



Children and Young People Select Committee

Report title: School Place Planning update

Date: 11 January 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Whole Borough

Contributors: Head of Business, Infrastructure, Compliance and Education Operations

Outline and recommendations

This report provides an update on Lewisham's position regarding school place planning, specifically in relation to the changes to primary and secondary forecasts, mitigations in place and an overview of the changes being made to special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision.

CYP Select Committee members are recommended to note and comment on the contents of the report and the attached presentation (Appendix 1)

1. Summary

- 1.1 The report details the falling birth rate in Lewisham (and across the UK) and the impact this has on place forecasting and how the system is dealing with these reductions. It also covers the increased preference for Lewisham secondary schools and the work underway to increase the provision of special educational needs and disability (SEND) places within the borough.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 CYP Select Committee are recommended to note and comment on the contents of the report and the attached presentation at Appendix 1.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Ensuring sufficiency of school places contributes to the following key priority outcome of Lewisham's Corporate Strategy 2022-2026:

Supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham.
- 3.2 Specifically we are helping our schools plan for the future by ensuring that they know how many pupils they are likely to have and reducing the potential for excess spaces within schools. Additionally we are working to increase the provision for children with SEND to meet children's learning needs within the borough.
- 3.3 The Local Authority has a duty to ensure the provision of sufficient places for pupils of statutory school age

4. Background

- 4.1 As previously reported, the UK and London in particular has suffered from two 'shocks' over the past few years that have impacted pupil numbers, namely Brexit and Covid.
- 4.2 Together these have impacted on both the number of families within Lewisham (and surrounding areas) but also the number of people planning to have families.
- 4.3 This has come after a near 10 year boom of pupil numbers which peaked in Reception in 2017.
- 4.4 Alongside this, whilst our primary schools have typically had a very strong reputation, the Secondary sector had been less widely regarded, although we can see this is starting to change following an improvement in educational outcomes.
- 4.5 A lot of work has been put in to ensure that we don't have excessive oversupply of school places in Lewisham, and that we take advantage of spare physical capacity to enable us to cater more widely for Lewisham children in Lewisham, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 4.6 The presentation at Appendix 1 outlines the current position, actions that have been taken and what the near future holds.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. Whilst there are no immediate financial implications for the General Fund, there are potential implications for individual schools who could be negatively impacted from falling numbers.
- 5.2. Where this is the case, there is an associated risk that a school in deficit could result in

a pressure on the councils overall funding position

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Education Act 1996, Section 14 lays you a local authority's functions in respect of provision of primary and secondary schools:

A local authority] shall secure that sufficient schools for providing primary education and education that is secondary education by virtue of section 2(2)(a) are available for their area.

The schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient for the purposes of subsection unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. In subsection (2) "appropriate education" means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of—

- (a) the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes, and*
- (b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.*

A local authority in England shall exercise their functions under this section with a view to—

- (a) securing diversity in the provision of schools, and*
- (b) increasing opportunities for parental choice.*

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities implications

8. Climate change and environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no direct climate change implications

9. Crime and disorder implications

- 9.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications

11. Background papers

- 11.1 Appendix 1 School Place Planning presentation

12. Glossary

Term	Definition
PAN	Published Admission Number
FE	Forms of Entry
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Term	Definition
PAN	Published Admission Number
FE	Forms of Entry
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder

13. Report author and contact

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