

QUARTERLY SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING UPDATE

Committee name	Residents, Education & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Dan Kennedy, Residents Services
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The purpose of this report is to provide the Residents, Education & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee with an update on planning for primary and secondary school places in Hillingdon and an opportunity to question officers. The Autumn 2018 school census data shows continuing volatility in rolls with a wide range of impacts on individual schools across the borough. This reflects the London-wide experience.

The key points from the October 2018 census are:

Overall:

- Reception intakes are stabilising below the peak of 2012 and overall primary rolls are slightly declining with average surplus places at 11%, just above the benchmark threshold (10%).
- Secondary Year 7 intakes are rising year on year - so almost every school will progressively fill up completely.

The picture is very mixed for individual schools:

- All but four secondary schools were full or over-full in Year 7, but the four had higher levels of vacancies.
- Of the 58 primary and infant schools, nearly half had no vacancies in reception or just one per reception class.
- Ten primary or infant schools had over thirty vacant places in reception
- Overall, around twenty primary and infant schools have experienced some decline in reception numbers for a few years and also the loss of pupils throughout the year across year groups, and they now have above average vacancies.

Therefore there is a need to consider increasing capacity in secondary and managing the transition in primary places take-up. Many schools are now concerned the volatility in rolls requires changes in class organisation and impedes long-term financial planning and is contributing to budget challenges in schools. Officers are updating all schools on the issues and discussing plans to mitigate impact with specific schools.

Classification: Public

Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee – 26 February 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

1. Notes the update and actions underway to support schools through change; and
2. Questions officers about the update.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Background

School place planning aims to take a long term overview of the demand for school places across the Borough, in order that schools can make best use of their resources to help pupils progress and succeed. After a decade of continuous rises in rolls there have been a few years of volatility, due to national and local factors and polarised parental preferences which have combined to impact differently on specific schools. Many head teachers, governors and trustees are now concerned and keen for the local authority to coordinate actions to help manage the risks to budgets, staffing and pupil achievement.

1.1 Autumn Census 2018 Primary and Secondary Rolls

The 2018 Autumn Census shows the highest total rolls yet in state schools in the Borough, following over a decade of growth in population:

R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL	
3,993	3,939	4,101	4,066	3,940	3,972	3,929	3,426	3,367	3,189	3,223	3,173		
PRIMARY						27,940	SECONDARY					16,378	44,318

However, growth has slowed in reception intakes. Primary rolls are now at a 'bumpy plateau' with some changes between years and in different areas and schools. Secondary rolls are growing with each Year 7, as the large primary cohorts progress upwards.

This is clear from the table below which shows each of the past three Autumn Census years displayed horizontally. The years are off-set so it is possible to see that in the primary phase, as each year group has moved up through the school, most have lost pupils. Until recent year, this was net growth. In secondary the pattern is less clear.

1.2 Context - Autumn Census Primary and Secondary Autumn Rolls 2016 - 2017 - 2018

			Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Primary Total	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Secondary Total	PRIMARY & SECONDARY TOTAL
2016			4,199	4,227	4,033	4,099	4,043	3,708	3,589	27,898	3,308	3,233	3,075	3,208	3,063	15,887	43,785
2017		3,982	4,157	4,167	4,007	4,054	3,981	3,688	28,036	3,403	3,252	3,160	3,261	3,040	16,116	44,152	
2018	3,993	3,939	4,101	4,066	3,940	3,972	3,929	27,940	3,426	3,367	3,189	3,223	3,173	16,378	44,318		

1.3 Individual Schools

The all schools totals and averages mask variations:

Primary - 58 primary and 12 Infant schools with reception

- Reception intakes are stabilising below the peak reached in 2012. Overall primary rolls are slightly declining, with 11% vacant places - above the national benchmark 5-10%.
- Twenty primary schools had no reception vacancies and twelve had one per reception class, totalling 55% in effect full. Infant class sizes are legally restricted to 30 per teacher.
- Ten primary schools had over thirty vacant places in reception.
- Nineteen primary schools had over 15% vacancies across their year groups and a few more have also experienced some decline in reception numbers for a few years and the loss of pupils in a number of year groups.

Secondary

- Year 7 intakes are rising year on year - so almost every school will progressively fill.
- Most secondary schools (14 of 18) were full or over-full in Year 7.
- Across all secondary schools there are 6% vacant places but these are concentrated in four schools with between 24% and 64% Year 7 vacancies.

Impact of volatility on schools

- Some schools have seen rolls move up and down over the past few years. Schools are concerned the volatility in rolls is leading to more in-year changes in class organisation with some disruption to staff and pupils, at worst leading some to change schools and so adding to the instability.
- The Autumn census is the key driver of school budgets and volatility or decline is impeding long-term financial planning and leading to some schools using reserves, or licensed deficits to boost budgets.

1.4 Past Projections and Actual Rolls

All boroughs rely on projections and actual rolls to plan future places. Along with 29 other boroughs, projections are developed by the GLA, using actual rolls, live births and pre-school health data, migration data, cross-borough flows and known housing developments. Forecasts have been relatively close in aggregate in the past but slightly less so at area and individual school level.

The 2018 reception intake was 103 pupils, 2.5% below the projection, although still slightly above 2017 actual. Other boroughs have noted the lower reception numbers and we are each investigating the specific factors behind the actual numbers of pupils, and will discuss if the projection model can be adjusted. The 2018 Year 7 intake was 206 lower than projected, though slightly above 2017.

The Tables below illustrate this:

Table 1 - Reception Rolls and Capacity - Actual Rolls to October 2018 and projections

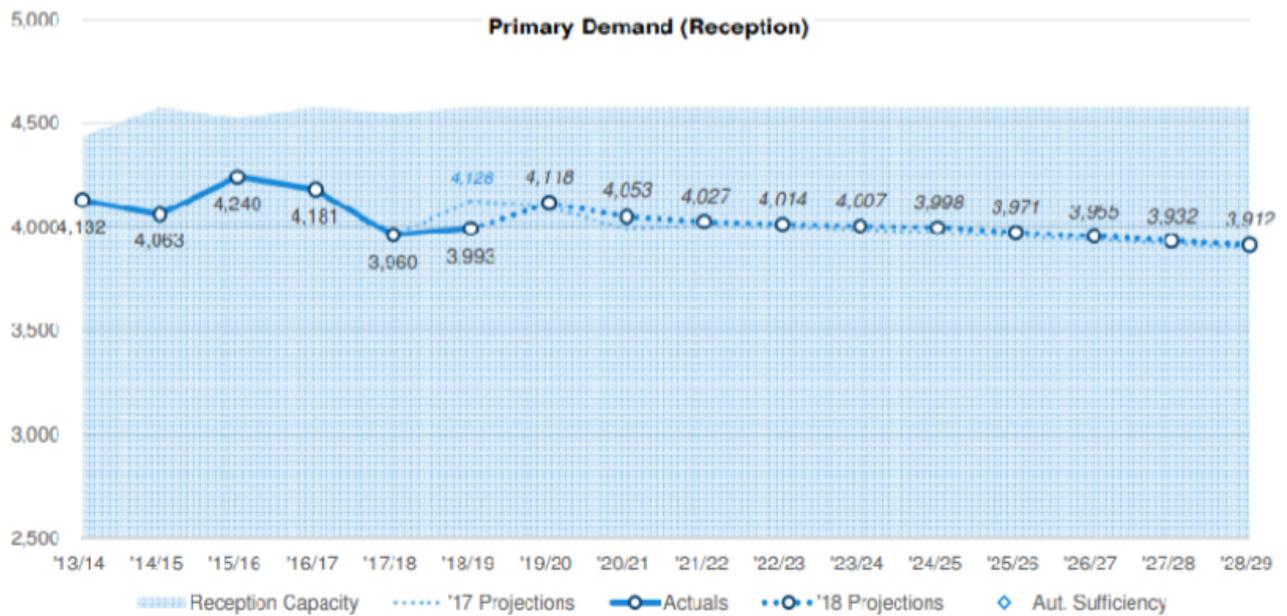
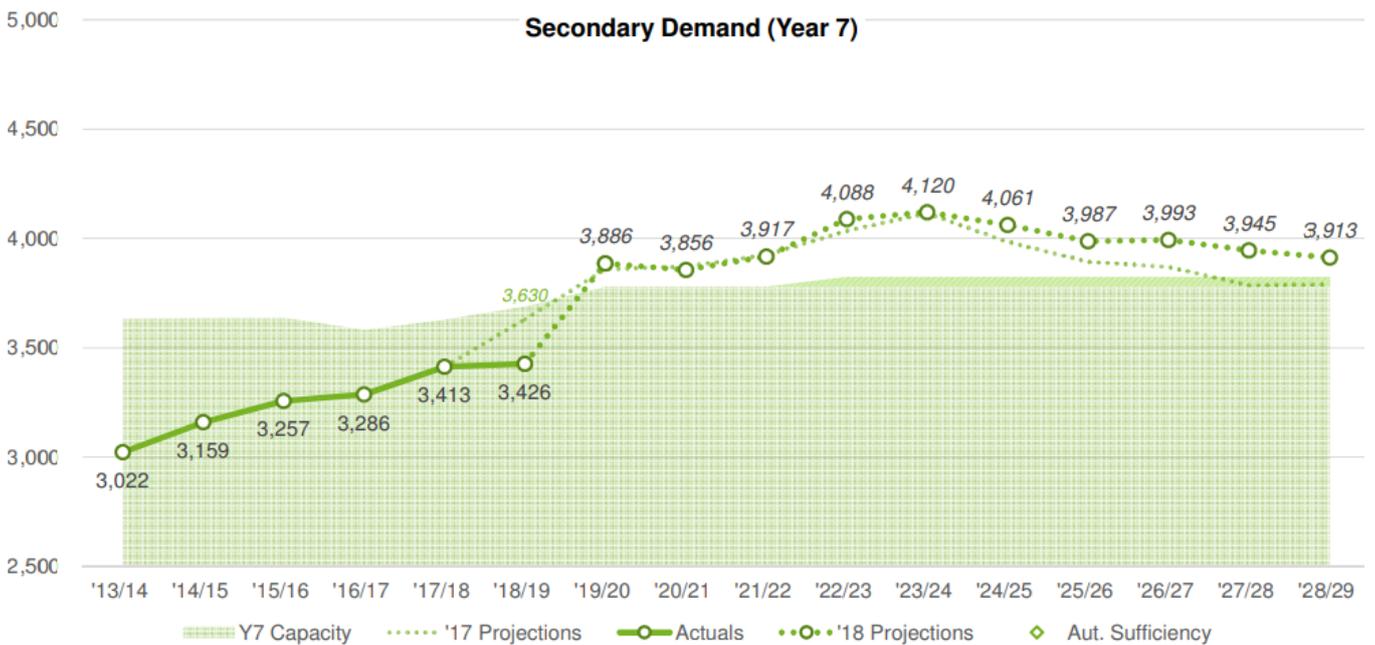


Table 2. Year 7 Rolls and Capacity - Actual and Projected October 2018



1.5 Drivers of volatility over past two years - a mosaic of factors

London-wide factors:

- The London birth rate peaked in 2012 and has fallen 6% since.
- Over the past two years a big population shift out of London after decades of growth:
 - Migration outwards grown - to EU and rest of UK and far less inwards from rest of UK or EU.

- This is attributed to the fall in the exchange rate, high housing costs, welfare benefits changes, an element of house sales stagnation - all leading to families moving out of London and removing pupils from various age groups.
- There are no signs yet these factors have stopped, stabilised or will reverse soon.
- If they do reverse, growth will be bumpy - across different age groups, areas and individual schools.
- West London Borough Place Planning officers recently discussed issues, noting similar trends, though the decline in primary school rolls is more marked in other boroughs.
- Officers noted projections were likely to be affected by the uneven distribution of all the above demand factors and further blunted since the child-yield of new housing is averaged, whereas much new housing now is for single or childless households. Finally the supply of capacity is also more uneven than can be modelled. The model assumes even parental preferences whereas there is increasing polarisation - in the borough at secondary there is a stark range of first preferences - from under 40 to over 300 across different schools.

Local Factors - lead to pockets of greater impact in specific schools

- There are distinct villages and residential neighbourhoods across the borough that are each served by local primary schools.
- There are some geographic constraints and barriers in the Borough that restrict some communities and constrain access to some primary schools - such as the airports, motorways, dual carriageways, railways, rivers, canals, green spaces.
- Improved educational standards and successful expansion and physical improvement of many schools has contributed to influencing parental popularity and polarised parental preferences, hence filling some schools and creating pockets of vacancies nearby.
- Some developers have completed new house building at a slower rate or fewer family homes than originally planned, such as at St Andrew's, thereby leading to excess school capacity in the short-term.
- Some family homes leased by RAF and MOD have been left vacant or relet to single persons without children.
- There seems an increasing trend for family housing south of the M4 to be vacated by families and leased to adults without children, often working at the airport.

1.6 Office of the Schools Adjudicator Judgments

In 2018 four Academies published proposed reductions in their PAN for 2019/20, subject to the final decision by the Schools Adjudicator. The Borough objected to all four, citing the need to ensure a sufficiency of school places. The Office for the Schools Adjudicator's separate decisions upheld two of the proposals; for a reduction in the PAN of Haydon Secondary Academy from 312 to 300, and at Bishop Winnington Ingram Primary CE Academy from 60 to to 30. Both decisions said that demonstrably there had not been parental demand for those places for three years or more, and having the higher PAN was causing the school potential problems in organisation and budget as they would have to accept pupils up to the PAN and even open another class and employ another teacher.

Conversely, the Adjudicator upheld the Council's objections to the proposal to reduce the PAN at Uxbridge High from 230 to 210 and Pinkwell Primary Academy from 150 to 90, for similar reasons - that at points in the past few years their parental preferences had been higher than the proposed reduced number.

This experience has highlighted the importance of planning with all schools and academies and of parental preferences and the need to be clear whether there are specific pupils wishing to go to a specific school, rather than the generalised overall figures. Also, in each report, the Adjudicator made comments and recommendations to improve the compliance of admissions criteria with the statutory Admissions Code, mainly to promote clarity in definitions, such as of sibling or measures of distance. These actions are being followed up by the individual schools.

1.7 Links to SEND

Some schools are noticing no changes, some experiencing rising rolls and others 'shrinkage' across year groups and greater mobility than before. The overall rise in numbers means there are more pupils with SEN. Parental preferences for mainstream provision mean that some schools are seeing larger rises in numbers of pupils with SEND and Education & Health Care Plans. Officers are liaising with colleagues leading the SEND review to find opportunities to better meet the needs of pupils and schools and optimise the use of buildings and resources.

1.8 Primary Places - Actions Underway and possible options

Officers are meeting with individual schools and with the various representative groups to share understanding about the issues schools face, and the impact on pupils, school budgets and organisation, and to reduce the risk of more schools needing licensed deficits.

Specific plans will be developed with schools, the priority is for those with continuous declining rolls over a few years that are experiencing issues affecting pupils' education as a result. This may entail local area discussions to agree plans between schools.

There must be enough unfilled spaces within a reasonable distance across the borough for some in-year movement and there are some relatively isolated villages and communities who must have a school but may not always deliver pupils in units of 30. Some schools have unfilled capacity in excess of 30 this year, but any decisions on reducing available places must be carefully planned both for each school and their local area. The extreme popularity of a number of schools which are always full in every year group to PAN, with waiting lists of parents quick to move into any vacancy, adds to the complexity.

In April, offers will be made for September 2019 reception, based on parental preferences. The outcome will help inform plans, adding another year's data to trends. At this stage it appears there are around 100 fewer applicants than in 2017 but there will be late applicants. Therefore the total is likely to be similar to 2018 but the distribution between schools will be key.

In the primary phase the current total of published admission numbers is 5922, in multiples of 30 except for two schools. Overall, 11% of primary places are vacant, slightly above the benchmark ranges of 5-10%. As an indication, a reduction to around 8% surplus would require reducing around six forms of entry - PAN of 180. The process of reducing PAN takes over a year of consultations and submission to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by the local authority in respect of community schools. Academies, voluntary aided and foundation schools apply directly, but they are being involved in agreeing an overall plan as the decisions of each school impact on others.

As funding has become tighter, schools can manage with just one or two classes with under 25 pupils. There are only 7 schools with PANs of 30, though in effect, separate infant and junior

schools with PAN 60 have similar or smaller rolls and so face the same pressure to have full classes to generate adequate funding as the national formula has reduced the lump sum.

A common pattern is schools with a PAN of 90 having several year groups of 80 which was tight but financially manageable until recently. Now, some have year groups of 70, which means three classes of 23/24. Some have experienced roll reductions in some or all year groups to 60 and have merged three classes to two, but fear receiving a few more pupils which would require a new class to be opened, a new teacher employed and all the pupils in the year remixed again. This cycle also applies in schools with a PAN of 60, 120 and 150.

To manage this, other authorities have operated temporary admissions caps on specific year groups in a school for a few terms, pending permanent PAN reductions, and to check that parental preferences can be managed within the proposed reduced PAN. This enables more efficient distribution of pupils within and between schools. Now many of the Borough's schools are asking for this. It gives schools more certainty to plan, currently many are employing temporary teachers in case they can reduce classes in the next year or so, but this can impede long term school improvement.

This requires extra work from local authority admissions teams to consider such 'caps' from term to term with schools and steer parents to and from particular schools in different year groups. It is not a legal process in the Admissions Code, and so potentially a parent could legally challenge to access a place available within the PAN, though it reflects a general duty to support the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources. Schools are facing problems sourcing permanent or temporary teachers, apart from funding them. Increasingly, headteachers are teaching to help cover a class for a term or so.

The Borough has never needed to use temporary caps before. Several schools are very keen and cannot see an alternative route that will protect their class stability and promote fairness and efficient use of resources, ahead of a permanent reduction in PAN.

Increasing PAN is a far easier process. Any reductions in PAN that are decided will require the school to confirm they are willing to discuss a bulge class in future if rolls rise. We have had some discussion with pairs of neighbouring schools about alternating bulge classes from year to year, should numbers rise, to share and minimise the risk of very small classes.

1.9 Secondary Phase Actions Underway

It was clear from projections and the size of the Year 6 cohort, that the Year 7 intake in September 2019 will be large and may exceed capacity. This has been shared with all secondary schools and contingency plans discussed for some to temporarily increase their Year 7 intake above PAN should all schools be full and extra places be needed. The Year 7 admissions process is driven by parental preferences and the different criteria set by each school. Parents express up to six ranked preferences (for schools across London) and the pan-London computer process aims to match and allocate the highest possible. We are planning for a range of options to ensure that every resident pupil has an offer of a Year 7 school place on 1 March 2019, which, as far as possible, meets one of their preferences and is reasonably accessible. However, some parents may choose schools entailing travel far across or out of the borough.

There have been expansions with extra places open this year at Ruislip High and Vyners to cope with the extra demand, and also two free schools just over north west and the east border ('The Reach' and 'Pinner High') have absorbed some demand from within the borough and some that

previously came into borough schools. Many schools' buildings are full. The DfE is now considering progressing plans to open one of the Free Schools agreed in the borough, though no site has yet been agreed.

2. Next Steps

Discussions will continue with individual schools and consultative groups, and Members will be updated as plans are developed and firmed up.

Further analysis of updated forecasts will be undertaken, together with analysis of offers for September 2019. Officers will progress options for meeting the future forecast need for school places and report these to Members in the first instance.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet which is responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

The outcome of the pupil forecast is fed into updates of the Strategic Infrastructure Plan, which contains details of expected changes to pupil numbers, any consequential requirements for additional places, in which geographical areas these places are needed and the delivery time scales required.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

The recommendation of this report ensures that there is effective scrutiny of the school place planning process, thereby contributing to ensuring that there are sufficient school places for Hillingdon residents.

Financial Implications

The possible implications for capital investment in schools arising from any changes in the pupil forecast are considered within the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecasting process. This ensures that sufficient capital resources are available.

Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising out of this report at this time. However, as indicated in the report, a statutory process would need to be followed by the Local Authority in relation to Admission Number changes at community schools. Own admission authorities, such as faith schools and academies, would be responsible for undertaking the required statutory process for changes to their admission arrangements.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.