

Minutes

For: Admissions and Place Planning Forum

Date: 11 March 2020

Time: 16:00 – 18:00

Location: Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Attendees:

Chair

Councillor Julianne Marriott: Cabinet Member for Education (JM)

Councillor Jane Lofthouse: Deputy Cabinet Member for Education (JL)

Local Authority Officers

Peter Gibb: Head of Access and Infrastructure (PG)

Simon McKenzie: Interim Head 0-25 SEND Service

Tracy Jones: Group Manager, Pupil Services (TJ)

Manjit Bains: Commissioner Education Place Planning (MB)

Clerk

Kiran Parkash Singh: Pupil Services

Representative: Nursery schools

Jo Aylett: Head Teacher, Edith Kerrison Nursery School and Children's Centre

Representatives: Maintained primary schools

Diane Barrick: Head Teacher, Carpenters Primary School

Sue Ferguson: Head Teacher, Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Representatives: Maintained secondary schools

Ian Wilson: Head Teacher, Little Ilford Primary School

Representatives: Academy primary schools

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Representatives: Academy secondary schools

Peter Whittle: Associate Principal, Langdon Academy (Brampton Manor Trust)

John Blaney: Principal, Royal Docks Academy (Burnt Mills Trust)

Omar Deria: Head Teacher, The Cumberland School, Community School Trust

Representative: Free schools

David Perks: East London Science School

Representative: Foundation schools

Anthony Wilson: Head Teacher, Lister Community School and CEO Newham Community Schools Trust

Representative: University Technical Colleges

Gloria Gold: Assistant Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

Faith Representative: Catholic schools

Gael Hicks: Head Teacher, St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School (Our Lady of Grace)

Catholic Academy Trust)

Faith Representative: Catholic schools

Chris McCormack: Head Teacher, St. Bonaventure's

Faith Representative: Church of England schools

Matt Hipperson: Head Teacher, St. Luke's Church of England Primary School

Apologies

James Dawson: Head Teacher, Winsor Primary School

Kate McGee: Head Teacher, Manor Primary School

Quintin Peppiatt: New Vision Trust

Gael Hicks: Head Teacher, St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School (Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust)

Charlotte Robinson: Head Teacher, Rokeby School (boys only)

Val Naylor: Executive Head Teacher

Key

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

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Action Points

Item 2a. Nursery Admissions

TJ to work with nursery school representatives to further develop local protocol and feedback to forum

Item 5. Secondary transition for September 2021

TJ to produce guidance presentation for primary schools to present at their transition events.

Transition process for admission in September 2022 to be brought forward to summer term in 2021. Composite prospectus to be published by May 2021. Secondary Schools to hold open days in the summer term of 2020-21 academic year.

Item 6d. Admission Arrangements determination

Forum members to consider amendments to the current admission arrangements (if considered necessary).

Item 7 – Any other business

Amendments to Fair Access Protocol to be discussed at primary pupil placement panel. If the changes are agreed, the Protocol will be circulated and published.

In Year secondary transfer delays – local authority officers to investigate concerns and raise at next forum if necessary.

In response to the Covid-19 virus pandemic, the above action points will remain under constant review as the Government's self-isolation and social distancing advice permits.

1a. Introductions

Chair introduced herself and asked the other members of the forum to do the same. New members of the forum were introduced and welcome. Apologies were forwarded for members who were unable to attend today's forum.

1b. Membership

Whilst new members had been recruited to the forum there were still a number of outstanding vacancies for the following positions;

- Voluntary Controlled representative
- Maintained Secondary representative

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous forum meeting were reviewed. All present confirmed that it was an accurate recording of the discussions.

2.a Nursery admissions

TJ advised the forum that she had been advised by the Department for Education that the current School Admissions Code did not apply to nursery admissions. Nursery schools needed to decide whether they wanted arrangements similar to the current admission arrangements, or whether they would prefer to formulate their own individual arrangements. The current process was difficult for parents to navigate having to go from nursery to nursery and having to complete individual applications. TJ notified the panel that a working party made up of local authority officers and head teachers had been established to develop a process and gauge an opinion which will be fed back to the forum.

3. Place Planning

PG provided the forum with an update on the current place planning strategy. The board met in December with the discussion centring on planning and forecasts, and a consultation was sent inviting responses. The previous version of the Places for All strategy was updated to take into account updates to the 2018 forecasts. The latest version will be taken to informal Cabinet in May. The forum was invited to provide feedback.

MB presented the latest analysis and the projected need over the next five years. There had been a decline in birth rates in Newham since 2012 by 11.6%. This was higher than the national (9.9%) and London (10%) averages. This trend has reflected the decrease in reception roll numbers. The forecasts however suggests that there will be a rise in birth rates in the long term with pupil yields increasing in both primary and secondary by 2022/23. Net international migration into Newham had decreased since 2016-17.

These trends are in contrast to the demand for new homes in Newham with the Local Plan set to deliver 17,947 new homes in the next five years and 43,000 new homes by 2023. This reflected a projected increase in the population of London by 1.6 million by 2041. Overall there are sufficient places across primary schools to counter this increase however there will be a need in Beckton, Stratford and Canning Town by 2023/24 once the Local Plan begins to deliver on the new homes.

PG added that the local authority was also supporting any schools that were experiencing falling rolls to avoid surplus places through the reduction or capping of admission numbers. Schools Forum had agreed to support such schools by establishing a falling rolls fund. The demand for secondary places was also increasing. Year on year Newham schools were retaining children in year 7 meaning that it was not possible to maintain even a small surplus of places. The anticipated pupil yield will mean that additional places will be required even after the planned expansions of some secondary schools. Newham is facing a deficit of 194 places by September 2021.

Newham has also experienced an increase in the need for specialist SEND provision, particularly for children with complex autism needs. This had resulted in more resource provisions being opened in mainstream primary schools and John F Kennedy special school opening an annex in North Woolwich. However there was no current expansion in secondary and with the expected increase in the number of children transitioning to secondary school in the next ten years, there was an urgent need for more provision. The local authority have now set proposals for additional annexes located at existing school sites and two secondary schools have expressed interest.

SM added that EKO Pathways had also undergone an increase in capacity in 2019 and will also expand over 2020 and 2021.

PG acknowledged that secondary was an acute issue. Current capital had already been earmarked for the ongoing building projects and it was unknown at this stage if the DfE will be providing additional basic needs capital. It was important therefore to monitor the projections in accordance with the Local Plan to determine if the projected yields are realised.

In addition to this, the local authority was also conducting analysis of completed new homes building works to determine whether the actual occupancy reflected the projected

previously forecast.

A SHT added that whilst the analysis will help better planning, the type of homes planned should also be looked at, as 1-2 bedroom flats will not be suitable for families therefore meaning that families were seeking residential properties elsewhere. They also added that the local authority needed to look at expansion of existing schools in the planning areas where the need would be the greatest before considering the opening of new schools in these areas.

PG responded that the local authority will manage the process carefully and will seek contributions from all stakeholders. For example, developers may offer to fund a new school as part of their building programme. In addition to this, expansion of existing schools can only happen if the local authority receives additional capital from the DfE, via the Basic Needs Fund. The local authority will find out in May if there is an increase. If there is no increase then it will be difficult for the local authority to expand existing schools.

JM added that the preference would be to expand existing schools however there has to be a balance between which schools have the capacity to expand and how far the local authority would expect primary school children to travel to school.

A SHT added that Newham schools were retaining more children should be seen as a positive thing. However the local authority should conduct analysis of children who do not stay in the borough and the reasons behind those decisions.

TJ responded that data was available that shows where these families were from and the where they go to so this can be looked at.

JM closed the discussion by thanking the secondary schools that had supported the local authority by providing additional places through expansion, bulge classes and over allocation. This had made a great difference in the local authority's ability to place children in Newham schools.

4. Secondary Transition for September 2020

TJ opened this section of the forum by thanking primary schools for supporting parents through the application process. 98% of Newham applicants submitted their application online and primary schools had worked very hard to make sure applications were submitted on time.

64.3% of Newham applicants were offered a place at their first preferred school with over 90% being offered a place at one of their top three preferred schools.

210 Newham children were offered a place at a school named outside of Newham with the majority either attending a Catholic secondary or grammar school.

Places currently remain available at Rokeby School and Eastlea Community School Preference satisfaction based on current primary school was also considered with some schools having a majority of their year 6 children being offered a place at their first preference school. It was agreed however that this was not a reflection on individual primary schools and more to do with geographical location of schools with a lower preference satisfaction.

A PHT added that schools work very hard to engage with families to ensure that they make

informed decisions when it came to applying for a secondary school, advising parent to check admission criteria and home to school distances before completing the application. A SHT added that certain schools were heavily oversubscribed and remain on the top of preference lists. Applicants will continue to apply for the most popular schools in any local authority. It will be difficult to change that.

Another SHT added that undersubscribed schools need to engage with their local community as public perception plays a huge part in how parent/carers complete their applications. If schools engaged more with their community that perception may change.

A PHT stated that secondary schools needed to work more closely with their local primary schools so that they can engage with the families and encourage them to apply for local schools.

JM added that the message that parent/carer should name six preferences on their application form needed to be reinforced. A PHT responded stating that it was more difficult for primary schools to do this since the shift to applying online.

TJ advised that there were three key reasons why some applicants do not get their first preference;

1. Increase in applications for grammar schools
2. Some applicants do not understand the process
3. Geographical areas with heavily oversubscribed schools where applicants are not offered a place at a local school

Another issue is when parent/carers do not get their preferred school and are allocated an alternative school and point blank refuse to send their child to the allocated school. A SHT added that this was a major issue. Schools were having to invest a lot of resources into dealing with this. Parent/carers think that if they wait long enough, they will eventually get a place at their preferred school, but this does not always happen.

A PHT added that secondary schools needed to do more to promote themselves and the local authority should work with schools to celebrate success. Another PHT added that this situation wasn't just about an aspiration of attending an outstanding school. For some families it was also to do with safety – they do not want their child to travel far distance to get to school.

TJ responded that the local authority also gave recipients of an alternative allocation the opportunity of requesting a place at another school with vacancies. Of the 319 who had received an alternative allocation 9 made a request to change their school.

TJ added that at the time of the meeting there were also a number of year 6 children undergoing a statutory assessment. It was possible therefore that some of the offers may change before September.

A SHT asked why these were not actioned sooner (before national offer day)? SM advised that the statutory assessments for pupils in year 5 and 6 are prioritised but requests can be submitted at any time and not always by schools, resulting in the local authority issuing Education & Health Care Plans at different times of the year.

5. Secondary Transition and Reception for September 2021

The forum had previously discussed the option of starting the secondary transfer process during the summer term when pupils are in year 5 in order to give parent/carers more time

to research the process and make informed decision. Part of this discussion was to publish the composite prospectus and schools to hold open days before the end of the summer term.

The panel agreed that the timescales to put this in place for admission in 2021 are too short, but it was something that could be done for admission in September 2022, with the process beginning in the summer term of 2021. The composite prospectus will be published by May 2021, distributed to parent/carers whilst their child was still in year 5. Secondary schools will hold open days before the end of the summer term in July 2021 and also at the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year.

In addition to this, the local authority will produce a presentation that primary schools can use when they hold their meetings with parents which will explain the application process, the benefits of expressing a preference for six schools and the importance of making informed decisions.

6. Standing Items

6a. New Academy conversions and proposed new free schools

TJ informed the panel there were no changes

6b. Consultations

TJ informed the panel there were none at present. Own admissions authority schools needed to ensure that they had determined their arrangements for 2021 admission by the deadline of February 28th 2020.

6.c Objections to Office of Schools Adjudicator and Ombudsman cases of interest

There were none of note but TJ notified the forum that the Ombudsman had in recent times recommended that Newham rehears a number of appeals where they believed there had been fault with the process at some point. The forum will be updated if this continues.

6.d Determination of admission arrangements

TJ advised the forum that if they believed that the current arrangements need to be changed for admission in 2022 then this will be discussed at the next forum as a major agenda item. One option the forum could consider is the reintroduction of link schools (priority given to pupils attending a primary school local to a secondary school).

Forum members to advise the local authority of any proposals prior to the next meeting to be included as an agenda item.

7. Any other business

TJ advised the panel that an amendment has been made to the current version of the Fair Access Protocol to now state that safeguarding will be the protocol's highest priority and that children exhibiting challenging behaviour or previously been excluded will not be placed in schools deemed as inadequate by OFSTED. The forum was required to provide their opinion. The forum confirmed that they agree to the amendments.

A PHT advised that in light of the current situation relating to the potential spread of the Coronavirus, schools needed clear messages from the local authority about what they needed to do with new admissions, as head teachers had the responsibility to ensure that staff were protected and took necessary precautions to prevent the risk of contracting and spreading the virus further.

PG advised that at a meeting of the Education Partnership Board it was confirmed that the

local authority will be in communication with schools and clear and consistent information and advice about what they will be expected to do.

A SHT raised a concern about the delay some parent/carers were experiencing when they have been offered a place to transfer from one Newham school to another. It was a matter that needed to be discussed at the forum. This will be looked into and if necessary will be on the agenda of the next forum.

Meeting Closed 18:00

| Dates for next 2019-20 meeting

10th June 2020 TBC

End.

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