

# School Places Commissioning Plan for Mainstream Schools 2025/26 - 2027/28

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## Glossary

Throughout this document, the following abbreviations will be used:

Bexley - When referring to “Bexley”, this document is referring to all education stakeholders within the London Borough of Bexley. These stakeholders include schools, Multi-Academy Trusts, the Strategic Education Partnership and the Local Authority of the London Borough of Bexley.

CofE – Church of England

EHCP – Education Health and Care Plan

EHE – Elective Home Educated

FSM – Free School Meals

MAT - This abbreviation will be used in place of “Multi-Academy Trust/s”

NCY – National Curriculum Year

NOD – Notice of Declaration (linked to Elective Home Educated)

PAN – Pupil Admission Numbers

PRU - Pupil Referral Unit

RP – Resourced Provision

SCAP – School Capacity Forecasts

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

## Section 1

### Mainstream Schools Executive Summary

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#### 1.1 Overview of this commissioning plan and governance

This document has been produced in partnership with the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership in Bexley. It aims to provide an overview of the current local picture of the current and future plans for ensuring there are enough mainstream school places for pupils in Bexley as well as ensuring the financial viability of Maintained and Voluntary Aided schools. It also provides up-to-date information for local Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to help them support their schools so that they may also respond to changes in admissions in the areas surrounding their schools. Therefore, this document may be of interest to leaders and governors within local schools and MATs.

There are multiple layers of governance surrounding this document, which includes sign-off by both the School Places and Planning sub-group and the Strategic Education Partnership Board prior to approval from the London Borough of Bexley.

The data shared in this document reflects the information provided in the January 2025 School Census in addition to Bexley performance data. This data is correct as of the time of collection and the writing of this plan. This plan will be reviewed again in June 2028, with a yearly interim report being provided as an appendix if numbers change to such a degree that an update is required.

It should be noted that predicting the number of school places needed across the Borough remains an on-going challenge as Bexley, along with many other boroughs across London, are experiencing a period of demographic change. Using our School Census data, our School Capacity Forecasts (SCAP) in addition to regular updates from the school admission team in the Council, Bexley are able to pull together information to inform the decisions outlined in this plan.

## 1.2 Overview of all schools in Bexley

As the local strategic commissioner of education, Bexley has the statutory responsibility to provide a school place for every child resident in the borough and must take the essential steps in planning for required school places and the ongoing monitoring of available suitable places. Bexley has a diverse range of schools, across 20 MATs, Stand Alone Academies and Free Schools, in addition to Maintained and Voluntary Aided Schools. There are 60 primary, infant and junior schools, 15 secondary schools, 4 of which are grammar schools, 1 all-through school, 7 special schools and a pupil referral unit.

The data provided below shows the results from the School Census in Spring 2025 for all schools in Bexley from Reception through to Year 11 (statutory ages of education), providing data including the number of pupils on roll across all school in Bexley, including details of the percentages of gender, ethnicity, language, SEN provision, SEN Primary Need, National Curriculum Year (NCY), Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility, phase of education and school type. This data shows the changes since 2022 and how the number of pupils on roll is decreasing, whilst the number of pupils with SEND are increasing.

### School census data – Spring 2025

#### Pupils on roll across all schools in Bexley from Reception to Year 11



The breakdown for this data can be seen below:

Phase of education	% of total school population	Total numbers
Primary	55.28%	20,876
Secondary	38.8%	14,654
All-through	3.66%	1,381
Special school	2.2%	829
Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	0.07%	25

## School census data – Spring 2022

### Pupils on roll across all schools in Bexley from Reception to Year 11



\* Please note that this data insight includes data from special schools and the pupil referral unit, which is looked at in more detail in the Special School Commissioning Plan 2025-2028.

Comparing the data of the School Census from Spring 2025 to Spring 2022, the headlines Bexley are seeing from all school data includes:

- The total number of pupils on roll at Bexley schools has reduced by 880 pupils (-2.1%).
- The number of pupils with SEND has increased by 1180 pupils (+19%).
- The number of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 586 pupils (+37%).
- The number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has increased by 453 pupils (+5.5%).

This data is broken down into primary and secondary in sections 4.1 and 5.1 respectively of this document.

Following a period of time where Bexley saw increasing pressures on school places right across London and the wider Southeast, Bexley is now experiencing a fall in school Places being required which is in line with other London Boroughs, resulting in a temporary surplus of school Places.

Previous and current forecasts indicate that the number of places required in primary schools across the borough will continue to decrease over the next five years in all year groups. This change is not yet reflected in secondary school admissions.

At this stage our biggest challenge for primary schools is monitoring the number of admissions compared to the Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) of each school. For secondary schools, our biggest challenge continues to be “in year” applications. For this reason, our pupil place planning is not based solely on national offer day as Bexley has to build in additional capacity for the high number of in-year applications Bexley receives.

The School Places and Planning sub-group have been working with geographical clusters of schools, rather than individual institutions, as the basis on which to respond to local need. This also reflects the planning areas used in the School Capacity (SCAP) Forecast, with the areas being divided into the following areas:

- Thamesmead and Belvedere Primary
- Erith and Crayford Primary
- Bexleyheath Primary
- Welling Primary
- Sidcup Primary
- Whole Borough Secondary

In April 2024, following a higher than anticipated fall in admission numbers for Reception, the Strategic Education Partnership began meeting with education leaders of both MATs and Head teachers to discuss the local challenges schools are facing regarding admissions. Whilst a fall had been predicted, there were significant differences between the number of admissions and the numbers of places being offered by schools, particularly in the Thamesmead and Belvedere area. These meeting began with educational leaders in the Thamesmead planning area, as this was the area being most affected, all planning areas were then invited to meet and discuss the changing landscape of demand for places. Bexley continue to work with education leaders to support the viability of their school and provide support as appropriate.

The work of the Strategic Education Partnership will also support our aim to ensure that the school community comes with us on this continued journey and are planning bi-yearly meetings to provide updates to all stakeholders.

Our analysis previously showed that pressures on school places are not isolated but are arising across the borough and across year groups. Our challenge still remains to assess the current demand that seems to be declining for the next few years, particularly as many of the schools most affected are schools managed by a MAT and therefore Bexley are unable to influence, only inform the stakeholders about the current and future picture of demand in spaces.

## 1.3 Primary Schools

There are 60 primary, infant and junior schools in Bexley, with 23,925 places available for Reception through to Year 6. From the Spring 2025 School Census, 21,536 pupils are currently on roll from Reception through to Year 6 which leaves a surplus of 2389 spaces across all year groups. Bexley are currently seeing a surplus of places due to the fall in the birth rate and School Roll Projections.

The Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) for Reception for the 2025-2026 academic year, including their planning area, are as follows:

Name of school	Planning area	PAN for Reception 25/26
Barnehurst Infant School	Erith & Crayford	60
Barrington Primary School	Welling	30
Bedonwell Infant School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	120
Belmont Academy	Erith & Crayford	60
Belvedere Infant School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	90
Birkbeck Primary School	Sidcup	90
Bishop Ridley CofE VA Primary School	Welling	30
Brampton Primary Academy	Bexleyheath	60
Bursted Wood Primary School	Bexleyheath	90
Castilion Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	60
Chatsworth Infant School	Sidcup	60
Christ Church, Erith, CE VA Primary School	Erith & Crayford	90
Crook Log Primary School	Welling	60
Danson Primary School	Welling	90
Days Lane Primary School	Sidcup	90
Dulverton Primary School	Sidcup	60
East Wickham Primary Academy	Welling	90
Fairford Academy Barnehurst (Formerly Normandy Primary)	Welling	90
Foster's Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Gravel Hill Primary School	Welling	60
Haberdashers' Crayford Primary	Bexleyheath	30
Haberdashers' Slade Green Primary	Erith & Crayford	90
Harris Garrard Academy	Erith & Crayford	90
Hillsgrove Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	60
Holy Trinity Lamorbey Cof E Primary School	Welling	90
Hook Lane Primary School	Sidcup	60
Hope Community School	Welling	30
Hurst Primary School	Sidcup	90
Jubilee Primary School	Bexleyheath	30
Leigh Stationers' Primary Academy	Welling	30
Lessness Heath Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	90
Lime Wood Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Longlands Primary School	Sidcup	45
Mayplace Primary School	Bexleyheath	90
Northumberland Heath Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60

Northwood Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
Old Bexley Church of England Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Orchard Primary School	Sidcup	30
Our Lady of The Rosary Catholic Primary School	Sidcup	60
Parkway Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
Peareswood Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Pelham Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Royal Park Primary School	Sidcup	60
Sherwood Park Primary School	Sidcup	60
St Augustine of Canterbury CofE Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
St Fidelis Catholic Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Erith & Crayford	30
St Michael's East Wickham CofE VA Primary School	Welling	30
St Paulinus Church of England Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St Paul's (Slade Green) C of E Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School	Sidcup	30
St Stephen's Catholic Primary School	Welling	60
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Upland Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Upton Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Willow Bank Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	60
Total number of Reception places:		3465

For the September 2025 cohort, there were 2,736 applications from Bexley residents, which is 26 fewer than last year. Of these, 93.8% of children were offered a place at a Bexley primary school - an increase from 93.5% last year. A total of 92.4% of applicants received their first preference. Meanwhile, 99% secured one of their top three preferences, up from 98.7% last year and 99.3% received one of their six preferences, showing a slight increase from 99.2%. Following National Offer Day, there will be 505 places available for any late or in-year applications.

More detailed analysis of this can be found in section 4 of this document.

Please note that this number includes the number of spaces available for primary pupils in special schools, but this is discussed and reflected on in the Special School Commissioning Plan 2025-2028.

## 1.4 Secondary Schools

There are 15 secondary schools in Bexley, including 4 grammar schools and 3 faith and church schools, with 3338 places available in year 7, available across all secondary schools in Bexley. According to the Spring 2025 School Census, 3247 pupils currently are on roll in Year 7. This includes boys and girls only school, in addition to co-educational schools, details of which can be found below:

	Yr7 PAN 2025/2026	Selective or non- selective	Gender for admissions
Beths Grammar School	192	Selective	Boys
Bexley Grammar School	210	Selective	Co-ed
Bexleyheath Academy	330	Non-selective	Co-ed
Blackfen School for Girls	230	Non-selective	Girls
Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School	192	Selective	Co-ed
Cleeve Park School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Haberdashers' Crayford Academy	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Harris Academy Falconwood	210	Non-selective	Co-ed
Harris Garrard Academy	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Hurstmere School	210	Non-selective	Boys
Leigh Academy Bexley	250	Non-selective	Co-ed
St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls	210	Non-selective	Girls
St Columba's Catholic Boys' School	180	Non-selective	Boys
Townley Grammar School	224	Selective	Girls
Trinity CofE School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Welling School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Total number of places available in Yr7			<b>3338</b>
Number of places at selective schools			<b>818</b>
Number of places at non-selective schools			<b>2520</b>
Number of places at boys only schools			<b>582</b>
Number of places at girls only schools			<b>664</b>
Number of places at co-educational schools			<b>2092</b>

For the September 2025 Year 7 cohort, there were 2997 applications from Bexley residents this year, which is 20 fewer than were received last year and there has been a gradual decrease in the number of applications made, which is looked at more thoroughly in section 5.2.1 of this document.

## 1.5 Early Years Settings

Bexley has a strong track record of supporting the development and quality improvement of early years education and childcare provision. Giving children the best possible early learning experiences coupled with a comprehensive range of early help support is a high priority. Our commitment to training and developing the workforce, improving practice, and supporting the development of new provision reflects this.

The Local Authority has a duty of care under the Childcare Act 2006 to ensure there is sufficient good quality childcare for parents. It is essential that the Local Authority understands the demand for capacity across the borough and what our parents need. Bexley also have a number of statutory requirements in relation to childcare sufficiency that include:

- providing information, advice and guidance to parents seeking childcare
- providing information, advice, guidance, and access to training for existing and potential childcare providers
- securing sufficient early education places for all eligible children 9 months plus if their parents want to access funded childcare and enough high-quality childcare places for eligible Early Learning for 2 Year Olds (previously Play2Learn).
- meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010 when securing early learning places

Bexley has a team of Early Years Support Officers, Advisers, Area SENCOs and Specialist Officers available to assist providers in delivering high-quality childcare by helping them to meet all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. Providers are regulated by Ofsted or Childminder Agencies, where required, but the Local Authority monitors them and helps them to maintain and improve their quality of provision.

It is our aim to always meet the needs of parents where possible and to have the tools in place that enable them to source the childcare that best suits their needs. Bexley also have a duty to ensure there is adequate provision for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the borough and that parents can access this for their children.

The Department for Education has invited Bexley to participate in its national Safety Valve Programme. The programme is aimed at addressing the increase in demand for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the associated costs it places on the Council's High Needs Budget. Through this programme, Bexley Early Years offers early speech and language intervention to children requiring support to help reduce the need for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), including Early Talk Boost and WellComm.

From September 2025 eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks per year, from the term after their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

## 1.6 Post-16 provision

The Council has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16-19 and for those up to age 25 with a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in their area. To fulfil this, local authorities need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.

Local Authorities must also promote the effective participation in education and training of 16- and 17-year-olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.

This is managed through events such as the Apprenticeship Event, which is held annually to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week, along with events hosted by our further education institutions with sixth forms and London South East Colleges.

Local authorities must make arrangements - i.e. maintain a tracking system - to identify 16- and 17-year-olds who are not participating in education or training. Putting in place robust arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.

More detailed analysis of this can be found in section 7 of this document.

## 1.7 Elective Home Educated (EHE) Families

Over the past two years, Bexley has seen an increase in the numbers of families declaring EHE for their children and numbers continue to rapidly increase. This is not only a challenge in Bexley but also nationally following the Covid-19 pandemic where families are reporting more often that they do not feel the schools are meeting the needs of their child.

	TOTAL on the register for the period	
2022-2023	492*	303**
2023-2024	557*	372**
2024-2025 (up to 6.6.25)	620 *	514**

\* all instances in period

\*\* active at end of period

### ***Additional notes regarding this data***

2022-2023 - Data insight shows 233 actual NODS (Notice of Declaration - which does not always result in EHE being taken up) received in this period and 227 EHE starts in period

2023-2024 - Data insight shows 272 NODS received and 254 actual EHE starts in period

2024-2025 (up to 24.1.25) - Data insight shows 273 NODS received and 245 EHE starts in this period

More detailed analysis of this can be found in section 8 of this document.

## 1.8 Capital projects

Due to the decreasing rolls in schools, there are currently no capital projects linked to mainstream schools. However, Bexley have been looking at how to utilise the excess space available in schools to increase the number of Resourced Provisions (RPs). More details about the development of RPs can be found in the Special Schools Commissioning Plan 2025-2028. The challenge in a sector with such moving demographics is to ensure that any reductions in school PANs does not affect the ability to flex with demand in the future, therefore avoiding expensive capital build projects.

## Section 2

### Bexley context

#### 2.1 Bexley as a London Borough

##### 2.1.1 The role of the Local Authority

#### 2.2 MATs, Academies, Maintained and Voluntary Aided schools operating in Bexley

#### 2.3 Quality of provision

### 2.1 Bexley as a London Borough

Bexley is situated in the South East of London and covers an area of 23 square miles (6,400 hectares). Bexley borders the Thames to the north, the boroughs of Royal Greenwich to the west and Bromley to the south and the County of Kent to the east. The borough has one Strategic Town Centre Bexleyheath, and has four major district centres – Crayford, Erith, Sidcup and Welling.

Our [Bexley Plan 2022 – 2026](#) discusses the following;

- Our Principles
- Our Values
- Our Mission and Priorities
- How Bexley will deliver their vision
- Action Plan

The provision of high-quality school places will support the development of a successful local economy and enhance Bexley as a place to live and work.

From the January 2025 Census 42,960 pupils are educated in Bexley schools including nursery classes, post-16 sixth forms and Special Schools. These pupils are educated in 84 schools across Bexley, 63 of these educational institutions are part of a MAT, 7 are stand-alone academies, 12 are community schools and 4 are Voluntary Aided. There are also 402 private and voluntary early years' providers and accredited child-minders.

Bexley's schools are generally popular, and the borough regularly educates pupils who live outside the borough, due to the make-up of our secondary schools. Bexley believe that children and teachers deserve high quality premises which support high aspiration and achievement, and are safe, healthy and environmentally sustainable.

By clearly setting out our commissioning plans on a regular basis, Bexley hopes that parents and providers will be in a better position to work collaboratively with us regarding how Bexley manages the current surplus of places and ensure financial viability of our Schools. Bexley recognises that new providers are entering the market. Bexley also recognises that popular schools may wish to expand or be under pressure from the local community to do so, but this must be in line with current demand.

### 2.1.1 The role of the Local Authority

The education world continues to evolve with a new Central Government showing signs of putting more power back into Local Authority control. This will always create a level of tension between Central and Local Government all the time that the statutory duty to provide a school place for every resident remains with the Local Authority.

The Children's Wellbeing and School Bill, which is currently moving through parliament, aims to introduce the following measures:

- Allow Local Authorities to establish regional co-operation arrangements for planning and commissioning homes for looked after children (clause 9)
- Introduce a Local Authority consent mechanism for the withdrawal of certain children from school (clause 24)
- Introduce a requirement for Local Authorities to maintain a register of children not in school, with duties for parents (clauses 25 to 29 and schedule 1)
- Remove the existing duty to make an academy order if a maintained school is in
- special measures (clause 44)
- Require schools and Local Authorities to cooperate over school admissions and
- school places; and give Local Authorities powers to direct academy schools to admit
- pupils (clauses 47 to 50)
- Remove the requirement for new schools to be academies, and restore Local
- Authorities' and other bodies' powers to propose opening new maintained schools
- (clauses 51 to 55)
- Ensure all new duties are fully funded so they do not create additional financial
- burdens on Local Authorities, which are already facing significant financial pressures.
- Work with Local authorities and other partners impacted by the Bill to understand the workforce implications of any new duties and ensure sufficiency before full implementation.
- Extend corporate parenting responsibilities to other government departments and
- public bodies).
- Introduce a duty for Local Authorities to undertake annual monitoring visits to home
- educated children so they are able to fulfil their safeguarding duties to all children in
- their local area.
- Strengthen proposed measure in the bill to ensure that schools comply with Local Authority place planning arrangements and that the DfE have levers they can use to enforce this duty.
- Give Local Authorities the overall responsibility for managing applications for in-year
- admissions for all state funded schools in their area to minimise delays and lost
- learning, as well as reducing bureaucracy for parents.
- Give Local Authorities greater decision making powers over the future of closed
- schools to ensure that they can be used to meet local needs, including protecting
- them for education purposes in the longer term.

*Information taken from the London Councils Written Evidence for Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2025*

Bexley already has a number of these duties in place as part of good practice, but there will also be more ownership over school admissions and the requirement for schools to admit pupils, even when it concerns a school who is part of an Academy Trust.

As strategic commissioners of education provision there is a strong interlink with the school improvement, regeneration and growth agendas. Our statutory duties include:

The need to ensure sufficient places for 3- and 4- year old children, and disadvantaged 2- year olds, to be able to access their free early years entitlement (15 hours a week, 38 weeks per year)

A school place for all Bexley residents of statutory school age (5 to 16 years old) who require one

Full time education for children who are not in school for reasons of ill health, exclusion or otherwise

All young people are in education or training up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The children and young people who have been assessed and, as necessary, issued with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans have appropriate provision. This may extend up to the age of 25. Bexley has a separate Commissioning Plan for SEN Education which will detail this further.

The Local Authority's failure to provide sufficient school places could lead to the council being taken to court by parents for breach of its statutory duty if these children are not in school.

These requirements are defined in statute in:

- The Childcare Act 2006
- The Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
- The Education Acts of 1996, 2002 and 2011
- The Academies Act 2010
- The SEN and Disability Act 2001

## 2.2 MATs, Academies, Maintained and Voluntary Aided Schools operating in Bexley

Across our 84 schools in Bexley, Bexley has a wide variety of different types of responsibility, with a mixture of schools maintained by the Local Authority, MATs as well as Voluntary Aided or Stand-Alone Academies. As of July 2025, of our 60 Primary schools, 44 are academies, 11 are Maintained by the Local Authority, Community or Voluntary Aided, 4 are free schools and 1 of which is an all-through academy. Of our 16 secondary schools, 4 are selective (grammar) and 1 is an all-through academy.

Regarding the MATs operating in Bexley, these are the Trusts and the schools they support:

### **Amadeus Primary Academy Trust**

- Castilion Primary School
- Hillsgrove Primary School
- Holy Trinity Lamorbey CofE Primary School
- Old Bexley CofE Primary School
- St Paulinus CofE Primary School

### **Cygnus Academies Trust**

- Gravel Hill Primary School
- Upland Primary School

### **Haberdashers' Federation Trust**

- Haberdashers' Crayford Temple Grove Primary Academy
- Haberdashers' Slade Green Temple Grove Primary & Nursery Academy
- Haberdashers' Secondary

### **Harris Federation**

- Harris Academy, Falconwood
- Harris Garrard

### **Illuminate Minds Academy Trust**

- Fairford Academy Barnehurst
- Pelham Primary School

### **Leigh Academies Trust**

- Stationer's Primary Academy
- Leigh Academy Bexley

### **Lift Schools**

- Lift Bexleyheath

### **London South East Academies Trust**

- Aspire Academy
- Barrington Primary School
- Bedonwell Nursery, Infant and Junior Schools
- Belmont Academy
- Endeavour Academy
- Horizons Academy Bexley
- London South East College, Bexley Campus
- Woodside Academy

### **Maritime Academy Trust**

- Hook Lane Primary School

### **New Generation School Trust**

- Hope Community School

### **Penhill Umbrella Trust**

- Bexley Grammar School
- Blackfen School for Girls
- Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School
- Sherwood Park Primary School

### **Reach2 Academy Trust**

- Brampton Primary Academy

### **SELCAT**

- St Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School
- St Columba's Catholic Boys School
- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

### **Southwark Diocese Trust**

- Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School
- St Fidelis Catholic Primary School
- St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
- St Michael's East Wickham CofE Primary School
- St Stephen's Catholic Primary School

### **Stand-alone Academies**

- Beths Grammar School
- Burstled Wood Primary School
- Christ the King Sixth Form
- Days Lane Primary School
- Hurst Primary School
- St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls
- Townley Grammar School

### **The Howard Academy Trust**

- Hurstmere School

### **The Kemnal Academy Trust**

- Cleeve Meadow School
- Cleeve Park Secondary School
- East Wickham Primary Academy
- Royal Park Primary School
- Shenstone
- Welling School

### **The Pioneer Academy**

- Belvedere Infant School
- Belvedere Junior School
- Burnt Oak Junior School
- Chatsworth Infant School

### **The Primary First Trust**

- Barnehurst Infant School
- Barnehurst Junior School
- Lessness Heath Primary School
- Mayplace Primary School

### **The Woodland Academy Trust**

- Lime Wood Primary School
- Northumberland Heath Primary School
- Peareswood Primary School
- Willow Bank Primary School

### **Trinitas Multi-Academy Trust**

- Christ Church (Erith) CofE Primary School
- Cornerstone School
- Jubilee Primary School
- Northwood Primary School
- St Augustine of Canterbury Cof E Primary School
- St Paul's (Slade Green) Cof E Primary School
- Trinity CofE School

**Schools maintained by the Local Authority are listed below:**

- Birkbeck Primary School
- Bishop Ridley CofE Primary School
- Crook Log Primary School
- Danson Primary School
- Dulverton Primary School
- Foster's Primary School
- Longlands Primary School
- Marlborough Secondary School
- Orchard Primary School
- Parkway Primary School
- Upton Primary School

## **2.3 Quality of provision**

Of the 84 schools in Bexley, 92.8% have been judged by Ofsted as good or better, which sits above both National (86%) and London (92%). 94.9% of Primary Schools are judged as good or better, with 81.3% of secondary schools being judged as good or better. This includes 100% of schools maintained by the Local Authority being judged good or better by Ofsted.

Considering the number of pupils in Bexley, this equates to 90.4% of Bexley pupils attending a school which has been graded good or better.

In Early Years, 98.9% of the 97 nursery providers have been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted.

## Section 3

### Data and methodology

- 3.1 Birth rates in Bexley
- 3.2 School Capacity (SCAP) Forecasts

#### 3.1 Birth rates

Whilst births had been seen to be increasing until a peak in 2011 and 2015, the birth rate has since been decreasing year-on-year. This follows both a national and local trend and goes against the expected baby boom following the Covid-19 pandemic.

##### Number of live births in England and Wales, 1838 to 2023

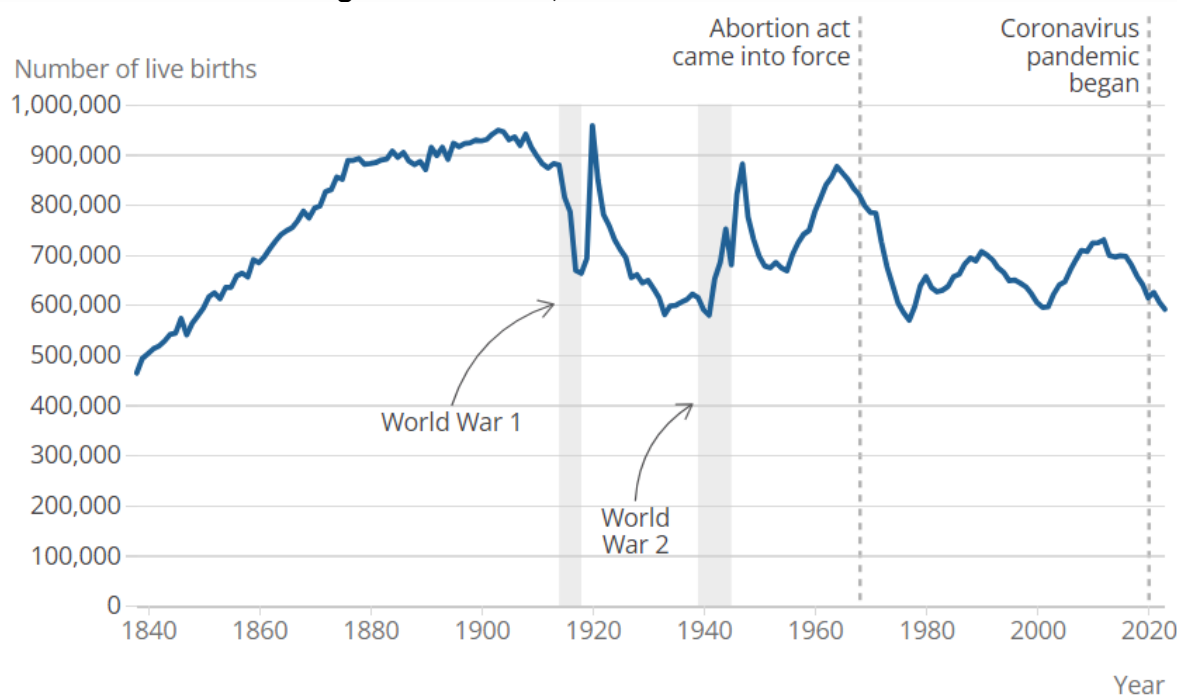
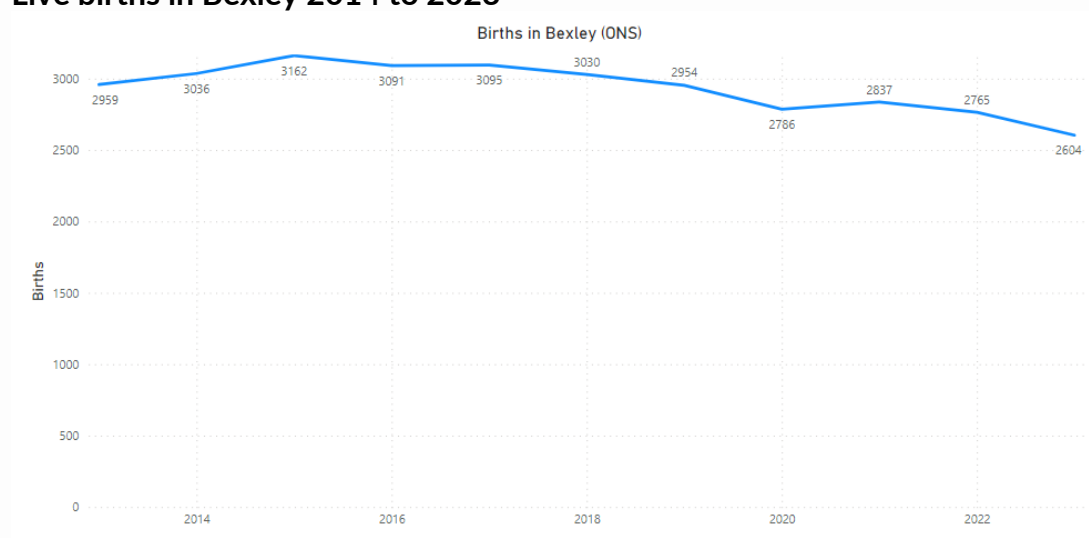


Diagram taken from:

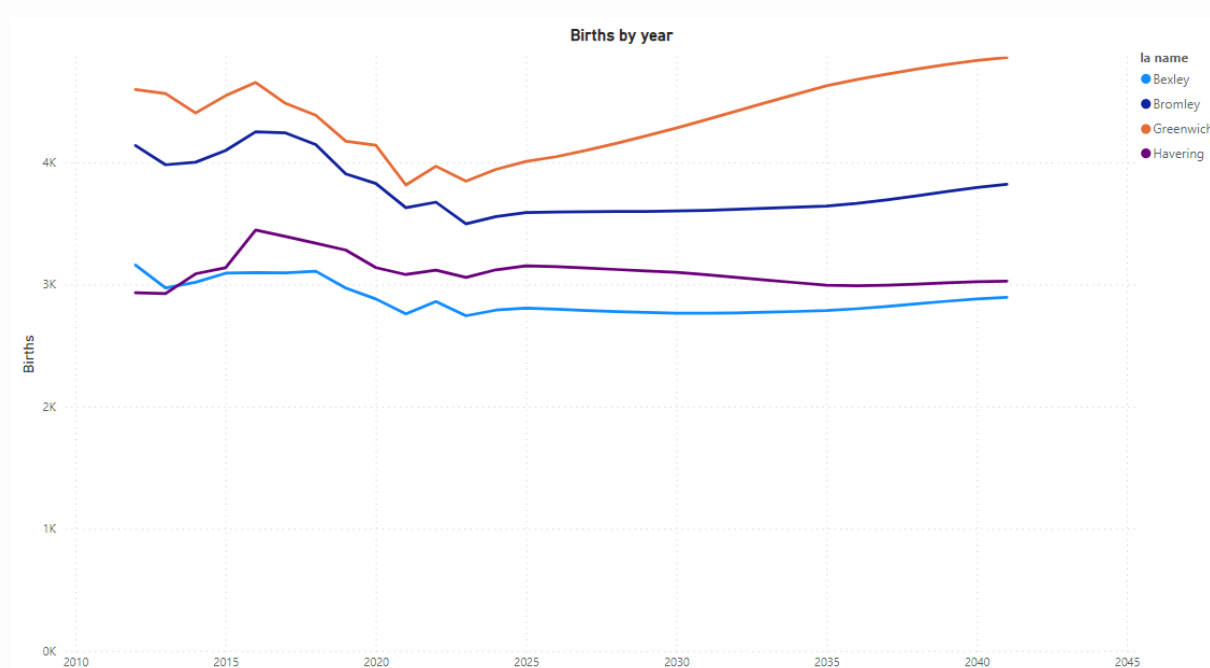
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/latest#live-births>

This national picture is reflected in the number of live births in Bexley, both compared to the national statistic as well as neighbouring London boroughs. In the diagrams below, you can see the downward trend, which is reflected in the decreasing numbers of admissions into Reception. Coupled with the cost of living crisis and the migration of families out of London, Bexley is seeing the impact in their schools.

### Live births in Bexley 2014 to 2023



### Live births predictions comparison between Bexley and neighbouring London borough 2010 to 2042



<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/latest#live-births>

## 3.2 School Capacity (SCAP) Forecasts

The SCAP forecasts are developed to show predictions on places needed in each year group in schools. They are developed using predictions from housing, migration, live births and Bexley is divided into the following areas:

- Thamesmead and Belvedere Primary
- Erith and Crayford Primary
- Bexleyheath Primary
- Welling Primary
- Sidcup Primary
- Whole Borough Secondary

Over the past year, the School Places and Planning sub-group have used the SCAP forecasts to compare to the actual numbers on roll in school so that Bexley are able to evaluate the local picture.

The information provided by the SCAP Forecasts in each of these areas are looked at in more detail in sections 4.3 and 5.3 of this document.

## Section 4

### Primary Schools

- 4.1 Current numbers of pupils in school
- 4.2 Demand for places
- 4.3 Future Planning
  - 4.3.1 Thamesmead and Belvedere planning area
  - 4.3.2 Erith and Crayford planning area
  - 4.3.3 Bexleyheath planning area
  - 4.3.4 Welling planning area
  - 4.3.5 Sidcup planning area

#### 4.1 Current numbers of pupils in primary schools

The data provided below shows the number of pupils on roll from Reception through to Year 6 across all schools in Bexley. It also includes the pupils in these national curriculum years who attend Special Schools, but this is also looked at in more details in the Special Schools Commissioning Plan 2025-2028.

Details below include the percentages of gender, ethnicity, language, SEN provision, SEN Primary Need, National Curriculum Year (NCY), Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility, phase of education and school type. This data shows the changes since 2022 and how the number of pupils on roll is decreasing, whilst the number of pupils with SEND are increasing.

#### School census data – Spring 2025

##### Pupils on roll from Reception to Year 6 in all schools in Bexley



## School census data – Spring 2022

### Pupils on roll from Reception to Year 6 in all schools in Bexley



Comparing the data of the School Census from Spring 2025 to Spring 2022, the headlines Bexley are seeing from all school data includes:

The total number of pupils in years Reception to Year 6 on roll at Bexley schools has reduced by 515 pupils (-2.4%).

The number of pupils with SEND has increased by 774 pupils (+22.5%).

The number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has not changed significantly.

## 4.2 Demand for places

Since 2021, Bexley has seen a decrease in the number of applications for Reception places across all areas of Bexley. Whilst this has resulted in more Bexley residents being offered a higher preference of school, this does pose a number of implications and challenges for schools. The Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) for Reception for the 2025-2026 academic year, including their planning area, are as follows:

Name of school	Planning area	PAN for Reception 25/26
Barnehurst Infant School	Erith & Crayford	60
Barrington Primary School	Welling	30
Bedonwell Infant School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	120
Belmont Academy	Erith & Crayford	60
Belvedere Infant School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	90
Birkbeck Primary School	Sidcup	90
Bishop Ridley CofE VA Primary School	Welling	30
Brampton Primary Academy	Bexleyheath	60
Bursted Wood Primary School	Bexleyheath	90
Castilion Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	60
Chatsworth Infant School	Sidcup	60
Christ Church, Erith, CE VA Primary School	Erith & Crayford	90
Crook Log Primary School	Welling	60
Danson Primary School	Welling	90
Days Lane Primary School	Sidcup	90
Dulverton Primary School	Sidcup	60
East Wickham Primary Academy	Welling	90
Fairford Academy Barnehurst (formerly Normandy Primary School)	Erith & Crayford	90
Foster's Primary School	Welling	60
Gravel Hill Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Haberdashers' Crayford Primary	Erith & Crayford	30
Haberdashers' Slade Green Primary	Erith & Crayford	90
Harris Garrard Academy	Thamesmead & Belvedere	90
Hillsgrove Primary School	Welling	60
Holy Trinity Lamorbey Cof E Primary School	Sidcup	60
Hook Lane Primary School	Welling	60
Hope Community School	Sidcup	30
Hurst Primary School	Bexleyheath	90
Jubilee Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
Leigh Stationers' Primary Academy (formerly Eastcote Primary School)	Welling	30
Lessness Heath Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	90
Lime Wood Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Longlands Primary School	Sidcup	45
Mayplace Primary School	Bexleyheath	90
Northumberland Heath Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Northwood Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
Old Bexley Church of England Primary School	Bexleyheath	60

Orchard Primary School	Sidcup	30
Our Lady of The Rosary Catholic Primary School	Sidcup	60
Parkway Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
Peareswood Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
Pelham Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Royal Park Primary School	Sidcup	60
Sherwood Park Primary School	Sidcup	60
St Augustine of Canterbury CofE Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
St Fidelis Catholic Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	30
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Erith & Crayford	30
St Michael's East Wickham CofE VA Primary School	Welling	30
St Paulinus Church of England Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St Paul's (Slade Green) C of E Primary School	Erith & Crayford	60
St Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School	Sidcup	30
St Stephen's Catholic Primary School	Welling	60
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Upland Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Upton Primary School	Bexleyheath	60
Willow Bank Primary School	Thamesmead & Belvedere	60
Total number of Reception places:		3465

### Number of admissions for Reception in Bexley schools:

Primary Admissions round	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	Sept 2025
Number of Bexley residents applying	2915	2766	2736
Bexley residents offered their first preference	89.3%	93.0%	92.4%
Bexley residents offered one of their top three preferences	98.05%	98.7%	98.97%
Bexley residents offered one of their six preferences	98.5%	99.2%	99.3%
Bexley residents <u>not</u> being offered one of their preferences	1.5%	0.8%	0.7%
Number of places	3305	3254	3225

With funding for schools being based on the number of pupils on roll, any vacancies in any year group have a financial implication and this is being felt in a number of Bexley schools, hence why Bexley are working with them to help ensure their financial viability.

Bexley is, however, seeing movement with in-year admissions increasing for primary schools, but this does not appear to be affecting total numbers and is more related to families moving across schools rather than in and out of the borough.

## 4.3 Future planning

A focus for the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership over the past year has been sharing information with education leaders about the impact of the SCAP forecasts and the impact this may have on their admissions into Reception. As can be seen in the tables in the following sections, there is a year-on-year reduction in the forecast for Reception places for all planning areas in Bexley. This then affects future year groups and is likely to feed into a decreased demand for secondary places, although this has not yet been seen and places in secondary schools are relatively stable. Government legislation limits the number of pupils in an infant class to 30 pupils, which means that a new class should be opened for any number above this. For a 2-form entry school with only 45 pupils, this results in a large financial deficit.

This work began in the Thamesmead and Belvedere area, which was the area most affected in the 2023-2024 admissions in Reception, but the sub-group then met with all primary schools across all planning areas across Bexley. This is a great example where previous pupil place planning growth, based on housing and other predictions, can change rapidly due to new external factors, such as the new Elizabeth Line which has completely changed the demographics of an area resulting in higher numbers of surplus places in our primary schools.

Bexley has particularly focussed on looking at Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) and compared this to both the SCAP forecast and the current numbers of roll to ensure that schools meet demand but do not result in too many excess spaces, as schools must admit pupils until their official PAN is met.

Strict guidelines around the reduction of school numbers present a challenge for the Local Authority and the wider education community. Whilst working within the parameters of the guidelines, Bexley has this year been able to work with schools and the Department for Education in the reduction of numbers for 4 school. These reduced PANs will begin for Reception in September 2025 and reduce the number of places by 60 and then a further 120 in September 2026/2027.

Moving forwards, Bexley are also having conversations with schools around informal reductions, following National Offer Day, with a view to considering a formal reduction in the future. This work will continue in 2025/2026 and beyond as they believe there will need to be more reductions in PANs to ensure the financial viability of a number of schools in Bexley.

Through our initial work, our current forecast is that our mainstream school places should be reduced by around 300 places and 190 secondary places over the next 3 years. This reduction would reduce an over provision of places and therefore assist with school financial stability whilst still providing sufficient places to deal with the number of 'in-year' applications that Bexley continue to receive. The table below outlines these forecasts.

**Bexley anticipate that these are the number of places which each phase will need to reduce by is currently:**

	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	Total
Primary places	60	120	120	300*
Secondary places	70	120	0	190*

*\* These will continue to be adjusted as required and will be added as an appendix.*

For 2025/2026, we have reduced the number of places in the primary phase by 60 through the reduction of one form of entry in 4 primary schools. We have also reduced the number of places in the secondary phase by 70 through the reduction of places in one secondary school.

For 2026/2027, we are currently seeing a reduction in the number of places totalling 120 for primary schools and 100 for Secondary. Consultations for admissions for 2027/2028 have begun and we so far have consultations to reduce the PAN of primary schools by 120 places and 30 places for secondary schools.

The culmination of these reductions currently mean that by 2027/2028, there will have been a total reduction of 300 places for primary schools and 190 places for secondary schools across the London Borough of Bexley.

It is anticipated that more schools will seek to reduce their PAN for Reception classes from 2027/2028 and previous SCAP forecasts and pupil planning work suggest that further reductions would be welcomed, providing that these are in the appropriate planning areas and do not impact the gender balance across our secondary phase. Through the work of the Strategic Education Partnership, the London Borough of Bexley will continue to review and refine numbers, ensuring that the balance between meeting the statutory duty and the financial and educational viability of our schools remains.

Key aspects of this continual review will include upcoming education reforms and the next SCAP analysis which is due to be published in early summer 2026.

Below you will find more detailed information about the planning areas and how the SCAP forecasts are impacting our work on school places and planning. All planning areas will continue to be monitored by the sub-group with regards to admission numbers and how these compare to the SCAP forecasts to ensure that Bexley are able to share this information with educational leaders.

### 4.3.1 Thamesmead and Belvedere planning area

Due to the redevelopment and expansion of housing in this planning area, there was expected to be an increased demand for places in schools in Thamesmead and Belvedere. However, with the opening of the Elizabeth Line Crossrail line opening at Abbey Wood in May 2022, the homes built have been occupied with professionals rather than the families that were expected. This has resulted in fewer applications for Reception places across this planning area. A large part of the work of the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership in the past year has been meeting with education leaders across all planning areas, but this began with Thamesmead and Belvedere, to discuss the impact this is likely to have on school places.

According to the SCAP forecast below, you can see a reduction in places for all year groups for the foreseeable future. This is particularly noticeable in Reception, where the forecast is a reduction of 96 spaces (equivalent to over 3 classes) between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029 which is a decrease of 18.3%.

Academic year	Primary						
Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
2024/25	523	524	517	531	547	554	545
2025/26	513	519	520	513	527	543	550
2026/27	445	509	515	516	509	523	539
2027/28	434	442	505	511	512	505	519
2028/29	427	431	439	501	507	508	501

Following on from these discussions, as well as the provisional application numbers for September 2025, the following changes to PANs will take place.

- One school reduced from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry in September 2025/2026.
- One school will reduce from a 4-form entry to a 3-form entry in September 2026/2027.
- Finally, one school will reduce from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry in September 2027/2028. This results in a reduction of a total of 60 places by 2026/2027 and potentially a total of 90 places by 2027/2028 (comparing to the PAN of 2024/2025).

This leaves a total of 600 places available for Reception pupils in this planning area for 2027/2028 (using the current numbers we have based on consultations taking place).

It may be necessary for more schools in the area to reduce their PAN, but a number of these schools are already smaller, 1-form entry schools and cannot reduce further without merging year groups.

### 4.3.2 Erith and Crayford planning area

Along with the Thamesmead and Belvedere area, Erith and Crayford have also seen significant housing developments including the development of the Erith Quarry “The Quarry” and a new 2-form entry primary school was opened in September 2024 to help meet demand from this housing development. However, there is also expected to be a decrease in demand for places over the coming years, with a projected reduction of 78 Reception places between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029, equivalent to a reduction of -12.1%.

Academic year	Primary						
Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
2024/25	644	646	583	634	660	642	630
2025/26	631	639	641	579	630	655	637
2026/27	591	627	635	636	575	626	650
2027/28	576	587	623	631	632	571	622
2028/29	566	572	583	619	627	628	567

One school in this area has consulted to reduce from a 3-form entry to 2-form entry school in September 2027-2028. There is also a further school who have consulted to reduce from a 3-form to a 2-form in September 2026/2027 and then reduce further from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry school in September 2027/2028.

This results in a reduction of a total of 30 places by 2026/2027 and potentially a total of 90 places by 2027/2028 (compared to the PAN of 2024/2025). This leaves a total of 690 places available for Reception pupils in this planning area for 2027/2028 (using the current numbers we have based on consultations taking place).

### 4.3.3 Bexleyheath

As with all other planning areas, schools in the Bexleyheath planning area are also expected to see a reduction in demand for places, with a projected reduction of demand for Reception places of 81 (-13.5%) between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029.

Academic year	Primary						
Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
2024/25	692	694	704	706	711	723	713
2025/26	648	687	689	699	701	706	718
2026/27	638	643	682	684	694	696	701
2027/28	622	634	638	677	679	689	691
2028/29	611	618	630	634	672	674	684

Following on from discussions with the sub-group, one school in this area has consulted and will be reducing from a 4-form entry to a 3-form entry from September 2025. This will help to reduce the surplus places in schools in this area but using the projections, there will still be a surplus of nearly two classes.

This results in a reduction of a total of potentially 30 places by 2027/2028 (compared to the PAN of 2024/2025). This leaves a total of 720 places available for Reception pupils in this planning area for 2027/2028 (using the current numbers we have based on consultations taking place).

### 4.3.4 Welling

Within primary schools in the Welling planning area, there is a projected reduction of demand for Reception places of 69 places (-15%) between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029.

Academic year	Primary						
Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
2024/25	532	534	575	569	616	582	602
2025/26	491	528	530	571	565	612	578
2026/27	483	488	524	526	567	561	608
2027/28	471	480	485	520	522	563	557
2028/29	463	468	477	482	516	518	559

Following on from discussions with the sub-group, one school in this area has consulted and will be reducing from a 2-form entry to a 1-form entry from September 2025. Another school will be reducing from a 3-form entry to a 2-form entry school in September 2026/2027 and a final school will also reduce from a 3-form entry to a 2-form entry school in September 2027/2028. This results in a reduction of a total of 60 places by 2026/2027 and potentially a total of 90 places by 2027/2028 (compared to the PAN of 2024/2025). This leaves a total of 540 places available for Reception pupils in this planning area for 2027/2028 (using the current numbers we have based on consultations taking place).

This will help to reduce the surplus places in schools in this area but using the projections, there will still be a surplus of over one class.

### 4.3.5 Sidcup

The forecasted reduction in the Sidcup planning area is less significant than in other areas of the borough, with a projected reduction of demand by 41 places (-7.6%) for Reception between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029.

Academic year	Primary						
Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
2024/25	549	551	578	588	581	587	583
2025/26	538	545	547	574	584	577	583
2026/27	530	534	541	543	570	580	573
2027/28	517	526	530	537	539	566	576
2028/29	508	513	522	526	533	535	562

There have been no consultations to reduce the PAN in this area and therefore the total number of places available for Reception pupils in this planning area remains at 675.

This planning area is seeing the smallest impact of admissions compared to the other planning areas, but there is still a forecasted reduction of the equivalent of more than one class.

## Section 5

### Secondary Schools

- 5.1 Current numbers
- 5.2 Demand for places
  - 5.2.1 Admissions for Year 7 places
  - 5.2.2 Late and in-year admissions
- 5.3 Future Planning

#### 5.1 Current numbers of Bexley pupils in Bexley schools

Bexley currently have 3338 secondary places available in Bexley schools for Year 7. This number only links to Year 7 admissions, rather than the total number of places available in the school, as schools are able to change the PAN beyond Year 7 and therefore Bexley' calculations are based on the number of places available for Year 7 admissions into the school.

This includes Year 7 places at the following schools:

- 2520 places available at non-selective schools
- 818 places available at selective schools
- 582 places at boys only schools
- 664 places at girls only schools

The data provided below shows the number of pupils on roll across Year 7 to 11 in all schools in Bexley. It also includes the pupils in these national curriculum years who attend Special Schools, but this is also looked at in more details in the Special Schools Commissioning Plan 2025-2028. The chart below shows details including the percentages of gender, ethnicity, language, SEN provision, SEN Primary Need, National Curriculum Year (NCY), Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility, phase of education and school type. This data shows the changes since 2022 and how the number of pupils on roll is decreasing, whilst the number of pupils with SEND are increasing.

## School census data – Spring 2025

### Pupils on roll from Year 7 to Year 11 in all schools in Bexley



## School census data – Spring 2022

### Pupils on roll from Year 7 to Year 11 in all schools in Bexley



Comparing the data of the School Census from Spring 2025 to Spring 2022, the headlines Bexley are seeing from secondary school data includes:

The total number of pupils on roll at Bexley schools has reduced by 365 pupils (-2.25%).

The number of pupils with SEND has increased by 406 pupils (+17%).

The number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has increased by 593 pupils (+19.8%).

## 5.2 Demand for places

### 5.2.1 Admissions for Year 7 places

The PANs of each secondary school can be found here:

	Yr7 PAN 2025/2026	Selective or non- selective	Gender for admissions
Beths Grammar School	192	Selective	Boys
Bexley Grammar School	210	Selective	Co-ed
Bexleyheath Academy	330	Non-selective	Co-ed
Blackfen School for Girls	230	Non-selective	Girls
Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School	192	Selective	Co-ed
Cleeve Park School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Haberdashers' Crayford Academy	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Harris Academy Falconwood	210	Non-selective	Co-ed
Harris Garrard Academy	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Hurstmere School	210	Non-selective	Boys
Leigh Academy Bexley	250	Non-selective	Co-ed
St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls	210	Non-selective	Girls
St Columba's Catholic Boys' School	180	Non-selective	Boys
Townley Grammar School	224	Selective	Girls
Trinity CofE School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Welling School	180	Non-selective	Co-ed
Total number of places available in Yr7			<b>3338</b>
Number of places at selective schools			<b>818</b>
Number of places at non-selective schools			<b>2520</b>
Number of places at boys only schools			<b>582</b>
Number of places at girls only schools			<b>664</b>
Number of places at co-educational schools			<b>2092</b>

Regarding admissions for secondary school places, Bexley are beginning to see a reduction in applications for Yr 7 places during the Secondary Planned Admissions Round, which can be seen on the chart below.

Secondary Admissions round	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	Sept 2025
Number of Bexley residents applying	3092	3017	2997
Bexley residents offered their first preference	71.0%	68.0%	70.6%
Bexley residents offered one of their top three preferences	91.2%	89.2%	90.3%
Bexley residents offered one of their six preferences	96%	96%	96.3%
Bexley residents <u>not</u> being offered one of their preferences	4.0%	4.0%	3.7%
Number of places	3463	3442	3338

For September 2025, there were 2997 applications from Bexley residents this year, which is 20 fewer than were received last year.

For on-time applications for 2025/2026, 70.6% of residents were offered their first preference (compared to 68% last year), 13.3% their second preference (14.20% last year), 6.4% their third preference (7% last year), with 90.3% receiving one of their 3 preferences (89.2% last year) and 96.3% will receive one of their 6 preferences (96% last year).

3.7% or 111 children are not being offered any of their preferences, but a school close to home, which is 16 fewer than last year. After direction there will be 256 places for any late applications and any 'in year' applications which are both important as in previous years Bexley has received as many as 100 late applications and the large number of 'in year' applications that are consistently received means that they have to plan for places beyond both national offer day and the start of the academic year.

Last year 75.9% Bexley children were offered a Bexley school, this year 77.4% were offered a Bexley school, but this may be indicative of the surplus of places available in schools.

### 5.2.2 Late and in-year admissions

Outside of the planned admissions round, Bexley are seeing an increasing number of late and in-year admissions.

The year groups in which Bexley see the most demand and are also hardest to place are pupils in Year 10 and 11. Bexley has recently seen an increase in in-year applications for places in these year groups from families who had previously declared EHE and also the migration of families into Bexley, either from other areas or other countries. This has put immense pressure on the system in Bexley with very few spaces available for these pupils.

The Fair Access Protocol (FAP) exists to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible. These meetings take place bi-weekly and attendees include not only representatives from the Local Authority but also local schools.

The Children's Wellbeing and School Bill, which is currently in consultation before going through the processes associated with it being passed by parliament suggest that the power to direct schools to enrol children will be passed to the Local Authority, which would mean that Bexley would no longer need to get permission from the Secretary of State to direct a school to take a pupil.

## 5.3 Future planning

Bexley has not yet seen the same drop in the number of applications to secondary schools that has seen in primary schools and according to the SCAP forecasts, Bexley are unlikely to see the same impact in secondary schools in the coming years. However, whilst you can see there is relative stability in the number of pupils up until 2030/31, there are some reductions and Bexley may see numbers change and will need to act upon this where necessary.

Academic year	Secondary						
Forecasts	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2024/25	3188	3227	3250	3245	3194	1979	1837
2025/26	3175	3250	3214	3232	3204	1948	1832
2026/27	3169	3244	3208	3227	3198	1944	1829
2027/28	3165	3240	3204	3222	3194	1942	1826
2028/29	3161	3236	3200	3218	3190	1939	1824
2029/30	3158	3233	3197	3215	3187	1937	1822
2030/31	3155	3230	3194	3212	3184	1936	1820

The reasons why the reductions are not being seen in secondary as much as in primary schools may be due to a number of factors. This includes the high demand for grammar school places as well as the number of pupils living outside of Bexley but whom attend a Bexley school.

Ultimately, there is a reduced demand for places. Where there are geographical and demographic changes afoot, this will impact the number of pupils on roll at secondary schools in Bexley and this will be monitored and acted upon by the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership.

Through our initial work, our current forecast is that our mainstream school places should be reduced by around 300 places and 190 secondary places over the next 3 years. This reduction would reduce an over provision of places and therefore assist with school financial stability whilst still providing sufficient places to deal with the number of 'in-year' applications that Bexley continue to receive. The table below outlines these forecasts.

**Bexley anticipate that these are the number of places which each phase will need to reduce by:**

	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	Total
Primary places	60	120	120	300*
Secondary places	70	120	0	190*

\* These will continue to be adjusted as required and will be added as an appendix.

For 2025/2026, Bexley has reduced the number of places in the primary phase by 60 through the reduction of one form of entry in 2 primary schools. Bexley has also reduced the number of places in the secondary phase by 70 through the reduction of places in one secondary school. For 2026/2027, we will see a further reduction of 100 places through the reduction in PAN of two schools. One further school is consulting to reduce their PAN in 2027/2028 by 30, which would take the total number of reductions of places to 200 by 2027/2028.

170 of these spaces are for co-ed schools and the further 30 is for an all-girls school. This should not adversely affect the number of places available for girls.

Bexley will also ensure that decisions made about any reduction of places for secondary schools are made with the gender of pupils of the school in mind to ensure they do not create an imbalance of places. In mainstream secondary schools, there are relatively stable distribution of the ratio of boys to girls, as can be seen in the chart below.

**The gender of pupils in Bexley schools from the Spring Census:**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Boys</b>	10751 (52%)	10618 (52%)	10588 (52%)
<b>Girls</b>	9820 (48%)	9680 (48%)	9668 (48%)

\* this data comprises of data from the Spring Census for NCY years 7-14, across all schools in Bexley.

## Section 6

### Early Years Settings

- 6.1 Current numbers and quality of provision
- 6.2 Demand for places
  - 6.2.1 Children from families in receipt of additional forms of support
  - 6.2.2 Children with parents who work irregular hours
  - 6.2.3 Funded spaces
- 6.3 Future Planning
- 6.4 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

#### 6.1 Current numbers and quality of provision

Bexley has a range of childcare provision across the borough offering a variety of flexible childcare options to parents. New providers continue to register. At the time of publication Bexley has:

- 59 Primary schools, 40 of which have nursery classes
- 92 Ofsted registered day nurseries and preschools
- 273 Ofsted registered childminders
- 202 of which offer funded places
- 25 childminders registered with agencies
- 33 Ofsted registered Out of School Clubs, plus several run by schools

The below shows the breakdown of the inspection results of recent Ofsted inspections:

- Outstanding – 1%
- Good – 95%
- Requires improvement – 4%

Some providers are still awaiting their first full inspection. In addition, there are a number of unregistered organisations that provide childcare, tutoring or Holiday Activities and Food Programme provision, community activities and care for older children.

*Data provided by Ofsted. Figures are correct as of January 2026.*

#### 6.2 Demand for places

Bexley currently has approximately 6900 places for children in settings registered on the Early Years Register. Although Bexley does not hold data on vacancies in early years providers, anecdotal evidence tells us that there are sufficient places for Early Years Children. Bexley do not anticipate the new funding entitlements have led to a large increase in the demand for places as our survey shows that many children who took up the extended entitlements were already attending a setting in a paid-for place. This is supported by data supplied from the DfE, which tells us that they predicted that by September 2025 Bexley may need to increase places for our youngest children in the centre and south of the borough by just 4%. Using the Childcare Expansion Capital Funding, Bexley has generated approximately 420 additional places for children aged 2 and under.

### 6.2.1 Children from families in receipt of additional forms of support

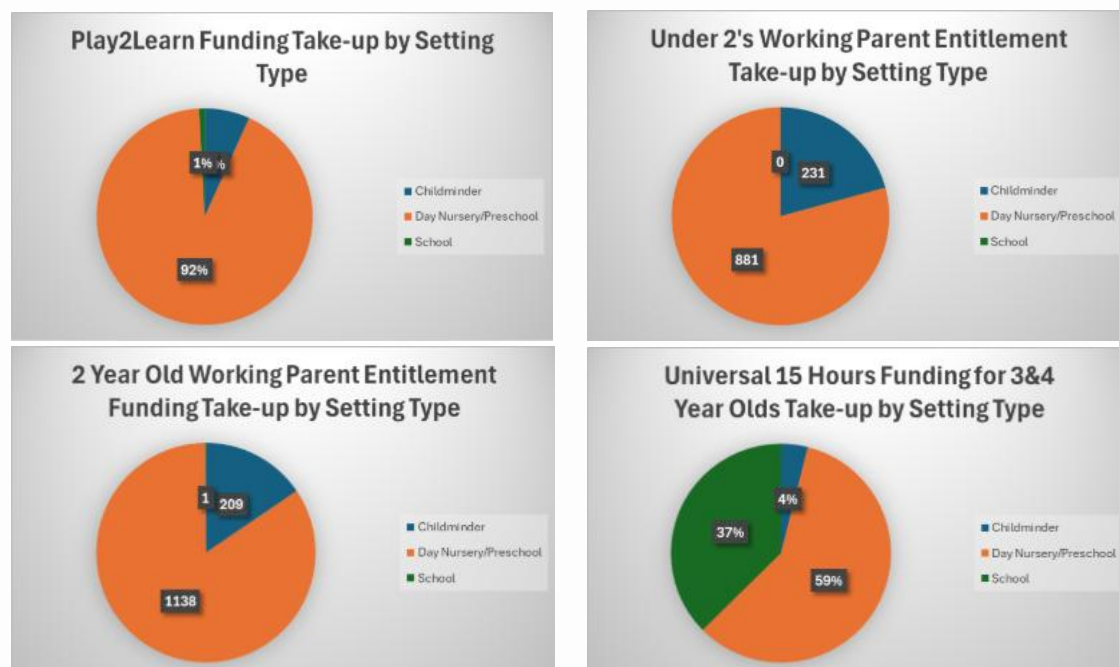
Bexley receives a list of families supplied by DWP six times a year, which gives us an insight into families receiving relevant benefits that have 2 year old resident. Otherwise, Bexley does not hold data on which children would fall into this category, although we can extrapolate some metric from Free School Meals information. From this, we have concluded that Bexley have overall sufficient childcare so would assess the childcare for this particular group to be sufficient also. Bexley estimates that approximately 10% of the children attending early education settings fall into this category.

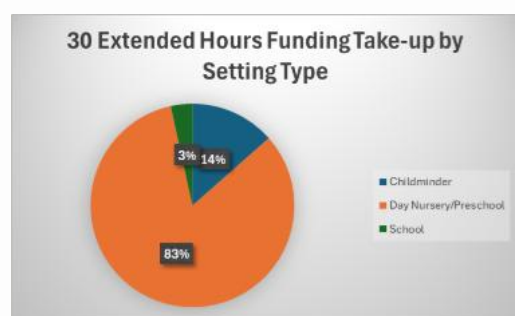
### 6.2.2 Children with parents who work irregular hours

Bexley does not hold data on the hours childminders and nurseries operate beyond the hours they have told Ofsted they will be operating. As a Local Authority, Bexley are not aware of any gap in childcare for children whose parents work irregular hours and are aware of some childminders who work irregular hours, for example on Saturdays, to accommodate parents' work schedules.

### 6.2.3 Funded spaces

The following information shows the numbers of children aged over 9 months, two, three, and four taking up funded places in Bexley:





Currently, children in Bexley who are taking up a funded 3 and 4-year-old place are attending a wide range of settings, including childminders, PVI's and school nurseries. With the Working Parent Entitlement now in place, Bexley are anticipating a shift whereby more 3 and 4-year-olds will be attending school nurseries while the PVI's (private, voluntary and independent providers) and childminders take more of the younger funded children.

### 6.3 Future planning

There were 591,072 live births in England and Wales in 2023 which is the lowest since 1977; the number remains in line with the recent trend of decreasing live births observed before the coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic. Bexley project that the supply and demand will remain largely in line with current rates.

*Data provided by the Office for National Statistics.*

#### **A survey of parents showed the following:**

61% of parents are accessing formal childcare and the following shows parents' preferences by setting type when looking for childcare:

- Childminder - **23%**
- Term time pre-school - **6%**
- School Nursery - **24%**
- Private Day Nursery - **23%**
- Out of School club - **35%**
- Some parents answered with more than 1 choice

Bexley has identified that they currently have sufficient childcare and will have enough places to meet the needs as the entitlement continues to expand through September 2026 and beyond. However, Bexley have identified some gaps, including:

- Care for children, both Early Years and school age, with high and complex needs.
- Spaces are not always available in the exact part of Bexley that parents are looking for. However, Bexley is not a large borough and there are good transport links.
- Spaces are not always available in the type of provision that parents would prefer as a first choice. Parents, and the professionals that advise them are supported to understand the different types of provision, and to choose that which is best for their child.
- The childcare expansion will continue to change the landscape of places required, opening opportunities for changes to business modelling and flexible arrangements.
- Any existing gaps will likely be exacerbated by the childcare expansion.

The overall assessment is that, according to the data available, Bexley has sufficient childcare to meet current needs, and to support the further expansion of the entitlement funding to children

of working parents. However, it is recognised that most of the provision is delivered by private and independent businesses (including childminders) so there may be other considerations coming into play that will prevent the maximisation of places. For example, providers may choose to limit places due to staffing or venue issues, or parents may not find their first choice of provision available.

## 6.4 SEND in Early Years Settings

Local Authorities and settings should promote equality and inclusion for all children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. Bexley does not have any Private, Independent, Voluntary or Community dedicated specialist provision for early years, although there are settings that have specific expertise in this area. Instead, Bexley promote and support inclusive practice across all of our settings. Inclusive practice addresses and supports the individual needs of each child. By working in this way, providers ensure their inclusive practice benefits each child in the setting and creates an environment in which all children, including those with SEND, have the opportunity to flourish. This includes removing barriers that prevent children from accessing early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. In terms of sufficiency, parent conversations and anecdotal data implies that there are not enough places able to cater for high-end and complex needs, and although Bexley know that they have enough places overall, the places are not necessarily where parents would like them. For example, generally, childminders have spaces for children with SEND, whereas PVI's and preschools might have more limited spaces. Our data also shows that the primary need for children identified with SEND is around speech and language, and social communication.

## Section 7

### Post-16 provision

- 7.1 Current numbers
- 7.2 Demand for places
- 7.3 Future Planning

#### 7.1 Current numbers

All children and young people need to be in school, education or employment until the age of 18. Whilst the Local Authority does not have a role in place planning for this age group, the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership work with schools and providers to ensure there are appropriate offers available for the needs of the pupils in Bexley. As of May 2025, out of 6784 pupils in Year 12 and Year 13, 95.2% (6456) were engaged in education and training, through further and higher education institutions, sixth form colleges and sixth forms in schools. 340 (5.0%) pupils were engaged in an apprenticeship or employment with training/part time study and 74 (1.1%) were engaged in other training, such as work based learning, part time education, employment with training or other training.

This means that the percentage of pupils in Year 12 and 13 who are participating in activities has stayed the same, with 95.2% from May 2024 to May 2025. There has, however, also been a 0.2% increase in the percentage of Year 12 and 13 pupils who are NEET, which has grown from 2.2% in May 2024 to 2.4% in May 2025.

Our current provisions who offer Post-16 provision include:

- Christ the King Sixth Form
- London South East Colleges
- Bexleyheath Academy
- Trinity CofE School
- Leigh Academy Bexley
- Beths Grammar School
- Bexley Grammar School
- Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School
- Townley Grammar School
- Cleeve Park School
- Harris Academy Falconwood
- Harris Garrard Academy
- St Catherine's Catholic Girls School (opening in September 2026)

Bexley also have a Post-16 Directory, which can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/post-16-education-bexley/decisions-post-16>

## 7.2 Demand for Places

As can be seen in the figures in section 7.1, the percentage of pupils in Year 12 and 13 who are participating in activities has remained at 95.2% when comparing the data from May 2024 to May 2025.

There will be a project focussing on looking at what post-16 provision is available and whether it continues to meet the needs of our pupils in the future. This project will be undertaken by the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership in the next academic year, as outlined in 7.3.

## 7.3 Future Planning

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will also feed into the future planning of Post-16 provision, through the introduction of the single register which requires the tracking of pupils until they are 18.

The work of the School Places and Planning sub-group next academic year will focus on Post-16 provision, looking at what is currently on offer, including the number of places for each course, the variance of the courses available and whether there are currently any areas of vocational or academic education that are not currently available.

In September 2026, St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls will also be opening a sixth form, the number of places of which will be confirmed at a later date.

## Section 8

### Elective Home Educated (EHE) families

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, Bexley has seen an increase in the number of families declaring Elective Home Education (EHE). The reasons behind this are varied and range from mental health difficulties through to identified or unidentified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. So far in 2024-2025, 22.3% of families in Bexley cite dissatisfaction with the school as a reason for declaring EHE and 25.4% is cited as due to mental health.

The total number of children home educated is 575 (as of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025) but this figure changes very frequently. The breakdown by year group can be found below:

NCY	Count	%	NCY	Count	%
0	2	0.3%	6	28	4.9%
1	18	3.1%	7	50	8.7%
2	23	4.0%	8	53	9.2%
3	23	4.0%	9	94	16.3%
4	21	3.7%	10	123	21.4%
5	21	3.7%	11	119	20.7%

There is a higher proportion of secondary aged pupils home educated compared to primary age and this can be due to a number of different factors, as evidenced above.

The data below shows the number of new declarations since 2022, but this is in addition to the number already on register.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL declared during the academic year	TOTAL on the register for the period	
2022-2023	5	5	6	8	7	9	6	29	36	49	49	18	227	492*	303**
2023-2024	11	8	9	11	8	6	14	30	44	55	40	18	254	557*	372**
2024-2025 (up to 24.1.25)	1	7	8	11	4	5	3	11	8	17	29	18	122	497*	441**

\* all instances in period

\*\* active at end of period (for example, leaving year 11s, leaving the Borough, returning to school education)

### **Additional notes regarding this data**

- 2022-2023 – the data insight above shows 233 actual Notices of Declarations (NODS) received in this period and 227 EHE starts in period
- 2023-2024 – the data insight above shows 272 NODS received and 254 actual EHE starts in period
- 2024-2025 (up to 24.1.25) Data insight shows 161 NODS received and 122 EHE starts in this period.

There is often an increase in Year 7 declarations, as pupils move into secondary education, but the trend is for this to continue throughout secondary school, as can be seen in the data above. Whilst there is a high number of EHE pupils in Bexley, this does not impact school places and planning significantly and whilst it has been taken into consideration, it has not been deemed necessary to make alternative arrangements.

The Children's Wellbeing and School Bill, which is currently in consultation before going through the processes associated with it being passed by parliament suggest that there will be changes to the way in which EHE runs. This is unlikely to affect school places and planning and much of the work is already a part of Bexley's processes. This includes ensuring that children with a Child Protection Order or a Child in Need are unable to be home educated, but the changes are likely to impact the capacity of the Local Authority.

More information about EHE can be found on the [Bexley website](#).

## Section 9

### Proposed reduction for places and summary

Our main priority is to support our schools and ensure the financial viability moving forward to reduce the risk of school closures, as have been seen in other boroughs in London.

Bexley, through the Strategic Education Partnership, will continue to share updates so that our education community is fully aware of the place planning challenges within Bexley and the impact this could have on their schools.

The following consultations have either taken place or are currently in progress (as of December 2025):

Year	Primary School Reception PAN changes	Secondary School Year 7 PAN changes	Total reduction in places
2025/26	Bishop Ridley Primary School (60 to 30 places) Old Bexley (120 to 90 places)	Welling School (250 places to 180)	Primary = 60 places  Secondary = 70 places
2026/27	Bedonwell Infant School (120 places to 90 places) East Wickham Primary School (90 places to 60 places) Haberdashers Slade Green Primary School (90 places to 60 places) Willow Bank Primary School (60 places to 30 places)	Hurstmere (210 places to 180 places)  Leigh Academy Secondary School (250 places to 180 places)	Primary = 120 places  Secondary = 100 places
2027/28	Jubilee Primary School (60 places to 30 places) Haberdashers Slade Green Primary School (60 places to 30 places) Christ Church Primary School (90 to 60 places) Danson Primary School (90 to 60 places)	Blackfen School for Girls (230 places to 200 places)	Primary = 120 places  Secondary = 30 places
Total number of place reductions from 2024/2025 to 2027-2028: Primary = 300 Secondary = 200			

This document will be reviewed in June 2028 but, if required, a yearly appendix will be added if the local picture significantly changes.