Bracknell Forest Council

Education Sufficiency Strategy
2026-2031

The Right Place for Every Child



Education Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2031: The Right Place for Every Child

Strategy Lifecyle: 2026-2031

Document Owner: Bracknell Forest Council, Education and Learning

Revision Date: November 2026

Revision Cycle:

This strategy will follow a structured review cycle over its five-year period. It will be updated annually following the Department for Education (DfE) school capacity return (SCAP) and local sufficiency review, using pupil forecasts, school census data, admissions intelligence, housing growth, early years sufficiency evidence, SEND demand, estate use and transport considerations. Annual review will ensure the strategy remains aligned and enables timely adjustment to reflect any national reforms whilst meeting local community needs with 'the right place for every child'

Phase	Timeframe	Key Actions and Notes
SCAP Return	Summer Term 2	Collect data, analyse trends, submit SCAP return to DfE
Drafting	Autumn Term 1	Update strategy, where required following SCAP analysis and present to School Place Planning Group
Submission Preparation	Autumn Term 2	Submit through internal governance
Submission and post-submission	Spring Term 1	Signed off strategy posted online, and easy read version created
Monitoring and Ongoing Review	Spring Term 2	Monitor capacity, review strategy effectiveness, update as needed

Foreword by Cllr. Megan Wright: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Health

I am pleased to introduce the Education Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2031: The Right Place for Every Child, a forward looking plan that sets out our shared ambition for every child and young person in Bracknell Forest. It is built on a simple but vital principle: that all pupils should have access to the right education, in the right place, at the right time, and reflects our commitment to opportunity, inclusion and high quality provision.

Bracknell Forest continues to experience significant change, including rising SEND needs and shifting demographics. This strategy responds through a responsible, data driven approach that prioritises building necessary specialist provision where required alongside making effective use of our existing school estate to enable adaptable, locally focused planning.

Rising demand for education, health and care plans (EHCPs), specialist places and in borough SEND education shows the need for bold and coordinated action. The development of new specialist schools alongside planned growth of Resource Bases offering specialist support in mainstream schools, and a shift toward a needs led model will help more children learn closer to home in settings designed to meet their needs.

Developed collaboratively with schools, partners, community representatives and families, this strategy complements the Learning Improvement Strategy—which focuses on improving outcomes for all children, including vulnerable learners and those with SEND—and aligns with SEND and AP Strategies to strengthen inclusion, equity and local provision.

Following a 12 week public consultation, support for the strategy was overwhelmingly positive. Useful clarifications and changes have been made to the document, especially pertaining to the use of the existing school estate to provide new provision. These developments will be driven by community need, aligning to the strategy core pillars.

Together, these strategies underpin our shared commitment to ensuring every child can thrive, feel supported and access clear pathways into a positive and fulfilling future.



Contents

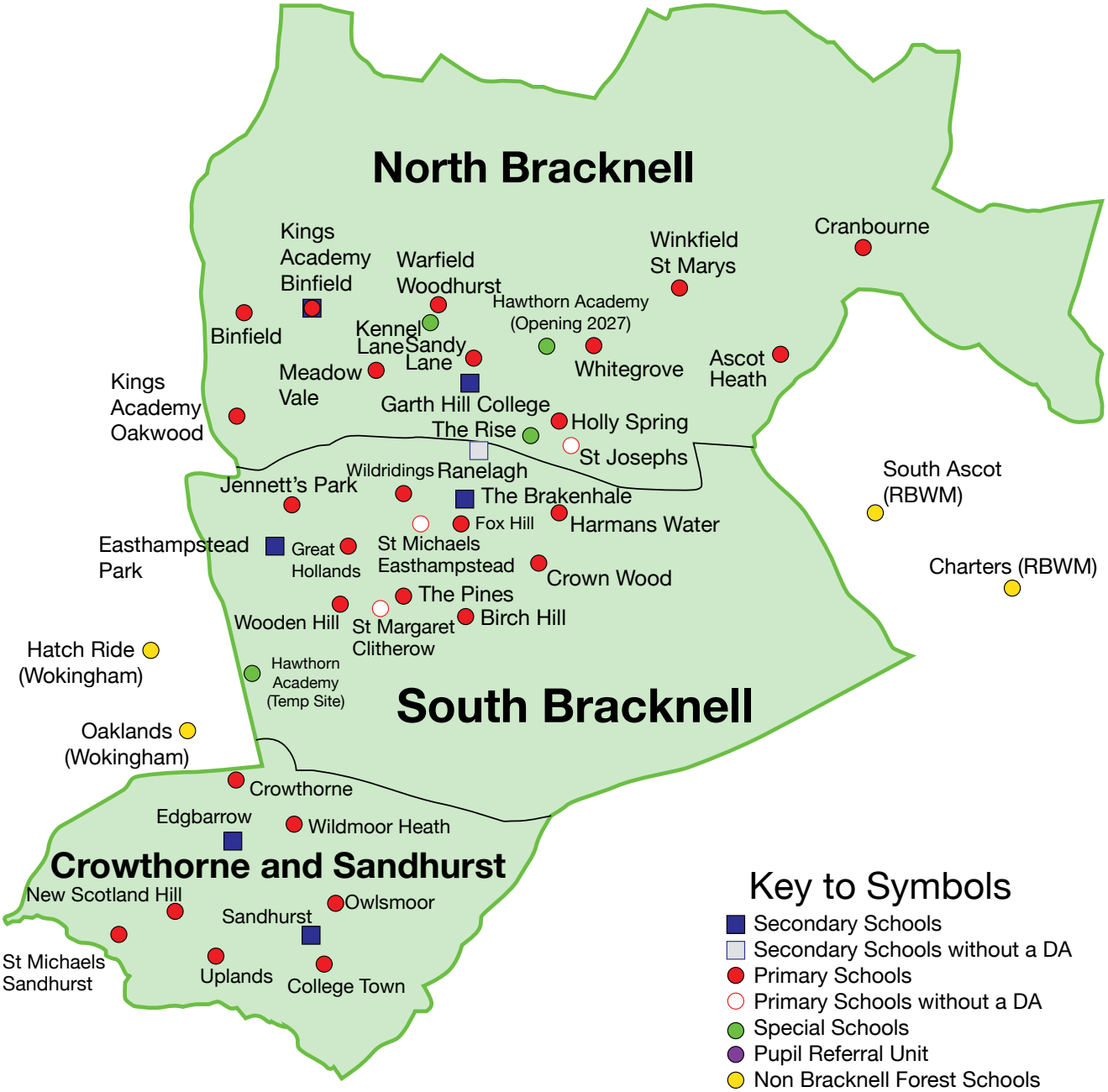
Education Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2031: The Right Place for Every Child 2
Revision Cycle: 2
Foreword by Cllr. Megan Wright: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Health ... 3
Contents 4
Glossary of terms 5
Planning Area Map 7
1. Executive Summary 8
2. Introduction 9
3.Current Context and Background 10
4. Vision and Strategic Objectives 11
5. Emerging Needs and Risk Factors 12
6. Contingency and Adaptability 13
7. Early Years 14
8. Primary 16
9. Secondary 18
10. SEND – Special Education Need and Disability 20
11. Post-16 (mainstream) 24
12. Education Transport 26
13. Elective Home Education and School Attendance 27
14. Factors and Data source impacting place planning 28
15. Strategic Partnerships and Cross-Authority Planning 29
16. Consultation Feedback 30
17. References and Supporting Strategies 32
18. External documents and relevant documents 32
Appendices 32

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
14–16 Learners	Pupils in the final two years of compulsory schooling may access alternative or vocational pathways outside a traditional secondary curriculum.
Admissions Code	Statutory guidance that local authorities, admission authorities and schools must follow when carrying out duties relating to school admissions.
AP	Alternative Provision
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Basic Need	Capital funding provided by government to local authorities to support the delivery of sufficient school places.
BFC	Bracknell Forest Council.
Bulge Year	A temporary increase in a school's intake for a specific year group to manage short-term demand without permanently changing the school's capacity.
CofE	Church of England.
CSA	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
CYP	Children and young people.
DfE	Department for Education
DMT	Directorate Management Team
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
EBSA	Emotionally Based School Avoidance
EBDOG / SEBDOG	Education Building Development Officers Group and South East Education Building Development Officers Group;
EHE	Elective Home Education
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
E and L SLT	Education and Learning Senior Leadership Team.
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GA	Graduated Approach
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
IASS	Information, Advice and Support Service
In-borough placement	Education provision located within Bracknell Forest
ISP	Individual Support Plan

Term	Definition
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KS4	Key Stage 4; the phase of secondary education covering Years 10 and 11, usually ages 14 to 16.
LA	Local Authority
Local Offer	Published information about SEND services, support and provision available locally for children, young people and families.
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training.
NMISS	Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools
OAP	Ordinarily Available Provision
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAN	Published Admission Number
PCF	Parent Carer Forum
PfA	Preparing for Adulthood
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent early years providers.
RBWM	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
S106	Section 106 planning agreement; a legal agreement between a local authority and developer to fund infrastructure linked to development, including education provision.
Safety Valve Programme	A Department for Education intervention programme for local authorities with high Dedicated Schools Grant deficits, focused on SEND financial sustainability.
SCAP	School Capacity Survey
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo / SENDCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator, or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
SEND Reform Sufficiency Group	Strategic governance group overseeing SEND sufficiency
Specialist Base	Specialist provision within a mainstream school
SPPG	School Place Planning Group
SRP	Specialist Resource Provision
T-Levels	Technical qualifications equivalent to three A-levels that combine classroom learning with industry placements.
Vulnerable Schools Sustainability Plan	Local planning work to identify and support schools facing financial or organisational sustainability pressures, including persistent under-enrolment.
WSOA	Written Statement of Action

Planning Area Map



1. Executive Summary

The Education Sufficiency Strategy – the right education at the right time sets out a renewed and visionary approach to school place planning across Bracknell Forest Council (BFC). This strategy is designed to be ambitious, responsive, and rooted in the lived realities of our borough, a place that has undergone significant transformation since its origins. Schools were built to meet the immediate needs of growing communities in the 1940s–60s. Today, Bracknell Forest continues to experience rapid housing development and demographic change, requiring a more agile and future-focused approach to education sufficiency.

This strategy does not default to the assumption that new schools are the immediate solution to rising demand in mainstream education (planned new special schools are however required to support demand for SEND places). Instead, it prioritises the **creative and efficient use of existing provision**, recognising that surplus places across the borough can be strategically deployed to meet emerging needs. New mainstream schools, while sometimes necessary, can take time to reach full capacity and may impact the sustainability of existing provision. Therefore, our planning approach seeks to optimise what we have, within the parameters of the **School Admissions Code**, to ensure that every child has access to high-quality education without delay.
Working with key stakeholders adopting a **'what if' mindset** will allow the partnership to ensure adaptability and generate **creative solutions** to manage and mitigate admission dilemmas and unexpected changes.

For **early years provision**, the challenges due to the private, independent and voluntary nature of the sector are acknowledged. However, opportunities for expansion and diversification will be explored, ensuring a geographically balanced and flexible childcare offer that supports working families across Bracknell Forest.

Within the **post-16** landscape, BFC will continue to assess gaps in provision and explore enhancements to the local offer, including the integration of new qualifications such as T-Levels and the development of alternative pathways for **14–16 learners**. This reflects commitment to ensuring that all young people, including those with SEND up to age 25, have access to the right education at the right time.

The final strategy has been updated following consultation to strengthen the meaning of suitable, flexible and needs-led provision. Consultation feedback confirmed that sufficiency must mean the right place for each child or young person, not simply an available place. This is particularly important for SEND, where the local priority is to increase the number of suitable in-borough placements so more children and young people can learn closer to home where this meets assessed need.

The national SEND reform programme, including Every Child Achieving and Thriving and related SEND reform proposals, reinforces the need for earlier support, stronger mainstream inclusion, clearer pathways and more consistent local planning. This strategy therefore remains flexible and evidence-led, with annual review points to ensure alignment with national reform, the local SEND/AP Strategy and local implementation planning.

Schools White Paper and SEND Reform:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-send-reforms-sheet

Delivery will be supported through two complementary governance routes. The School Place Planning Group will continue to focus on operational place planning, admissions, forecasting, estate use and SCAP-aligned review. The SEND Reform Sufficiency Group will provide strategic oversight of SEND sufficiency, provision creation and in-borough placement growth, ensuring that local demand, national reform and SEND/AP priorities are translated into deliverable provision plans.

2. Introduction

‘Sufficiency’ in context of this is strategy means having enough suitable, sustainable and accessible education provision in the right places to meet the needs of children, young people and working families across Bracknell Forest. It is not simply about an available place, but about the right place: provision that is appropriately located, able to meet need, supports inclusion and makes effective use of the education estate. The council will therefore prioritise the use of existing capacity, including surplus mainstream places where they offer a suitable local solution, before considering additional mainstream provision.

For SEND, sufficiency will be planned around assessed need, with a focus on strengthening suitable in-borough placements where these meet children and young people’s needs.

Education that is right for each child is defined as the provision that meets their needs within the locality of their residence, where feasible. Transport, and climate impact will become key considerations, with a focus on children attending a provision within their designated area and or parental preference will remain a priority area when planning.

By anticipating the full breadth of community need and setting out clear principles to address future challenges, this strategy provides assurance that high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable education provision will be available to all children and young people in Bracknell Forest.

Planning Principles

- The local authority works in partnership with all schools and education providers to meet the sufficiency and sustainability of places in Bracknell Forest, putting in place effective strategies to manage changing demand.
- The needs of all children and young people, including those with SEND and vulnerable groups, underpin all school place planning activity.
- Education leaders are supported to manage the challenges of school reorganisation where there are expansions or reductions to capacity.
- Inclusive provisions will be considered in all proposals.
- The local authority will work with neighbouring authorities on the planning of school places and cross border movements where appropriate.
- Any expansions of school places, including in academies and voluntary aided schools, will only be supported where there is agreed local demand.
- Assessment of the local school estates and school sustainability plan will be central to future place planning.
- Local communities will be consulted as part of the planning process when required to minimise and mitigate the impact of school organisation proposals.



3. Current Context and Background

Historic Context

- Early years provision was previously strong and diverse, but the childminder market has declined by 48% over the last five years.
- Primary school patterns shaped by historic development now create surpluses in some areas and pressures in others.
- Secondary provision has shifted due to academisation, updated facilities, and changing demographics, influencing parental choice.
- Historic SEND provision relied heavily on one special school and out-of-borough placements, leading to long journeys and financial pressure.
- Post 16 pathways traditionally prioritised academic routes, prompting learners needing vocational options to travel to areas like Farnborough and Reading.

Current Context (2025)[1]

- Early years demand is rising, particularly for full day care and under two provision; birth rates remain steady. New provision and expansion of provision have taken place to meet rising demand.
- Primary schools are Good or better, but surplus places are uneven, causing sustainability risks for some school and emerging pressures within some year groups.
- Secondary provision is sufficient overall, but oversubscription is concentrated in a small number of popular schools, with surplus elsewhere.
- SEND need continues to increase, with sustained growth in EHCPs, continued reliance on out-of-borough and independent specialist placements, and rising demand for ASD, SEMH and complex needs provision. The local priority is to increase the number of suitable in-borough placements through specialist school development, specialist bases and stronger mainstream inclusion, while recognising that some children and young people will continue to require highly specialist provision where this is the right placement for their assessed need.
- Post 16 participation is increasing, with some young people continuing to travel out of area for specialist pathways.



[1] At the time of writing

4. Vision and Strategic Objectives

Bracknell Forest aspires to an education system where every child and young person in the borough can access the right place at the right time through inclusive, high-quality and future ready provision. Our ambition is to create a resilient and sustainable education landscape that adapts to changing needs, promotes equity, and supports learners to thrive academically, socially and emotionally from early childhood into adulthood.

Strategic Pillars of Our Vision

- **Inclusive Foundations from the Start.** Every child deserves access to nurturing early years provision that is flexible, inclusive, and shaped by individual needs.
- **Equity of Access Across All Phases.** All learners, regardless of background or location, should have fair and timely access to education that meets their needs and potential
- **The Right Place, Not Just a Place.** We define success not by seat availability, but by the quality of the learning environment, where children and young people feel safe, supported, and inspired to grow and education within our borders.
- **SEND Provision Rooted in Need, Not Labels** Provision planning will be shaped by evidence of need, shared need profiles, pathway analysis and local demand, rather than diagnosis alone. This will support a more flexible local continuum of mainstream, specialist base, special school, alternative and post-16 provision.
- **Sustainable and Climate-Conscious Planning.** Education infrastructure must contribute to a greener future, by enabling walkable access, reducing transport reliance, and aligning with environmental goals.
- **Community-Connected Learning.** Schools and post-16 settings should be embedded in their communities, fostering strong local ties and shared ownership of educational outcomes.
- **Adaptability and Resilience in Planning** Our plans must be agile, able to respond to demographic shifts, emerging needs, and policy changes without compromising quality or inclusion.
- **Collaborative Leadership and Partnership** We will lead through collaboration—working with families, providers, academy trusts, and stakeholders to co-create solutions that reflect lived realities.
- **Empowered Transitions into Adulthood** post-16 education should offer diverse, high-quality pathways that prepare young people for lifelong success, employment, and active citizenship. Where barriers to Higher education exist within our offer, we will seek to address these barriers.



5. Emerging Needs and Risk Factors

Legislative and Policy Changes	Financial and Demographic Pressures	SEND, Community and Social Pressures
Impact of White Paper and SEND reform	Managing real terms decline in school funding	Higher than national ASD diagnosis rate (48.5% vs 31.5%)
Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act	Higher operating costs for schools	Continued upward trajectory of EHCP referrals
Funding changes (Early Years; capital; Basic Need)	Reduced LA funding for operational and capital activity	Academisation pressures
Children's Commissioner Report (2025)	Migration and national schemes	Changing demand for Early Years and SEND provision
	Ageing population	Parental choice and shifting priorities
	New developments: Warfield, Central Bracknell, Bucklers Park, Amen Corner	Ofsted/oversight changes
	Birth rate changes; BFC average 100 per month	Transport needs; environmental factors
		Political and economic factors incl. transport costs

Key Pressures

- Uneven distribution of surplus places in primary.
- Secondary demand concentrated in a small number of schools.
- Sustained growth in statutory SEND demand; high out-of-borough placements.
- Rising Early Years demand, especially under twos and full day provision.
- Transport and sustainability pressures linked to out-of-borough placements.

Strategic Response

- Prioritise efficient use of existing capacity, including bulge years and PAN adjustments.
- Deliver Hawthorn Academy SEMH school and Forest View Autism School. Expand local SEND capacity (specialist base, special school places) and embed a need led model.
- Strengthen Early Years sufficiency through collaboration within the sector, with a flexible approach to meet local demand.
- Align estate planning with housing growth and forecasting, annual review cycle.
- Coordinate admissions and transport to support equitable access and reduce travel times.
- Apply a suitability test before using surplus capacity, ensuring provision can meet evidenced need and relevant building, accessibility and safeguarding standards.
- Use SEND demand mapping, EHCP trends, mainstream inclusion evidence and placement data to inform specialist provision planning.
- Align SEND sufficiency planning with national reform, the local SEND and AP Strategy and the SEND Reform Sufficiency Group.
- Review transport and accessibility implications, including journey times, safe routes, housing growth and the sustainability benefits of suitable in-borough provision.

6. Contingency and Adaptability

Bracknell Forest's school place planning strategy is underpinned by a proactive and adaptive "what if" mindset, recognising the borough's dynamic and often unpredictable landscape. From early years through to post-16, the strategy anticipates a range of potential disruptions, demographic shifts, policy reforms, structural changes, and environmental emergencies, and outlines a robust contingency framework to respond swiftly and effectively.

This approach is not static; it is designed to evolve through regular review, scenario modelling, and strong cross-sector collaboration.

By maximising existing resources, maintaining flexibility within the system, and fostering deep partnerships with schools and services, the borough aims to ensure that all children and young people have access to high-quality, appropriately located education provision—regardless of what the future holds.

Anticipated "What If" Scenarios

Demand and Demographics
- Localised population surges (housing, migration, birth rate spikes).
- Shifts in parental preference due to Ofsted outcomes or leadership changes.
- Managing demand fluctuations within school settings.

SEND and Inclusive Provision.
- SEND policy reforms increasing demand for inclusive provision.
- Support and focus for schools identified through the Vulnerable School Sustainability Plan.
- SEND and inclusive provision planning will remain responsive to national reform, local demand and changing need profiles. The SEND Reform Sufficiency Group will review strategic demand, potential provision gaps, specialist base opportunities, special school development, alternative provision requirements and post-16 pathways. This will complement the School Place Planning Group, which will continue to oversee operational place planning, admissions, forecasting and annual sufficiency review.

Early Years Sustainability.
- Early Years provision closures or structural changes affecting capacity.

System and Structural Risks.
- School closures or structural changes affecting capacity.
- Environmental or emergency disruptions.

Contingency and Adaptation Measures

Planning and Review
- Annual SCAP aligned sufficiency reviews with scenario modelling.
- Suggested adjustment of provision based on data and outcome of review.

Capacity and Flexibility
- Bulge year deployment and capacity reassignment.
- Flexibility within mainstream surplus capacity, creative use of underutilised sites offering contingency planning.
- Alignment with the Education and Learning strategy across all phases up to Post 16.

Data, Insight and Collaboration
- Strong interagency data sharing and collaboration with;
  - Schools and multi academy trusts.
  - Housing, planning and health.
- Continued development of strong Early Years partnerships.
- Continuous engagement with parent carers and partners.

Strategic Alignment and Estate Management
- DfE Edcuation Estate Strategy[2] and Vulnerable Schools Sustainability Plan.
- Flexible admissions (within the code of conduct / published policies) and site use planning.
- Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (from birth to school age) to underpin supply and demand.

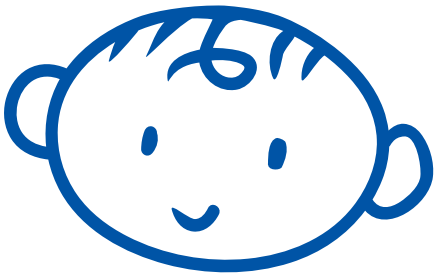
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-estates-strategy

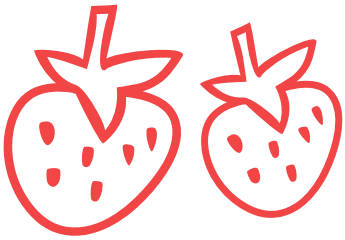
7. Early Years

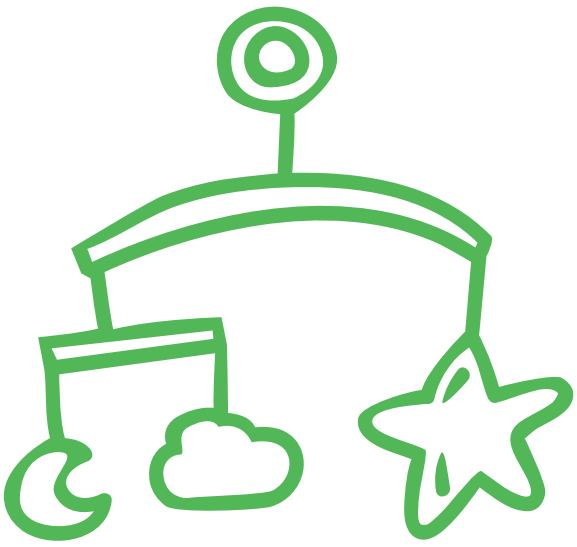
Challenges
Bracknell Forest faces rising demand for early years provision, particularly for under twos and full day, all year-round care. The decline in childminders has reduced flexibility, and planning delays can hinder expansion. Limited land availability and unsuitable venues restrict growth in certain localities, while financial risks and market saturation create uncertainty. As PVI providers operate independently, the local authority's influence is limited unless entitlement funding is involved.

Strategies to Meet Current Challenges
- Collaborate with planning teams to support new provision, along with capital expansion projects following the expanded entitlements.
- Use parental surveys and feedback to assist with understanding expectations and emerging gaps.
- Review opportunities for provision via school estate capacity, and school based nursery guidance, along with assessment of community venues for suitability.
- Align with Public Health data to forecast demand and need through birth rate data and emerging SEND needs.
- Apply Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) data and scenario planning to forecast supply vs. demand.
- Seek funding through government grants and development opportunities when available.

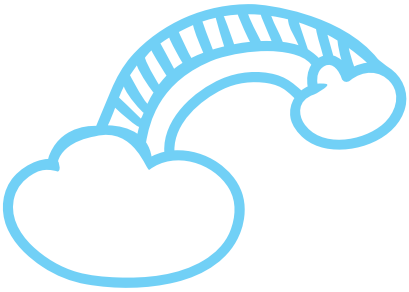
Following consultation feedback, flexibility in early years sufficiency is defined at market and borough level. This means supporting a diverse and responsive childcare market across localities, to meet parental demand with flexible delivery of care, whilst recognising that individual providers operate within staffing, funding, premises, regulatory and business sustainability constraints. Opportunities to use school estate or community provision for early years expansion will be considered only where sites are suitable, sustainable and able to meet local demand.





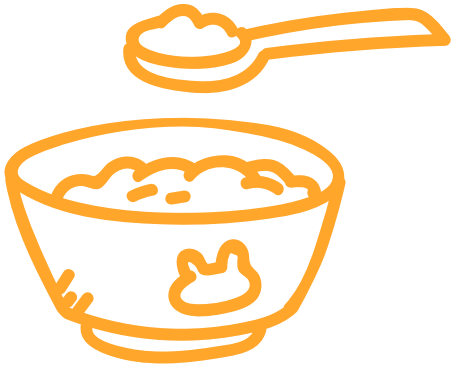












8. Primary

Bracknell Forest's primary education landscape is shaped by a mix of governance models: 41% of schools are academies and 59% are maintained by the local authority.

Primary pupils educated within BFC Maintained School	Primary pupils educated within a MAT
5,165	5,005

N.B. Data source May 2025 School Census return and includes nursery aged children attending a school-based nursery provision.

All primary schools are rated Good or better / have strong Ofsted assessments[3], with popularity influenced by leadership, reputation, location, and perceived quality. This aligns with the Learning Improvement Strategy, which prioritises strong outcomes and high-quality provision across all phases.

Primary Schools	**29**
Secondary School	**6**
All-Through Schools (Academy)	**1**
Special School (Academy)	**2**

Capacity and Sustainability

While the borough holds an overall surplus of primary places, distribution is uneven. Some schools operate at or near capacity, while others—particularly small one-form entry schools (38% of the estate)—face sustained under-enrolment and financial risk. A vulnerable schools sustainability plan is under review to explore viable long-term options.

The local authority of Bracknell Forest comprises of three planning areas for school place planning.[4]

- North planning area
- South planning area
- Crowthorne and Sandhurst planning area

Demand by Area

- North Planning Area: Oversubscription at Kings Academy Binfield, Warfield CofE, and Whitegrove. Surplus at Kings Academy Meadow Vale and Sandy Lane, though the latter's surplus is reducing post-academisation.
- South Planning Area: Crown Wood and Harmans Water remain popular. St Michaels CofE have seen a decline in admission and are operating under PAN; demand can fluctuate due to faith-based admissions.
- Crowthorne and Sandhurst Planning Area: Crowthorne CofE and Uplands are consistently full. Surplus at Owlsmoor and College Town, both impacted by military family mobility.

Challenges

- Surplus places are not located where demand exists, causing both oversubscription and under enrolment. This is impacted by the school locations and reflect historic development, which leads to a mismatch between current family distribution and provision.
- Limited available land restricts opportunities for new schools and/or major expansions.
- Some school sites cannot expand despite having surplus places, due to physical or structural constraints.
- Short term demand spikes in specific year groups require temporary, creative solutions rather than permanent PAN adjustments.
- Rising SEND numbers place added pressure on mainstream schools with future uncertainty following the white paper and SEND reform likely to influence demand.

[3]At the time of writing

[4]See Appendix A, Supporting Data, for a list of schools by planning area

- Vulnerable schools facing financial sustainability issues due to persistent under enrolment and other pressures.
- Housing development and changing residency patterns add uncertainty to long-term projections.

Strategies to Meet Current Challenges

- Refine and apply SCAP based forecasting models to track planning area demand, incorporating the housing and planning pipeline, in year admissions data, and strengthened data sharing with health services.
- Deploy bulge years strategically by identifying schools able to accommodate short term increases without permanent PAN changes, using the Admissions Code to manage temporary spikes.
- Conduct a borough-wide SEND and estate mapping review to identify where mainstream capacity, specialist bases or adaptation of existing estate could support evidenced need. Surplus places will not be treated as suitable provision by default; they will be considered only where the school environment, accommodation, accessibility, staffing model and partnership capacity can support the needs of children and young people.
- Engage in structured dialogue with vulnerable schools through the Vulnerable Schools Sustainability Plan, exploring options and, resource sharing. Maximise use of the existing estate by identifying schools with physical space, preparing readiness plans for activation, and reconfiguring capacity through PAN alterations or site repurposing where appropriate.
- Integrate school place planning more closely with early stages of housing development, ensuring new projects trigger educational provision assessments and secure longer-term S106 contributions.
- Enhance coordinated admissions and transport planning to manage geographic demand and redistribute pupils where feasible.
- Build and maintain strong partnership networks with schools to support swift, collaborative responses to emerging pressures through the School Place Planning Group.





9. Secondary

Bracknell Forest's secondary landscape is predominantly academy-led (84%), with one maintained school. All schools are rated Good or better (or have strong judgements under the new framework)[5], reflecting a strong foundation for quality and outcomes.

Secondary pupils educated within BFC Maintained School	Secondary pupils educated within a MAT
1,476	7,168

N.B. Data source May 2025 School Census

Popularity is shaped by leadership, reputation, offer and Ofsted ratings, aligning with the borough's Learning Improvement Strategy, which prioritise high standards and inclusive provision.

Primary Schools	**29**
Secondary School	**6**
All-Through Schools (Academy)	**1**
Special School (Academy)	**2**

While overall capacity is sufficient, demand is unevenly distributed. Edgbarrow, Ranelagh, and Kings Academy Binfield are consistently oversubscribed. Ranelagh's faith-based admissions and Edgbarrow 's cross-border intake complicate planning. Other schools, such as Garth Hill College and Sandhurst School hold surplus capacity.
The borough's diverse geography supports local transitions, but housing growth and conversions in the north planning area and central areas introduce uncertainty. Strategic planning must remain agile to ensure sufficiency and sustain high-quality provision across all settings.
The local authority of Bracknell Forest comprises of three planning areas for school place planning.[6]

- North planning REA
- South planning area
- Crowthorne and Sandhurst planning area

North Planning Area

- Kings Academy Binfield: Admissions continue to see oversubscription with applications
- Garth Hill College: Under PAN (2025 intake 219 vs PAN 270); surplus capacity in building due to historic PAN reductions.

South Planning Area

- Kings Academy Easthampstead Park: Surplus places historically with a rise in demand and meeting in-take for September 2025.
- Ranelagh: Consistently oversubscribed, admissions prioritised on non-geographic faith criteria.
- The Brakenhale School: Historical oversubscribed, fall in demand from 2024 intake.

Crowthorne and Sandhurst Planning Area

- Edgbarrow: Oversubscribed; has exceeded PAN for some years. To assist with oversubscription school, operate an irregular intake every two years with admitting an additional 30 places over PAN.
- Sandhurst School: Surplus places within this school and continues to hold spaces within this planning area. Planning area houses Sandhurst Royal Military Academy which impacts pupil numbers and transitions from year 6 to year 7 due to military movements which impacts place planning and demand.

Challenges

- Surplus places not aligned with demand.
- Historic school locations misaligned with current population.
- Limited land and physical capacity for expansion.
- Short-term cohort pressures require flexible solutions.
- Rising SEND demand may affect mainstream capacity.
- Financial fragility in under-enrolled schools.
- Housing changes introduce long-term uncertainty.

[5]At the time of writing
[6]See Appendix A, Supporting Data, for a list of school by planning area

Strategies to Meet Current Challenges

- Refine forecasting to track demand shifts and guide planning through the School Place Planning Group.
- Use bulge years to manage short term pressures without permanent PAN changes.
- Map SEND demand across secondary schools to inform inclusive provision, specialist base development and targeted estate planning. Where surplus secondary capacity exists, it will be considered for sufficiency solutions only where it can be adapted to meet evidenced need, support safe and inclusive provision, and avoid undermining the suitability of placements, whilst supporting the wider schools inclusion practice within their ordinarily available provisions (OAP).
- Identify schools with capacity for modest intake increases and maximise estate use.
- Strengthen collaboration with academy trusts to improve admissions coordination.
- Reconfigure the estate through PAN adjustments or site repurposing.
- Embed school place planning early within housing development proposals.
- Expand inclusive provision (specialist bases/ satellite classes) where sustained need exists.
- Coordinate admissions and transport to balance demand and improve access.
- Seek capital funding for targeted expansions in high pressure areas.
- Review designated areas for faith-based schools to improve intake predictability.
- Align secondary planning with post 16 pathways for smoother transitions.
- Strengthen transition planning from primary to secondary for pupils with SEND, including earlier pathway planning, shared demand intelligence and closer alignment between mainstream, specialist and alternative provision.



10. SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

Bracknell Forest is experiencing sustained growth in statutory SEND demand.[7]
Currently, **25%[8] of children with Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) (aged 4–16) are educated outside the borough**.

Parental advocacy drives nearly half of all Education Heath Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests (49%), and a 6% reduction in SEN support suggests increasing escalation to statutory plans.[9]

Bracknell Forest historically had one special school (Kennel Lane School) supporting children and young people with a range of needs, ranging from physical needs and disabilities to neurodiversity needs.

The local authority has been developing essential new provisions to support the increase in demand with further specialist recourse units (specialist bases) using the local area partnership and JSNA to guide priorities. In 2025 Hawthorn Academy was opened, a new SEMH school with phased growth which when at capacity will support 50 children and young people with their secondary education.

The authority has received confirmation that Forest View Academy, a planned autism-specialist school for 100 pupils, has been approved to by the DfE. **These developments are central to the borough's SEND sufficiency.**

The new draft SEND and AP strategy will focus on the four key principles aligning with local and national SEND reforms.

1. **Effective** – support based on evidence to achieve excellent long-term results
2. **Fair** – all schools to have the necessary resources and capabilities to address needs, reducing parental struggles and maintaining clear legal protections
3. **United** – promoting collaboration between education, health and care services, local government, families and experts
4. **Close to home** – ensuring access to local schooling and high-quality specialist provisions for children and young people with complex needs

SEND (SEND Support and / or EHCP) pupils 5-16 within Bracknell Forest Maintained School (excluding SRP places)	SEND Pupils 5-16 educated within a special school or alternative provision setting, (including SRP)
1,065	**1,476**

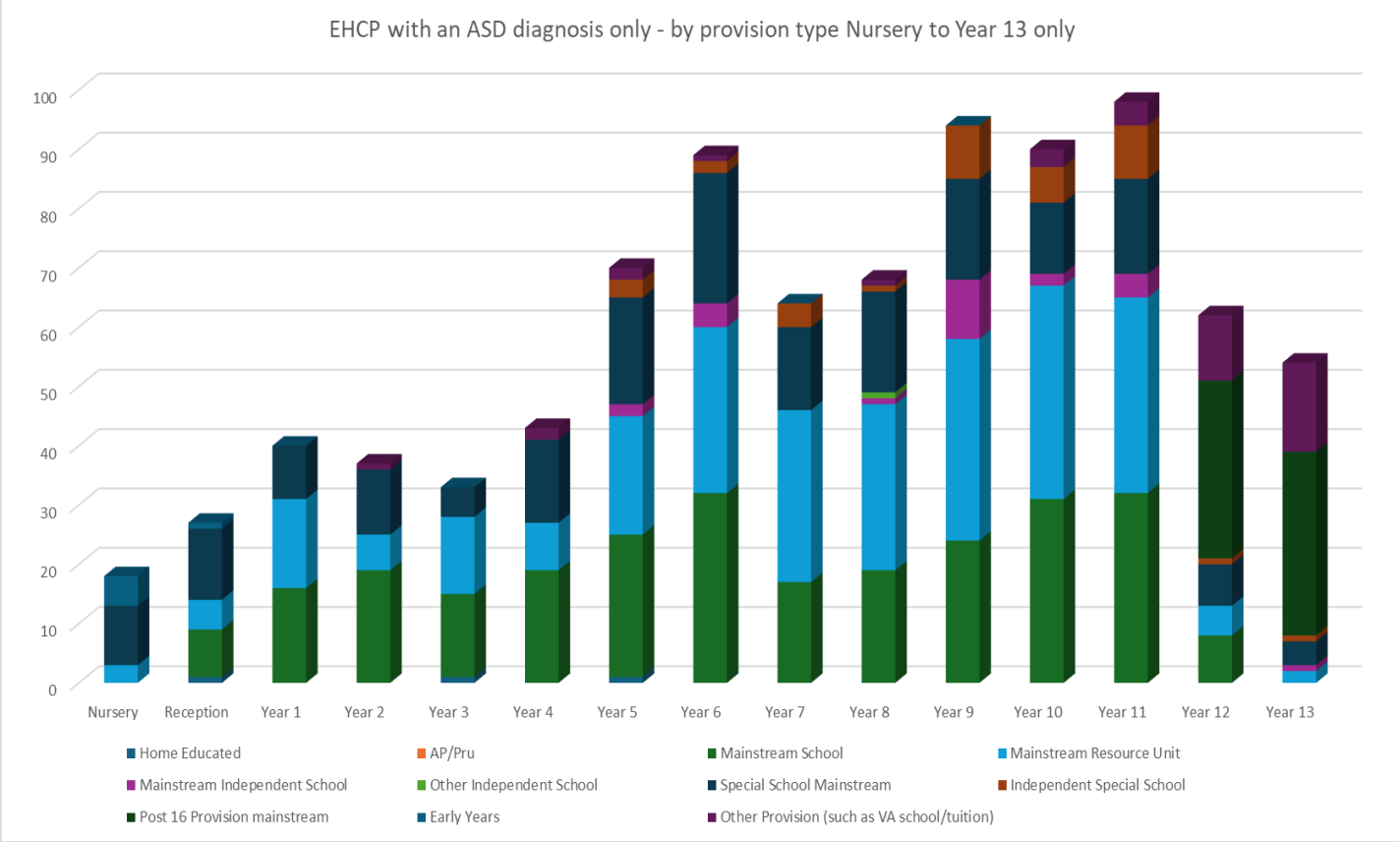
The local authority of Bracknell Forest comprises of three planning areas for school place planning.[10]
- North planning area
- South planning area
- Crowthorne and Sandhurst planning area

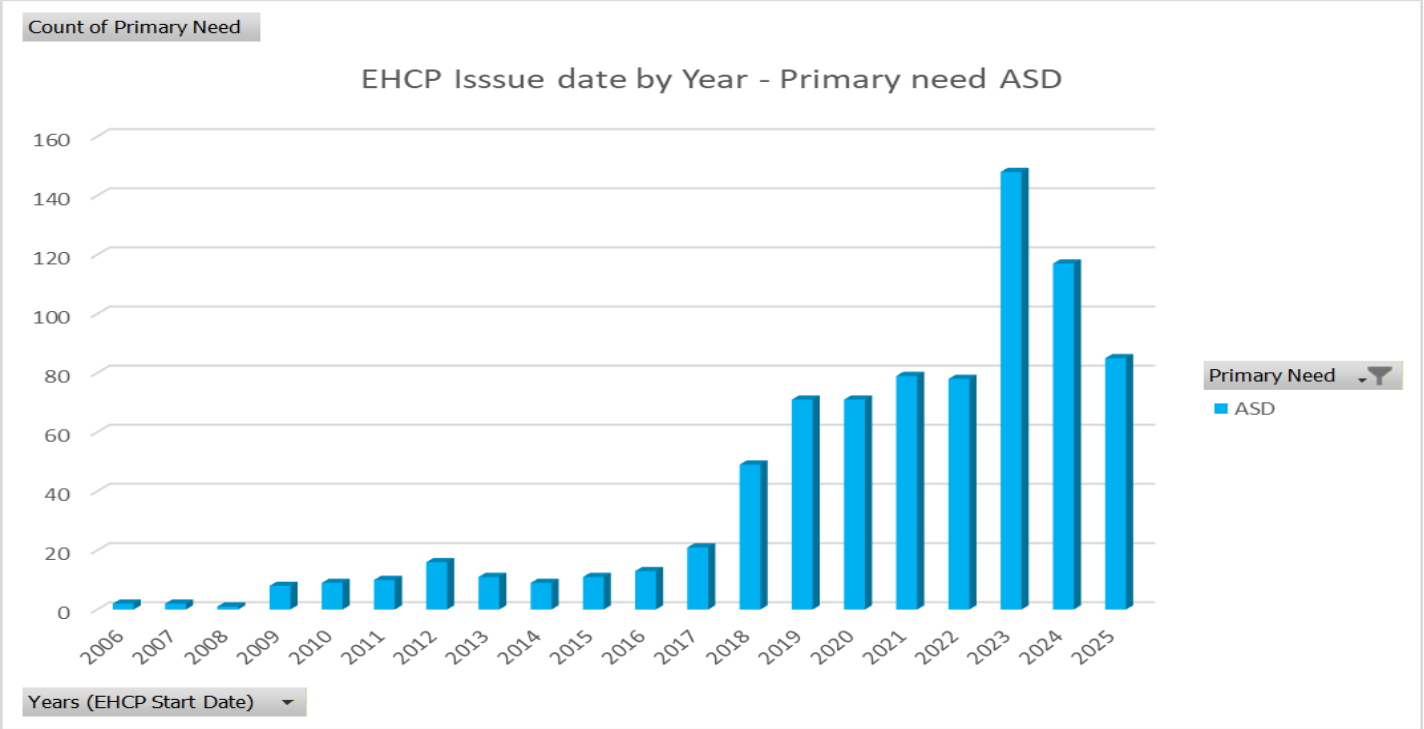
Expansion of provision has been undertaken with the opening of new Specialist resource Units (specialist bases) within schools, primary and secondary, along with the opening of a new secondary SEMH school.

[7] See Appendix A, Supporting Data, Bracknell Forest EHCP growth
[8] Data source: December 2025 SEND EHCP caseload
[9] Data source: EHCNA referral
[10] See Appendix A, Supporting Data, for a list of SEND provision by planning area

Primary Need

Autism (ASD) remains the most prevalent primary need in Bracknell Forest[10].





[10] Data source: December 2025 SEND EHCP caseload

Demand

SEND demand is unevenly distributed, with the north planning area historically hosting the borough's only special school, while the new SEMH school (Hawthorn Academy) currently operates from a temporary site in Crowthorne and Sandhurst planning area and is planned to relocate to the north planning area in 2027. Forest View School, the newly approved autism through school will be built within the Crowthorne and Sandhurst planning area. Admissions to SEND provision are based on assessed need rather than geographical, and the borough is moving toward a needs led model to ensure provision remains flexible and responsive to current cohorts rather than diagnosis.

Admissions to specialist SEND provision will continue to be based on assessed need. However, sufficiency planning will increasingly use shared need profiles, EHCP trend analysis, placement data, school readiness, estate mapping and pathway planning to understand demand and plan the right mix of provision. This supports a needs-led approach, rather than planning solely by diagnosis or by available places.

Reliance on independent placements remains necessary where local provision cannot meet complex needs. These pressures directly align with the national issues identified in the **SEND Reform White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving**, which sets out a new, more consistent national system, including Individual Support Plans and strengthened mainstream inclusion, to reduce escalation to statutory plans and lessen dependence on out-of-borough or independent placements.

The development of Hawthorn Academy and the planned Forest View Academy, alongside specialist bases and inclusive mainstream provision, are central to increasing suitable in-borough placements. The local authority will continue to recognise that some children and young people will require highly specialist or independent provision where this is the right placement for their needs, but the strategic direction is to reduce avoidable reliance on out-of-borough placements by developing a stronger local continuum.

Challenges

- Sustained growth in EHCPs, ASD, SEMH and complex needs demand.
- Workforce, funding and implementation pressures affect the pace of provision development.
- The need to align local sufficiency planning with national SEND reform and the local SEND and AP Strategy.
- Land and Expansion Constraints: No/Limited spare land for new schools; only major housing linked developments are viable, so planning must focus on maximising and reconfiguring existing estate.
- Limited Physical Capacity: Some schools have surplus places on roll but cannot expand meaningfully due to site and building constraints.
- SEND Pressures in Mainstream: Rising numbers of SEND pupils in mainstream create capacity and staffing pressures.
- Financial Impact on Schools: Reduced economies of scale and increasing SEND cohorts require structural, governance, or partnership solutions to maintain long-term school viability.
- Independent Placements: Ongoing reliance on independent sector placements persists due to insufficient local specialist provision.
- Funding and Capacity Challenges: Uncertainty over national funding, lack of in-borough capacity to meet rising ASD and SEMH demand, and financial pressures linked to Safety Valve obligations.
- Parental Demand: Increasing parental expectations and requests for statutory assessment (including via private assessments) drive further demand for specialist provision from the local authority.

Strategies to Meet Current Challenges

- Increase suitable in-borough placements through specialist school development, specialist bases, satellite provision and inclusive mainstream planning.
- Use a needs-led sufficiency model based on assessed need, shared need profiles, EHCP trends, placement patterns and transition data.
- Apply a suitability test before using existing school estate, including demand, adaptability, accessibility, compliance, safeguarding and staffing considerations.

- Strengthen early transition planning, particularly for Year 6 to Year 7 and post-16 pathways.
- Align all SEND sufficiency decisions with the SEND and AP Strategy, national SEND reform and annual review arrangements.
- Use the SEND Reform Sufficiency Group as the strategic forum for provision creation, SEND demand oversight and in-borough placement growth.
- Ensure that operational place planning, admissions, forecasting and school capacity considerations continue through the School Place Planning Group.

Strategic delivery through SEND reform sufficiency governance: The SEND Reform Sufficiency Group will oversee the strategic delivery of local SEND sufficiency priorities, including the growth of suitable in-borough placements, development of specialist bases, implementation of national reform expectations and alignment with the SEND and AP Strategy. This group will complement the School Place Planning Group by focusing on provision creation, demand oversight and strategic sufficiency, while operational place planning, admissions and annual forecasting continue through existing school place planning routes.







11. Post-16 (mainstream)

Bracknell Forest's post-16 landscape is becoming increasingly complex, shaped by demographic growth, diverse learner needs and a mixed provider base. The local authority's priority is to ensure all young people, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, can access high quality, appropriate pathways into adulthood.

Post-16 sufficiency planning will include mainstream sixth forms, FE, specialist post-16 provision, alternative pathways and preparation for adulthood. Consultation feedback highlighted the need to strengthen references to young people who may require flexible or alternative routes, including those with SEND, those at risk of NEET and those whose needs are not fully met by traditional academic pathways. The local authority will work with schools, FE providers, specialist settings, employers and partners to understand gaps in local pathways and to develop provision that supports progression, independence, employment and preparation for adulthood. This includes considering how local provision can reduce unnecessary out-of-borough travel where an appropriate in-borough pathway can be developed.

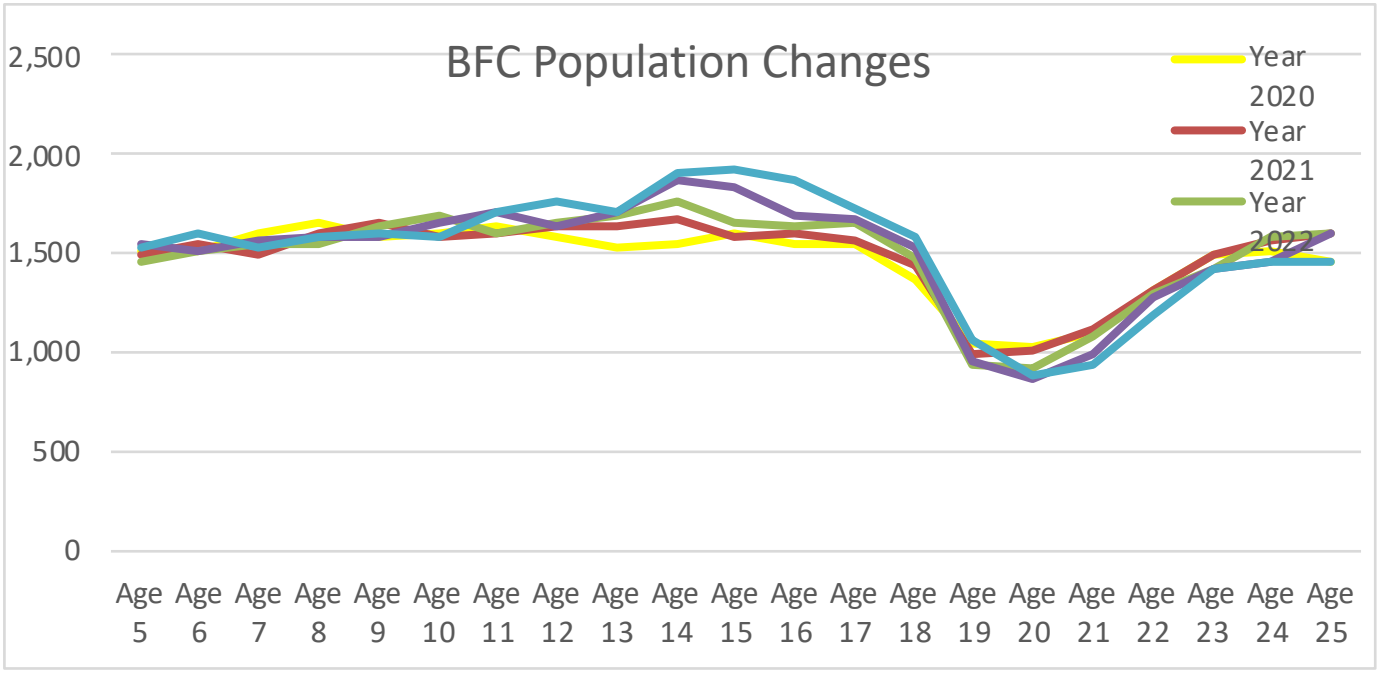
Key strategic drivers include:

Demographic growth: Rising numbers of 15–17-year-olds signal increasing demand for post-16 provision.

Provider landscape: A mix of school sixth forms, FE colleges, and specialist settings support a diverse cohort, though capacity and curriculum breadth vary.

Destination patterns: While many learners remain in-borough, a significant proportion transition to out-of-area providers, reflecting both choice and potential gaps in the local offer.
Vulnerable cohorts: Outcomes for SEND learners, care-experienced young people, and those eligible for FSM are tracked.

Post-pandemic recovery: Impact of COVID-19 continues to shape learner engagement, particularly for those whose education was disrupted during key transition phases.[12]



[12] Data Source: Nomis (official census and labour market statistics)

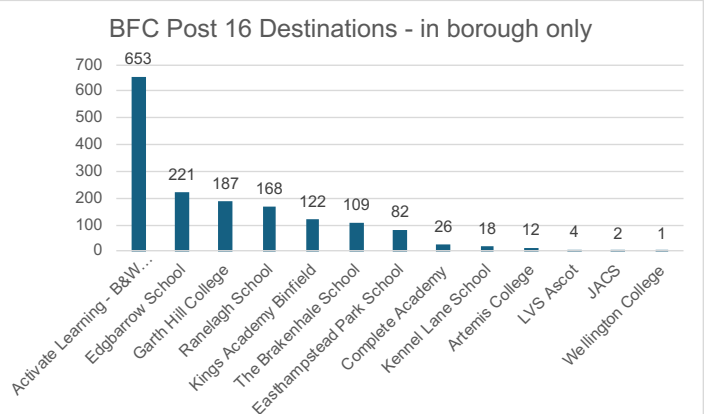
Demand
The 15-year-old cohort rose from 1,596 in 2020 to 1,919 in 2024. A dip at age 18 suggests outward migration, with numbers rising again from age 21. Nationally, the 16–18 population is expected to peak in 2029.[13]

Infrastructure Factors[14]
Provision is concentrated around a few key providers:

- Activate Learning – Bracknell and Wokingham College serve 653 students (40.8% of in-borough learners).
- School sixth forms (Edgbarrow, Garth Hill, Ranelagh, Kings Academy Binfield) support academic progression.
- Smaller and specialist providers (LVS, JACS, Wellington College) cater to niche or high-needs cohorts.

Out-of-borough destinations reflect curriculum gaps:

1. Farnborough Sixth Form: 10.6%
2. Farnborough College of Technology: 5.9%
3. Reading College: 4.9%
4. Berkshire College of Agriculture: 4.3%



Challenges
Strategic challenges include:

- Rising demand in high-pressure providers
- Incomplete data for vulnerable groups
- Sustaining engagement post-pandemic
- Ensuring curriculum diversity and equitable access

Strategies to Meet Current Challenges
Short-Term (1–2 Years):
Enhance data systems to track outcomes for all cohorts

- Strengthen transition support and early intervention
- Expand flexible entry points (internships, traineeships)
- Facilitate provider coordination
- Use KS4 attendance and attainment data to identify at-risk learners

Medium-Term (3–5 Years):

- Invest in high-demand institutions and curriculum gaps
- Formalise out-of-area pathways for continuity
- Co-design inclusive programmes with employers and partners
- Commission specialist provision based on data
- Support workforce development to meet diverse learner needs

[13] Data Source: Nomis (official census and labour market statistics)
[14] Data Source: Bracknell Forest data, Capita ONE May 2025

12. Education Transport

Education transport remains a significant pressure within the council, with costs consistently overspent and demand rising year-on-year. Growth in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has been a key driver, alongside continued reliance on placements outside the borough.

Concerns regarding the length of journey time impacting education is a prime factor for reducing reliance on out-of-borough placement to enhance pupil experience.

Currently, around a quarter of children with EHCPs attend schools beyond our borders, increasing the requirement for costly taxi and public transport provision.

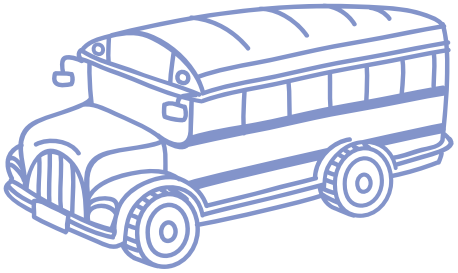
SEND Provision and Local Placement with Transport
The expansion of in-borough SEND provision is central to reducing transport pressures. The new SEMH secondary school (opened in September 2025) and the planned all-through ASD school are designed to meet the needs of children currently placed out of area. Together with increased specialist resource provision in mainstream schools, these developments will:

- Reduce reliance on long-distance and costly transport
- Improve children's daily experience by minimising travel times
- Support the council's commitment to inclusion and the Safety Valve Programme

By aligning transport policy with statutory guidance and investing in local SEND capacity, the council will reduce costs, improve pupil experience, review sustainable travel solution to align with the climate change project team, whilst ensuring that more children are educated closer to home within borough schools.







13. Elective Home Education and School Attendance

Elective Home Education (EHE)
EHE referrals continue to rise, with 24 new cases this academic year (10 primary, 14 secondary)[15]. Parental choice remains a key driver. If all EHE pupils returned, secondary capacity would be significantly strained.

Return rates remain low:
- **2023–24:** 17%
- **2024–25:** 12%
- **Primary:** 7% to 4%
- **Secondary:** Stable at 16%

EHE trends are monitored through SCAP data return, admissions, and operational insight. No immediate return surge is expected, but planning remains responsive.

Attendance Strategy
The 2025–2028 strategy promotes a "support first" approach, linking attendance to wellbeing and outcomes. For sufficiency planning, it reinforces the need for accessible, inclusive school environments and attention to transport and location factors.



[15] Data Source: Bracknell Forest EHE Register

14. Factors and Data source impacting place planning

School place planning in Bracknell Forest is informed by a combination of statutory data, local intelligence and forward looking assessments, including:

- **DfE School Capacity (SCAP) returns –** annual statutory data on pupil numbers, capacity and forecasts.
- **Birth rate and population data –** local ONS data and health intelligence (including Hospital local trust data and birth registrations).
- **Housing growth and phasing –** local plan allocations, major developments and delivery timelines.
- **School census and admissions data –** on roll numbers, PAN, surplus/pressure points and in year movement.
- **SEND data –** EHCP caseload trends, primary need, placement patterns and tribunal activity.
- **Early years sufficiency data –** Childcare Sufficiency Assessment outcomes and take up of funded entitlements.
- **Parental preference and mobility trends –** through cross border flows, faith based admissions and EHE patterns, early years demand, school age children care requirements.
- **School estate constraints –** site capacity, deliverability of expansion, and condition priorities.
- **Transport and accessibility considerations –** journey times, costs and sustainability impact.
- **National policy and funding changes –** including SEND reform, capital funding rules and entitlement changes.

These factors will be reviewed through the annual SCAP cycle, local sufficiency review and relevant governance routes. The review will consider demographic change, pupil forecasts, SEND demand, EHCP trends, placement patterns, early years sufficiency, housing growth, estate use, transport and accessibility, consultation feedback and national reform requirements. Findings will inform both operational school place planning and strategic SEND sufficiency planning.



15. Strategic Partnerships and Cross-Authority Planning

Bracknell Forest recognises that effective school place planning is inherently collaborative, requiring strong partnerships both internally across departments and externally with neighbouring authorities and regional networks.

Internal Collaboration

School place planning is embedded within wider strategic priorities through joint working with Planning and Housing, SEND, Admissions, Education and Learning, Education Welfare, transport, commissioning, schools, academy trusts, early years providers, post-16 providers and neighbouring authorities. The School Place Planning Group will remain the operational forum for school place planning, admissions, forecasting and annual sufficiency review. The SEND Reform Sufficiency Group will provide the strategic forum for SEND sufficiency, provision creation, in-borough placement growth and alignment with SEND reform and the local SEND and AP Strategy.

External Collaboration

- Cross-boundary planning is essential where schools serve shared designated areas or attract pupils from outside the borough. Key partnerships include:
- Neighbouring authorities for aligned forecasting and pupil flow management.
- Schools with wider catchments, ensuring their capacity is factored into local planning.
- Regional and national networks such as SEBDOG and EBDOG, enabling benchmarking, shared learning, and policy influence.
- Through these partnerships the authority strengthens our ability to plan proactively, respond to change, and deliver a resilient education system that meets the needs of all pupils across the borough and beyond.



16. Consultation Feedback

The full consultation and engagement activity demonstrated strong support for the Education Sufficiency Strategy 2026–2031 and its ambition to secure the right education, in the right place, at the right time. Feedback from residents, parents and carers, children and young people, education providers and professional stakeholders supported the overall strategic direction, structure and the focus on needs-led planning, local SEND sufficiency, effective use of the education estate and stronger partnership working.

Consultation theme	What respondents told us	Amendment made in the final strategy
Suitable provision	Provision must be suitable to assessed need, not simply available.	Wording has been strengthened across the strategy to clarify that the aim is the right place for each child or young person, and that existing places will only be used where they can provide suitable provision.
Needs-led SEND planning	SEND provision should be planned around need, not diagnosis alone.	The SEND section has been strengthened to explain that sufficiency planning will use shared need profiles, demand data and pathway planning to inform specialist provision, specialist bases and mainstream inclusion. References made to JSNA.
Existing estate and surplus capacity	Stakeholders supported effective use of the estate but were concerned that surplus capacity must not override suitability.	The strategy now makes clear that surplus capacity will only be considered where it can be adapted to meet evidenced need, comply with relevant standards and support suitable sustainable provision.
Early years flexibility	Providers supported inclusive early foundations but asked for realistic language on flexibility and sustainability.	The early years section now defines flexibility at borough and market level, parental demand operationally, whilst recognising provider constraints including staffing, premises, funding and business sustainability.
Post-16 and alternative provision	Feedback asked for stronger attention to post-16, FE, AP and alternative or innovative pathways, particularly for young people at risk of becoming NEET.	The post-16 section has been strengthened to include local pathway development, specialist progression routes, FE alignment, alternative pathways and preparation for adulthood.

Consultation theme	What respondents told us	Amendment made in the final strategy
Transitions across phases	Sufficiency planning should consider onward pathways, not isolated phases.	The strategy now makes clearer that planning considers transitions from early years to primary, primary to secondary, secondary to post-16 and preparation for adulthood.
Alignment with SEND reform and SEND/AP strategy	Respondents asked for clearer alignment with national SEND reform and local SEND/AP plans.	The strategy now references national SEND reform, the local SEND and AP Strategy, the SEND Reform Sufficiency Group and annual review points.
Transport and accessibility	Housing growth, safe travel routes, journey times and accessibility should inform sufficiency planning.	Transport and accessibility wording has been strengthened in the education transport section.
Annual review and governance	Feedback asked for clarity on how demographic change, SEND demand, estate use and feedback will be reviewed.	Governance wording has been amended to explain the complementary roles of the School Place Planning Group and the SEND Reform Sufficiency Group.
Feedback outside the scope of the strategy	Many comments related to wider SEND, funding, workforce, mental health, attendance, transport, curriculum and service delivery issues.	The strategy now includes a clear statement that out-of-scope feedback will be retained, routed to relevant service areas and considered through appropriate strategic workstreams.

Feedback outside the direct scope of this strategy remains important and has been retained as part of the consultation evidence base. Where comments relate to SEND service delivery, individual placement decisions, thresholds, funding, workforce, training, specialist expertise, mental health, attendance, EBSA, curriculum, transport or other wider system issues, these will be shared with the relevant service areas and strategic workstreams, so they are not lost.

17. References and Supporting Strategies

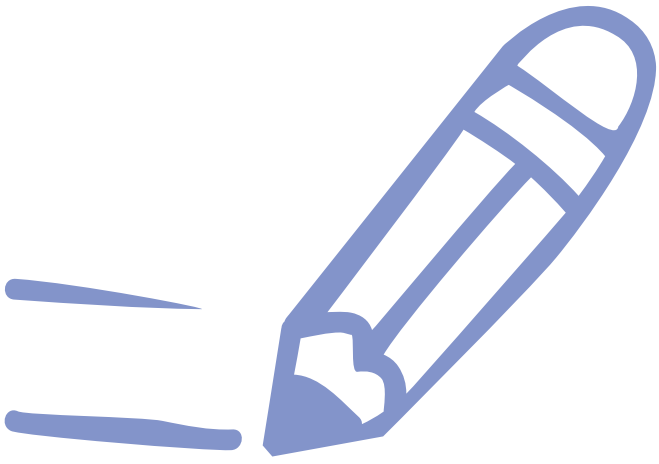
Strategies, plans and policies | Bracknell Forest Council
SEND Reform Plan
Learning Improvement Strategy
Commission Plan
Priority Action Plan (Ofsted outcome workstream)
Transport Policy
SEND and AP Strategy
National Strategies and Policies
DfE Estate Strategy
Childrens Wellbeing and Schools Act
DfE Every Child Achieving and Thriving

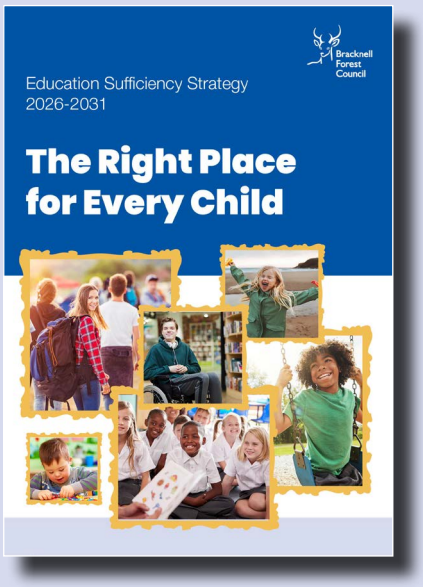
18. External documents and relevant documents

https://www.nfer.ac.uk/for-schools/free-resources-and-advice-for-schools/research-bites-for-schools/strategies-for-schools-facing-falling-pupil-numbers/
Graduated Approach
Primary Planning ordinarily available provision
Link to white paper
Link to Children's Commissioner Report
Link to Education Committee Report
Bracknell Forest JSNA

Appendices

Appendix A – Supporting data (internal use only)





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