

TOWER HAMLETS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

School Admission Arrangements Public Consultation Responses 2019/20



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Children's Services Directorate

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1. Introduction

The Authority consults on its school admissions arrangements annually, to ensure that its arrangements continue to be fair and transparent and that as many parents as possible can obtain a place for their child at one of their preferred schools.

The consultation provided opportunity for respondents to comment on:

(A) Proposed admissions arrangements for Tower Hamlets community schools:

- Nursery School/Class
- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools

(B) Proposed schemes for the co-ordination of admissions for:

- Reception Year of Primary School;
- Year 7 of Secondary School;
- Admissions outside of the normal points of entry ('In Year' admission)

(C) Proposed planned admission numbers for schools in Tower Hamlets;

Two significant changes were proposed. The first was a change to the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria for both Community Primary and Secondary Schools. This was whether or not the policies should include an additional oversubscription criterion that would give priority to children of staff in Tower Hamlets community schools. These are children whose parent is a member of staff who has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time of application or has been recruited to fill a vacancy for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

A further change was proposed to the coordinated scheme for in-year admissions and school transfers. Under existing arrangements school transfers are timetabled to take place at the start of the term or each half term. It was proposed to change the timetable whereby a child would transfer schools for the start of the term only. Thereby reducing the points in the school year when children can transfer schools from six to three.

The consultation period ran for six weeks from 1st November 2017 until 5th January 2018

2. Communication

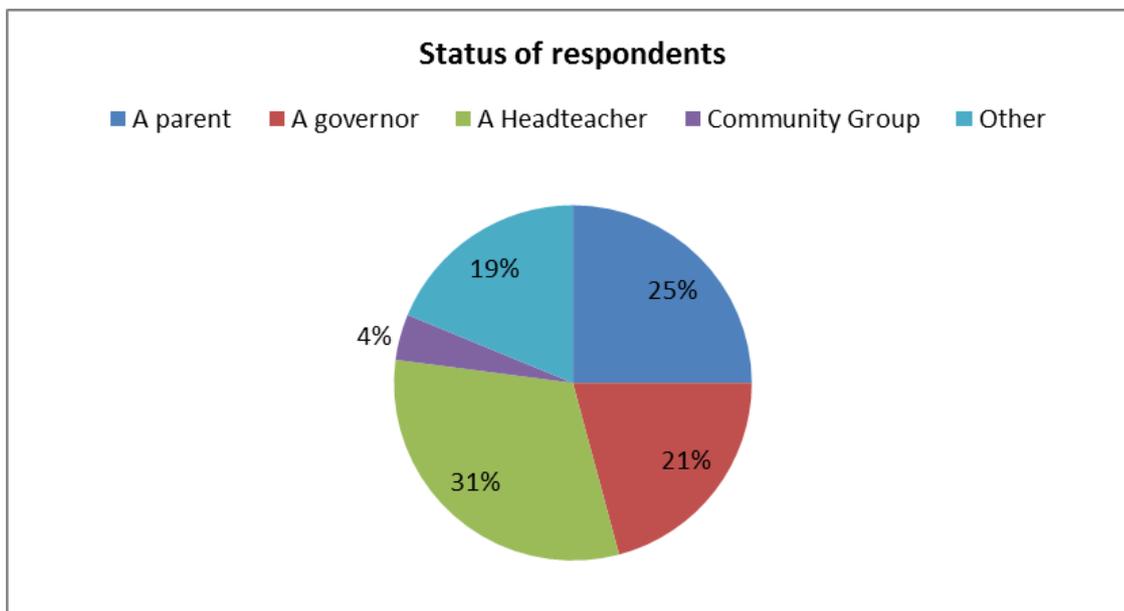
The table below includes the communication methods that were used to advertise and promote the consultation and its reach.

Communication medium	Communication reach	Date actioned
Email to all governors via Governor Services with information on consultation opportunity	All governors	November 2017
Email to all neighbouring local authorities seeking their views	All neighbouring local authorities	November 2017
Link on Tower Hamlets council website and intra-net to online consultation questionnaire to obtain wider reach	All local residents and businesses and staff employed by the council	November 2017
Pupil Services staff advertise on email signatures	Borough and council wide reach	November 2017

Our East End Newspaper advert	Local residents and businesses	November 2017
East London Advertiser Newspaper advert	Local and neighbouring borough residents and businesses	November 2017
Janamot Bengali Newspaper advert	Wider community reach including hard to reach communities	November 2017
Head Teachers Bulletin, Primary and Secondary Heads Consultative, direct email to all Tower Hamlets Headteachers	All head teachers employed by the local authority	November/December 2017
Members bulletin and briefing note for Lead Member for Children's Services	All elected members asking for support to engage the local community	November 2017
Admissions Forum – agenda item for discussion and response	Members of the Forum	October - December 2017
Collective of Bangladeshi Governors	Governors	November 2017
Tower Hamlets under 5's providers including Children's Centres, Playgroups and Nurseries	Email and letter	November 2017
Parental Engagement Team and Parent Carers Council	Consultation and notification to parents	November 2017
Councils social media accounts, scheduled releases on Facebook and Twitter	Wider reach	November and December 2017

3. Profile of respondents who submitted an online response

3.1 Status of respondents



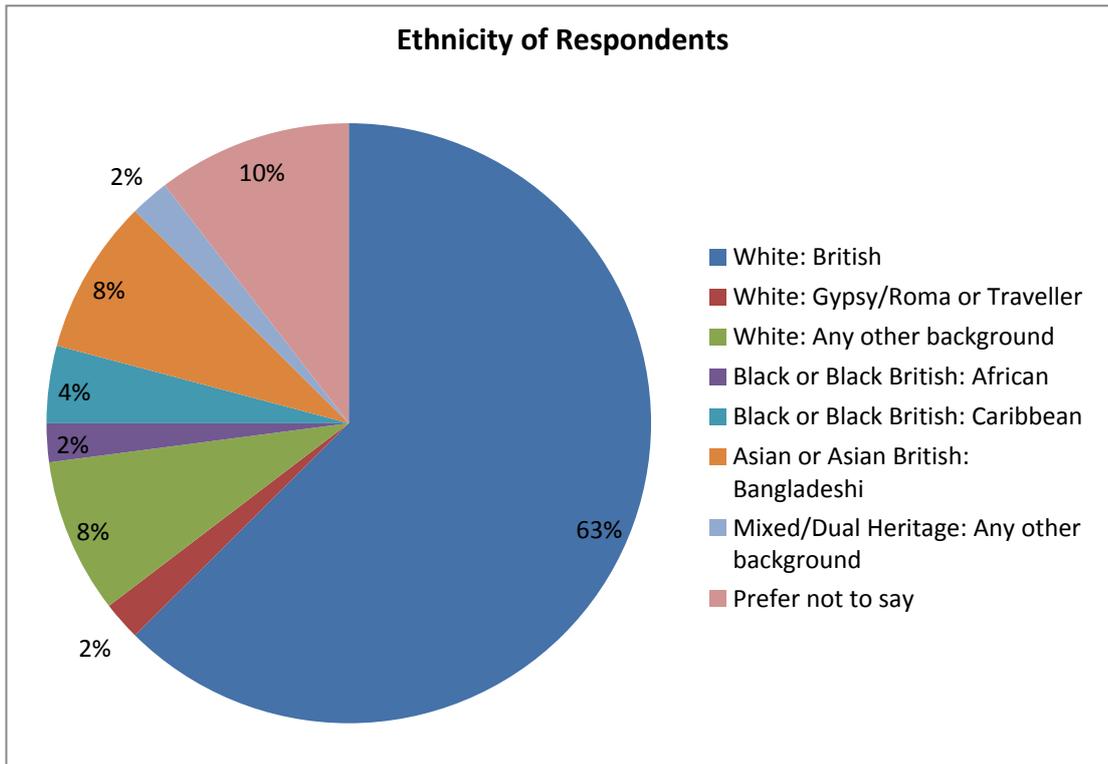
This year the consultation had a wider reach with more parents engaging in the consultation than in previous years and more responses overall.

3.2 Schools input

The Tower Hamlets school that took part in the consultation were: St Johns Primary, St Pauls Primary, Columbia Primary, Cayley Primary, Bangabandhu Primary, St Lukes Primary, Old Church Nursery, Osmani Primary, Harry Gosling Nursery, The Clara Grant Primary, Seven Mills Primary, Manorfield Primary, Halley Primary, Blue Gate Fields Infant, Chisenhale Primary, Bygrove Primary, Stebon Primary, Hague Primary, Cubitt Town Junior, St Paul with St Luke's Primary, Virginia Primary, Bow Secondary, George Greens Secondary

3.3 Ethnicity and Disability of respondents

Ethnicity of respondents



The respondents engaged includes representation from a range of community groups the White: British representing the largest group.

Other community groups engaged included:

- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Black or Black British: African
- Black or Black British: Caribbean
- Mixed/Dual Heritage: Any other background
- White: Any other background
- White: Gypsy/Roma or Traveller

Disability

43 (89.58%) respondents said they were not disabled, 3 (6.25%) responded with Yes and 2 (4.17%) Prefer not to say.

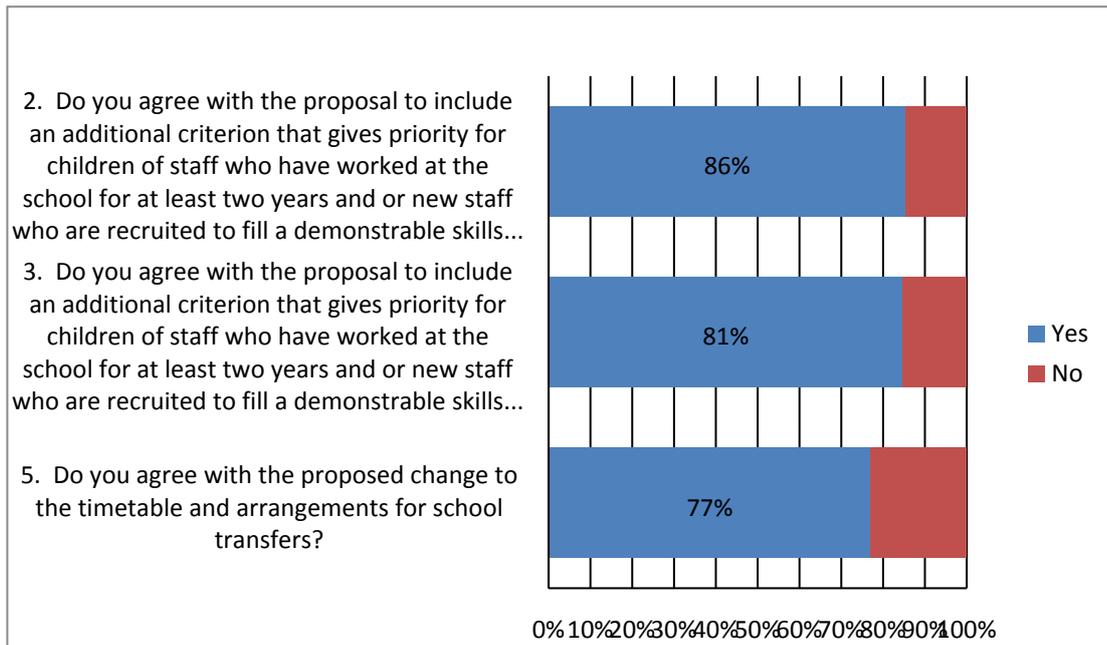
4. Results analysis

There were 48 responses to the questionnaire, completed via an online submission. The table below shows that overall there was a very positive response to the proposed arrangements with the majority of consultees in agreement.

There was a collective response from the Tower Hamlets Admissions Forum, group representative of key stakeholders including, parents, headteachers, diocesan bodies, Council of Mosques and community organisations. The Forum supported the arrangements and its comments are included in Section 6.

4.1 Analysis of online results

Responses to the three consultation questions in percentages



Responses to the three consultation questions in numbers

Question	Yes	No
2. Do you agree with the proposal to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage?	41	7
3. Do you agree with the proposal to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage?	39	7
5. Do you agree with the proposed change to the timetable and arrangements for school transfers?	37	11

5. Analysis of comments from the online questionnaire

Question One: Proposed Co-ordinated Schemes for Community Nursery School/Classes in 2019/20

Last year the Council agreed to establish a central system for the co-ordination of applications for admission to community nursery schools and classes for the school year 2019/20 – the consultation invited comments on the planned arrangements.

The majority of comments were positive about the change. Below is a selection of the comments received:

<i>Local resident</i>	<i>I believe this will make the whole Nursery process smoother and efficient.</i>
<i>Community playgroup</i>	<i>I believe this will make the system easier for parents and stop schools for choosing which children they take into nursery</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>I think this is a good idea</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>This is a great development, as currently applying for a nursery place is something that parents do directly with the school and can apply (and be given) multiple places</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>This brings Nursery admissions in-line with all other admissions.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>Having a central system for co-ordinated admissions has potential difficulties for parents who are new to the application process</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>I feel that this will make it harder for Nursery Schools to continue to respond to the needs of their communities as they currently can</i>

Local Authority Response

The Authority considers that there will be a number benefits to a centrally co-ordinated nursery admissions system. These include:

Providing parents with one source of information for all admissions stages;

Enabling the Local Authority to forecast and plan for the number of children needing places in the reception year of primary school;

Being more resource effective as it would help to create a pupil database ready for the reception year admission process;

Providing better support for families in securing their free nursery entitlement and thus enabling the Local Authority to fully comply with its statutory duty;

Providing better access to information on the demand for nursery places as well as improving the management and funding of these places;

Identifying children entering maintained provision without any prior pre-school experience;

Improving arrangements for the transfer of information for children with special educational needs, thus enabling schools to undertake the necessary planning to best meet their needs.

Question Two: Proposed Arrangements for Admissions to Community Primary Schools in 2019/20

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal for the primary school oversubscription criteria to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage.

The overwhelming majority of responses 41 (86%) were in favour of the proposal. 7 responses (14%) were not in favour. Below is a selection of the comments received:

<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>This will support the retention of teaching staff and it is an expression of confidence in the school by its staff.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>As a teacher and a parent in Tower Hamlets, this concession would be a huge benefit and really help with recruitment and retention of teaching staff.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>Can't have schools without staff. If staff can't find schools for their children you can't staff your schools.</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>It makes possible to for staff to attend work, save time and avoid unnecessary child care arrangements both before and after work.</i>
<i>Governor</i>	<i>If we want to maintain quality teachers, allow their children a place in the school. It is hard recruiting and maintaining good staff</i>
<i>Teacher</i>	<i>I think it would help schools to attract and retain higher quality staff and therefore to compete fairly against schools who already have the ability to do this.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>Easier for staff to come to work and have children nearer - rather than in another borough. Very difficult to recruit good staff anyway - any incentive would be good.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>I am not always sure that it is positive for staff members' children to attend the school in which they work.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>Ok but not if schools so oversubscribed that local children sent far away</i>

Local authority response

The proposal will seek to improve staff recruitment and retention issues within Tower Hamlets community schools, which will enable them to compete in the current recruitment market, and through this, have a wider positive impact on the educational outcomes for Tower Hamlets' children and young people.

The Equality Impact Assessment, undertaken as part of the public consultation process, was robust and confirmed that the proposals would not have significant or detrimental impact on any of the protected groups of service users. All opportunities to promote equality and prevent discrimination have been taken.

Question Three: Proposed Arrangements for Admission to Community Secondary Schools in 2019/20?

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal for the secondary school oversubscription criteria to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage.

The overwhelming majority of responses 39 (81%) were in favour of the proposals. 7 responses (14%) were not in favour. Below is a selection of the comments received:

<i>A Governor</i>	<i>It would encourage teachers working outside the borough to apply to work in Tower Hamlets and would be very convenient for these teachers/parents</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>This will help with recruitment and retention of staff</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>Children of staff in secondary school are much more independent of the parents and usually take themselves to school.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>What about when children of secondary teachers are primary age?</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>It makes possible to for staff to attend work, save time and avoid unnecessary child care arrangements both before and after work.</i>

Local Authority Response

The proposal will seek to improve staff recruitment and retention issues within Tower Hamlets community schools, which will enable them to compete in the current recruitment market, and through this, have a wider positive impact on the educational outcomes for Tower Hamlets' children and young people.

The Equality Impact Assessment that was undertaken as part of the public consultation process was robust and confirmed that the proposals would not have significant or detrimental impact on any of the protected groups of service users.

All opportunities to promote equality and prevent discrimination have been taken.

The criterion will only apply to the secondary school at which the eligible member of staff is employed. The member of staff would not be able to apply under this criterion to local primary schools.

Question Four: Proposed Co-ordinated Schemes for Reception and Year 7 in 2019/20

Together with the other London Boroughs Tower Hamlets has a well-established system to co-ordinate the arrangements to start primary school in the reception year and to transfer to Year 7 of secondary school. This is known as The Pan London Co-ordinated System - the consultation invited comments on the existing arrangements.

The overall majority of comments were positive. Below is a selection of the comments received.

<i>Local resident</i>	<i>This is a process that has been working well since its inception.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>This is eminently sensible.</i>
<i>Community Group</i>	<i>This process makes admissions to reception and year 7 smoother for all involved</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>This makes the system of applying for schools in a neighbouring borough far more straight forward. Especially when you are applying for schools in more than one borough, as you will be able to do this whilst clearly giving your order of preference. It would also prevent an individual child being offered multiple places in different boroughs</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>This can have a negative effect on summer born children who transition to Reception immediately after turning 4. No other concerns.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>It should explain that the parent can accept, accept and defer, or reject the offer of a place. It should make this option clear, and how long a proposed deferral can be.</i>

Local Authority Response

The Pan- London Co-ordinated admission arrangements continue to be an effective means of ensuring that the vast majority of children starting primary school or transferring to secondary school are able to secure a school place at the earliest opportunity. The school preference success rates for children in Tower Hamlets remain positive and are still among the best in London.

Question Five: Proposed Co-ordinated Scheme for In-Year Admissions and Transfers in 2019/20

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposed change to the timetable and arrangements for school transfers.

The majority of responses 37 (77%) were in favour of the proposal. 11 responses (23%) were not in favour. Samples of the comments are noted here:

<i>Local resident</i>	<i>This will prevent unnecessary movement of children from one school to another</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>Changing each half term is disruptive to both the child and the school</i>
<i>Community playgroup</i>	<i>I believe this will cause less disruption to the pupils, teachers and schools.</i>
<i>School Business Manager</i>	<i>Not unreasonable as it makes exceptions for children with medical needs and difficult journeys.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>I agree because it makes sense to minimise disruption for both the student being transferred and the schools involved. Must be flexible though, as in some situations it may be best for a child to be moved immediately. Probably needs case by case thought.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>Too many points of transfer impacts negatively on the stable pupils in schools who are continually experiencing disruption as class dynamics have to adjust and staff need to assess new arrivals.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>It would however be helpful to LIMIT the number of transfers for any single child in a given year to 2 - except in special circumstances. This would discourage school-hopping.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>Many school places will be left empty for longer due to this change</i>
<i>Teacher</i>	<i>It would make the children miss schools for long a period, maybe a whole term. Will put strain on parents. As a teacher I think it will be harder on us as more children will be transferring at the same time being only 3 transfers a year</i>

Local Authority Response

The proposal is to change the points at which a child could transfer school to the start of each new school term rather than each half term. Essentially, school transfers would now only take place in the September, January and April of the school year.

There is because there is considerable concern from school headteachers that school transfer every half term is too frequent and is causing unnecessary disruption to children's' education and their subsequent levels of attainment. This view is supported by the evidence from a previous national study and analysis on pupil mobility¹.

This new timetable will give the existing school time and opportunity to work with the family to resolve problems, particularly if a transfer is being sought because there has been a disagreement between the parents or child and the school. Exceptions will be made in cases where children are making an unreasonable journey to a

¹ 'Between the cracks' RSA Study Exploring In-Year Admissions in Schools in England (July 2013)

school or where there is an exceptional medical or social need for early transfer.

The Authority has already established a number of methods to enable parents to have better information about in-year school transfers, partly aimed at discouraging unnecessary moves, and to reinforce parents' responsibilities to keep schools and the Authority informed of planned moves. This further provision should enable a system that ensures that school transfers take place when appropriate and or necessary.

Question Six: Planned Admissions for Schools in Tower Hamlets in 2019/20
Reasons and comments

The Planned Admission Number (PAN) for each school in Tower Hamlets confirms the number of children that each school will admit to the reception (primary) or Year 7 (secondary) or Year 9 (UTC) in the school year 2019/20.

The PAN is based on the net capacity range of each school, or in some cases a higher figure. The overall majority of comments supported the PANs for Tower Hamlets Schools – a sample of comments are noted here:

<i>Parent</i>	<i>As long as these increases can be managed adequately within the current school building (no temporary classrooms), without losing valuable outdoor play space, without increasing class sizes and the workload of already overstretched teachers, then this should be considered.</i>
<i>Parent</i>	<i>The PAN should only be increased as an absolute last resort. New schools must be built to accommodate new residents in all these new tower blocks. Increasing class sizes is not acceptable.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>I think flexibility should be used to reduce the PAN number of some recently expanded schools on a year by year basis.</i>
<i>Head teacher</i>	<i>I think the planned admission numbers should reflect the demand for places.</i>

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority has a statutory duty under the Education Act 2006 to ensure that there are sufficient school places in Tower Hamlets. This includes securing diversity and increasing opportunity for parental choice when planning the provision of school places in its area.

This duty includes matching projected demand with supply, and determining whether this demand is either temporary or permanent. Based on this evidence, the Local Authority will sometimes request schools, which have the potential to expand, to admit additional pupils or add an additional form of entry on a temporary or permanent basis.

The Local Authority is committed to supporting, where possible, permanent expansions at existing 'good' or 'outstanding' schools. However, it will also commission places through the establishment of new schools when it is evident that the potential demand cannot be met by expansions within its existing provision. This would ordinarily be through the 'Free School Presumption' process:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-a-new-school-free-school-presumption>.

6. Additional representation

Additional representation was received and this is detailed below:

Tower Hamlets Admissions Forum	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Proposed Co-ordinated Schemes for Community Nursery Schools/Classes in 2019/20 AF Response: No further comment from AF2. Do you agree with the proposal to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage? AF Response: Yes<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two members were initially not in favour of this criterion but had now decided that it was in the best interests of schools who may be struggling to recruit and ultimately for parents and their children.• It was noted that this criterion would affect relatively few children, but in the event of a large numbers of applications the number of places could be capped according to the school's size and type.• As large numbers of own admission authority schools had introduced this criterion it was beneficial for all schools to also do so to ensure all were on a 'level playing field'.3. Do you agree with the proposal to include an additional criterion that gives priority for children of staff who have worked at the school for at least two years and or new staff who are recruited to fill a demonstrable skills shortage? AF Response: Yes See above4. Proposed Co-ordinated schemes for Reception and Year 7 in 2019/20 AF Response: No further comment from AF5. Do you agree with the proposed change to the timetable and arrangements for school transfers? AF Response: Yes<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was noted that moving children between schools causes disruption to the child's education and their eventual attainment, at a time when schools are struggling with limited resources to ensure the best outcomes for their pupils. This proposal would allow for more dialogue between schools and parents where there is disagreement, reducing the potential for children to change schools in 'heat of the moment'.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It was confirmed that early transfers would still be considered and take place under the following circumstances:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- where exceptional medical or social need was demonstrated;- where siblings were attending different schools- In circumstances where a family had moved house and were undertaking an unnecessarily long journey to the existing school.• Some members felt that any request for children to transfer schools was better actioned 'sooner rather than later' to avoid any lost school days.
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6. Do you wish to comment on the planned admission numbers for schools in Tower Hamlets?

AF Response: No comment, given that the planned numbers were sufficient to meet the anticipated demand.

Local authority response:

The Local Authority welcomes the advice and views from its School Admissions Forum, especially, given that it is representative of key stakeholders and has a role and remit to consider and promote a fair and effective schools admission system, which advances social equity and inclusion, ensuring that the interests of local parents and children come first.