

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING - QUARTERLY UPDATE - July 2021

Committee name	Families, Health and Wellbeing Select Committee
Officer reporting	Dan Kennedy, Sarah Phillips – Education, Schools Place Planning
Papers with report	Map of schools in Hillingdon and Primary Planning Areas
Ward	All

HEADLINES

1. The Committee are scheduled to receive quarterly school place planning updates as this is a key statutory function of the Council as a local education authority (LA) and involves liaison with all schools and Trusts in the borough, and with neighbouring LAs. The duty is to have a sufficiency of school places to meet parent demand. School place planning sets a strategic framework in which the LA and every school can operate, requiring annual review and decisions to be agreed with individual schools and trusts to adjust supply, and to inform timely capital investment and building decisions and negotiations with the DfE.
2. Covid-19 has had a local and national impact on school planning and individual school rolls of unprecedented volatility. Hillingdon school rolls remain the seventh highest (of 33) in London with 52,350 total pupils on roll on the January 2021 schools census from nursery to sixth form. There has not been the steep decline in pupil numbers seen in Inner London where the combination of Brexit and Covid-19 led many European families to leave London with a serious impact on schools.
3. Most Hillingdon schools are experiencing varying levels of continuous mobility of pupils, in and out, with uncertainty that will continue into the autumn term. Across Hillingdon there has been a small decline in rolls and also in new admission applications over the past 18 months. However there have also been new housing and new movements into the borough. The May 2021 census is still being completed.
4. The LA place planning duty to ensure sufficient places to meet demand covers all schools; Community, Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Academy. Most secondary schools and half of all primary schools are still absolutely full, so the cumulative impact of a slight decline has been a larger decline in rolls in a small number of schools, but spread across the borough. All special schools and Special Resourced Places (SRPs) in mainstream have filled up given the rise in EHCPs over the past year. Overall, nursery numbers have declined but sixth form numbers have risen.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. notes the update and actions underway to support parents and schools.**
- 2. questions officers about the update.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Strategic Context

5. The national and local impact of Covid-19 on schools and on families has led to volatility in school rolls and changes that may be temporary, or may signify new trends. A few schools face challenging decisions to manage budgets and staffing and class sizes.
6. A map of all schools is appended which also shows the 14 Primary Planning areas. There are two secondary planning areas, north and south of the A40.
7. Demand is estimated by the number of pupils living in each planning area of the borough and by the patterns of parental choice in their preferences for admissions and of new housing and cross-borough movements, with our seven neighbouring LAs and beyond. Around 80% of all pupils attend a school within two miles of their home, but it may be in a different LA. Some of our schools are very close to the borough boundary and individual school intakes vary from 0% to 55% of out-borough pupils. The borough has a wide range of different schools. 32 are community schools with the LA setting admissions criteria but most set their own admissions criteria, and can decide to consult on changes. For all, distance between home and school is the key determinant if places are oversubscribed. There are some other differences which impact on parent choice including faith criteria for 3 of the 8 secondary schools (one each of Sikh, Church of England and Roman Catholic) and 12 of the 70 primary schools (five each of Church of England and Roman Catholic and two Sikh).

Primary Schools

8. Total rolls in January 2021 were lower in all year groups than in 2020 – but still nearly half of all schools are completely full and have waiting lists. Admissions offers were lower than last year on National Offer Day for Reception (in 46 primary and 12 infant schools) and Year 3 (in 12 Junior schools), but there has been a steady rise in applications through the summer months.
9. The level of vacancies is too high, despite reductions in Reception Published Admission Numbers (PAN) in recent years. Ideally, we would have an 8% operating margin of vacancies in the 4,551 total Reception Published Admission Numbers (PAN). On National Offer day, 20% of places were unfilled. This is now 16%, a 2% rise on last year, partly due to the re-opening of Nanaksar before its new building is finished, now due in January 2022.

10. Pupil numbers are still moving but around 30 schools have some vacancies in Reception and other years. About another 12 schools have higher levels of vacancies – over 30 in Reception and in other year groups. Parental preferences have sharpened – there is very high demand for some schools but a far less for others. There are no plans to expand any more primary schools. The admissions process is designed for the computer to match pupils to the highest available of their preferences and they are notified if a higher preference place later becomes available– hence some movement continues as parents choose to take up new offers. Parents without any of their preferences being met are made an offer that is a reasonable distance from their home, but they cannot be forced to accept it, though they must secure education for their child. Some choose to travel a distance for a school or to home educate. The table below summarises:

11. **Table 1 Hillingdon Primary January Census 2021 compared to 2020**

Hillingdon Primary Census of school rolls	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
Jan. 2020	4,018	4,031	3,974	4,105	4,129	3,980	3,939	28,176
Jan. 2021	3,878	3,899	3,912	3,826	3,958	3,957	3,841	27,271
change in 2021	-140	-132	-62	-279	-171	-23	-98	-905
% of 2020	-3%	-3%	-2%	-7%	-4%	-1%	-2%	-3%
cohort loss (e.g. Y1 from previous year R)		-119	-119	-148	-147	-172	-139	
Projection for 2020/21	3,957							27,709
actual Jan21 compared to projection	-79	-2% lower than projection						-438

12. The School Place Planning team is meeting with relevant schools to support and help their staff and budget planning, and co-ordinating with Education Advisors and SEN colleagues as relevant. Where the evidence will support it – in up to seven schools – the legal Published Admissions Number (PAN) can be reduced following consultation in the Autumn of 2021, for a lower number – 30 less in each case - to be published in 2022 for those applying to start in September 2023. The law promotes parental choice above all. Therefore, an admissions authority can agree a temporary higher figure for a year at a time if demand rises with no need to consult, so with immediate effect. This will help manage future rising demand. No actual physical capacity will be removed. As demand may alter in the next few years there will be the flexibility to respond across the borough. There will be changes in the pattern of family movements after Covid-19 due to changes in housing availability and costs (and relative to other areas) and employment patterns. Some parents choose to move to access good or outstanding schools.

Secondary Schools

13. Secondary rolls are high, and many schools are full in every year group or have exceeded their PAN. Year 7 intakes and total secondary rolls have grown since 2018 as higher numbers moved up from primary. Secondary schools have expanded far less than the ten plus years of primary expansions. The total of the secondary Year 7 PAN is 3,767 which is 784 pupils lower than the Primary total PAN. So, the secondary PAN is lower than each of the year groups currently in primary. The table below summarises:

14. **Table 2 - Hillingdon Secondary Rolls - January Census 2020 and 2021**

Year Group:	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total Sec	UTC & Studio	TOTAL Y7-Y13
Jan. 2020	3,701	3,387	3,196	3,203	3,077	1,798	1,668	20,030	722	20,752
Jan. 2021	3,606	3,658	3,361	3,229	3,175	1,861	1,586	20,476	819	21,295
Cohort loss		-43	-26	33	-28			446	97	543

15. On National Offer Day for September 2021, as for the previous two years 15/18 schools were immediately full. There are overlapping metrics:

- **Offers to Hillingdon residents: 3,607** (including 505 to schools in other LAs) Hillingdon remains the top west London borough with 94% of pupils gaining one of their preferred secondary school places, 67% their first.
- **Places offered in Hillingdon Schools: 3,647** (including 409 from other LAs and 73 resident pupils with EHCPs through the separate SEND process, which considers parent preferences and pupil needs.)

16. The offers left a margin of 120 empty places in the schools (3.2%). However, for the past decade there have been at least 100 total places empty (2.6% of PAN) across up to four schools as they did not receive enough parent preferences. These can be offered (if a reasonable distance) to those 6% of parents who did not get offered any of their preferences, but many parents then decline them. This figure is not unusual and DfE suggest LAs add a 5% - 10% operating margin in order to cope with faith school variations, distances between schools, cross-borough movement and fluctuations in parent preferences. Hillingdon has not had a margin over 3% for some years, so in practice the margin is currently zero, even though for the past few years some temporary places have been added above PAN on Offer Day in a few schools in order to make offers that are a reasonable distance to parents who failed to secure any of their preferences.

17. Secondary rolls are far less linked to locality and more to perceived education experience, high standards and faith. The LA does projections of numbers looking at actual primary pupils, new housing and cross-borough movements but these

assume each school will be equally full and popular, hence the need to add a margin.

18. The LA must review cross-borough flows. Until 2018 these were equal overall or a slight net 'importer'. Since then, 'imports' have decreased to 12% as most schools in the borough have been popular and recruit from smaller distances, and 'exports' of resident pupils to schools in other LAs have increased to 14% of residents, so the LA is a net exporter. This year, neighbouring LAs have warned they too have rising numbers and their schools are under increasing pressures so distance criteria will mean fewer Hillingdon Pupils will secure places in 2022 onwards. Parental Preferences are still low for a few schools, adding pressure on actual places and parent choice in some areas of the Borough.
19. Currently there are two projects to add permanent secondary places to meet demand being progressed that were bids in 2015-16 and are funded and managed by DfE:
 - Expanding Harlington School by 1.5 forms of entry – 45 places each year from 2023. This is part of the complete rebuilding of the school and library.
 - Reviewing the need for the new Bishop Arden Free school +6FE – 180 places each year (if feasibility and planning permission agreed next year, will open in 2023 or 2024). It will have no faith admissions criteria, distance will be the main criteria, though it is to be part of a Church of England Trust – their aim is to 'bring together pupils of all faiths and of none'.
 - Both of these new build schools will also have new units for secondary aged pupils with ASD who would have some integration into mainstream and also specialist teaching and support.
20. The year group moving up from primary to start in Year 7 in September 2022 is the largest yet (116 more than for September 2021) and further checking is underway with neighbouring boroughs on their capacity changes. In September 2021 discussions will take place with our secondary schools to identify where potential temporary extra places could be added to meet likely high demand in 2022 and 2023.

Special Schools

21. Special schools are under pressure from rising demand from pupils with EHCPs who require a special place. Currently all seven special schools in the LA are full as demand has been continuous throughout the year, not just at the normal ages of transfer. The largest growth is in pupils with autism conditions, many with other complex needs. Temporary extra places have been added to meet demand in most schools. In January there were 893 total pupils on roll, 82% were Hillingdon residents. A special school must be designated to meet the needs of the pupil as set out on the EHCP and some residents are in other LA schools and some in independent placements. The process includes parental preference as well as LA consideration of the best placement to meet each individual pupil's need. Parents

have a right to request a placement in mainstream with adaptations to meet the pupils needs.

22. Since January, after the normal planning for September 2021 entry was completed, over 30 more pupils aged 4 and 5 have been assessed as needing a special school place from September 2021, who were unknown and undiagnosed previously. They have been referred by nurseries, schools and parents, but had not been seen by settings through 2020 so this demand had built up over lockdown. Most have autism and other complex needs.
23. Closer planning is underway between officers in place planning and SEN with schools and Trusts and DfE. Three special schools have permanent expansions underway funded by DfE projects which will add 135 places in 2022 and 2023. There are now plans to use the DfE SEN capital grant to expand two more schools in order to meet demand locally and to reduce the cost pressures of out of borough placements. This is all crucial to securing the Schools Forum Deficit Recovery Plan with the DfE and officers are in regular meetings.
24. Officers are reviewing options to 'repurpose' unused mainstream education places for SEN and will bring those forward in the autumn to the Lead Member. It is neither easy nor quick to match supply and demand to meet the needs. For example, many primary schools have only 3 empty classrooms which is not enough to create a viable satellite of a special school. The nine primary SRPs and four secondary SRPs are also near full and officers are considering the ongoing demand and where expansions may be possible for September 2022 and future years.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings by the Committee and any recommendations forwarded to Cabinet.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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