

Minutes

For: Admissions and Place Planning Forum

Date: 13.05.2021

Time: 15:30-17:30

Location: Video Conference

Attendees:

Chair

Councillor Sarah Ruiz: Cabinet Member for Education and Children Social Care (SR)

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

Local Authority Officers

Peter Gibb: Head of Access and Infrastructure (PG)

Tracy Jones: Group Manager, Pupil Services (TJ)

Ruth Gibbs, Group Manager 0-25 SEND Service (RG)

Clerk

Kiran Parkash Singh: Pupil Services

Representatives: Maintained primary schools

Diane Barrick: Head Teacher, Carpenters Primary School

Kate McGee: Head Teacher, Manor Primary School

James Dawson: Head Teacher, Winsor Primary School

Sue Ferguson: Head Teacher, Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Representatives: Maintained secondary schools

Ian Wilson: Head Teacher, Little Ilford School

Representatives: Academy secondary schools

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

Simon Elliott: CEO Community School Trust

Representative: Foundation schools

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

Representative: University Technical Colleges

Geoffrey Fowler: Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

Representative: Single sex schools

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

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

Representative: Alternative provisions

Sandy Davies: Head Teacher, Education Links

Apologies:

David Perks: East London Science School

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

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

Roz Pither, Interim Head of 0-25 SEND Service

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Gael Hicks: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

Val Naylor: Executive Head Teacher

Key

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

APPROVED

Action Points

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a. TJ to draft a note of thanks on behalf of the forum to be sent to Quintin Peppiatt.

3. Department for Education - Statutory Consultation: Admissions Code proposed for January 2021:

- a. TJ to circulate text to own admission authority schools to update 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 determined arrangements to take into account internationally previously looked after children.

5. Standing items

- a. Local authority to produce interactive map reflecting the locations and details of existing and proposed schools as part of the Places for All strategy.
- b. TJ to circulate the latest cases of interest from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and Ombudsman.

Agenda Item 1. Welcome, introductions and membership

1. Chair SR introduced herself and welcomed attendees to the third virtual forum of the 2020-2021 academic year. SR asked forum members to introduce themselves and explain what type of school they were representing. Apologies were forwarded for members who were unable to attend today.

a. Membership

1. SR informed the panel that Quintin Peppiatt had stepped down from representing the New Vision Trust at the forum. Quintin had been a valued member for over 15 years, who, prior to being a representative, had also chaired the forum during his tenure as lead member for education. SR and forum members passed on their thanks to Quintin for his contributions and input in formulating Newham's admissions and place planning policies. Quintin will be discussing New Vision Trust's future representation at the forum with the Trust's CEO.

2. SR asked if there was an update on the request for a representative from the independent education sector to join the forum. TJ advised that this was currently with the Education Senior Managers Team for further discussion. An update will be provided when it is agreed what type of representation there should be.

Agenda Item 2. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising:

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

2. The terms of reference for the forum had been updated and circulated. All present confirmed that the new terms reflected the purpose of the forum and did not require further amendments.

Agenda Item 3. Department for Education (DfE) - Statutory Consultation: Admissions Code proposed for January 2021:

1. SR notified the forum that the new Admissions Code had been delayed and will not come into force until September 2021.

2. TJ added that the DfE had notified admission authorities to immediately update their

determined admission arrangements for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, to prioritise children who were in state care outside of England and were adopted as 'internationally adopted previously looked after children' (IAPLAC). This will give equal priority to previously looked after children (in state care) from outside of England. LB Newham's determined arrangements will be updated and own admission authority schools who have not adopted LB Newham's arrangements will be sent text to update their own arrangements.

3. At this stage there is no guidance from the DfE as to how IAPLAC should be determined as most international adoption documents are not drafted in English. The forum confirmed however, that admission authorities should move to determination and update their arrangements to reflect the changes.

Agenda Item 4. Pupil place planning

1. SR advised the forum that the latest version of the Places for All strategy had been agreed at Cabinet in November 2020. PG added that the authority had recruited a new place planner to replace Manjit Bains. Ada Egot will be starting later this month.

2. Place planning was further covered in agenda item 7.

Agenda Item 5. Standing Items

a) New academy conversions and proposed new free schools

1. TJ advised the forum that there were no new conversions since the last forum meeting. Lister Community School and Rokeby School were in the process of consulting over conversion and an update will be provided at the next forum.

2. PG advised that aside from School 360 which will open in September 2021, no further primary free schools are planned for the next 3-5 years. The local authority will have input in any planned future openings in terms of whether there is an actual need for new schools.

3. A new secondary free school in Plaistow, part of the Big Education Trust and another secondary school in Stratford, also part of the Big Education Trust are proposed for September 2023 at the earliest.

4. A PHT asked for clarification on what input the local authority has when new free schools are proposed. PG advised that there are two processes for the opening of free schools;

1. National Free School Waves - This is based on bids by Trusts/proposer groups submitted to the DfE for proposed free schools. School 360 and the proposed secondary schools in Plaistow and Stratford were agreed in this way.

The local authority has minimal input in this process. However, it is unlikely that further schools will open in Newham, as further nationally funded free schools are expected to be prioritised for areas with underperforming schools. This is not the case in Newham.

2. Presumption Competition – Run by the local authority where academy trusts express an interest to the local authority to bid to open a school where there is a need.

5. A SHT stated that a substantial number of secondary school places are planned. Can the local authority clarify how these are being funded (i.e. Section 106 funding), what

representations will be made by the authority between proposal and implementation and whether the location of the schools are based on need or where physical space is available.

6. PG advised that the schools are being financed through DfE Capital Funding. As forecast in the Places for All strategy, additional secondary school places are needed going forward and the local authority is in dialogue with the DfE over when these schools will open to reflect forecast need. There is only one planning area for secondary schools in Newham as secondary aged children are expected to be able to travel across the borough to get to school. Location therefore, is less of a consideration when new secondary schools are proposed, especially when there is limited availability of land.

7. A PHT asked how often the Places for All strategy is reviewed. PG advised that it will be updated over the summer and a draft will be submitted to the next Forum before being presented at Cabinet in the autumn. A PHT added that the impact on existing schools must be considered when new schools are proposed and it would be beneficial to include maps to detail where the schools are planned.

8. A SHT requested that the strategy should include a graphic representation and details of all schools in Newham as well as the proposed free schools so that the potential impact of new schools can be visualised. In addition to this there should be a conversation about moving away from a single planning area for secondary schools. PG advised that the local authority will be meeting with schools in different planning areas to discuss the proposals.

9. The local authority will take forward the suggestion of an interactive map that will form part of the Places for All strategy.

b) Consultations

1. None

c. Objections to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA)

1. TJ advised the forum that there had been a number of recent cases of interest which will be circulated to be discussed at a future forum.

d. Composite Prospectus

1. Manor Primary School will be the featured primary school in the Starting Primary School prospectus. Secondary schools are invited to express an interest to the local authority.

e. Transition processes for normal admissions

1. Covered in agenda item 6.

Agenda Item 6. Normal and atypical admissions – new starter arrangements

1. SR advised the panel that due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions it was important to discuss how best to manage the standard activities associated with transition. PG stated that that this has been discussed at the Head teacher Reference Group meeting and there was a suggestion to hold events after 21st June 2021 when Covid restrictions are planned to ease. There was an appetite to hold face to face meetings.

2. PHT and SHT forum members explained what plans they had put in place as part of the new starter process. There was a concern that year 6 children will be mixing with children from other schools and then returning to their primary school. However it was suggested that children will be openly mixing after 21st June, therefore this should no longer be a consideration.

3. TJ asked if there was an expectation on primary schools to permit their year 6 pupils to attend inductions at secondary schools. A SHT stated that schools will be sensible and follow the guidance at the time. SR stated that there appears to be a variety of approaches and schools will do whatever is required to ensure the guidance is adhered to. It was necessary however to ensure that both primary and secondary head teachers co-ordinate the dates for transition rather than having a number of different dates.

Agenda Item 7. Falling rolls

1. PG introduced the item. 28 infant and primary schools were full on national offer day for primary school admissions for September 2021. The authority had 33 forms of entry available which amounted to a surplus of 16.1%. Whilst the number of the children starting reception class remains lower than in previous years (3.8% reduction on last year; 6.7% across London) the forecast was for significant growth over 5 years. Between 16th April 2021 and 13th May 2021 the authority had made a further 165 offers to Newham schools and this will continue to be monitored.

2. The reduction could be due to the impact of the pandemic but there could also be other factors. The local authority will be conducting further analysis over the summer.

3. 30,000 new homes are planned to be built in Newham by 2029, however pupil yield from new homes is hard to forecast. These developments are mainly in the south and west of the borough. It was therefore likely that schools with low rolls in those parts of the borough may see growth in their pupil numbers.

4. The situation is more challenging in other parts of Newham where growth is not forecast. Schools with falling rolls in these areas will need to be supported. Limited financial support was available via the falling rolls fund but other sustainable options also needed to be considered. 'Capping' was an option that a number of schools have successfully taken. This involves temporarily reducing the roll number in an effected year group thus limiting the number classes, e.g. reduce from three forms of entry to two.

5. Schools could consider permanently reducing their admission number where growth is not forecast. For schools in areas where growth is forecast, capping would be a better option. School in federations or multi academy trusts may also look at opportunities to share staff or resources which would support schools in reducing costs.

6. A SHT added that in the current climate it was difficult to forecast which direction the borough was heading. The impact of brexit, cost of housing, young professionals having children later and the fallout of the pandemic all needed to be considered when the Places for All strategy is next reviewed. The local authority needed to be cautious in ensuring that new schools linked to developments do not lead to an oversupply of places.

7. A SHT added that the local authority should also think about school closures if they are not considered to be viable in the long term.

8. PG thanked members for their comments and advised that a series of meetings will be planned with schools in different parts of the borough to discuss what options best meet the needs in each area. The Places for All strategy will be revised over the summer and will be presented at the next Forum before being taken to Cabinet.

Any other business

1. A SHT head teacher raised a concern about the number of children with SEND needs were being placed in mainstream education settings. Their school has a resource provision which is at capacity but they have been asked to admit a further 7 pupils into their mainstream setting who should also be in a resource provision. RG stated that the 0-25 SEND Service do discuss placements with parents before schools are named on Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). But if preference is for a mainstream placement, then the service has to act in line with the statutory guidance.

2. The expansion of John F Kennedy Special School had helped with the situation but the authority had seen a year on year increase in demand for places and in the complexity of cases of SEND children. Newham special schools were also being directly consulted by other local authorities for places.

3. TJ added that concerns have also been raised by independent school admission appeal panels who have no specialist SEND knowledge or expertise, yet are having to consider cases that would normally be heard at tier 1 tribunals in other local authorities, as they would have EHCPs. When they do not have an EHCP, they have to go through the statutory admission appeals process.

4. A SHT added that a full SEND provision review was required in Newham to ensure that a long term plan is in place to manage the increase in demand and ensure families are supported with their children's needs. SR commented that the independently chaired SEND Commission will be considering Newham's offer and look at practical ways to manage the situation. Schools should consider participating in the commission so that their concerns are heard.

5. TJ asked the forum if they were content with the times of the meetings: 15:30 to 17:30. All present advised that the time was suitable.

Meeting Closed 17:30
End.