

**Isle of Wight Headteacher Executive
Group**

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ISLE OF WIGHT
HEADTEACHER
EXECUTIVE

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Dear Parent / Carer or Colleague

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

The Headteacher's Executive would like to make you aware that on the 8 June, the Isle of Wight Council at its Cabinet meeting will discuss a report on school place planning. The report will focus on the significant decline in primary pupil numbers over the next five years and how this needs to be managed.

Over the last year headteachers and governors from across the Island including the Headteachers' Executive group have been working with council officers and elected members about the many impacts of significant surplus places in our schools. The focus of these discussions has been about how collectively, we as schools, and the council as the responsible body for education on the Island, manage this very challenging situation.

Longer term pupil trends show the national decline in births having a direct impact upon the number of children arriving into the primary education phase. The numbers of primary pupils on the Island are forecast to decrease from c.9,200 in 2017 to c.8,000 by 2025. Secondary forecasts indicate pupil numbers are currently increasing from c.6,000 in 2017 to 6,400 in 2025. However, this growth will not be maintained longer-term, and consideration will need to be given in time as to how future surplus capacity is managed in the secondary sector.

Having a small level of surplus places across our schools provides flexibility. It allows for movement onto the Island and helps meet parental preference. However, the consequences of having too many surplus places can be severe. The main impact on schools of surplus places due to falling rolls is the resulting reduction in individual school finances which, brings many significant challenges for governors and headteachers to try and manage. In addition to this, in a time of increasing teacher shortage, it makes it less likely that schools will be able to employ enough high-quality teachers to ensure that each child receives the best possible education.

As the Cabinet report will be published on 26 May, the last day of the half term, it is important that you are aware of this report, and that it has been written with the full support of headteachers and governor representatives across the Island. **However, it is important to note that Isle of Wight headteachers and governors had no influence on the naming of any schools in the report, nor any knowledge of which these schools would be.**

The level of surplus places currently and forecast across the primary phase must be addressed if collectively we are to ensure a strong and sustainable schools system going forward.

Pending discussions and decisions taken at the Council's Cabinet meeting on the 8 June further information on next steps will be issued by both individual schools and the Council.

Yours sincerely

The Isle of Wight Executive Headteacher Group