

Minutes

For: Admissions and Place Planning Forum

Date: 07.10.2021

Time: 16:00-17:45

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)

Ada Egot: Commissioner Education Place Planning

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 Primary Schools

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Gael Hicks: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

Representatives: Academy secondary schools

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

Omar Deria: Head Teacher, Cumberland Community School

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

Representative: Foundation schools

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

Representative: Single sex schools

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

Representative: Virtual School

Val Naylor: Executive Head Teacher

Representative: Alternative provisions

Sandy Davies: Head Teacher, Education Links

Representative: Nursery Schools

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

Apologies:

David Perks: East London Science School

James Dawson: Head Teacher, Winsor Primary School

Geoffrey Fowler: Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

Chris McCormack: Head Teacher, St. Bonaventure's

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

Key

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

Action Points

1. Membership vacancies

Request for new members to fill current vacancies to be raised at next NAPH and NASH meetings.

- a. Primary Academy Trust representative
- b. Maintained secondary school representative

2. SEND discussions/concerns

Local authority to identify the appropriate forum for school leaders to raise and discuss concerns about SEND.

3. Fair Access Summary Sheet

Local authority to consider producing a Fair Access summary sheet to be circulated to schools, to support their understanding of the Fair Access process and the remit for referring admissions to Pupil Placement Panel.

4. Documents for Admission

Local authority to circulate updated School Admission Document Requirements guidance to schools.

5. School leaver data

Local authority to consider using school leaver data (off rolling) to support place planning strategy forecasting.

6. Proposed changes to admission arrangements

Local authority to contact own admission authority schools in Newham to ensure any proposed changes to their admission arrangements for 2023 admission are raised with Admissions and Place Planning Forum.

7. Promotion of Newham Secondary Schools

Local authority to review current promotion of Newham secondary schools in borough and to explore ways of communicating and highlighting successes.

8. Local Plan Workshops

Local authority to circulate details of the Local Plan workshop to forum members interested in participating.

Agenda Item 1. Welcome, introductions and membership

1. Chair SR introduced herself and welcomed attendees to the first forum of the 2021-2022 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 asked the panel if they were happy with the long term membership of the forum and for the existing members to remain in office. Members confirmed that they were.

2. SR added that a vacancy had arisen for a representative from a primary academy trust and also for a maintained secondary school representative. It was agreed that this will be raised at the next NAPH and NASH meetings for head teachers to express an interest in joining the forum.

3. SR also asked the forum for their views about having members of the forum from the same multi academy trust but representing different types of schools e.g. a single sex school and a foundation school, both being in the same trust but fulfilling different roles. The forum had no concerns regarding this.

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. TJ confirmed that the local authority had circulated the short notice requirements for the statutory changes to admission arrangements to the own admission authority schools located in Newham, and it appears that these changes have been actioned.

3. TJ also advised that with the support of the Corporate GIS team, an electronic map reflecting the locations of existing and proposed schools had been created and will form part of the Places for All strategy going forward.

Agenda Item 3. Draft Fair Access Protocol and Pupil Placement Panels:

1. TJ advised the panel that the draft Fair Access Protocol was circulated to all schools in early September 2021 for comment. This was followed up with meetings with both primary and secondary schools. Both meetings were well attended and school leaders have provided constructive feedback.

2. Local authority officers will now be working with school leaders to draft the final version with the aim of the new Protocol going live after half term.

3. PG thanked schools for their support and contribution to drafting the new Protocol. Generally speaking there had been widespread agreement with the draft. There were some points however that needed to be addressed.

a. Schools felt that there was not sufficient time between being notified of an offer by Pupil Services and the outcome letter being sent to the family. This was not giving schools sufficient time to review the application and reach a decision about whether they needed to refer the case to pupil placement panel.

To allow schools more time to make a decision the period between sending the admission details to schools and the outcome letter to families will be increased from three to five days.

b. There is a need for clarity about how disproportionality by the Pupil Placement Panel will be measured. It is clear in the new School Admission Code that Fair Access data is only in relation to admissions under Fair Access in the current academic year and normal admissions cannot be taken into account.

There is however a need to clarify the position and manage the expectations of schools in terms of what can or cannot be taken into account. This will be discussed at Education Partnership Board and at Sub Group level.

c. Where a school is refusing to admit a child under 3.10 of the School Admissions Code, it will be for them to decide what information they will need to provide to present at Pupil

Placement Panel so that they can present their case in an appropriate way, rather than relying on borough wide data.

d. It has been acknowledged that not all Fair Access cases are the same. A weighting scheme therefore, such as a RAG rating system will be introduced to apply to each Fair Access case so that panels can look at seriousness of previous Fair Access admissions to make a decision about the current case.

e. The new Fair Access Protocol requires all schools located in Newham to be represented at each monthly meeting to participate in discussions and decision making. There is an expectation that for the secondary panel, all secondary schools will ensure that a representative will attend.

Due to the number of primary schools in Newham, having all schools attend the primary panel would be unmanageable. The local authority will want to ensure that there was proportional representation of all primary schools across the different admission authorities.

The local authority proposed a core representation of maintained and academy schools at placement panel and also if a representative from an Academy Trust can represent all schools in their Trust. It was important to note that any school can attend if they have a case to present.

4. A PHT added that it was probably the case that a lot of schools have admitted children who would normally be classed as Fair Access but do not bring to the placement panel. The local authority needed to ensure that they advised schools to bring cases that meet the criteria of Fair Access to placement panel.

5. Another PHT added that it was important that the local authority ensured that pupil placement panel was conducted in line with the requirements of the new School Admissions Code. If that meant that some matters that were previously discussed at placement panels are no longer going to be, the local authority needed to ensure that there are other forums where they can be discussed (specifically relating to SEND).

6. A SHT added that due to places being available in schools with a low OFSTED rating, children with high level of needs were being placed at these schools due to them having places available. This has a profound impact on the school and the SEND pupils. As stated by others if placement panel is not the forum to discuss SEND and other vulnerable children, then there needed to be another forum, possibly an extension to the current placement panel.

7. Other forum members expressed a similar concern and the forum requested confirmation from the local authority where this will sit.

8. PG acknowledged the concerns but reiterated the limits of placement panel and Fair Access and what can be discussed.

9. PG added that it was possible that the various education subgroups which have been relaunched this term could be an appropriate forum where such matters can be discussed. In addition if there is any evidence of 'signposting' then schools needed to provide that to the local authority and steps will be taken to address this.

10. TJ added that Fair Access was about challenging behaviour and if placement panel

continued to discuss SEND, then an assumption is being made that all SEND children have challenging behaviour. All will accept that this is not the case and by continuing to discuss SEND at placement panel could be seen as discriminatory.

11. A PHT stated that previously schools requesting a new in SEND assessment for a child who had been offered a place in year but has SEND, had to do so via placement panel. Would this still continue under the new Protocol?

12. TJ advised that this process will remain and the new Protocol will include the pathway for two types of assessments;

- a. Pathway for new in SEND assessment
- b. Pathway for new in children with medical needs.

13. SR added that local authority officers needed to determine which forum SEND admissions will be discussed.

14. A PHT added that it was important that all types of schools had representation at placement panel but a number of head teachers had regularly attended the panel since its inception. These head teachers have played an important part in making decisions on cases and the formulation of Fair Access over the years. If they wish to continue to be part of the panel they should be considered for membership before others.

15. In addition to this it was important that schools were aware that they could bring cases to panel that meet the requirements of Fair Access and what they need to do to add to the placement panel agenda. It could be the case that they are unsure of the process.

16. TJ added that all schools needed to commit to a process where they shared information to prevent delay and allow schools to gather information in order to make referrals to placement panel if necessary. Both NASH and NAPH needed to show a commitment to the process so that there is a collaborative approach to address this.

17. SR asked on the occasions where schools refuse to, or delay sharing information, what sanctions are in place to address this?

18. TJ advised that there does need to be a commitment on the part of all schools but there does need to be an escalation process to address this.

19. Another SHT added that the new Protocol removed the right to refuse admission when a child is avoiding sanctions as the only grounds they can refuse under is challenging behaviour. For schools to be able to decide if the admission meets that remit, they needed the information from the current school and the local authority will need to hold off on the transfer until the information can be gathered.

20. A PHT added that a crib sheet with advice for school leaders which outlined the terms of the Fair Access Protocol, and the process under which schools can refer a case to the panel will help them understand the process better without needing to refer to the full protocol in the first instance.

Actions:**SEND discussions/concerns**

Local authority to identify the appropriate forum for school leaders to raise and discuss concerns about SEND.

Fair Access Summary Sheet

Local authority to consider producing a Fair Access summary sheet to be circulated to schools, to support their understanding of the Fair Access process and the remit for referring admissions to Pupil Placement Panel.

Agenda item 4. Draft guidance 'Documents required for admission to school'

1. SR advised the panel that the draft version was circulated to all forum members in July 2021 for review and comment. The local authority had received two responses.
2. TJ advised that there had been a delay to issuing the document due to Brexit but it was now ready to be circulated to all schools provided the forum agreed that no changes were required.
3. The main element for schools to remember was that irrespective of a child's immigration status a school can admit. The responsibility of ensuring that the child has a right to education based on their immigration status, has to be determined by the child's parent/carer prior to submitting an application.
4. In addition the local authority had produced a template checklist that they could use to help with the process at admission meetings. This however, was not compulsory for schools to use.
5. The forum agreed that the document was ready to be circulated to schools.

Actions:**Documents for Admission**

Local authority to circulate updated School Admission Document Requirements guidance to schools.

Agenda Item 4. Pupil place planning

1. PG advised the forum that pupil place planning primary and secondary forecasts were updated over the summer and will be used to update the Places for All strategy. Meetings have been set with all primary schools across the current 7 planning areas to advise schools in those areas of the revised forecast.
2. These forecasts are for mainstream places only. There will be a separate update on the SEND places forecast and will be further discussed with the SEND Subgroup.
3. AE updated the panel on the revised forecast.
4. There had been a drop in the birth rate in Newham and this trend will continue until 2025 when the birth rate will stabilise and begin to climb.

5. Housing developments across Newham are expected to attract families of reception class age but also other year groups too. Certain areas of the borough will have a higher number of housing developments than others. Currently, Stratford and Canning Town have the highest number of developments planned. This will impact the forecast on the number of school places required in that area.

6. There is no anticipated need for additional primary school places in Newham over the next five years but in the longer term, the planning areas where a high number of housing developments are planned will continue to be reviewed. Currently there is a 10% surplus on reception class places, factoring in any caps that have been agreed for this academic year.

7. There will however be a need for secondary school places in the next five years. Whilst there is a current surplus of places following the formal expansion of a number of secondary schools, by 2023 there is likely to be a deficit. This should be addressed by the opening of a new free school by the Big Education Trust in 2023 or 2024 if that need is maintained.

8. A SHT suggested that the current surplus of one form entry in year 7 has been understated and that it is likely that there are more places in secondary schools. How could the local authority be certain that additional places will be required by 2023?

9. AE stated that the forecast is based on the past trends but once further data is available via the 2022 Census, then the forecast will be updated.

10. TJ advised that currently there was a surplus of just over one form of entry. It was possible that the forecast was being skewed by what appears to be a higher number of leavers than there has been in the past. This may further impact the forecast once schools receive confirmation from the relevant service areas that they can remove from their roll or pending admissions.

11. A PHT stated that many families from schools in their Trust are moving out of Newham when their child is in years 5 and 6, in a bid to secure secondary schools outside of the borough. The local authority needed to ensure that they were not seeking additional secondary school places when they may not be needed.

12. A PHT added that a number of primary schools had recently been experiencing falling rolls, yet a new primary school recently opened in Newham when places were not required.

13. PG advised that this was not a local authority decision but a department for Education one, although the local authority were asked for their views and it was recognised that over time new schools are needed for new housing developments. The key issue is the timing of when additional school provision opens and discussions continue with the DfE.

14. Similarly, for secondary school places going forward, the forecast is suggesting that there isn't a need for a further two secondary schools but for one within the next five years, although in the longer term it is likely that further new secondary provision will be needed given planned new housing. There will be further conversations with the Department for Education about this.

15. A SHT added that the local authority needed to ensure that this was monitored carefully as a new school opening could affect the effective operation of other local schools with low rolls, thus effecting the education of children on roll at those schools. The local authority

needed to be ensure that there was no overprovision of places.

16. TJ added that the local authority also needed to clear on schools capping and leavers in certain year groups to see what the impact of this is. In addition leavers appears to be high this year, therefore this needed to be monitored as part of the forecasts.

17. AE added that in year applications appeared to be dropping between 2019 and 2021. The local authority will have a more accurate picture once the Census data is available in January 2022.

18. AE added that the Newham primary school planning areas are also being reviewed. Currently Newham has 7 planning areas and this being reviewed to increase this to 8. Other areas will see a change in their boundaries and/or schools will be moved into other planning areas. It is also proposed that the Stratford planning area will be split into West Ham and East Village. Only the Manor Park planning area will remain the same.

19. The proposed changes will be submitted to the Department for Education with evidence to support the rationale behind the changes before a decision is made in January 2022.

20. PG added that this will not affect school admissions but could impact capital funding agreements in the future.

Action:

School leaver data

Local authority to consider using school leaver data (off rolling) to support place planning strategy forecasting.

Agenda Item 6. Standing Items

a) New academy conversions and proposed new free schools

1. SR advised the forum that there were no new updates on proposed conversions since the last forum meeting. Lister Community School and Rokeby School are expected to convert to academies by the 1st December 2021.

b) Proposed consultations for September 2023 entry.

1. SR advised that the local authority is not proposing any changes requiring consultation to the existing admission arrangements and are therefore not required to consult to meet the seven years without change requirement.

2. SR asked if any own admission authority schools are proposing changes to their admission arrangements for 2023 entry and if so, they will need to present their changes to this forum. This would also apply to own admission authority schools that have adopted the London Borough of Newham admission arrangements.

3. TJ asked if any changes were planned or whether any own admission authority schools were at the end of the seven year cycle which now require consultation.

4. Members of the forum advised that none were planned.

Action:**Proposed changes to admission arrangements**

Local authority to contact own admission authority schools in Newham to ensure any proposed changes to their admission arrangements for 2023 admission are raised with Admissions and Place Planning Forum.

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

1. None.

d. Primary to Secondary school transition & Composite Prospectus – Delivery autumn 2021

1. SR asked the forum if they had found the presentation produced by the local authority about the secondary transition process helpful with their meetings with families. The forum confirmed that it had been helpful.
2. SR stated that the local authority acknowledged the importance of infant, junior and primary schools receiving their composite prospectuses in good time to give to their parents to make informed decisions about school applications.
3. On behalf of the local authority, SR apologised for the significant challenges many schools experienced this year in being able to book their year 6 meetings and have sufficient copies of the each composite prospectus (primary and secondary).
4. Corporate communications on behalf of CYPS education, as every year, commissioned a recognised company to print and deliver these important statutory guides. CYPS has requested a full investigation into this matter and will feedback the findings to the forum.
5. If schools felt anything was needed to assist with this process they should contact the local authority.
6. SR also advised the forum that the local authority will be carrying out customer engagement exercises to review whether there was still a need for a hard copy of the prospectuses which would be replaced by an online version. Having an online version only would be a financial benefit.
7. A PHT suggested that accessibility to the prospectus was important, therefore the local authority should not stop providing hard copies to families.
8. In addition to this, the local authority needed to ensure that they actively promoted the success of schools in Newham to encourage families to not only apply for Newham secondary schools, but to also not feel the need to move out of Newham to attempt to gain places at high performing secondary schools when there are a lot of good secondary schools in Newham.
9. SR agreed that more should be done to promote schools the schools in Newham and suggested that this should be taken back to Newham's Communications department for action.
10. A PHT added that Newham's Catholic secondary schools were struggling to attract applications from their normal feeder Catholic primary schools. The active promotion of Newham secondary schools could help with this.

11. A PHT added that the local authority should make more use of social media to promote secondary schools as their own research had shown a higher level of interaction with residents but was also more cost effective than physical adverts.

12. TJ advised that the use of social media was previously raised but officers in Pupil Services are not permitted to have social media accounts.

13. PG added that the local authority's official social media channels could be used to promote education success.

14. TJ added that the datasets produced by the local authority as part of the annual primary to secondary transition process includes helpful data that shows where applications for certain schools are coming from. This has been used by some secondary schools to target local primary schools where they have not received the number of applications that they would normally expect for their school.

15. The datasets can be a helpful tool to all schools to see the areas where they need to focus on to attract more applicants.

Action:

Promotion of Newham Secondary Schools

Local authority to review current promotion of Newham secondary schools in borough and to explore ways of communicating and highlighting successes.

Agenda Item 7. Summer born admissions

1. A PHT advised the forum that parent/carers requesting to defer the admission of their child born during the summer term to start reception class a year later than normal, appeared to spreading to other year groups, especially for children with SEND. This was a cause of concern as parents were not understanding the impact when the child reaches secondary school age.

2. PHT added that there had also been anecdotal evidence that some schools were encouraging families to remain in their nursery and to request a summer born deferment.

3. A SHT advised that when this has been previously raised, the default position of secondary schools in Newham was that they will admit into year 8 and not into year 7.

4. TJ added that summer born requests are becoming common place across London and there appears to be an increase in families requesting their child being placed in the year below their actual age (non-summer born), without realising the impact on their application for a secondary school.

5. It is for schools to decide whether they will agree to the deferment request and it is not a local authority decision. It was important that schools fully explained the potential impact on families.

6. The Department for Education have not yet addressed the issues that are associated with children being educated outside of their normal year group and it is not clear what the potential repercussions on secondary schools will be should they not agree to admit into year 7.

7. Currently the impact on secondary applications has not yet been seen as the first cohort of agreed summer born deferments are yet to apply for a secondary school. This however will be reviewed when they are due to apply.

8. Any other business

1. PG advised the panel that the local authority are in the process of developing community facilities as part of the Local Plan and workshops are being established to discuss this. The local authority is keen for schools to join the workshops and provide a valuable contribution to the development of the Local Plan in terms of what community facilities are needed.

2. A number of head teachers expressed an interest to join a workshop.

Action:

Local Plan Workshops

Local authority to circulate details of the Local Plan workshop to forum members interested in participating.

3. SR asked the forum for their views about a potential return to face to face meetings for future forums.

4. PG advised that under the rules this was now permitted, but based on the other forums that are continuing online, head teachers preferred virtual meetings as it made better use of their time.

The next forum is scheduled for March 2022 and members could be asked when the invitations are sent.

5. SR closed the meeting by advising the forum that Ian Wilson will be retiring in December and thanked him for his contribution to the forum and the development of Newham's admissions policies and place planning strategy.

Meeting Closed 17:45

End.