

Minutes

For: Admissions and Place Planning Forum

Date: 07.11.2022

Time: 15:00-17:00

Location: Video Conference

Attendees:

Chair

Councillor Joshua Garfield: Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (JG)

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

Sue Ferguson: Head Teacher, Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Kate McGee: Head Teacher, Stratford Manor Primary School and Nursery

Representatives: Maintained secondary schools

Vacant

Representatives: Academy Primary Schools

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Representatives: Academy secondary schools

Anthony Wilson: CEO Newham Community Learning Trust

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

Representative: Voluntary Controlled schools

Vacant

Representative: Infant and junior schools

Vacant

Representative: Nursery Schools

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

Representative: Single Sex Schools

Vacant

Faith Representative: Catholic schools

Chris McCormack: Head Teacher, St. Bonaventure's

Representative: University Technical Colleges

Geoffrey Fowler: Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

Representative: Virtual School

Val Naylor: Executive Head Teacher

Representative: Alternative provisions

Sandy Davies: Head Teacher, Education Links

Apologies:

Councillor Mariam Dawood: Deputy Cabinet Member for Education

Simon Elliott: CEO Community Schools Trust

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

James Allen: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

James Dawson: Head Teacher Winsor Primary School

Key

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

Action Points

1. Membership vacancies

Local authority to circulate expressions of interest to school leaders to fill vacant Admissions and Place Planning Forum positions.

2. Admissions and Place Planning Forum decisions and communications

Chair of Admissions and Place Planning Forum to disseminate decisions and messages from each forum at future head teacher conferences.

3. In year admission figures

Local authority to publish weekly in year admission figures on Newham Connect until new Education MIS is live.

3. School organisation

School organisation and falling school rolls to be added as a substantive agenda item at the spring Admissions and Place Planning Forum.

4. Education place planning

Local authority to consider forum members' request for further analysis and modelling of the plans to extend the SEND provision in Newham;

- a. financial impact of the opening of new special schools and extending the SEND provision in Newham schools on the existing SEND budgets.
- b. further analysis of the data that underpins the decision behind how much provision is needed.

4. Deferment requests and summer born admissions

- a. Local authority to circulate slides presented at the autumn term Admissions and Place Planning Forum to all schools.
- b. Slides to be amended to include information about financial impact of agreeing deferment requests.
- c. Local authority to further develop proposal for a co-ordinated summer born decision-making process.

Agenda Item 1. Welcome, introductions and membership

1. Chair JG welcomed attendees to the first forum of the 2022-2023 academic year. JG introduced himself and asked the rest of the forum members to do the same. Apologies were forwarded for members who were unable to attend today.

2. TJ advised that the forum currently had a number of vacant positions. School leaders will be contacted to express an interest to fill the following vacant positions:

- Representatives: Maintained secondary schools x 2
- Representative: Academy secondary schools x1
- Representatives: Academy primary schools x2

- Representative: Voluntary Controlled schools
- Representative: Infant and junior schools x1
- Representative: Single sex schools

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.

1. The forum reviewed the action points from the previous meeting.

1. Lead Councillor for Education visits to schools

1. JG thanked schools for their invitations and advised a number of visits have already taken place with more planned. Schools should contact JG's PA if they would like him to visit his school.

2. Promotion of Newham Schools

1. PG advised that the local authority's Communications service have developed a strategy to celebrate the success of Newham schools. This was circulated to forum members ahead of this meeting.

2. This strategy will promote the council's outstanding education offer to families, residents and wider stakeholders. It will be delivered through an integrated communications plan, which will target the audiences with timely communications using consistent key messages.

3. Key messages will closely link with the council's Corporate Plan, Building a Fairer Newham, which takes forward the achievements of past four years of work by the council to serve the people of Newham. Case studies will be used as part of this and will be inclusive, representative of Newham's diversity. Young people with SEND will also be included.

4. A PHT advised that the plan should also include promoting Newham schools in other London boroughs as some non-Newham schools do in Newham. PG advised that this will be included in the plan.

3. SEND Consultations

1. PG advised that a paper outlining LB Newham's 0-25 SEND Service's forward plan for reviewing how the SEND consultation process will work was circulated to forum members ahead of this meeting.

2. It is recognised that there needs to be a more proactive approach to the consultation process for normal admissions e.g. starting year 7 transition work in year 5 for children with EHCPs or undergoing a statutory assessment.

3. A PHT stated that it was important that the nursery to reception and infant to junior transition process was also part of the strategy.

4. The 0-25 SEND Service will be working more closely with families to make informed decisions and not just consider schools that have resource provisions as is currently happening.

4. In Year Admission Figures

1. The forum agreed that the weekly in year figures circulated prior to today's meeting had been useful and suggested that they be shared with schools via Newham Connect until LB Newham's new education MIS goes live, at which point the local authority will consider how they can be shared via the schools portal.

5. Admissions and Place Planning Forum Feedback at Education Partnership Board

1. PG advised that local authority administered education sub groups provided feedback at the termly head teachers' conferences. It was important that the messages and decisions made by this forum were also communicated to all school leaders.

2. The forum agreed it would be appropriate for the Chair of the forum to update school leaders at each termly conference.

6. Transgender Pupils

1. PG advised the forum that initial discussions have taken place but it is clear that due to the complexities of the subject matter, there is a need for further conversations.

Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance was circulated to schools but there are specific issues around admissions that remain unresolved at national level. Currently, it is difficult to distinguish when a young person identifies with the gender they were born with and self-identification when school applications are made. There is a need for a Pan London approach to this.

2. PG advised that transgender pupils should be discussed at RSHE and SACRE (Standing Advising Council on Religious Education) level.

7. Children Missing Education Procedures

1. TJ advised the forum that LB Newham's children missing education (CME) procedures are being reviewed, and the CME team will be moving into the Access and Infrastructure service later this year. At this point, new procedures will be put in place. The local authority acknowledge the concerns raised by schools in relation to the current processes and will be working with a sub group of schools to develop the new procedures.

2. The new procedures are expected to go live by the summer term in 2023. Schools will be provided with training on the new procedures.

Agenda Item 3. Education Place Planning

1. PG opened this agenda by advising the forum that the Council's Cabinet has approved the capital investment to extend LB Newham's SEND provision.

2. The Cabinet were also updated on the latest version of LB Newham's Place Planning Strategy where the latest projections revised down the previously forecasted need of school places across Newham. There is no additional future capacity required in mainstream schools. Instead, all future funding will be invested in specialist and alternative provisions.

3. PG thanked all schools and Trusts that submitted bids to open a specialist provision. Of the 60 bids submitted, 30 were approved. John F Kennedy Special School will be expanded to support more children with autism from next September, and other smaller projects designed to make schools even more inclusive than they currently are will be implemented.

4. Further progress has also been made on the new free special school. It is planned that it will open in temporary accommodation in 2023 before moving to a permanent site in 2024.

5. The local authority had also submitted a bid for another special school as the place planning forecasts show that there is a need for another in borough specialist provision.

6. PG added that he and AE had been meeting with primary school leaders in each of the planning areas to address the issue of falling rolls. It was important that the local authority looked at measures to ensure schools with falling rolls remain financially sustainable. Some schools had already implemented temporary caps in some of their year groups whilst permanent reductions to their published admission numbers (PANs) is also an option.

7. The local authority will be focussing on this in the spring term and will be a substantive agenda item at the next forum early next year, before finally consulting on the proposals for admission from September 2025.

8. JG added that the Council was committed to extending the SEND provision in Newham, and to ensure that the quality of the provision available to residents who need it continues to improve.

9. A SHT suggested insufficient modelling had been completed looking at the effect of extending LB Newham's SEND offer and the financial impact on schools on SEND funding. Whilst it is acknowledged that there was a need to increase the SEND provision in the borough, there had been no detail of the impact this would have on the Higher Needs Funding block that is available to schools.

11. In addition to this, the SHT suggested that there needed to be effective analysis of the decision that underpinned how much additional SEND provision was required in the borough.

12. PG advised that the local authority had carried out its analysis of the particular special educational need that was required, rather than SEND as a whole. This was required as part of the latest special school bid. This bid has demonstrated that by increasing the in borough provision through the additional special school, there will be a substantial saving, as there will be less need to place Newham's children in specialist provisions outside of Newham, which can be expensive.

13. The SHT stated that the detailed modelling needs to be shared. In addition to this, the local authority needed to pull together all the analysis as part of the borough's response to the SEND Commissioner's report as it was still not clear if the bids are actively meeting what was required.

14. The SHT also asked if a school with falling rolls could change its designation from a mainstream school to a special school. PG advised that this was being explored and an update will be provided at the next forum

15. A PHT asked if the migrant issue had caused a spike in applications. PG advised that following the invasion in Ukraine there had been a spike but this had stabilised and it had not put any pressure in schools.

16. TJ added that it is recognised that there is an issue when refugees arrive in Newham, the local authority is not always informed. There perhaps is a need to work with other service areas to highlight refugee families and to ensure schools are accessed with minimal delay. This issue however, is not exclusive to Newham but a Pan London issue.

Agenda item 4. Standing items

a) New academy conversions and proposed new free schools

1. TJ advised that there were no new conversions and none were currently planned. The special free school will be opening in the Royal Docks area in 2023.

b) Proposed consultations for September 2024 entry.

1. TJ advised the forum that LB Newham was not planning any changes to the 2024 arrangements. The current arrangements have been deemed fair and transparent.

2. A Newham Trust was considering including a feeder school criteria but subsequently decided to keep their arrangements as they have been adopted.

3. Harris Science Academy East London are considering adopting Harris Academy Chobham's arrangements after joining the Harris Federation. They are currently seeking legal advice on whether the change can be an immediate one or whether they will need to carry out a full consultation.

4. JG added that LB Newham should be proud that our admission arrangements are seen to be fair and transparent and that the process is clear and understandable for residents navigating the school admissions process.

d) Annual item: composite prospectuses

1. TJ advised the forum that the annual composite prospectuses had been successfully delivered to schools in early September.

2. The local authority may need to review the number of 'We Are Going To School' composite prospectuses that are printed, as it appeared that nursery schools this year had a higher number of children starting reception class in September 2023 than in previous years. The assumption had been that nurseries had a 50/50 split of children in N1 and N2, but this has not been the case this year.

3. TJ also advised that the local authority are also considering creating a separate prospectus to promote primary schools for parent/carers, similar to the current individual school pages in the current 'We Are Going To Secondary School' prospectus. This will be available in digital format only.

5. Statutory deferment, Summer Born deferment, Out of year group admissions

1. TJ presented this agenda item and outlined the difference between what parent/carers can request and what is their statutory right. The slides presented will be circulated to all schools. The main headlines were the following;

a. Deferred entry

- Statutory right – schools cannot refuse
- Parent/carers can defer admission until a later part of the academic year or to the point the child reaches compulsory school age but not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the application was made.
- Children can attend on part time basis until they reach compulsory school age.
- Schools cannot put the child on roll until the child actually starts.

b. Summer Born deferment

- Only applicable for children born in the summer term.
- Not a statutory right – Parent/carers have to apply. Schools can refuse.

- Parent/carers must apply as part of the application process for the entry point the child is normally expected to start.
- If deferment is agreed, the family will also need to complete a new application form for admission the following year, but this does not guarantee a place.
- Parent/carers cannot appeal against the decision.

c. Out of year group admissions

- Parent/Carers can request their child is admitted into a year group above or below the year group based on their age e.g. gifted and talented children.
- Schools can refuse.
- Parent/Carers cannot appeal against the decision.

2. TJ asked forum members if they had many requests from parent/carers about deferring admission. Primary school forum members advised that they have had requests for deferment but not for starting part time. TJ will contact those schools to discuss further.

3. TJ also advised the forum that schools could not include children on their October census return where the family have decided to defer entry to a later part of the school year. In addition to this, schools must keep the admission pending and cannot offer a place from the waiting list to fill in the pending admission space.

4. A PHT suggested that the presentation slides should also include information on the financial implication of deferment before they are circulated to schools.

5. TJ added that that local authority were proposing to make changes to how summer born requests are considered. Instead of schools discussing requests in isolation, it has been proposed that the local authority centralise the process where a panel of school leaders is held to discuss all requests submitted by a local closing date and a decision made collectively based on the circumstances of all cases. The decision will be communicated in writing to the parent/carer.

6. A PHT asked if individual schools will be represented. TJ advised all schools with an application will be presented and their view will hold additional weight in a split decision.

7. Another PHT asked if a closing date was enforceable. TJ stated that the guidance and Admissions Code of Practice are both silent on this.

7. TJ added that following the statement from Baroness Barran (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System), summer born children for whom deferment has been agreed are expected to remain out of their normal year group for the entirety of their education and should not be disadvantaged at secondary transition (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission/statement-for-local-authorities-schools-and-admission-authorities-on-the-admission-of-summer-born-children-to-school-from-baroness-barran-parliamen>).

8. A SHT stated that prior to Baroness Barran's statement, the position of secondary schools remained that summer born deferred children will be admitted into year 8 rather than year 7. The statement makes this decision more difficult to implement. It is important therefore that when a summer born deferment request is agreed, it is only in very exceptional circumstances i.e. medical grounds.

9. A PHT asked whether admission authorities were expected to abide by Baroness Barran's statement. TJ advised that it is likely that parent/carers may refer to the statement if they are initially refused which could give weight to their request.

10. A PHT suggested that a standardised approach was the best way to manage requests but it was important that blanket decision making cannot be standardised, and each request must be judged on their individual merits.

11. It was agreed that the local authority would continue to develop the proposal for a co-ordinated approach to manage summer born requests.

5. Any other business

None.

Meeting Closed 17:00

End.

Date of next meeting: 13.03.2022

APPROVED