# Minutes

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| For: | Admissions and Place Planning Forum  |
| Date: | 18.11.2024 |
| Time: | 15:30-17:30  |
| Location: | Video Conference  |

**Attendees:**

**Chair:** CllrSarah Ruiz **-** Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainable Transport, Children Services and Education (SR)

**Local Authority Officers**

Peter Gibb: Head of Service, Education Access and Infrastructure (PG)

Tracy Jones: Group Manager, Education Access and Infrastructure (TJ)

Ada Egot: Commissioner Education Place Planning (AE)

**Clerk**

Kiran Parkash Singh: Admissions and Appeals Team Leader - Primary (KPS)

**Representatives: Maintained primary schools**

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

**Representatives: Maintained secondary schools**

Vacant

**Representatives: Academy Primary Schools**

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Keri Edge: CEO Agate Momentum Trust

**Representatives: Academy secondary schools**

Anthony Wilson: CEO Newham Community Learning Trust

Craig Hewitt: Head Teacher, Stratford School Academy

**Representatives: Maintained and single sex secondary schools**

Rachel McGowan: Head Teacher, Plashet School and Chair of NASCL

**Representative: Voluntary Controlled schools**

Vacant

**Representative: Infant and junior schools**

Sine Brown: Head Teacher, Godwin Junior School

**Representative: University Technical Colleges**

Kenan Drugzani: Head of School, London Design and Engineering UTC

**Faith representative: Catholic secondary schools**

Chris McCormack: Headteacher, St. Bonaventure’s

**Faith representative: Catholic primary schools**

Nuala Cashell: CEO Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust

**Apologies:**

Annabel Bates: Director of Education, Inclusion and Achievement

Caroline Stone: Head Teacher, New City Primary School

Catherine Doyle: Executive Head Teacher Virtual School

Diane Barrick: Head Teacher, Carpenters Primary School

Errol Comrie: Head Teacher, Education Links

Emma Gleeson: Learning in Harmony Trust

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

John Blaney: Principal, Royal Docks Academy (BMAT)

**Key**

Primary School Representative – PSR

Secondary School Representative - SSR

## Agenda Item 1. Welcome, introductions and membership

SR opened the meeting by introducing herself as Chair and the Cabinet Lead for Education and asked all other participants to introduce themselves.

SR notified the forum that Matt Hipperson, the representative for Church of England schools had decided to step down from the forum and thanked him for his valuable contributions to previous forums.

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

## The minutes of the previous forum meeting were reviewed. All present confirmed that they were an accurate account of the discussions.

**Agenda Item 3. Update on actions from last meeting**

* **Action Point 3.1. Out of year group application – process flows**

Substantive item on this forum’s agenda (4.2).

* **Action Point 3.2. In-Year admissions data**

Forum members to email TJ to request access to view live data. To date no emails received from schools.

* **Action Point 3.3. Permanent PAN reduction process**

Substantive item on this forum’s agenda (4.1).

* **Action Point 3.4. Proposed consultation for change of admission arrangements for September 2026 entry**

No proposed change requests were received.

**4. Substantive agenda items**

**4.1 Place planning forecast update on options for sustainability**

PG and AE provided an update. There had been a positive response to the local authority’s request for expressions of interest to reduce PANs from both primary and secondary schools.

In total 12 primary schools responded and 11 agreed to reduce their PAN. 7 secondary schools responded to the expression of interest which resulted in 3 secondary school formally consulting to reduce their PAN.

Based on these responses the local authority were on course to begin the statutory consultation process which will run from 29th November 2024 to 24th January 2025.

AE added that a total of 540 places had been removed from the reception 2024 intake through temporary caps. The local authority have updated the place planning strategy for 2027-28 entry and have forecast that 23.5 forms of entry will need to be removed from the overall number of places available in the reception intake.

For 2026-27 there will a need to remove 10 forms of entry from the year 7 intake.

PG advised that whilst significant progress has been made to address the financial issues caused by falling rolls, there was still need for further PAN reductions. The local authority will therefore be sending another expression of interest request to schools and will be working with them on this process.

The list of schools proposing to reduce their PANs and the full consultation can be found via the link below.

<https://www.newham.gov.uk/schools-education/statutory-consultation-school-admission-arrangements-places-offered>

A PSR asked what the local authority can do if other schools do not express an interest in reducing their PANs. AE advised that the local authority has no power to compel academy schools to reduce their PANs. But the local authority will continue to hold constructive discussions with all schools (maintained and academy) to support them to remain financially viable.

PG added that most schools are accepting of the situation and realise that it is in their best interest to consider a PAN reduction. A number of schools have implemented temporary ‘caps’. This will make the transition to permanent PAN reductions simpler and less challenging for school leaders.

A PSR stated that according to a recent report there is a need for an increase in early years provision. The report suggests that by 2028 there needs to be a further 8% increase on the existing provision. This need for additional capacity in early years appears to be in contrast to the place planning forecasts.

PG advised that AE is working with colleagues in the Early Years Team to consider the demand. It could be that there may be an increase in demand due to changes in policy e.g. free 2 year old nursery places, rather than a population increase. If the demand is there, it is possible that capacity could be found in existing schools that have reduced their PANs.

A PSR asked if the introduction of VAT on private school fees will have an impact on the place planning strategy. PG advised that the number of independent schools in the borough is relatively low. But based on existing forecasts there is still sufficient headroom even with the proposed PAN reductions.

A PSR asked if the housing issues will have an impact and there had been a number of new homes built in the borough. Had this seen an impact? PG advised that the recent building projects had not produced the expected pupil yield. If this was to change, this will be reflected in the place planning strategy and forecasts, but the planned build projects are long term and there is a need to reduce capacity now.

The place planning strategy is constantly under review and any updates will be communicated at future forums.

**4.2. Deferred entry, summer born deferment and out of year groups applications (all year groups)**

TJ presented the agenda item and referred to the paper on deferment and summer born admissions (circulated ahead of the forum).

Main headlines

The law allows every family to defer their child’s reception start date until they reach compulsory school age. This means starting on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first, instead of their expected September reception start date.

For families whose children are legally recognised as ‘summer born’ for education purposes, being those born from 1 April to 31 August, they also have the legal right to apply to start reception a year later than their expected start date.

Deferment is a legal right, however summer born deferment isn’t. Parents can only make a request to defer.

Department for Education guidance

‘The government believes it is rarely in a child’s best interests to miss a year of their education, for example, by beginning primary school in year 1 rather than reception, or secondary school in year 8 rather than year 7.’

‘DfE supports the right of parents to decide their child will not start school until compulsory school age, but does not believe it should become the norm for summer born children to begin reception at age 5’.

‘Most summer born children will thrive if they are admitted to reception aged 4.’

‘The admission authority of each school must make a decision based on the circumstances of the case and in the child’s best interests. It should be rare for an authority to refuse a parent’s request.’

‘There is no expectation that children who were admitted out of their normal age group should be moved to their normal age group. As with other children, they should remain in the age group to which they were admitted unless there are sound educational reasons to do otherwise.’

In addition to the above, parent/carers can also request that their child is admitted into a year group other than the one based on their date of birth. Again this is not a legal right but a request a parent can make.

When a child is placed out of their normal year group in primary school, parent/carers will need to follow a similar process when applying for secondary school when the child is in year 5. Again there is no guarantee that the request will be approved and it may be the case that those children will need to start secondary school in year 8 rather than year 7.

A PSR stated that some agreed summer born deferment cases have proved beneficial to the child and therefore been the right decision. But this may not be the same for every request.

A number of PSRs stated that they had not seen many requests for out of year group placements and for summer born deferments; the main reason for the requests were due to medical and SEND needs.

A SSR asked what the situation would be when a child starts sixth form. TJ advised that all children once they leave secondary school cannot be NEET (not in education, employment or training). So this is something that needs to be thought about as well and may need to be built into any sixth form admission policy.

A number of PSRs suggested that there was a need to for all schools to follow a consistent approach to decision making as families have stated that some schools agree to their child deferring and others do not.

A centralised panel may support decision making consistency but there would need to be panels for each phase of entry at the normal points (reception, infant to junior, year 7).

PG added that there needed to be wider discussions about this involving all school leaders.

The local authority will therefore share a summary of the issues discussed at forum with all schools and draft an options paper to explore how summer born deferment requests should be considered by schools, to ensure a consistent approach when making decisions.

**Agenda Item 5. Standing items**

**5.1 New academy conversions and proposed new free schools**

SR advised that Plaistow Primary School intends to join the Letta Trust. This is expected for February 2025.

The local authority was successful in its application for a new special school and proposer groups had submitted bids but there had been no update since the general election. The local authority are waiting on an update from the DfE.

**5.2** **Statutory requirement for proposed consultation change of admission arrangements for September 2026 entry.**

TJ advised the forum that any admission authorities planning changes to their admission arrangements for 2026 will need to consult this autumn for a minimum of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.

All Admission Authorities will also need to determine their admission arrangements by 28 February 2025, even if no changes have been made.

**6. Any other business**

**Sue Ferguson**

The forum collectively remembered Sue Ferguson, former head teacher of Ellen Wilkinson Primary School and member of the forum who sadly passed away earlier this year. Sue will be remembered as a brilliant head teacher, champion of children and a valuable member of this and other local authority forums. She will be greatly missed.

End.