
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
Cabinet

12th March 2026
17th March 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor Dr K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director for Children and Education Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme 2025 - 2029

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals will significantly affect all wards.

Executive Summary:

Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 Coventry City Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education. It is the City Council's role to plan, commission, and organise school places in a way that raises standards and manages supply and demand.

The Coventry One Strategic Plan sets out pupil forecasts for primary and secondary schools, and Special Education Needs (SEND), across education planning areas in response to pupil cohorts across the city. It is proposed that this Strategy will be a flexible plan, which is able to adapt to shifting mechanisms of parental preference, unforeseen changes in supply and demand of school places, and future birth rates. To do this, officers regularly review school place planning, and the One Strategic Plan will be monitored and updated annually with presentation to the Cabinet.

There is commitment through a statement of intent to: collaborate and work in partnership to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Coventry; ensure the sustainability of Coventry schools; and to enable the City Council to meet its statutory obligations. The options within the Strategic Plan have been discussed at Coventry Education Partnership meetings, which include academy trust CEOs, headteachers and education colleagues from across the city.

The Strategy outlined within the One Strategic Plan appendix is in line with Department for Education (DfE) statutory requirements to:

- i. Spend capital funding efficiently
- ii. Safeguard the quality of places in the system
- iii. Utilise spare capacity in the estate where it exists.

Capital allocations to meet projected shortfalls in provision are provided by the DfE to all Local Authorities based on the data provided in the annual School Capacity return (SCAP). Demand for places, minus the supply of places, is multiplied by a cost per pupil place to inform the final allocation. This return informs the DfE of the expected change in pupil numbers over the medium term, the current capacity of schools to meet those numbers, and the planned changes to that capacity. Funding is also secured via S106 contributions from housing developers in response to new housing estates. The proposed programme of work is fully funded utilising existing resources as set out within the education capital programme.

From the 2021/22 academic year there has been a large increase in the number of pupils moving into the city in-year. The impact of this in-year movement has been that more places are required in schools than originally forecast, using up spare capacity, and causing sufficiency pressures in some year groups. In response a review and update of pupil forecast methodology has taken place, and additional school expansions identified within this report. Since September 2024 in-year growth has decreased, and we continue to factor a range of growth expectations to inform forecasts and ensure sufficient supply of school places.

Since the academic year 2021/2022 bulge classes have been introduced at nine primary schools across the city in Years 1 to 5. This increase in demand has also required expansions in secondary schools, particularly in Years 7 and 8. These measures have helped address immediate pressures on school capacity; however, further expansion will be necessary to ensure sufficient school places are available to meet future forecast demand. Ongoing planning and funding will be essential to maintain access to quality education as the pupil population changes.

Recommendations:

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to consider the report and make any comments/recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider any comments/recommendations from Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.
2. Authorise the programme of work outlined within the proposed Coventry One Strategic Plan for Primary, Secondary and Special Educational Needs Education as set out in appendix 1.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Children and Education Services to agree the most appropriate procurement route for works to be delivered and awarded.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1: One Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme
Cabinet Report – 10th June 2025

[Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme 2024 – 2028](#)

Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme
Cabinet Report – 13th February 2024

[Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme 2023 - 2027.pdf](#)

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes - Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 12th March 2025

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

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1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. The Coventry One Strategic Plan sets out pupil forecasts for primary and secondary schools, and Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND), in response to changing pupil cohorts across the city. It outlines the strategy proposed by the City Council and the Coventry Education Partnership to provide the additional places required in all phases of education (Early Years, Primary, Secondary and SEND) from 2025 – 2029.
- 1.2. The City Council holds the statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of places. This is done in consultation with all schools including Academies and Free Schools, where admissions arrangements are outside of City Council control. Early discussions and partnership with all schools is crucial to delivering the required number of school places across the city.
- 1.3. There is an expectation that Local Authorities ensure a level of surplus capacity across mainstream provision. This is necessary to deal with fluctuations in population and growth, support parental preference, and help manage in-year movement.
- 1.4. In response to increased pupil numbers in Coventry bulge classes have been created at 9 primary schools in the city across years 1 to 5, and at secondary in years 7 and 8. Further expansion is required to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet forecast demand.
- 1.5. The Department for Education (DfE) provides each Local Authority with an annual update on the estimated cost of providing a school place nationally with a local variation. Coventry uses these figures to inform their S106 contributions from housing developers. Accordingly, the cost per pupil place as outlined in the appendix has been updated to reflect this change.

2. Primary

- 2.1. The birth rate across Coventry for Reception entry from 2024 to 2028 is increasing slightly each year in comparison to the previous decline between 2012 and 2023. Although these increases are relatively small, they are a stable picture of just over 4,000 births per academic year in the city.
- 2.2. The current Year 5 cohort is currently the largest cohort in Coventry primary schools with circa 4,660 pupils. The year 5 cohort is due to transition to secondary schools in September 2027.
- 2.3. The current forecast is that in-year application levels have begun to stabilise, following the significant growth seen in 22/23 and 23/24. While this has eased immediate pressure in some areas, the impact of the growth continues to challenge sufficiency as larger cohorts move through the primary phase.
- 2.4. In September 2024 bulge classes were opened in the following Primary Schools: All Saints Church of England, Hill Farm, Frederick Bird Academy, Charter Academy, John Gulson and Howes. This was to ensure sufficiency of places, but also considered viability for schools, and value for money.

- 2.5. Further expansion of primary provision is expected to be focused in areas where there is significant planned new housing. Land for new primary provision has been identified in Keresley and Eastern Green to allow new schools to open when there is sufficient demand for new places. The timing of this is linked to build out rates of the housing developments.

3. Secondary

- 3.1. Since September 2018, additional capacity has been added into the secondary sector to provide for the larger cohorts identified through pupil forecasts. As agreed at Coventry Education Partnership meetings, the plan has been to deliver and adopt a model of both permanent and temporary expansions to ensure sufficiency of places, viability for schools, and value for money. Temporary expansions are for a single year (e.g. Year 7 increase which moves through the school until the cohort reaches Year 11). Adopting a mixed economy model of permanent and temporary expansions will support the future viability of schools and in the longer term will allow for a more flexible approach to be adopted by increasing and reducing capacity as required.
- 3.2. Phase one (2018 to 2021) resulted in the creation of 544 additional Year 7 places through a combination of temporary and permanent expansions at 16 Secondary schools in Coventry.
- 3.3. Phase two (2022-2024) focused on addressing the projected shortfall of school places through the creation of additional temporary bulge classes. This was done to ensure sufficient surplus places across the city. For 2024, plans were adjusted (from 6 to 10 forms of entry) in response to a rise in in-year applications. During this period 810 additional places were created across 11 secondary schools in Coventry.
- 3.4. Phase three (2024-2027) was developed to ensure sufficient future secondary school places for additional pupils from in-year admissions (academic years 21/22 - 23/24) in the primary sector. Phase three will be reviewed annually in line with the updated pupil forecasts and expansion plans adjusted if required. Since 2018 there have been temporary or permanent expansions at 19 out of 22 secondary schools in the city. Due to site constraints, and other factors, most existing schools have limited ability to expand further.
- 3.5. The Education Service has worked in partnership with schools to either re-utilise former bulge (temporary) classes or introduce new bulge (temporary) classes as part of the One Strategic Plan 2018-2024.
- 3.6. Local Authorities are required to ensure there is a level of surplus capacity to meet parental preference, manage in-year movement, and account for variations in pupil population. The strategy outlines a plan to ensure there is at least 2% surplus capacity in Year 7 places through the admissions coordinated scheme. This proactive measure should also reduce the need for future reactive bulge classes.
- 3.7. Based on current forecasts, including the reduced in-year growth seen last academic year, it is expected additional capacity will be required up to and including 2029. Beyond this date the need for places will depend on future levels of in-year movement, birth rates, and other national policies. The City Council will continue to

work with all schools to manage the supply and demand for school places, including consideration for published admission number (PAN) reduction, where appropriate.

- 3.8. There are 3 further secondary school expansions planned for September 2027, these are President Kennedy, Westwood and Cardinal Wiseman. Work is underway to deliver the additional space required on the existing school sites. These expansions are subject to planning consent and delivery of building works.

4. Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)

- 4.1. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure, that all pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) receive the provision required to meet their assessed needs. Coventry has 8 special school provisions, and 10 specialist provisions delivered in the form of resourced centres/units in mainstream schools. This is to ensure provision can meet the continuum of needs.
- 4.2. Recent evidenced growth in need, alongside an increase in in-year admissions and extended retention in post 16 provision (specifically in the areas of learning disability, complex communication) has placed an unprecedented level of demand on the specialist system. This reflects the national position.
- 4.3. Since 2016 the City Council have seen a 130% increase in the number of EHCPs maintained. This is in line with the national position. If this rate of growth continues for the next five years it is forecast for Coventry to maintain just over 5,000 EHCPs by 2030. This level of growth is larger than the mainstream population growth meaning a higher proportion of children within Coventry have identified additional needs than in previous years. Broadly 42% of children with an EHCP are placed in mainstream schools, 33% in special schools, 12% in further education and 13% have other arrangements including independent sector or Alternative Provision. The total proportion of EHCPs maintained for young people aged 17 to 25 is approximately 20%.
- 4.4. Between September 2017 and 2025 there have been 500 places added across the eight special schools and have included a combination of permanent building projects and reconfiguration of existing space within schools. Over the last academic year, a new secondary Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP) has opened at Blue Coat Secondary School and further primary ERP's are being developed. This report details further expansion required.

5. Options considered and recommended proposal.

5.1. Primary Schools options and recommended proposal

- 5.1.1 Land has been identified for primary provision at 2 large housing developments in the city, one at Eastern Green Sustainable Urban Environment (SUE) and the other as part of the Keresley SUE. These remain crucial to ensuring sufficiency of places in the longer term whilst the housing developments are in progress and completed. The option to relocate and expand existing schools is also being explored, and the projects will be progressed in line with receipt of funding and demand for places in the area.

5.1.2 Expansion of Keresley Grange Primary School to 2 forms of entry (60 PAN) will provide an interim solution to the current pressure on places in this area of the city. Keresley Grange Primary School currently has a PAN of 45, requiring the operation mixed year group classes. The school is over capacity, and this is putting significant pressure on teaching spaces, capital investment will provide a solution to this.

5.1.3 The Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) is currently developing proposals to enhance the school estate by providing investment for solar panels, plantroom insulation and heating improvements. The funding for this programme of work is still undecided but is likely to involve a power purchase agreement (PPA) rather than grant funding. The schools will also benefit from education engagement sessions via the SEP Social Value Fund.

5.2 **Secondary School options and recommended proposal**

5.2.1 The approach in phases one to three has created flexible provision that allows schools to be flex in response to sufficiency requirements (e.g. increase and reduce PAN as required). This approach has been effective in responding to the City's sufficiency challenges and has demonstrated efficient use of resources. It is planned that provision added in previous phases (e.g. temporary expansion) is re-utilised to provide additional classes required for future need, as required.

5.2.2 The largest cohort in the city is currently year 5, this cohort moves through to secondary in September 2027. To ensure sufficient school places, expansions are underway at President Kennedy, Westwood and Cardinal Wiseman. Each school will require capital investment, as set out in the capital programme and this will allow expansion by 3 forms of entry in total.

5.2.3 Based on current projections and existing admission trends it is anticipated that following these expansions, there will be no further requirement for additional secondary school places. Pupil number forecasts are regularly reviewed for accuracy and will be monitored and updated as appropriate.

5.3 **Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Options**

5.3.1 Building projects at Baginton Fields, Woodfield and Sherbourne Fields special schools have commenced to provide additional specialist school places. These projects will add circa. 190 additional places in a phased approach.

5.3.2 In addition to the expansion of special schools, additional school places are being created by adding ERP's within mainstream schools. There are currently 10 ERPs across the city accommodating 8-12 pupils per provision. The Education Service is planning to open a further 3 primary and 1 secondary ERP in 2026/27 and subject to expected policy direction in the white paper further are planned in subsequent years.

5.4 **Finance**

5.4.1 Basic need capital funding is allocated to Local Authorities to meet the demand for pupil places. Allocations have been announced up to the 27/28 academic year.

5.4.2 The City Council alongside other Local Authorities receives dedicated capital funding towards the expansion of special schools and alternative provision. It is

proposed the funds will be utilised to facilitate the relocation and expansion of Woodfield Special School and address building works required for expansion at Baginton Special School. The next allocation of High Needs Capital Funding is due to be announced in Spring 2026.

- 5.4.3 In the previous One Strategic Plan report (June 2025) the total capital programme resources reported were £243,102,422. No additional basic need grant has been awarded due to 2027/28 allocation being confirmed last year. There has been additional Section 106 funding secured to the value of £9,450,899, bringing the total capital programme resources to £252,553,321. This funding has been allocated against existing or planned projects as outlined within the updated One Strategic Plan.

Total Education Capital Programme resources (since 2019)	£252,553,321
Actual spend 19/20 - 24/25	£88,523,754
Forecast project spend 25/26 to 28/29	£107,444,755
Future projects required beyond 28/29	£56,584,812

6 Results of consultation undertaken

- 6.1 The City Council have consulted with headteachers via Coventry Education Partnership meetings when updating the One Strategic Plan. All schools must consult when undergoing changes to PAN, the City Council is responsible for conducting the consultation for maintained schools. Academies are required to consult for their expansion and inform the Department of Education of this consultation.

7 Timetable for implementing this decision

The timescale for the One Strategic Plan is set out in the following table:

Activity	Approximate Timing
Consultation with Primary, Secondary and SEND Headteachers via Coventry Education Partnership meetings	January 2025 – January 2026
Report to Cabinet for adoption of the policy set out in the One Strategic Plan and recommendations	March 2026

8 Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law, Governance and Safer Communities

8.1 Financial implications

- 8.1.1 Capital resources for the One Strategic Plan are a cumulation of several funding streams. Project costs are also indicative until the point of awarding contracts and therefore may differ from those currently anticipated.
- 8.1.2 The overall programme of works may need to be adjusted to ensure spend is not committed above the available resource and balanced against sufficiency requirements.
- 8.1.3 The revenue cost of places in mainstream schools is funded via the Schools Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Within the Schools Block there is also a Growth Fund allocation, which enables revenue support to schools with in-year pupil growth which is not otherwise immediately recognised by the lagged funding system.
- 8.1.4 The revenue cost of places in specialist provisions for pupils with SEND is funded via the High Needs Block element of the DSG. This is an area of financial pressure at both a national and local level. Coventry continues to experience growth in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans but currently has an overall DSG surplus reserve balance. It has been announced that from 2028/29 onwards funding implications will be managed within the overall government Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) envelope, such that the government will not expect local authorities to need to fund future SEND costs from general funds. It is therefore key that the Council monitors the position and manages resources effectively to ensure that it remains within funding allocations (including the use of the DSG reserve) as far as is possible up to March 2028.
- 8.1.5 The government has confirmed they are committed to supporting local authorities who have accrued High Needs revenue deficits as the sector transitions to a reformed SEND system. The first phase of support will address historic deficits accrued up to the end of 2025/26. All local authorities with a High Needs deficit as of March 2026 (not applicable to Coventry) will be eligible to receive a High Needs Stability Grant covering 90% of their accrued deficit. The government will confirm at a later stage what support will be provided for any deficits arising in 2026/27 and 2027/28. They will take an appropriate and proportionate approach, though support in these years will not be unlimited. A Schools White Paper will be published in early 2026, which will detail changes to the SEND system and a requirement for Local Authorities to have a SEND Local Reform plan.

8.2 Legal implications

- 8.2.1 Section (S) 13 of the Education Act 1996 places the Local Authority under a duty to promote high standards and fair access to education. S14 of the Education Act 1996 sets out the Local Authority's duty to secure sufficient schools in their area, and to consider the need to secure provision for children with SEND. This includes a duty to respond to parents' representations about school provision.

8.2.2 The Local Authority retains broad discretion in fulfilling its duty under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure sufficient school places, but it must follow statutory processes when proposing to establish, discontinue, or alter schools. These procedures are outlined in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, as amended. Non-compliance with these statutory requirements can render proposed changes invalid and may prompt intervention by the Department for Education (DfE). While reductions to the published admission number (PAN) of maintained mainstream schools do not fall under the School Organisation Regulations, such changes must comply with consultation requirements set out in the current School Admissions Code (last updated 2021). Depending on the type of school, the responsible admission authority—whether it be the Local Authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, the governing body for voluntary aided and foundation schools, or the academy trust for academies—must consult appropriately before making changes.

8.2.3 The School Admissions Code provides that when changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) that will apply for admission applications the following school year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period. Community and Voluntary Controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools' Adjudicator if the PAN proposed is lower than they would wish.

Land Acquisition

8.2.4 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that for the purposes of (a) any of the Council's functions under this or any other enactment or (b) the benefit, improvement or the development of the Council's area, the Council may acquire any land whether situated inside or outside its area.

8.2.5 Law and Governance Services will undertake the necessary legal due diligence including examining search results and the title for the property in order to ensure that the Council's interests are adequately protected. Enquiries before contract will be raised and the purchase will be subject to satisfactory results of the searches, a good and marketable title and a satisfactory survey and valuation result.

9 Other implications

9.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

This Strategy supports the One Coventry Plan priorities:

- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities – Ensuring sufficiency of school places within each locality to create quality, accessible, and inclusive provision across the city.
- Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change – when delivering building works on school sites investment into environmental infrastructure is prioritised. Examples include implementing solar panels, air source heat pumps, and using local materials (where possible) to reduce the carbon footprint.

9.2 How is risk being managed?

Monitoring is carried out through several different processes. Projects will be monitored through a project management team and will be subject to scrutiny and regular assessment on progress towards identified milestones. Further monitoring will be carried out through progress reports to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Cabinet, and quarterly budgetary control monitoring.

9.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There are no specific impacts on the organisation.

9.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 9.4.1 Over the past 3 academic years Coventry has experienced a significant increase in the number of pupils applying for a school place 'in-year'. To address this the City Council has implemented temporary and permanent additional classes to ensure adequate provision of school places. This reduces home to school travel distance for pupils removing a potential barrier to access education.
- 9.4.2 Children and young people with SEND can experience greater discrimination and may have fewer opportunities than children without SEND. The proposal aims to ensure that all Coventry children have access to education in accordance with their needs. Any revised accommodation changes and admission arrangements are compliant with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of their possible impact on equal opportunities.
- 9.4.3 Public authority decision makers should have due regard to 1) the need to eliminate discrimination, 2) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not 3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not (public sector equality duty - s 149(1) Equality Act 2010). The applicable protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment; race, religion or belief, sex; sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity.
- 9.4.4 Decision makers must be consciously thinking about these three aims as part of their decision-making process with rigour and with an open mind. The duty is to have "due regard", not to achieve a result but to have due regard to the need to achieve these goals. Consideration being given to the potential adverse impacts and the measures needed to minimise any discriminatory effects.
- 9.4.5 Each school has been assessed in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2004' and meets the requirements of the Building Regulations and relevant British Standards including BS 8300 2009 and Approved Documents Part M. Specific provisions of inclusion for wheelchair users, and those that are hard of hearing and/or visually impaired, have been included in the designs. An access statement is provided for each school to act as an on-going live document. These document the initial building approach and become an effective building management tool for the users to ensure long term accessibility.

9.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

- 9.5.1 The Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy sets out a vision for the UK to be the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030. In England this will be achieved through awareness raising and practical steps to transition to net zero, such as creating a more resilient infrastructure to adapt to a changing climate and create a better environment around education settings (including enhancing biodiversity and improving air quality). The government set out the requirement for all education settings to have Climate Action Plans. Basic Need Allocations have also been uplifted by circa.10% for additional investment into energy efficiency projects.
- 9.5.2 Coventry has 117 schools (excluding private owned). Of these 117 schools, 52% are Local Authority maintained and purchase energy from the City Council and are therefore captured within scope 3 of Coventry City Council's annual greenhouse gas emissions report. Local Authority Maintained schools account for 9% of Council emissions. Schools are included in the government's current target to reduce the emissions from Public Sector buildings by 50% (2032) and 75% (2037) compared to a 2017 baseline.
- 9.5.3 All future re-build programmes will need to be designed to a high standard of energy efficiency and be net zero in operation. They will be required to be designed to adapt to a changing climate. For example, any new school building designs should prepare for and mitigate against the effects of climate change, including measures to reduce surface water run off because of flooding, and reducing any negative effects on the local community and environmental infrastructure. Opportunities should be identified to create green space, sustainable urban drainage and enhance biodiversity. Designs should consider measures for thermal cooling to ensure new buildings can cope with more extreme temperatures alongside making provision for outdoor shade.
- 9.5.4 Opportunities should be identified to improve the energy efficiency and climate resilience of existing buildings as part of any planned refurbishment. As part of this consideration should be given to using the capital programme to leverage additional grant funding to support decarbonisation projects on existing schools, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 3b that is supporting the delivery of measures to upgrade heating systems and install renewable energy across some schools in 2024-25. The Council's SEP with E.ON will endeavour to support this programme through seeking to introduce more solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps across Coventry schools.
- 9.5.5 As part of the DFE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, all schools will need to report their carbon emissions and set and monitor against targets for carbon reduction. To support this, future cost benefit analysis will need to incorporate the environmental and socio-economic costs of the impacts of carbon emissions and consider climate resilience and adaptation.

9.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Planning for additional specialist places will require close partnership working with Health, Social Care and other relevant organisations to enable multi-agency support and provision for children with SEND to be made.

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