



CYP Select Committee

School Place Planning Update

Date: 25 November 2021

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

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Outline and recommendations

As part of its work programme the committee has requested a report on School Place Planning, including forecasting, resultant actions, spare capacity and children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) going to out of borough schools.

The Select Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the committee regarding School Place Planning, including the current position in Lewisham Schools, forecasting of places, the implications of falling rolls and the actions that we are taking, the current situation regarding pupils with EHCPs and the pilot work and opportunities presented to help address the numbers going to out of borough schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Select Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The detail within this report is in line with the following key priority outcome of Lewisham's Corporate Strategy 2018-2022:
- 3.2 Giving children and young people the best start in life – every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.
- 3.3 Additionally the Local Authority has a duty to ensure the provision of sufficient places for pupils of statutory school age; at present a falling birth rate means that we are currently

reducing the number of places in our Primary schools to prevent oversupply and allow schools to plan on a more stable footing.

Place Planning Strategy 2017-22

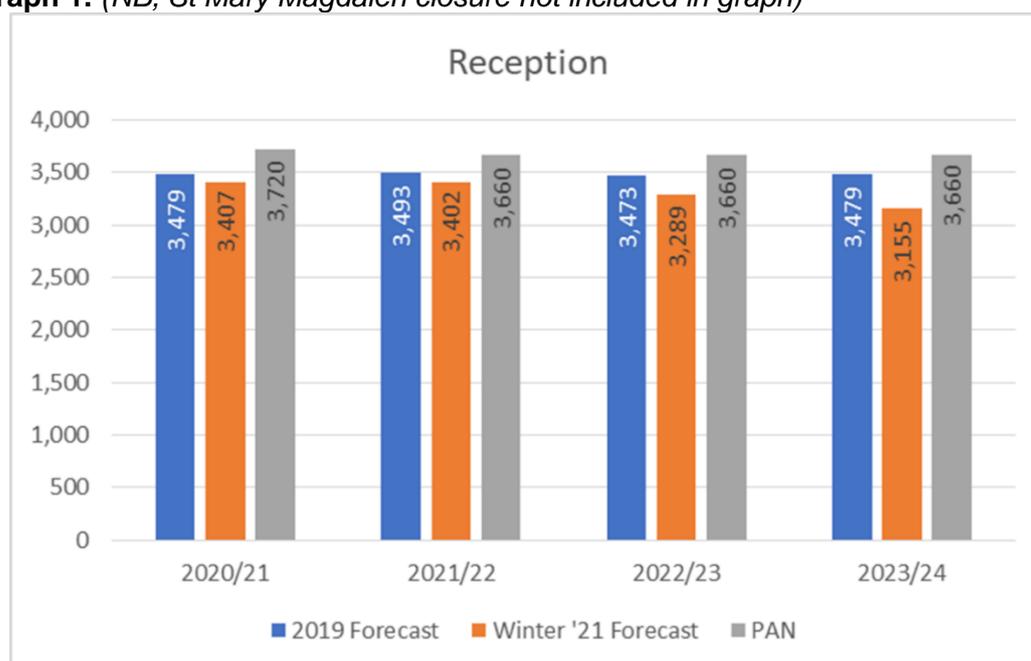
- 3.4 A recommendation of the 2016 Lewisham Education Commission Report was for the Council to develop a new 5 year Place Planning Strategy that succeeded the Primary Strategy for Change. Officers reviewed what had occurred previously and what needed to be achieved in the future. Subsequently the draft strategy went through a public consultation process. The strategy was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 22 March 2017.
- 3.5 Within the new strategy the Council committed to constantly review its forecasting to ensure that the supply of school places met need as accurately as possible, as both undersupply and oversupply can have knock on effects on school standards and finances.
- 3.6 As a local authority we have a responsibility to determine the admissions arrangements for community schools. Where any changes are proposed they must be publicly consulted on for a 6 week period between 1 October and 31 January, with determinations then agreed by the end of February of each year for the following year's intake (February 2021 determination was for 2022/23) – any changes can be appealed via the schools adjudicator. Outside of this process the local authority has no direct power to change the admissions arrangements for community schools, but can apply to the schools adjudicator and put forward a case for 'in year' changes – the decision for which rests with the schools adjudicator.
- 3.7 The local authority cannot determine the admissions arrangements for non-community schools (Foundation, Academy, Voluntary Aided etc) but would be able to comment on any consultation that these 'own admission authorities' conduct.
- 3.8 As such, as a Local Authority we have the following three options available to us to reduce school numbers in our Lewisham community schools;
- 3.9 **Local Authority Allocations Cap**
 - Can vary across year groups
 - Not an official reduction in Published Admissions Number (PAN), so cannot override parental choice
 - Can be put in place at any point, and removed at any point
- 3.10 **In year PAN reduction**
 - Only applies to that years 'entry'
 - Requires an application to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator
 - Needs clear evidence that demand not there
 - Decision is not ours
 - Takes up to 8 weeks post submission
- 3.9 **Determined Admissions Arrangements PAN reduction**
 - Next determined admissions arrangements consultation due to start late November 2021 for 2023 entry (for community schools)
 - Will be a permanent change in PAN
 - Decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet in February 2022

4. Primary School Places

- 4.1 When the current Place Planning Strategy was developed and launched, Lewisham was experiencing unprecedented demand for Primary School Places. We had permanently expanded a number of schools and were utilising 'bulge classes' to meet need.

- 4.2 Since that time there have been a number of once off major occurrences which have resulted in a reduction in our child population – most notably Brexit and COVID. It is however, unclear at this stage due to the lag in population data to fully understand the impact of these major events. Indeed these are still live events and continue to change as a result of various factors – extended settled status deadlines, end of furlough schemes etc.
- 4.3 What is clear is that there is currently a falling birth rate in London and Lewisham is no different. Indeed added together, these various factors have meant that we have been revising down our school applications forecasts each year for the past 5 years. This has been added to by a reduction in the throughput of Births to children in Reception.
- 4.4 At the peak in 2017 we had 4005 Reception places available to meet the needs of parents applying for Reception Places in Lewisham schools. Since that time we have removed planned bulge classes, and reduced the size of 7 of our primary schools. Additionally we have utilised the ability to put in place 'Local Authority allocations caps' in schools where they have lower numbers to help provide some short term stability.
- 4.5 Prior to the most recent forecasting revisions, these interventions would have reduced surplus places down to 5%, which is in-line with DfE guidance, however what is clear from the forecasting below (Graph 1) is that whilst we have cut Reception places down to 3660, we need to go further still over the coming years.
- 4.6 This is particularly the case as Primary application numbers for this September dropped across London at an average of 6.7% (Lewisham was 6.6%), though some boroughs were as high as 14%.
- 4.7 As such for this year's intake alone we have already introduced caps in a further 5 schools (removing an additional 150 places from the system), and are now working with schools, governing bodies, diocesan boards and trusts to agree where further reductions can take place. Additionally, St Mary Magdalen RC Primary School will close as of 31 December 2021 following consultation and decision earlier in the year.

Graph 1. (NB, St Mary Magdalen closure not included in graph)

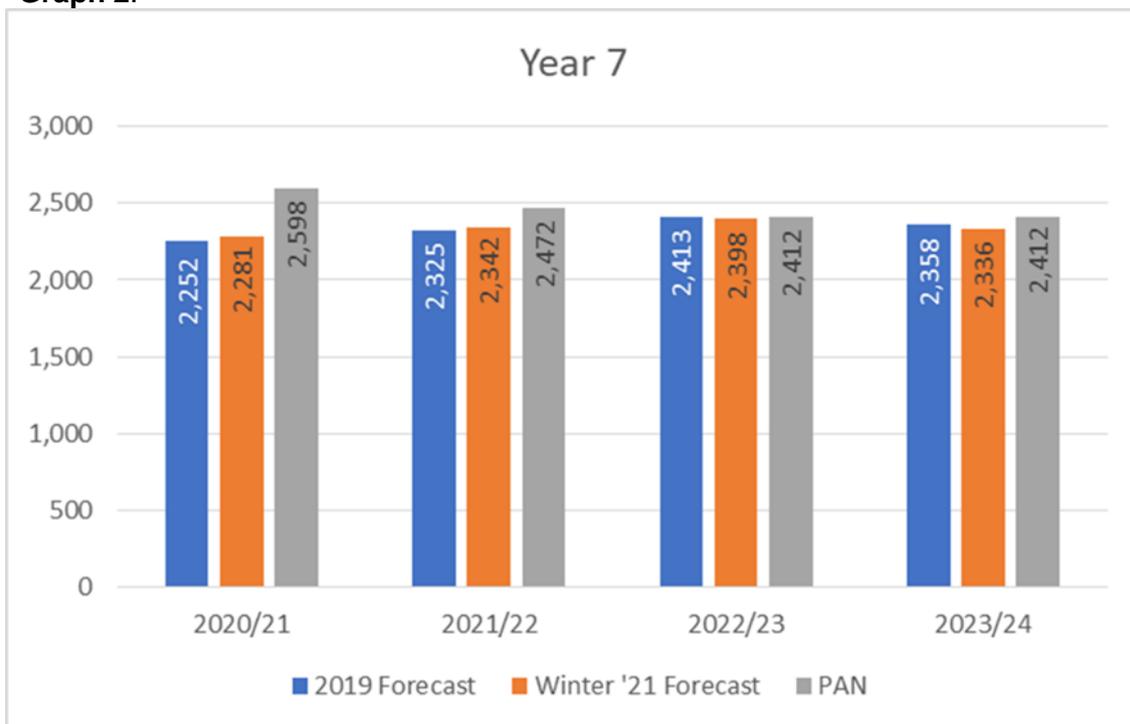


- 4.8 Further actions regarding Primary school places are to;
- Continuously review the capping of places
 - Consider the possibility of further applications to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for in year Published Admissions Number (PAN) reductions (for 2022 intake)
 - Identify and agree schools to be included for council Determined Admissions Arrangements (DAA) consultation later this year.
 - Continue to work with those own admission authority schools regarding their plans.

5. Secondary School Places

- 5.1 Unlike primary school places, the demand for secondary places has been more subdued through the last part of the 2010s, and we have never experienced a large increase in throughput from Year 6 to Year 7.
- 5.2 As such the decision to expand Addey and Stanhope School was revoked, and we have reduced the PAN in 4 of our schools – Deptford Green, Prendergast Ladywell, Sedgehill and Forest Hill – to help control the supply of places and provide more surety to schools for planning purposes.
- 5.3 Revised forecasting (Graph 2) hasn't changed the expectations for Year 7 places in the same way as for Reception, so at present we should have a surplus of between 1-4% over the coming years (which are also our highest Year 6 years).

Graph 2.



- 5.4 Indeed first preference applications for secondary places this year increased slightly by just over 1 form of entry (an increase of 32)
- 5.5 Regarding future intervention there is a possibility that we may need to consider this, and will continue to review, however it should be noted that the suppressed numbers at our secondary schools has been fed back anecdotally due to poor reputation and Ofsted ratings of a few schools. We have seen that when these improve (Prendergast Ladywell as

an example) that a school can go from struggling to oversubscribed in a very short period of time. At present, only 67% of our Year 6 pupils transfer to our secondary schools.

- 5.6 Significant support is currently being offered to our secondary schools via both Lewisham Learning and the Local Authority. Specifically;
- 5.7 Ongoing support throughout the year to ensure they maintain the highest possible standards, including a dedicated school improvement partner for each school who undertakes regularly visits and monitors performance. Additional intensive support in the run-up to any potential OFSTED inspection to ensure we maintain the high % of schools that are judged good or outstanding
- 5.8 Additionally there has been and continues to be further support regarding communications for our secondary schools, with ongoing actions including;
 - Promoting Secondary schools through the production of a brochure for parents distributed to every Y6 pupil at the beginning of the Autumn term
 - Identifying and promoting key PR opportunities for secondary schools (Good Ofsted results/Awards/GCSE & A Level results), promoting to local and national press, social media
 - Regular promotional features throughout the year in Council publication Lewisham Life – key messaging ‘consider your local secondary’
 - Employing an experienced communications officer to provide support for communications as needed

6. Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- 6.1 There are currently 3200 Education, Health and Care Plans in place for Lewisham young people. Of these 1002 pupils are currently educated outside of Lewisham schools.
- 6.2 The majority of these students were placed out of borough at secondary phase transfer and in a mix of mainstream provisions and independent special schools. From a survey that was conducted for these families this was largely due to the following reasons:
 - Lack of faith in the secondary provisions within Lewisham, fundamentally around reputations, not feeling that the mainstream schools can meet needs and parents attending specific Lewisham Schools and did not have a positive experience
 - Parents perception that Lewisham Schools do not have the right provision to meet their child’s needs
- 6.3 There are very few that are placed out of borough due to tribunal appeals as most cases do not get to that stage. They are usually stopped at mediation or via less formal communications.
- 6.4 Those that are placed out of borough due to lack of provision totals 404 young people where autism (116) is the most common primary need followed very closely by SEMH (99). 182 of the young people are post-secondary age and 179 are secondary age.
- 6.5 To mitigate some of these students being placed out of borough we have some pilot projects being developed:
 - A 1 year post 16 transition pilot being led by Brent Knoll and supported by Lewisham College. It is for 8-10 students who need 1 additional year to support the transition into a mainstream college (hopefully Lewisham College) rather than spending 3 years in a higher cost specialist placement. This should be implemented in September 2022.

- A collaborative provision for students with more complex needs that have attended either Greenvale or Drumbeat to attend a provision that is led collectively by Lewisham College and Greenvale School. These discussions are still in their infancy.
 - An increase in resource base provision across Lewisham primary and secondary, but particularly at secondary for students with autism, for students with speech and language disorders and for those who have moderate learning differences but are social.
 - A satellite provision for Drumbeat school to increase the specialist placements and sharing of expertise.
 - Development of nurture provisions across primary and secondary, with the implementation of a nurture network for colleagues within these provisions.
- 6.6 Additionally we are increasing provision at both Greenvale and Watergate Schools for our young people with Severe and/or Profound/Multiple Learning Difficulties.

7. Spare Capacity

- 7.1 It should be noted that school place demand is cyclical by nature, and that following a period of prolonged growth we are now in the position where demand is falling. As such it is important that we control the supply of places as best we can to enable schools to operate efficiently and effectively plan for the future, and not suffer from having large numbers of spaces in classes.
- 7.2 However, this does present an opportunity to utilise the spare capacity within our mainstream schools to help meet the needs of our young people that require more specialist provision, if only on a short to medium term basis.
- 7.3 As alluded to above we are in the process of identifying schools that have space that can help meet a number of needs for our young people both with EHCPs and also for those that require Primary Alternative Provision. Feedback so far from schools has been positive.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

11. Climate change and environmental implications

- 11.1 There are no climate change and environmental implications.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

- 12.1 There are no Health and wellbeing implications.

13. Report author(s) and contact

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