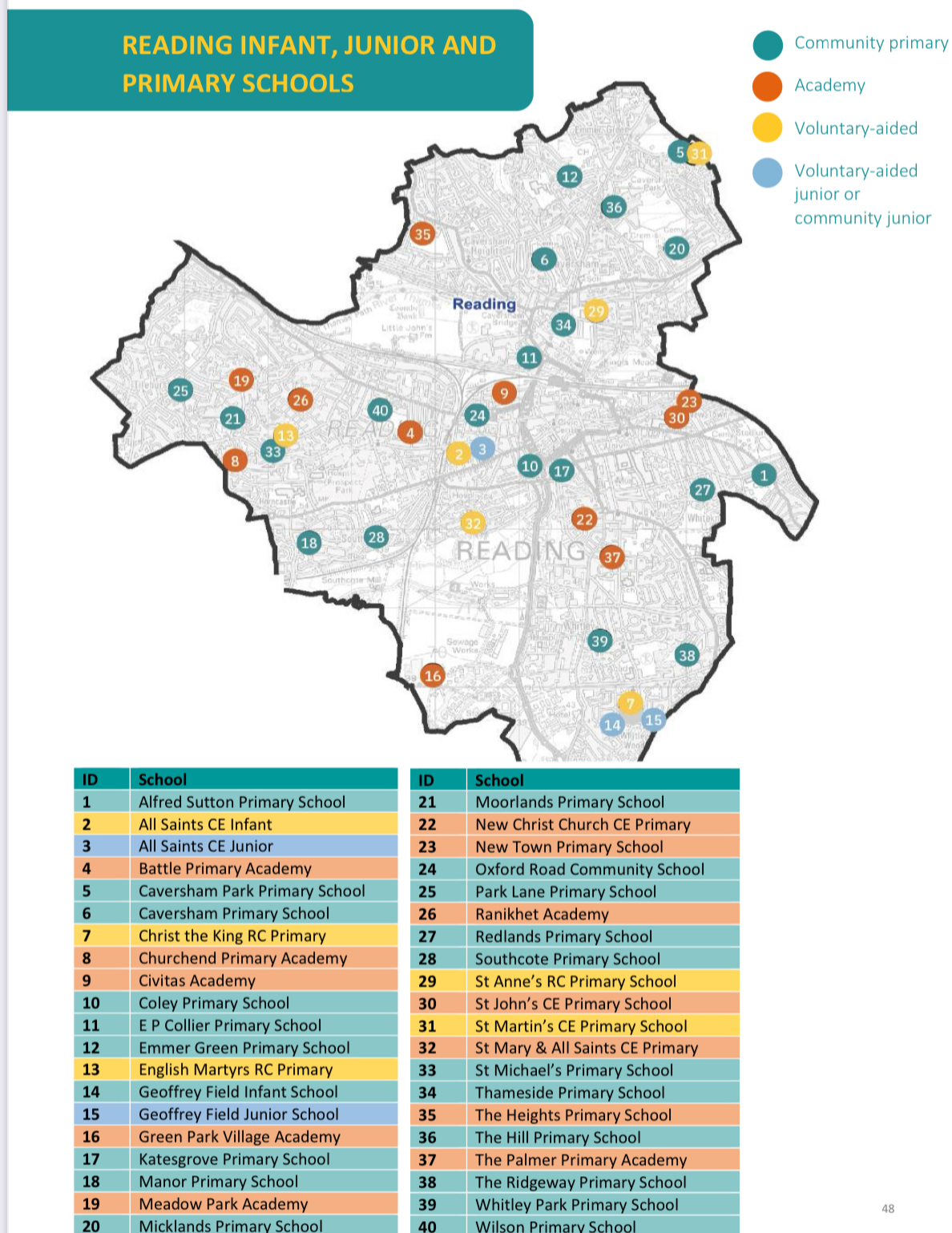


Figure 5: A line graph depicting the disparity between supply of, and demand for, places in special for children aged 5-16, assuming mitigated supply and demand.

As can be seen in Table 5 and Figure 5, mitigating both supply and demand is the only projected scenario in which Reading achieves sufficiency of places in special (albeit for a relatively short period of time).

It is inferred from the modelling in Table 5 and Figure 5, that Reading will continue to have significant capacity issues, and associated financial implications, unless sustained efforts are taken to **both** increase supply of places in special and reduce demand for EHCPs.

Appendix 2- Maps of Reading Primary provision and numbers of Education Health and Care Plans by area



Mainstream Primary Schools, Additionally Resourced and numbers of EHCPs by area

