

Review of primary school places

- 3.1 Primary place planning in Tower Hamlets is split into six planning areas referred to as school catchment areas.
- 3.2 Tower Hamlets had previously experienced a long run of gradual increases in demand for primary school places. Other London boroughs did too. Since 2017, there has been a drop in primary applications followed by a further substantial drop in 2019. The decline in pupil numbers is similar to the experience of most other London boroughs.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No of Applications Received for Reception	3405	3305	3329	3169

- 3.3 The current round of projections indicate that, numbers in most of the school catchment areas will remain steady up until 23/24, with the exception being that the areas of Poplar and the Isle of Dogs still expect to see significant increases through planned housing developments from 2020 onwards. However, the projections for these two areas need to be viewed with caution as it is evident from the current new developments that the levels of child yield are not as high as previously anticipated.
- 3.4 In last year's report on pupil place planning the council cabinet was informed of the LA's plan to undertake a review of its primary school places. The aim of the review was to identify long-term solutions to reduce the significant number of surplus places in the west of the borough, whilst ensuring that schools remained financially sustainable and able to maintain high quality education. Progress on the review has previously been reported to the Mayor's Advisory Board and also to elected members through two focussed seminars, the members' bulletin and individual letters to the members for the ward constituencies of the schools concerned. As the review reaches its conclusion, parents and the public are being kept informed through the 'Parents Matters' newsletter, direct correspondence from the LA and schools and through the council's dedicated website [here](#).
- 3.5 The initial findings from the review identified that a number of schools were already facing significant declines in their pupil roll and therefore financial challenges. This included some schools having to apply to the LA for a licensed deficit and the LA then having to establish whether or not the school would be able to repay the deficit over the now necessary three year period. In certain cases, it became evident that these schools would not be able to recover to a financial position that would enable the LA to be confident of their long term viability.
- 3.6 The review therefore included an independent consultant working with schools and the diocesan bodies to develop proposals for organisational changes, based on a set of principles agreed with the stakeholder advisory group overseeing the review process. The consultant's report on the first part of this process recommended a new model of school organisation based on 'educational communities'. Under this model, groups of neighbouring schools would work together to reduce the number of school places in their local area

as well as optimise their resources and potential to deliver excellent education. It included schools exploring options, such as, amalgamation, hard federation and the possibility of relocation to new primary school sites planned for the pupil growth that is expected in the East of borough. The options also, reluctantly, included the LA and school leaders considering schools closures, in cases where it was evident that the continuance of the school was no longer viable or financially sustainable and, where a decision to keep it open would have a negative impact on pupils' progress and attainment. However, decisions that involve the potential for a school to close will seek to ensure that the pupil's educational experience is maintained, through the process of an amalgamation with a neighbouring school.

- 3.7 The process of the review was purposely designed to enable school leaders to find their own solutions and work towards these with the support of the LA and the independent consultant. It has therefore provided better options to further develop partnerships and meaningful collaborations between schools, with the opportunity for genuine gains in shared learning and professional development as a result. The key involvement of the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership to complement this approach supports the LA's ambitions as it continues to work towards a productive school system that has professional learning and improvement at its front and centre. The feedback from schools during the process will provide invaluable evidence to inform school organisation and education policy-making going forward.

(a) Plans following the outcome of the review

- 3.8 Below is the current position within each school catchment area and the plans for reducing or increasing the Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) for schools, following the outcome of the primary review:

Catchment Area 1 (Stepney)

There are currently 840 Reception places available in Stepney. In January 2019 there were 110 (4FE) unfilled places and this is projected to rise to 141 (5FE) by 2027. Plans to reduce this surplus are outlined as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction
The amalgamation of Redlands (2FE) and Smithy Street (2FE), whereby Smithy would close and its pupils transfer to Redlands. Redlands would expand to 3FE to accommodate the pupils from Smithy.	The schools governing bodies have undertaken an initial, informal, consultation with their communities. Following its positive outcome, the LA is now asking the Mayor in cabinet to agree to the issuing of a statutory notice formally consulting on the schools amalgamation, to take effect from September 2020. The outcome of the statutory notice proposal will be reported to the Mayor in cabinet for a final decision to be taken on the schools amalgamation in February 2020.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)

Reduction to the PAN of Cayley School from 3FE to 2FE	The LA will consult on this change for the start of the next school year.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)
The amalgamation of Guardian Angels (1FE) and St Annes RC (1.5FE), whereby Guardian Angels would close and its pupils transfer to St Anne's RC.	The RC Diocese and school governing bodies are working to implement this proposal for start of the school year 2020/21. The outcome will be reported to the Mayor in cabinet in February 2020.	There will be reduction of 20 places by 2022.

Catchment Area 2 (Bow)

There are currently 450 Reception places available in the Bow catchment area. In January 2019 there were 42 (1½FE) unfilled places and this is projected to rise to 86 (3FE) by 2027. Plans to reduce this surplus are outlined as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction
A reduction to the PAN of Malmesbury School from 2½ FE to 2FE	The LA will consult on this change for the start of the next school year.	Reduction of 0.5FE (15 places)
To reduce the PAN of Olga from 3FE to 2FE	The LA will consult on implementing this change for the start of the next school year.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)

Catchment Area 3 (Poplar)

There are currently 890 Reception places available in the Poplar catchment area. In January 2019, there were 44 (1½FE) unfilled places; but with anticipated growth in the pupil population, this area is expected to have a shortfall of 122 places (4FE) by 2027. The current plans to address this potential shortfall are as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Increase
Increase to the PAN of Mayflower School from 1½ FE to 2FE	The LA is currently developing its plans to expand Mayflower to ensure the additional capacity can be available from as early 2022.	An increase of 0.5 FE (10 places)
To increase the PAN at St Saviour's CE School from 1FE to 2FE	The LA is working with the London Diocesan Board and the School's Governing Body to develop plans to expand the existing school on site.	An increase of 1FE (30 places)

The LA will explore the potential to expand other existing schools in the Poplar area, as and when it can be more certain about the projected levels of child yield resulting from the planned housing developments in this area.

Catchment Area 4 (Isle of Dogs)

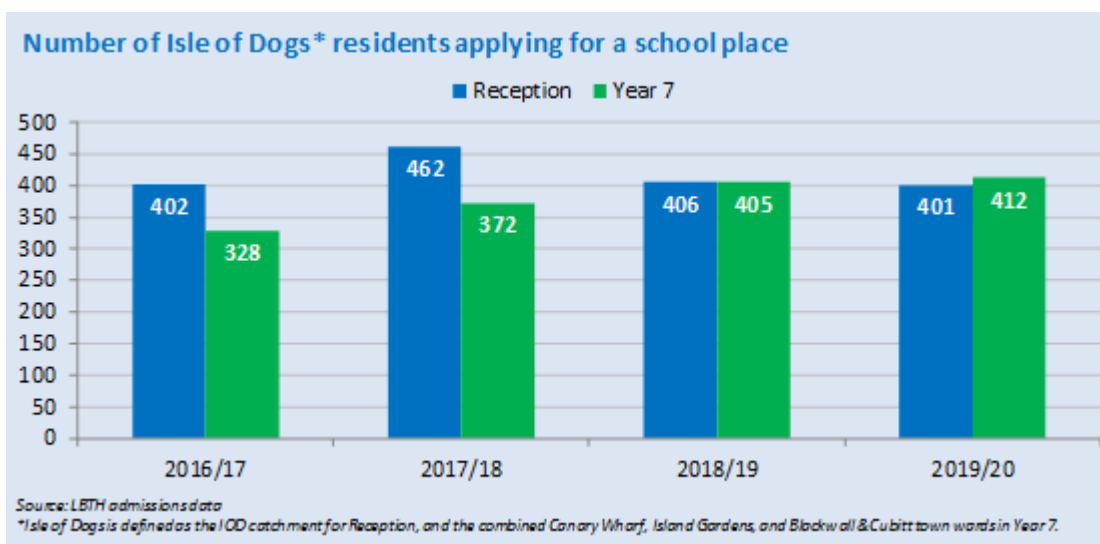
There are currently 441 Reception places available in the Isle of Dogs catchment area. In January 2019 there were 15 (0.5FE) unfilled places. However, with anticipated growth in the pupil population, this area is expected to have a shortfall of 156 places (6FE) by 2027.

The plans to address this potential shortfall are as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	Plan Increase
New 2FE School at Wood Wharf.	Cabinet has already agreed to open this new School from as early as September 2022, subject to the new housing development generating the level of child yield needed to sustain a 2FE primary school from the outset.	Increase of 2FE (60 places)
New 2FE School at Millharbour.	LA has taken up the s106 option to develop new 2FE school at Millharbour. The planned timescale for the school to open is September 2025. Cabinet will be asked to approve the funding and arrangements for the delivery of this new school in due course.	Increase of 2FE (60 places)

The LA is working on the development of further new school sites in the Isle of Dogs area, but in the next 18 months will decide with developers on the precise timescales for bringing these sites forward for 2027. These timescales will be informed and determined by the levels of child yield resulting from the planned housing developments in this area.

It is important that the LA takes a cautious approach to further new school developments in the Isle of Dogs, given that it is clear from the current school admissions data that housing and population growth in this area is not resulting in the expected increased demand for school places. The number of Isle of Dogs residents applying for a Reception place has actually fallen in the past two years, and there has been very modest growth in the number of residents applying for a Year 7 place (see chart below).



The number of schools sites already secured through the Local Plan will therefore provide opportunity and the necessary flexibility to meet fluctuations in demand as well as determine the options for improving the existing schools estate.

Catchment Area 5 (Wapping)

There are currently 480 Reception places available in the Wapping catchment area. In January 2019 there were 62 (2FE) unfilled places and this is projected to rise to 92 (3FE) by 2027. Plans to reduce the surplus are outlined as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction
To reduce the PAN of Canon Barnett School from 1½FE to 1FE	The LA will consult on implementing this change for the start of the next school year.	Reduction of 0.5FE (15 Places)
The LA has not yet fully developed its proposal for the future of Shapla School, but is currently working with school leaders on the potential for Shapla to partner with a neighbouring school, in order to further reduce the surplus in the Wapping area.	The LA will present recommendations for decision by the Mayor in Cabinet in February 2020.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)

Catchment Area 6 (Bethnal Green)

There are currently 660 Reception places available in the Bethnal Green catchment area. In January 2019 there were 132 (4FE) unfilled places and this level of surplus is projected to continue through to 2027. Plans to reduce the surplus are outlined as follows:

Plan	Responsible Agency and Timescale	PAN Reduction
The possible amalgamation of Christchurch (1FE) and St Matthias (1FE) Primary Schools.	The London Diocesan Board and school governing bodies are working towards implementing this proposal for start of the school year 2021/22. The outcome will be reported to the Mayor in cabinet in February 2020.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places).
To establish a Hard Federation between Hague and Stewart Headlam Schools, whereby the schools would then come under a single governing body. This will include a reduction to the PAN of Stewart Headlam from 2FE to 1FE.	The governing bodies of both schools are currently working towards the schools federating from January 2020 and the LA will consult on reducing the Stewart Headlam intake for the start of the school year 2020/2.	Reduction of 1FE (30 places)
To reduce the PAN of Bangabandhu Primary School 2FE to 1FE	The LA will consult on implementing this change for the start of the next school year.	Reduction of 1FE (30 Places)

- 3.9 The changes to Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) and catchment area capacities will see a reduction of 260 (8.5FE) reception places in the West of the borough and the addition of 160 (5FE) reception places in Poplar and Isle of Dogs catchment areas by 2025. They have been considered in the context of the effects on local provision, including looking at school recruitment patterns and ensuring that the knock-on effects in the adjustment of PANs is considered within the context of the necessary equalities considerations.