

# Minutes

**For:** Admissions and Place Planning Forum

**Date:** 15.03.2022

**Time:** 15:30-17:30

**Location:** Video Conference

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## 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 Education Access and Infrastructure (PG)

Tracy Jones: Group Manager, Pupil Services (TJ)

Ada Egot: Commissioner Education Place Planning (AE)

### Clerks

Kiran Parkash Singh: Admissions and Appeals Team Manager (Primary)

Cassandra Philip: Admissions and Appeals Team Manager (Secondary)

### Representatives: Maintained primary schools

Diane Barrick: Head Teacher, Carpenters Primary School

Kate McGee: Head Teacher, Manor Primary School

Sue Ferguson: Head Teacher, Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

### Representatives: Academy Primary Schools

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Gael Hicks: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

### Representatives: Academy secondary schools

Anthony Wilson: CEO Newham Community Schools Trust

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

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

### Faith Representative: Catholic schools

Gael Hicks: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

Chris McCormack: Head Teacher, St. Bonaventure's

### 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:**

James Dawson: Head Teacher, Winsor Primary School

Geoffrey Fowler: Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

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

Charlotte Robinson: Head Teacher, Rokeby School

**Key**

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

APPROVED

## Action Points

### **1. Membership vacancies**

School leader members of Admission and Place Planning Forum to raise request for new members to fill current vacancies at next NAPH and NASH meetings.

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

### **2. Promotion of Newham Primary Schools**

Local authority to scope options for promoting Newham primary school success alongside current work being planned to celebrate Newham secondary schools in borough, to encourage residents to remain in Newham for their children's education.

### **3. Overallocation**

Noting the impact on undersubscribed schools, local authority to survey admission authorities of secondary schools that have overallocated by more than 10 for admission in year 7 to understand more about the rationale for overallocation.

### **4. SEND**

Cllr Sarah Ruiz to raise primary school representatives' concerns about lack of agreed pathway and funding process for year 7 SEND children remaining at primary school whilst a suitable year 7 provision is sought.

### **5. SEND Place Planning and Free School Options**

Local authority to contact the DfE on behalf of the Admissions and Place Planning Forum to suggest that the proposed opening of a mainstream secondary free school in Newham be changed to a special needs free school.

### **6. Summer Born Admissions**

Local authority to review summer born admissions and get more detail relating to the legal position for when children move onto secondary school where deferment has been agreed by a primary school i.e. GCSE outcomes.

Secondary schools to provide their views about potentially admitting summer born children into an out of age range year group.

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## **Agenda Item 1. Welcome, introductions and membership**

1. Chair SR introduced herself and welcomed attendees to the second forum of the 2021-2022 academic year. Apologies were forwarded for members who were unable to attend today.

## **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 forum reviewed the action points from the previous meeting.

### **a. Membership vacancies**

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

1. SR advised the panel that vacancies still existed for a primary academy representative

and a secondary maintained school representative. School leader representatives were asked to raise this at the next NAPH and NASH meetings for head teachers to express an interest in joining the forum.

**b. SEND discussions/concerns**

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

1. SR advised that a productive workshop at the education conference held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 discussed six action points to address SEND pupil placement issues that will be taken forward by the local authority.

**c. Fair Access Protocol 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.**

1. The local authority have produced flow diagrams that have been shared and reviewed by all schools via pupil placement panel and have been incorporated in the final version of the Fair Access Protocol.

**d. Documents for Admission**

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

1. The local authority have produced the document which has been circulated to all schools via the weekly Newham Connect newsletter in January 2022 and also been published on the Newham Connect website.

**e. School leaver data**

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

1. Analysis of leavers' data is underway.

**f. 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.**

1. The local authority consulted on behalf of Bobby Moore Academy to align their admission arrangements with the London Borough of Newham's arrangements. Currently there are no other proposed changes for any other admission authorities in Newham that require consultation.

2. The local authority have notified own admission authority school leaders of the annual admission arrangements determination requirements.

**g. 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.**

1. Discussions with the local authority's communications team is underway to explore what

options are available.

2. A PHT suggested that with the forecast fall in primary roll numbers by 2030 the local authority should also consider promoting the success of Newham primary schools as well as secondary schools to highlight and celebrate

**Action: Local authority to scope options for promoting Newham primary school success alongside current work being planned to celebrate Newham secondary schools in borough, to encourage residents to remain in Newham for their children's education.**

#### **h. Local Plan Workshops**

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

1. This has been completed. Three forum members attended a workshop.

#### **Agenda Item 3. Primary to Secondary Transition for September 2022.**

1. PG thanked all schools for their continued support in ensuring the primary to secondary transition process for admission in September 2022 went smoothly for families in Newham. Over 96% of applicants received one of their top three preferences.

2. The local authority does recognise that there are a small number of schools that still have vacancies and the level of vacancies were being monitored.

3. TJ added that the local authority had also contacted applicants who were not offered one of their preferred schools, and were allocated the closest school to their home address that had a space available, to advise of schools that still had vacancies. They were invited to apply for one of these schools (if they were not satisfied with the school allocated). 232 letters were sent and at the time of the forum, 15 families responded and requested a change to the allocated school.

4. A small number of families have not applied for a secondary school place. They will be allocated a place within the next month. Primary schools can monitor who has or hasn't applied for a secondary school place via the LGfL eAdmissions portal. Training will be provided to schools who may be unfamiliar with the checking process.

5. There has also been a minor issue with applications from families of children from a multi birth where some applicants may have not understood the application process. The guidance about ensuring families submit separate applications for all children part of a multiple birth will be reviewed so that it is more clear for all families.

6. TJ further advised that work has also been carried out with families known to social care have also been supported to ensure that they applications submitted prior to the national closing date, thus improving the possibility of being offered a place at a preferred school. Social workers prioritised this work and made sure applications were submitted.

7. A PHT asked about appeals. TJ advised that the closing date for the first round of appeals was 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 but the local authority had already received a high number of appeals. Any appeals that are not successful, could result in children not attending the allocated school.

8. In general, families that are not happy with the outcome of their application fall within two

main categories;

- a. Allocated school is too far
- b. Only want their child to attend a particular school

9. A PHT advised that the pandemic had hindered schools' abilities to be able to invite families in to encourage them to attend the school if it wasn't their preferred school. With restrictions now being lifted more could be done to engage with families.

10. In addition to this there appeared to be a trend of families are moving out of Newham whilst their child is in year 5/6 to other boroughs before they start secondary school. Secondary schools should perhaps start looking at holding open events inviting families with year 5 pupils so that they can start researching secondary school applications earlier and make informed decisions.

11. A SHT added that based on the data provided about the places still available in Newham secondary schools after national offer day, it would seem that there is no need for another secondary free school in the borough as the demand for places is not there. The opening another secondary school will negatively impact those schools that have vacancies.

12. In addition to this, there was a concern about schools that have overallocated for admission in September. Whilst there was a rationale for schools over allocating by a small number (to ensure schools are full in September and reduce churn), some had over allocated by more and families that had not named that school as a preference have been allocated a place as the nearest school with a vacancy. If these schools had not over allocated, these children would have been allocated a school that had vacancies as part of their admission number and not over allocation.

13. PG advised that the local authority recognised the issue. However overallocation is a decision each admission authority can make and the impact on other schools is made clear to them when they are asked of their intentions to overallocate.

14. TJ advised that the intention of overallocation is to stabilise the secondary transition process and prevent the churn of families moving/changing schools at a later date from waiting list. Whilst extra places may be being offered at an earlier point, the net position remains the same.

15. A SHT added that parental preference is an important consideration and where possible every effort should be made to support that. Overallocation helps more families gain a place at a preferred school and reduce the need to go to an appeal.

16. However, the data does show that there is capacity in the existing schools and therefore there is no need to open another mainstream school in the borough.

17. Another SHT added that they understood the rationale about reducing churn. However, data shows that over the course of an academic year, a school loses 1-2% of their pupil population. Over allocating by 30-40 places reflects on average around 10% of additional places against the admission number being offered, when over the course of the year a school loses only 1-2% of pupils.

18. In addition to this, are schools that overallocate as part of the secondary transfer process admitting children in year?

19. PG advised that data from the January census will show if schools that have overallocated previously are admitting in year.

20. TJ added that historical data does show schools that have overallocated have admitted children in year.

**Action: Noting the impact on undersubscribed schools, local authority to survey admission authorities of secondary schools that have overallocated by more than 10 for admission in year 7 to understand more about the rationale for overallocation.**

#### **Agenda Item 4. SEND Place Planning**

1. PG introduced the item and advised the forum that substantial work had been carried out in the past 6 months to develop the forecast of the need for specialist SEND and alternative provision placements in Newham. Forecasting for SEND places is more complicated than it is for mainstream placements as there is a need to understand what type of placement is required. However, recent SEND data has supported the development of the forecast.

2. The local authority has already recognised the need for additional SEND specialist placements and has resulted in additional resource provision places in primary schools for ASD as well as special school annexes in secondary schools.

3. AE presented a place planning slide show outlining the detail of the forecast. It is expected that the demand for specialist placements to support children with complex ASD needs will continue to grow in the borough and the authority is projecting a deficit of secondary ASD places in the next three years.

4. This is evidenced by the fact that there are currently a significant number of year 6 children with complex ASD needs who are yet to be offered a suitable secondary placement for September 2022.

5. Newham commissions a total of 640 specialist places across 23 schools with resource provisions and 2 special schools. Currently resource provision occupancy is at 78%. In JFK (ASD special school) occupancy is at 93% and there is also an under occupancy in the SEMH school (EKO Pathways) at 47%.

6. Currently there were 102 pupils who were undergoing the statutory assessment for an EHCP that were yet to be issued.

7. The opening of the new ASD special school will help with the demand for ASD specialist placements. This was expected to open in September 2023, however this has been delayed.

8. In order to meet the expected demands over the next two years, a number of proposals have been put forward;

- a) Opening the new ASD free school on a temporary site from September 2023. This is currently being discussed with the DfE
- b) To develop more ASD specialist provision places alongside the new free school. Schools/Trusts will be invited to express an interest in hosting provisions on existing sites that can easily be transformed to assist a timely opening.
- c) Review of the HI and SEMH specialist places in order to maximise occupancy and commissioned places.



- d) Secure funding for the development of SEND Early Years provision to support inclusion and reduce future pressures.
8. A number of forum members expressed concern about the figure of 102 pupil awaiting an EHCP. They were of the view that that figure was a lot higher and provided examples from their schools of the number of children on the waiting list.
9. A PHT added that across schools there are many children that would benefit from a specialist placement but there doesn't appear to be a consistent pathway into accessing these.
10. Another PHT added that the pressure is not just in KS3 & 4 but is also being felt in KS1 & 2. The number of children with profound ASD needs coming through from Early Years will severely impact primary schools being able to manage.
11. Another PHT added that in order to gain a place at EKO Pathways a child must have an EHCP. However if there is a backlog of EHCP applications then it will be some time before a child can access a specialist placement which can have a negative impact. If there is capacity at EKO Pathways, then respite places should be created so that children can access the support they need.
12. PG accepted that there is a need keep the data on assessments under review – both from Newham's 0-25 SEND Service as well as the Early Years Team regarding assessment placements.
13. PG added that whilst the local authority is closely monitoring the situation in primary, the greatest pressure is being felt at secondary level. The new special school will cater for 5-19 year olds.
14. A SHT added that the recent Ofsted report regarding Newham's SEND provision highlighted a shortage of specialist placements. Additional provisions will help resolve some of the immediate issues, but these may be stretched in the future. The local authority should explore what options are available to open another SEND free school in the borough.
15. A PHT added that a mainstream free school is planned in Plaistow. There does not appear to be an immediate need for one. Instead of this opening, a new SEND free school should be opened on the site.
16. In addition to this, some primary schools will be willing to keep current year 6 pupils in their school in September whilst a suitable placement is sought. However, they will need assurances about timescales and funding before anything is agreed.
17. PG advised that the letter from Ofsted regarding their recent assessment of Newham's SEND provision has given weight for the need to commission more SEND placements. Regarding the opening of free schools in Newham, two were planned but it has been made clear to the DfE that both are not required. If a new round of special free schools are announced, it is likely Newham will be submitting a bid.
18. A SHT responded by stating that the free school is not required and instead the local authority should look into changing the proposed mainstream free school to an SEND specialist one.



19. The forum were in agreement that opening an SEND free school instead of a new mainstream one should be considered.

**Actions:**

**SEND**

**Cllr Sarah Ruiz to raise primary school representatives' concerns about lack of agreed pathway and funding process for year 7 SEND children remaining at primary school whilst a suitable year 7 provision is sought.**

**SEND Place Planning and Free School Options**

**Local authority to contact the DfE on behalf of the Admissions and Place Planning Forum to suggest that the proposed opening of a mainstream secondary free school in Newham be changed to a special needs free school.**

**Agenda item 5. Standing items**

**a) New academy conversions and proposed new free schools**

1. SR advised the forum that Lister Community School and Rokeby School converted to academies on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

2. St Winefride's RC Primary School will be converting to an academy on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and will be joining the Our Lady of Grace Academy Trust.

3. A SHT advised that Selwyn Primary School and Portway Primary School (both previous academy convertors) will be joining the Newham Community Schools Trust.

**b) Proposed consultations for September 2024 entry.**

1. SR asked forum members if any changes were planned by any own admission authority schools for September 2024 that would require consultation in autumn 2022.

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

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

1. None.

**Agenda item 6. Summer born and out of year admissions**

1. TJ advised the panel that the local authority had seen an increase in requests for summer born deferment and out of year group admissions. Secondary schools in Newham have already agreed that they will not be admitting summer born children who have started reception class in a year later into year 7 (when their age makes them a year 8 child). However, there may be a need to revisit this decision should there continue to be an increase in the number of requests.

2. A PHT added that some parents are of the opinion that they have the right to defer admission if their child is summer born and that it is a request that they can make. However, once they have understood the impact on secondary school's decision some parents have withdrawn their request to defer.

3. A SHT asked what happens when a summer born child reaches the age when they would normally be in year 11, but are actually in year 10? Are GCSEs based on age or year group?

4. TJ advised that this will need to be clarified with the DfE. They have however, confirmed that summer born children can leave in year 10 when they reach the age of 16.

5. A PHT added that this matter may also need to be raised with nursery schools to explain the implications of requesting summer born deferment and staying in a nursery setting for another year.

**Action: Local authority to review summer born admissions and get more detail relating to the legal position for when children move onto secondary school where deferment has been agreed by a primary school i.e. GCSE outcomes.**

**Secondary schools to provide their views about potentially admitting summer born children into an out of age range year group.**

## 8. Any other business

### Ukrainian Humanitarian Crisis

1. A PHT advised that they have started being contacted by members of the Ukrainian community in Newham about school places for families that will soon be joining them after fleeing the war in Ukraine. Is the local authority implementing plans to support to ensure children from these families are suitably placed?

2. TJ advised that there are a number of queries relating to the legalities around the immigration status of the families arriving in the UK and what impact that has about children are placed in schools. Depending on the immigration status, the local authority may use Fair Access to place children (if their status meets the remit for Fair Access), otherwise they may be placed via the normal in year admission process. Meetings have been planned to discuss this further.

3. PG advised that local authority will also be receiving £10,000 per refugee that arrives in Newham. However, at the time of the meeting no further detail has been provided about this funding will be received and how it can be used.

4. A PHT added that schools should be included as part of any discussions about how the funding should be used. Schools historically, put in a lot of support for families and are aware of what the challenges are once their child starts school.

Meeting Closed 17:15

End.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022