

Cabinet Decision	 TOWER HAMLETS
14 th December 2022	
Report of: James Thomas, Corporate Director, Children and Culture	Classification: Unrestricted
Planning for School Places 2022/23 Review and Recommendations	

Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:

	Step	Date
DLT Level (Tier One)	DLT	17 th October 2022
CLT Level (Tier Two)	CLT	15 th November 2022
Member Level (Tier Three)	MAB	30 th November 2022
Decision (Tier Four)	Cabinet	14 th December 2022

Proposed Decision Path (indicate) – Delete Section Before Publication:

Lead Member	Councillor Maium Talukdar, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
Originating Officer(s)	Terry Bryan, Service Head Pupil Access and School Sufficiency
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Reason for Key Decision	Significant impact on wards
Forward Plan Notice Published	[Insert date notice was published – see forthcoming decisions webpage]
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Accelerating Education

Executive Summary

This report presents the annual review of the council’s planning for school places. It informs cabinet on the latest position and key factors influencing the borough’s pupil population change and the impact on projected pupil numbers for Tower Hamlets schools. It recognises some of the place planning challenges that this presents to the Local Authority and schools, particularly in relation to financial sustainability and other performance pressures. It outlines the strategic approach being taken to manage the supply and sustain the quality of school provision, through the implementation of the council’s School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy.

It also provides an update on current school developments and the approach being taken to secure future school sites, for when they are needed.

THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION

Decision Type

Key Decision?		Urgent Decision?		Exempt from Call-In?		Restricted Report or Partially Restricted (e.g. appendix)?
Yes		No		No		No

Guidance Documents

Further details on the procedure for Urgent Decisions can be found in the [Intranet Library](#) and the [Guide to Report Writing guidance note](#).

Specific Issues for Pre-Decision Meetings

(Officers may use the following table to add points of note for internal meetings such as CLT, MAB or DMTs. Content can be deleted at any stage and, in any case, will be before publication for the decision making meeting.)

Directorate Leadership Team
Corporate Leadership Team
Mayor's Advisory Board
Communications

THIS SECTION TO BE DELETED BEFORE PUBLICATION

Recommendations:

This report summarises the action the council has taken, or is planning, to monitor and manage the supply of school places. Cabinet is therefore recommended to note the:

1. factors influencing pupil population change in Tower Hamlets;
2. latest pupil roll projections for Tower Hamlets and options for future school development sites to provide additional places, should they be required;
3. progress on the development of new and existing secondary school sites;
4. latest figures on SEN, current provision and sufficiency plan;
5. plans for the implementation of the council's School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy;
6. the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 5.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The council is legally responsible for the planning and provision of school places across its local area. This responsibility includes:
- Ensuring there are sufficient school places (Education Act 1996).
 - As far as possible, complying with the preferences expressed by parents (School Standards and Framework Act 1998).
 - Increasing opportunities for parental choice (Education and Inspections Act 2006).
 - Providing fair access to educational opportunity (Education and Inspections Act 2006).
- 1.2 While the council is responsible for school place planning, changes to education legislation (2010 Academies Act and 2011 Education Act) altered the way in which new education provision can be established, with the council's role changing from being a direct provider of school places to being a strategic commissioner. This , means that, when the borough is in need of a new school, the council must now seek proposals for an academy or free school. A traditional council run community school will only be allowed when no suitable free school or academy is proposed. This is commonly known as the free school presumption, whereby the council is required to:
- Publish and invite proposals from academy sponsors to establish a new 'free school'¹ (academy);
 - Carry out an assessment of the proposals; and
 - Put forward recommendations to the Regional Director (London), who acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.
- 1.3 Regional Directors' are government appointed senior civil servants who are now responsible for overseeing the performance of schools and academies, children's social care and special educational needs and disabilities services in the various regions of England.
- 1.4 The Regional Director's main responsibilities in respect of school organisation and place planning include:

¹ DfE [Free Schools](#) (England)

- supporting local authorities to ensure that every local area has sufficient places for pupils;
- deciding on academy sponsors to run new free schools;
- deciding on applications from local authority maintained schools to convert to academy status;
- addressing underperformance in schools and academies, offering support and, where necessary, intervening to deliver rapid improvement. This includes the power to require a local authority (council) maintained school, judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, to convert to academy status and become part of a multi academy trust (MAT);
- taking decisions on the creation, consolidation and growth of multi-academy trusts (MATs).

1.5 The council will therefore work with the Regional Director and a variety of partners, including council maintained and academy schools, to ensure that enough school places are available for children and young people in the right areas and at the right time to meet demand. Whilst doing so it must also seek to maintain a focus on high quality education as well as enabling a culture of high performing and financially sustainable schools.

1.6 In meeting its responsibility to ensure sufficiency the council is required to address both deficit and surplus school places across the education estate. The council will therefore consider how best to organise schools for the efficient and effective delivery of education. Any revenue benefit that results from changes to the education estate is then redistributed to schools through the school funding formula.

1.7 Proposals to provide additional school places will often require long-term planning to implement e.g. opening a new school, expanding an existing one or increasing provision for children with special educational needs. Evidence about the projected need for places must therefore be robust and reviewed regularly, in order to identify emerging need and new projects to inform the council's sufficiency strategy.

1.8 The content of this report aligns with the functions of the council as a Local Planning Authority, and the approach taken to make best use of the current allocation of school development sites in the Local Plan.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 An alternative would be to do nothing to manage the supply of school places. This would likely result in the council having to take a number of short term measures. Dealing with under-provision would require action to quickly provide additional places in the form of bulge classes at existing schools or expansions into temporary buildings. Dealing with over-provision would require action to financially support schools who are unable to balance their budgets to maintain quality education. These measures can address issues in the short-term, but they do not provide best value and should not be viewed as a sustainable approach to managing demand for school places.

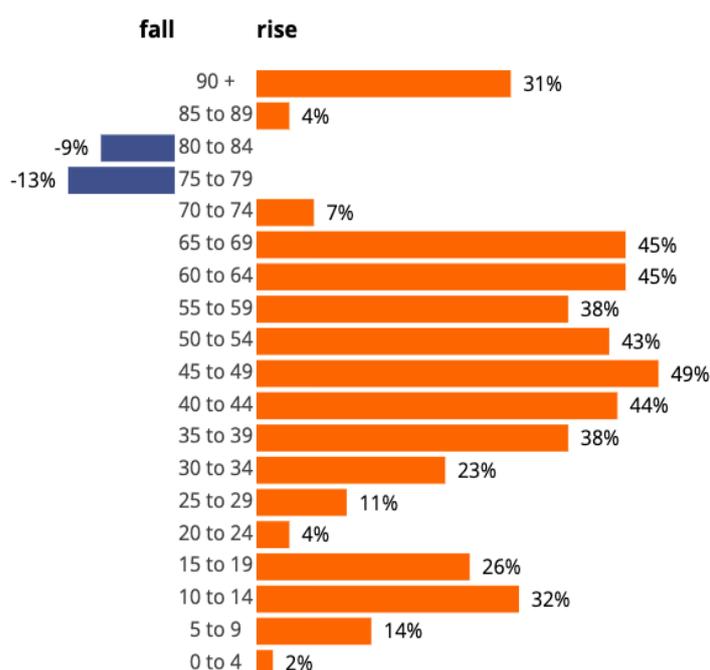
3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Background and Context

- 3.1 The demand for school places is driven by pupil population growth, migration levels and housing development. Tower Hamlets has seen the biggest general population increase in England. Between 2011 and 2021, the population grew by more than 22%. This compares to 6.6% for England as a whole over the same period. However, for the 0-4 age group, the increase has only been 2%, as can be seen from Figure 1 below. Hence, despite the overall rise in the general population, there has been little growth in the pre-school population.

Fig 1.

Population change (%) by age group in Tower Hamlets, 2011 to 2021

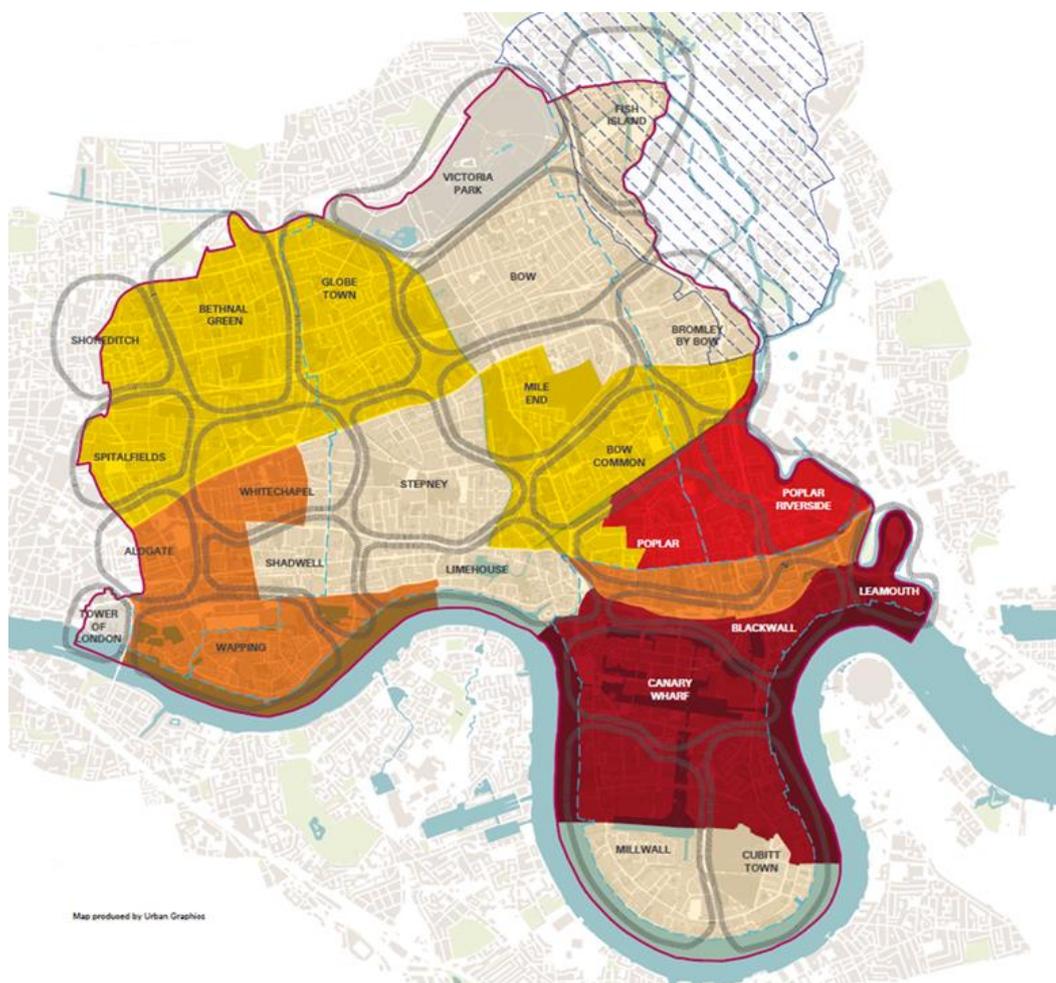


- 3.2 The pupil population increases between the 2011-2021 census also appear to have happened, mainly, in the first half of the decade. Over the remaining period, the general population growth has not translated into a need for additional primary school places, as is the case in most local authorities across London. Instead, we have seen flat primary pupil growth since 2016 and declining numbers since 2019. These changes, brought on by falling birth rates and a net outflow of primary school children, meant that previous school place expansions, composed during the earlier years of population growth increases, resulted in an oversupply of places at primary schools in some parts of the borough.
- 3.3 Further causes behind falling primary pupil numbers could be related to Brexit and other migration factors, the smaller pupil yields from the social and affordable housing stock within Tower Hamlets, the Covid pandemic or possibly the UK governments two-child policy², which limits benefits payments to the first two children born to the poorest households. More research is being undertaken to determine what is driving these changes in Tower Hamlets and across London.

² Two Child Policy' Universal Credit: support for a maximum of 2 children

- 3.4 The Tower Hamlets population change has been intensified by the decline in primary pupil numbers in the west of the borough, contrasted by a rise in the east, as the population balance shifts in line with the new areas of housing growth. The result leaves some schools in Bethnal Green and Stepney with significant capacity surpluses, causing financial sustainability and other performance pressures. The council's strategy for addressing this issue is outlined from paragraph 3.65 below.
- 3.5 The council has managed well with its most recent primary pupil projections, when looking at borough-wide numbers. However, it is the variances at the individual planning area levels that is of most concern. The causes behind the now lower than expected pupil projections in the east are now subject to further investigation, given the relatively large scale housing development in Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.

Fig 2. Distribution of Housing Growth in Tower Hamlets - LBTH Local Plan (2016 -3031)



KEY

-  London Borough of Tower Hamlets boundary
-  Character place
-  Sub area boundary
-  Very low growth (0 – 1,000 units)
-  Low growth (1,001 – 2,000 units)
-  Medium growth (2,001 – 3,000 units)
-  High growth (3,001 – 4,000 units)
-  Very high growth (+4,000 units)
-  London Legacy Development Corporation
-  Water space

3.6 Tower Hamlets has had continuous growth in the secondary school sector, in line with the earlier rises in the primary population, combined with a net in-migration for this age group. The secondary school population rose steadily, year on year, in the five-year period from 2016. The council is better positioned to plan increases and make adjustments to the supply of secondary school places, in response to changes in the primary population. This reduces the potential for future oversupply in the secondary sector whilst retaining the flexibility to provide additional places quickly, should the need arise.

Drivers for the Borough's Pupil Population Change

3.7 An assessment of the three key drivers influencing the changes in the borough's pupil population is as follows:

(i) Birth Rates

3.8 In recent years we have seen a steady decline in the birth rate in Tower Hamlets and across London, which has been evident in our schools from around 2016 as those born in 2012 and onwards reach school age. From 2012 - 2020 live births in Tower Hamlets fell by almost 500 from 4,784 to 4,291. This was in line with the changes seen in the birth rate across London.

3.9 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provisional birth figures for 2021, using NHS Birth Notifications, indicate that births in Tower Hamlets have increased slightly from the previous two years. Although these figures have not yet been confirmed.

Fig 1. ONS Actual Births for LBTH (2012 to 2020) and Provisional LBTH Births in 2021

Area	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ³	2021 ⁴
LBTH	4,784	4,608	4,622	4,560	4,592	4,604	4,381	4,307	4,291	4,381
London	134,186	128,332	127,399	129,615	128,803	126,308	120,673	117,897	111,688	110,961

3.10 The last set of birth projections produced by the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2020, although very accurate for London, indicate that the 2021 birth rates for Tower Hamlets would be much lower than those being provisionally reported by the ONS. The GLA's next update may therefore see a revision to the Tower Hamlets birth projections with the potential for these to be higher than previously indicated.

Fig 2. GLA Projected Births for LBTH (2021 -2030)

Area	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
LBTH	4,115	4,016	4,043	4,065	4,075	4,080	4,094	4,120	4158	4209
London	110,975	107,549	107,646	107,822	107,810	107,723	107,839	108,208	108,876	109,851

(ii) Pupil Migration

3.11 The impact and contribution of domestic and international migration is an important factor in pupil population levels. Tower Hamlets has experienced historically higher rates of net migration compared to many other local authorities in London and England. We are accustomed to seeing significant movement within the school population with very high numbers of 'in-year' school admissions.

³ ONS available data is until 2020

⁴ ONS Provisional Births using NHS Birth Notifications

3.12 The two charts below show the borough's recent and projected pupil net migration rate (domestic and international) for both the pre-school and primary age range. We can see the negative (outward) net migration rate for this age group. This means that more pre-school and primary age children are moving out of the Tower Hamlets area than moving in. This negative net migration trend is expected to continue.

Fig. 3 Total Net Migration Projection: Tower Hamlets (age 0-4)

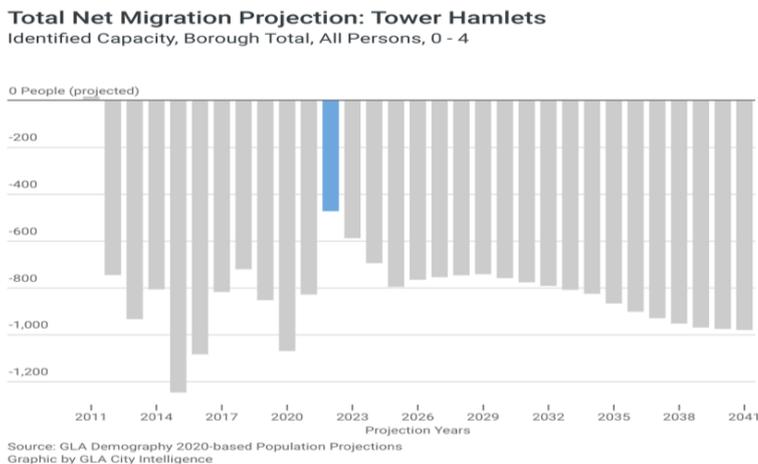
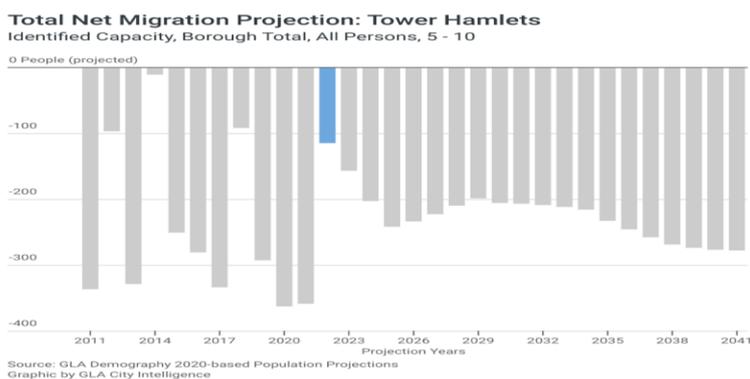
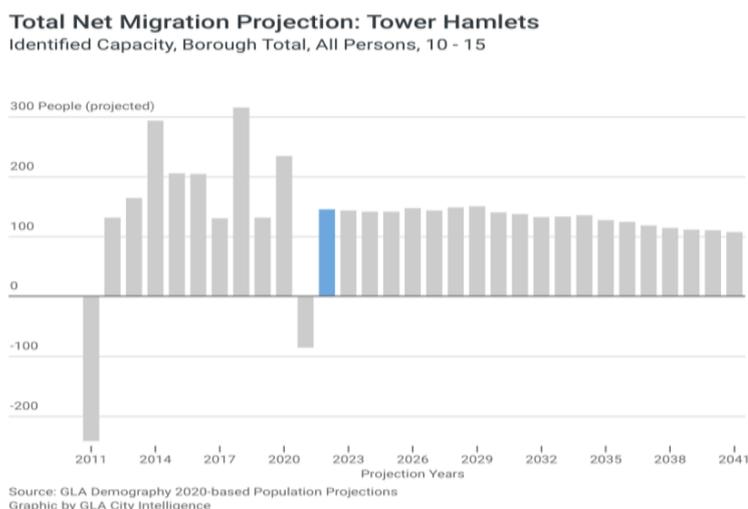


Fig. 4 Total Net Migration Projection: Tower Hamlets (age 5-10)



3.13 In the secondary age range the situation is reversed. With the exception of the 2021 negative net migration, affected by the mobility restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic, we should expect to see a positive net migration from 2022 onwards based on the GLA's projections. This means more secondary aged children moving into the borough than out.

Fig. 5 3 Total Net Migration Projection: Tower Hamlets (age 10-15)



(iii) Housing Development

- 3.14 A significant element in the planning for pupil population growth is the number of children likely to arise from new housing developments and the associated need for school places. Referred to as the 'pupil yield' factor. This calculation is based on the Borough's Local Plan development trajectory, which draws on existing housing project planning permissions, planning applications, and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites - a technical exercise to determine the quantity and suitability of land potentially available for housing development. This data is then factored into the pupil projection model, alongside school rolls, birth data, migration flow and the cohort survival/take up rates, which then produces the final set of information.
- 3.15 Tower Hamlets has a housing supply target of around 59,000 additional homes to be built across the borough between 2016 – 2031. The map at paragraph 3.5 shows where these new housing developments are planned, with most major developments concentrated in the Southeast. A further factor to consider is the actual level of pupil yield from new developments. Given the lower than projected primary pupil numbers in some areas with more intense housing development, with most major developments concentrated in the Isle of Dogs, Poplar and to a lesser extent Wapping. Given the lower than projected primary pupil numbers in these areas further investigation is being undertaken to understand the 'pupil yield factor' in these neighbourhoods. This is considered in more detail in the section on pupil projections later in this report.

School Place Planning Areas

- 3.16 For primary school place planning purposes, Tower Hamlets is divided into six planning (catchment) areas, shown on the map at Appendix 1. For secondary schools, we use the whole borough as a single planning area. The demand for places within these planning areas is discussed in detail below.

Pupil Numbers Forecasting (Projections Methodology and Approach)

- 3.17 The council commissions school roll projections from the Greater London Authority (GLA), along with most other London boroughs. GLA have access to data on all pupils in London (via the National Pupil Database) which enables them to model movements across borough boundaries in a way that would be difficult for an individual local authority. Projections are run each year in May/June using information based on demographic trends (e.g. births, and migration); the borough's housing development trajectory; and the flow of pupils from their ward of residence (including those out of borough) to each school.
- 3.18 The council uses six sets of pupil projections based on high, medium and low migration and on a one year or four year historical reference. The council prefers the high migration set, which produces a more modest pupil growth projection in line with the current local and national trends. Detail on the projections model along with a flow diagram is provided in Appendix 2.
- 3.19 Tower Hamlets being a densely populated urban area with high mobility, alongside large scale housing development, is accustomed to significant degrees of variability in its pupil projections. The borough's pupil place planning strategy is therefore required to exercise the necessary caution and flexibility to manage these variables, mindful of the expectations of school leaders and the other key stakeholders.

Primary School Places

(a) Current Position and Projected Need

- 3.20 The overall demand for primary school places at reception has reduced significantly in the six years since 2016.

Table 1 Reception Year Admissions (Sept entry)

Reception Year Applications for Sept Entry	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	3405	3305	3329	3169	3348	3311	3213

- 3.21 In the January 2022 census there were 23,264 pupils in Tower Hamlets primary schools. Although this represents a marginal increase over the period between 2016 and 2022, primary schools rolls have, in effect, been falling since 2019.
- 3.22 Considering these numbers by school planning area we can see that Bethnal Green and Stepney are the areas where numbers have declined most significantly in recent years, although Wapping is not far behind.

Table 2 Primary Schools Rolls By Planning Area

Primary School Rolls By Planning Area 2016 – 2022 (Jan census)									
Year	Stepney	Bow	Poplar	Isle of Dogs	Wapping	Bethnal Green	Total	+/-	%
2015/16	5,327	2,664	5,230	2,526	3,157	4,200	23,104	N/A	N/A
2016/17	5,428	2,690	5,435	2,661	3,114	4,117	23,445	341	1.5%
2017/18	5,405	2,687	5,582	2,769	3,046	3,983	23,472	27	0.1%
2018/19	5,417	2,709	5,722	2,787	3,014	3,860	23,509	37	0.2%
2019/20	5,240	2,732	5,800	2,804	2,952	3,742	23,270	-239	-1.0%
2020/21	5,003	2,745	5,979	2,844	2,970	3,801	23,342	72	0.3%
2021/22	5,074	2,795	5,992	2,666	2,957	3,780	23,264	-78	-0.3%
								160	0.7%

+/- Column shows increase/decrease from previous year

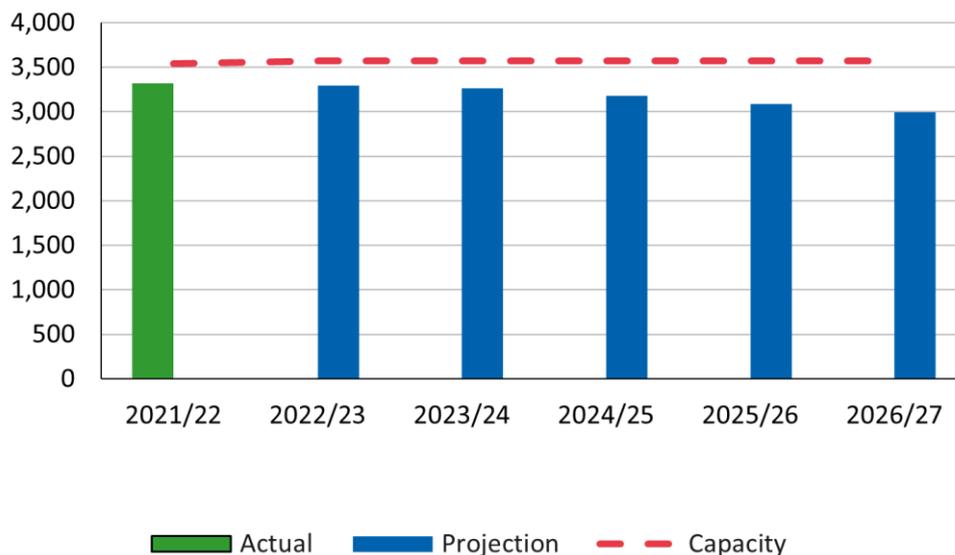
% Column show percentage increase/decrease from previous year

- 3.23 The latest round of borough projections for the reception year indicate that the primary school population will decrease throughout the next five year period, with the reception year intake reaching a low of 2,998 by 2026/7.

Table 3 Reception Year Projections

Reception Year Projections (Borough)							
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual (Jan Census)	3,316						
Projection	3,386	3,297	3,266	3,177	3,086	2,998	
Capacity	3,541	3,571	3,571	3,571	3,571	3,571	
Variance	Pupils	225	274	305	394	485	573
	FE	7.5	9.1	10.1	13	16.2	19.1
	%	6%	8%	9%	11%	14%	16%

Reception Projections (Borough)



- 3.24 The assessment of each school planning area, presented later in this report, will show the variability across the borough. Within each planning area there is also the variability in parental preference with some schools filling all or most of their reception places, whilst others are significantly undersubscribed. This decline in primary reception pupil numbers is being experienced by local authorities across London. On average, London boroughs are predicted to see a 7.4% decrease in reception pupils over the next five years with numbers predicted to fall from 104,054 to 96,082.
- 3.25 There is, as ever, a note of caution on these projections, in terms of continued sufficiency/surplus of places, given the current volatility of the pupil population across London. As mentioned earlier, Tower Hamlets has seen an unexpected marginal increase in its fertility and birth rates in the 2021 calendar year and although this, by no means, can be considered the beginning of an upward trend, it would be short sighted not to allow for further unexpected changes to occur in the future.
- 3.26 If the predicted fall in reception numbers for Tower Hamlets were to materialise it would result in a substantial surplus of school places, despite the significant reductions to primary school capacity that followed from the earlier review of primary school places in 2019/20. The council will therefore need to contingency plan to make further reductions to its primary school places in certain areas of the borough in the coming years. It will shortly begin a new round of discussions with school leaders about the potential for reducing capacity as part of the council's School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy.
- 3.27 In recognition of the inevitable peaks and troughs in demand for school places, the council will always first look to propose a series of temporary reductions rather than permanent changes. This approach will seek to avoid any permanent closures of school buildings to ensure there is enough spare accommodation to allow for a response, should numbers rise in future. In doing so the council will look to see, if and how educational buildings might be used to continue to meet rising demand in other educational areas. This will include alternative and SEN provision as required as well as how the council can help to expand the community services currently provided for children and families.

3.28 We now look at the current position in each of the borough's primary school planning (catchment) areas.

Planning Area 1 (Stepney)

3.29 The school roll projections for Stepney in 2021/22 estimated the pupil number to within 6 (679 as compared to the January census of 685 pupils).

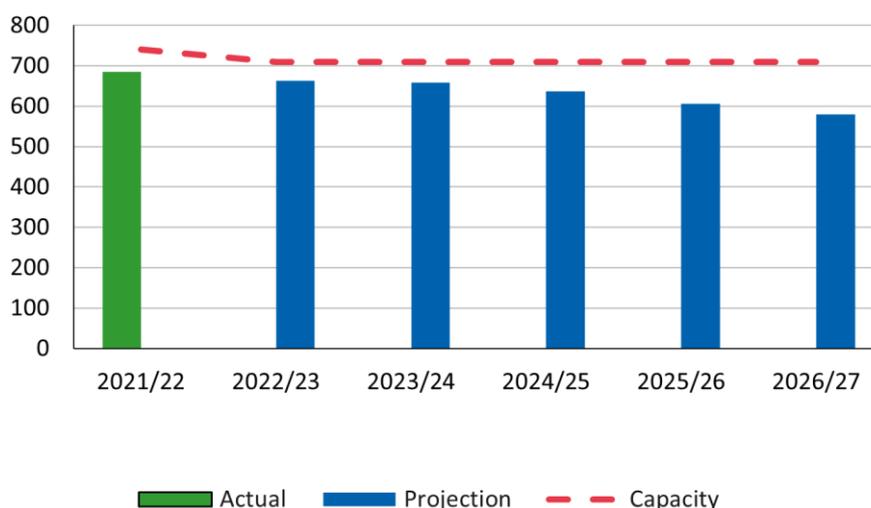
3.30 There are currently 740 reception places in the Stepney planning area. In the January 2022 census there were 55 unfilled places, a reduction from the 81 unfilled places in January 2021, and the 240 unfilled places that was recorded in the January 2020 census. Removing the unnecessary surplus was achieved through a range of school organisation changes, including school mergers, closures and reductions to schools planned admission numbers

3.31 The latest round of pupil projections for Stepney indicates that, despite these earlier school organisation changes, the current surplus of 7% will likely increase over the next few years, reaching as high as 18% by January 2027. Given that the council's target surplus is no more than 10%, this continued fall in pupil numbers will likely require the council and school leaders to, again, plan new measures to reduce the surplus capacity in this Planning Area.

Table 4 Reception Year Projections PA1

Planning Area 1 – Stepney (INCLUDES BOTH BONNER SCHOOL SITES)							
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual (Jan Census)	685						
Projection	679	663	659	636	606	579	
Capacity	740	710	710	710	710	710	
Variance	Pupils	55	47	51	74	104	131
	FE	1.8	1.6	1.7	2.5	3.5	4.4
	%	7%	7%	7%	10%	15%	18%

Reception Projections: PA1 (Stepney)



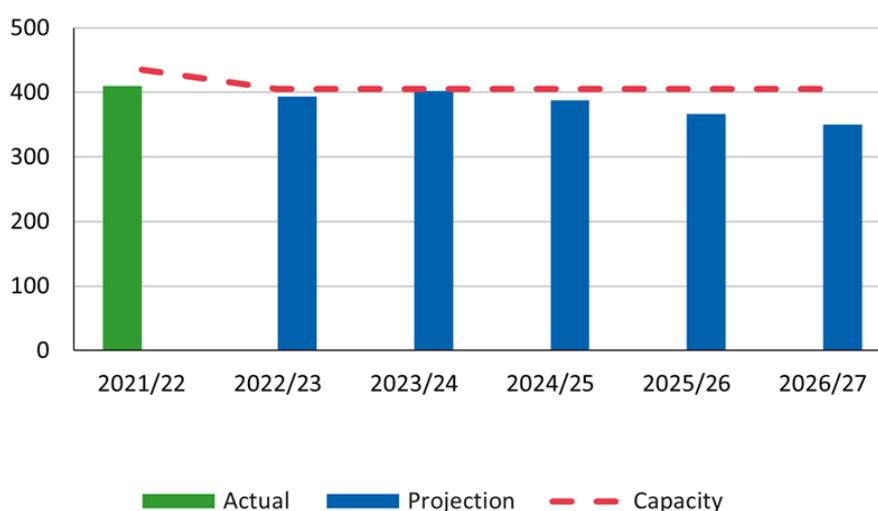
Planning Area 2 (Bow)

- 3.32 The GLA School roll projections for Bow in 2021/22 estimated the pupil number to within 6 (416 as compared to the January census of 410 pupils).
- 3.33 There are currently 405 Reception places available in the Bow catchment area. In January 2022 there were 25 unfilled places. The number of unfilled places is expected to be as low as 11 (3%) in January 2023. However, with pupil numbers expected to fall over the next five years there is the potential for a surplus of 14% by 2026/27. If this transpires it will be necessary for the council to plan with school leaders the measures to be taken to reduce the excess surplus in this area.

Table 5 Reception Year Projections PA2

Planning Area 2 - Bow		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual (Jan Census)		410					
Projection		416	394	402	388	367	350
Capacity		435	405	405	405	405	405
Variance	Pupils	25	11	3	17	38	55
	FE	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.6	1.3	1.8
	%	6%	3%	1%	4%	9%	14%

Reception Projections: PA2 (Bow)



Planning Area 3 (Poplar)

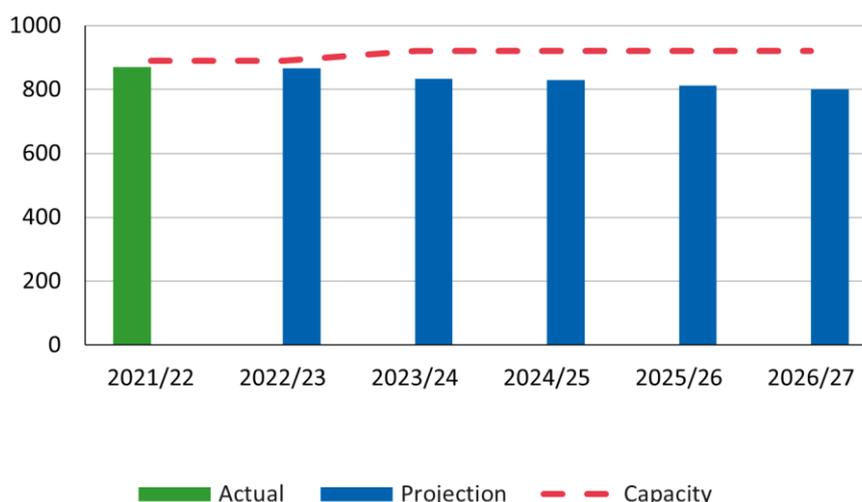
- 3.34 The school roll projections for Poplar last year estimated the number of pupils to within 4 (865 as compared to the actual January census of 869 pupils).
- 3.35 There are currently 890 Reception places in the Poplar area. In January 2022 there were 21 unfilled places. In last year's projections, numbers were expected to increase to above 900 by 2024, in line with the large scale housing development in Poplar. Plans are therefore in place to increase capacity in this area to 920 places from September 2024 through the 1FE expansion of an existing primary school. However, in the 2022 updated projections, pupil numbers in Poplar are projected to decline and by as much as 69 pupils by January 2027, causing a potential surplus capacity of above 10%. The council is currently investigating what is causing this

unexpected projected downturn in pupil numbers, giving the high density of new housing in development and planned for the Poplar area.

Table 6 Reception Year Projections PA3

Planning Area 3 - Poplar							
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual (Jan Census)	869						
Projection	865	865	834	830	811	800	
Capacity	890	890	890	920	920	920	
Variance	Pupils	21	25	56	90	109	120
	FE	0.7	0.8	1.9	3.0	3.6	4.0
	%	2%	3 %	6%	10%	12%	13%

Reception Projections: Poplar (Catchment 3)



3.36 In the event that there is a future significant increase in the pupil population growth in Poplar, the council has a new 2FE school development site option available at:

- Blackwall Yard, E14 (2FE)

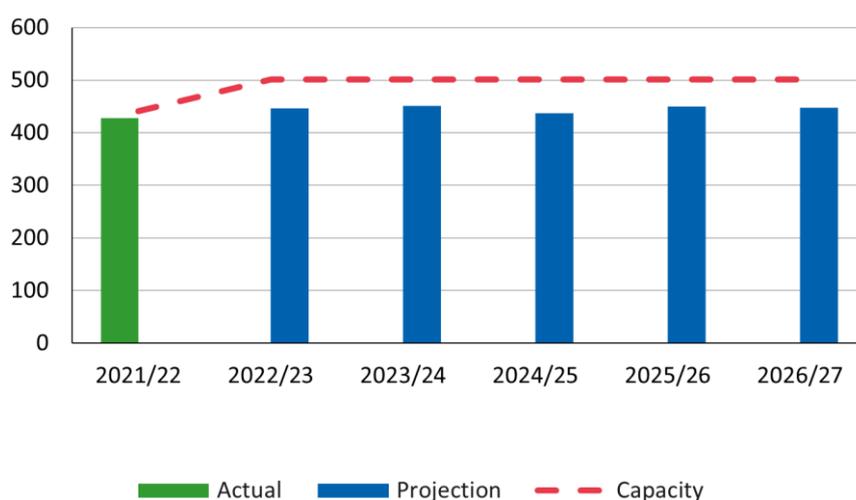
Catchment Area 4 (Isle of Dogs)

3.37 The school roll projections for the Isle of Dogs last year over-estimated the actual number of pupils by 45 (473 as compared to the 428 pupils in the January census). In fact, the numbers of pupils in the January 2022 census were slightly lower than the number in the January 2021 census (433). This is obviously a significant overestimation and is perhaps confirmation that the new housing development is not yet filling out at the rate previously anticipated. However, what is certain is that the Isle of Dogs is the borough planning area with the highest density of new housing in development and we would expect to see a growth in pupil numbers over the longer period. At the moment the projections indicate that the number of surplus places will exceed 10% and 11% per cent for the next five year period.

Table 7 Reception Year Projections PA4

Planning Area 4 - Isle of Dogs		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual (Jan Census)		428					
Projection		473	446	451	437	450	448
Capacity		441	501	501	501	501	501
Variance	Pupils	13	55	50	64	51	53
	FE	0.4	1.8	1.7	2.1	1.7	1.8
	%	3%	11%	10%	13%	10%	11%

Reception Projections: PA4 (Isle of Dogs)



3.38 Should the expected volume of new housing lead to a significant increase in the number of pupils in the Isle of Dogs in future, there are three potential development sites for additional school places that could be delivered within the Local Plan period through to 2031, as follows:

- Millharbour, E14
- Crossharbour Town Centre, E14
- Limeharbour (Skylines Village), E14

Catchment Area 5 (Wapping)

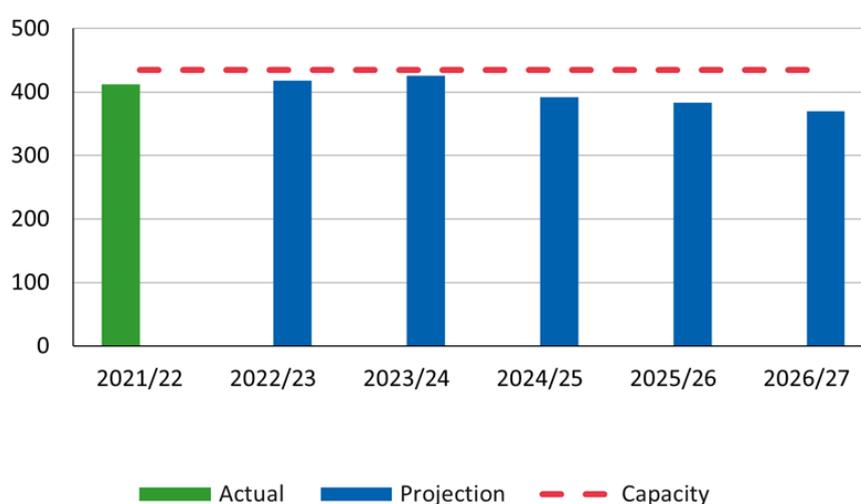
3.39 The school roll projections for Wapping last year over-estimated the actual number of pupils by 25 (437 as compared to the 412 pupils in the January census).

3.40 The numbers of pupils in Wapping are currently projected to reduce over time creating a surplus of above 10% by 2025/26. However, it should be noted that Wapping is also an area with significant levels of planned new housing development. It is therefore necessary to wait and see how the roll out and occupation of new housing development will impact pupil numbers going forward.

Table 8 Reception Year Projections PA5

Planning Area 5 - Wapping		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Actual (Jan Census)		412					
Projection		437	418	426	392	383	370
Capacity		435	435	435	435	435	435
Variance	Pupils	23	17	9	43	52	65
	FE	0.8	0.6	0.3	1.4	1.7	2.2
	%	5%	4%	2%	10%	12%	15%

Reception Projections: PA5 (Wapping)



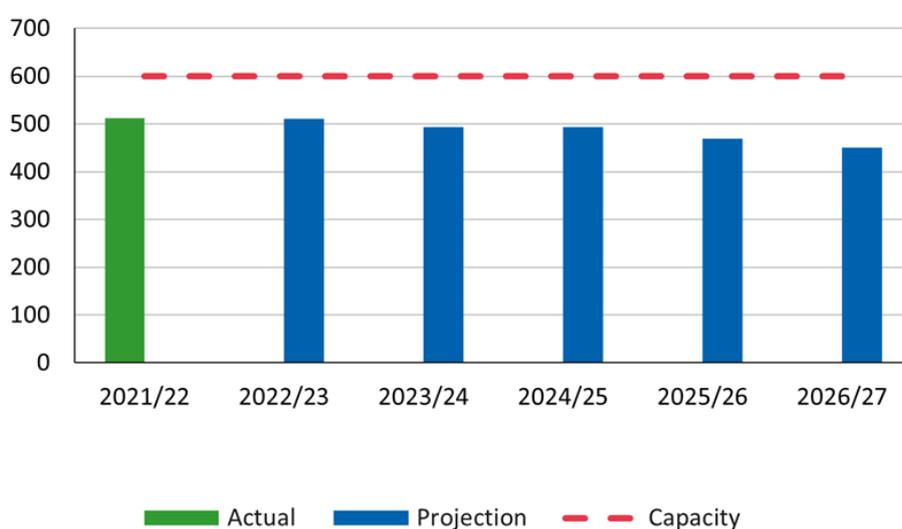
Catchment Area 6 (Bethnal Green)

- 3.41 The GLA School roll projections for Bethnal Green in 2021/22 estimated the number of pupils in Bethnal Green to within 4 (512 as compared to the 516 children in the January census).
- 3.42 In January 2022 there were 88 unfilled places in Bethnal Green a reduction from the 108 unfilled places in January 2021. However, the number of reception pupils in Bethnal Green are expected to gradually reduce over the next five year period with the surplus capacity reaching 25% by 2026/27. There is some limited housing development planned for this area but most of this is already in delivery. Although this offers the potential for an uplift in pupil numbers it is unlikely to significantly reduce the expected high level of surplus.
- 3.43 The council and school leaders have previously taken measures to significantly reduce the excess surplus in this area by reducing the overall capacity from 740 to 600 places, resulting in the closure of one primary school and reductions to the published admission numbers at others. However, with the latest set of projections, it is now necessary to contingency plan for further reductions, as part of the council's school organisation and place planning activities.

Table 9 Reception Year Projections PA6

Planning Area 6 – Bethnal Green							
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Actual (Jan Census)	512						
Projection	516	511	494	494	469	451	
Capacity	600	600	600	600	600	600	
Variance	Pupils	88	89	106	106	131	149
	FE	2.9	3.0	3.5	3.5	4.3	5.0
	%	15%	15%	18%	18%	22%	25%

Reception Projections: PA6 (Bethnal Green)



Secondary School Places

(a) Current Position and Projected Need

- 3.44 Secondary school places in Tower Hamlets are planned for on a borough-wide basis, as it recognised that secondary pupils are able to travel independently to schools across the borough, according to their particular school preferences.
- 3.45 Tower Hamlets has been experiencing a gradual increase in admissions for entry to Year 7 in line with the previous growth, as follows:

Table 10 Year 7 Admissions (Sept entry)

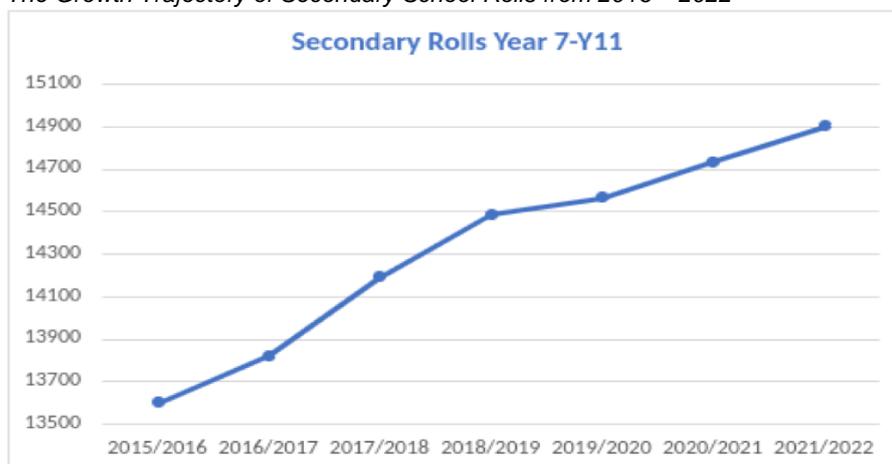
Year 7 Applications for Sept Entry	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	2738	2878	2995	3069	2976	3016	3047

- 3.46 Tower Hamlets secondary rolls (Y7 -Y11) have also been steadily increasing year on year since 2015/16 with an overall 9.6% growth. This growth is expected to continue for the time being as some of the existing primary population progress through to the secondary phase, along with the increased levels of positive net migration. However, secondary rolls will eventually flatten in line with the recent changes in the primary school population. This is reflected in the Year 7 pupil projections below.

Table 11 Secondary Rolls (Y7-11)

Secondary School Rolls (Y7-Y11) 2016-2022								
Year	7	8	9	10	11	Total	+/-	%
2015/2016	2,936	2,837	2,704	2,627	2,496	13,600	N/A	N/A
2016/2017	2,838	2,937	2,824	2,681	2,540	13,820	220	1.6%
2017/2018	2,952	2,869	2,929	2,818	2,625	14,193	373	2.7%
2018/2019	2,908	2,978	2,906	2,933	2,762	14,487	294	2.0%
2019/2020	3,007	2,902	2,954	2,846	2,856	14,565	78	0.5%
2020/2021	2,974	3,051	2,927	2,965	2,816	14,733	168	1.1%
2021/2022	2,919	2,963	3,103	2,978	2,940	14,903	144	0.9%
							1,303	9.6%

The Growth Trajectory of Secondary School Rolls from 2016 – 2022



- 3.47 The latest round of GLA projections for Year 7 indicate that the previous pattern of growth will slow, with pupil numbers peaking above 3000 in the 2023/24, with a small drop off in 2024-2027, and picking up again from 2027.

Table 12 Year 7 Projections

Year 7 Pupil Projections: Tower Hamlets Totals									
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
Actual (Jan census)	2,919								
Projection	3019	2,922	3,029	2,964	2,881	2,859	2,925	2,940	
Capacity	3,113	3,113	3,293	3,203 ⁵	3,203	3,203	3,263	3,263	
Variance	Pupils	221	191	264	239	32	344	338	323
	FE	7	6	9	8	11	11	11	11
	%	7%	6%	8%	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%

⁵ Takes account of plans for a PAN reduction at Bishop Challoner School(s) from 9FE to 8FE in 2024. Also the temporary 2FE reduction in places at Oaklands School during the period of planned building works.

- 3.48 The current and planned secondary school capacity has been thoroughly considered in view of the smaller numbers that will eventually come through from primary. They also take account of the opening of a new secondary school at London Dock from as early as 2023/24. This will be a non-selective, state funded, mixed school for 11–18 year olds. The additional places provided at London Dock will remove any risk to the council of a shortfall in the medium term as well as ensure there is a reasonable level of surplus. The council considers a 10% surplus sufficient to enable operational flexibility and parental choice. It is important to consider the interannual volatility in the popularity of Tower Hamlets secondary schools. This is an important factor that cannot be accurately projected for, given that it rests on parental/child preferences, changes in school Ofsted ratings, parental perception and other factors not linked to demography, migration and birth rates.
- 3.49 The council is reasonably assured that its planned capacity for Year 7 entry from 2023 onwards will provide sufficient secondary school places in the medium term. Especially, given the increasing number of new arrivals to the area who require secondary school places after the normal point of entry.

(b) Progress on Planned Secondary School Developments

London Dock

- 3.50 This development of this new 6FE secondary school site is progressing, but the completion date has been delayed until June 2024. The council has therefore made plans for the school to open on the former Shapla School site in September 2023, on a temporary basis, before moving to its permanent site in September 2024. The Department for Education (DfE) has appointed the Mulberry Schools Trust to run the new school and will provide 75 -80% of the capital funding. The Mulberry Schools Trust is a local academy sponsor that successfully runs a small number of schools in the Tower Hamlets area. It was formed following the academy conversion of Mulberry School for Girls in 2016. **The routes for the council to establish (commission) new schools in its area are set out in Appendix 3.**

Westferry Printworks

- 3.51 The DfE is planning to develop the Westferry Printworks site to provide permanent accommodation for Canary Wharf College 3 School. The DfE has not yet secured the site from the developer and it has therefore revised its target date for the delivery of the new school building, which is now scheduled for September 2026 at the earliest. Until the DfE can secure the site it is not yet certain when this new school building will be ready.

George Green's School

- 3.52 The council is considering plans for the rebuild of George Green's School, to provide replacement 21st century accommodation on its existing site, subject to further cabinet capital funding approval.

Oaklands School

- 3.53 The council has plans to provide additional accommodation for Oaklands School, following its earlier expansion from 4FE to 6FE. The council is working with the DfE and the landowners to permanently acquire the former Raine's Foundation Lower School site (old Bethnal Green Road), so that it can begin the further stages for the site's redevelopment. Oaklands is a council maintained school that currently uses the former Raine's (Lower) site for its 6th Form accommodation.

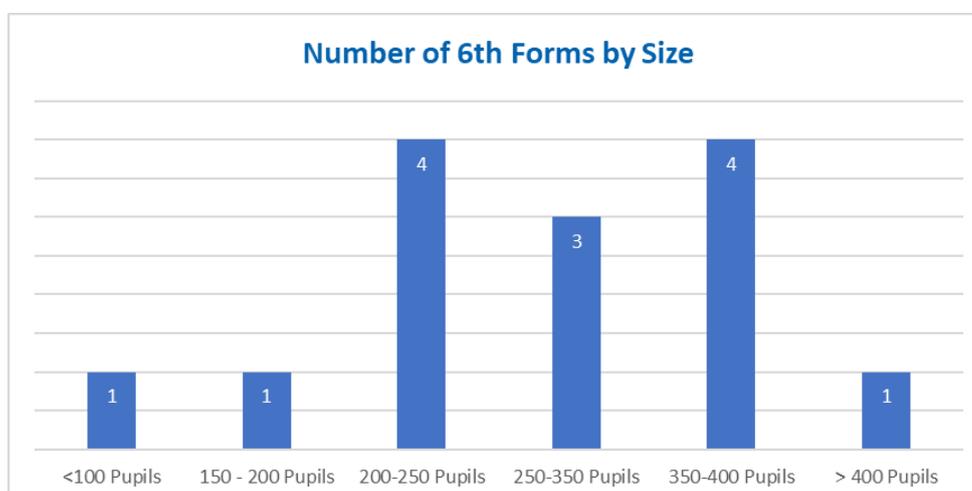
Post 16 Places

- 3.54 Post 16 place planning is not a statutory duty for the council. However, when looking at secondary provision, changes to the availability or quality of Post 16 places is a matter for consideration.
- 3.55 The current projections for Post 16 provision at schools in the borough indicate that numbers will continue to grow, beyond 4,000 pupils, which is an upward shift compared to last year's projections when 6th form places were expected to be lower, over for the projection period. The previous potential oversupply of places has now turned into expectations of schools operating at capacity, with additional 6th form places possibly being required in the medium term.

Table 13 Post 16 Projections

Post 16 Pupil Projections: Borough Secondary Schools									
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
Actual (Jan census)	3,942								
Projection		3,912	4,065	4,126	4,084	4,114	4,144	4,192	
Capacity	4,095	4,095	4,095	4,095	4,095	4,095	4,095	4,095	
Variance	Pupils	153	183	30	-31	11	-19	-49	-97
	FE	5.1	6.1	1.0	-1.0	0.4	-0.6	-1.6	-3.2
	%	4%	5%	1%	-1%	0%	-0.5%	-1%	-2%

- 3.56 A number of Tower Hamlets Schools have indicated plans to expand their 6th form provision in response to their increasing cohorts through Y7 – Y11. The LA expects that plans for the addition of sixth form provision will only be put forward for secondary schools that are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Schools should also consider the supply of other local post-16 provision in the area, to first assess if there is a genuine need for the additional provision.
- 3.57 Despite the increase in Post 16 pupil numbers at secondary schools, there is some significance variance in 6th Form size. The chart below shows the number of sixth forms by size. The average sixth form size in 12 of the 14 schools is above 200 students. The remaining two have fewer than 200, with one with less than 100 students.



- 3.58 It is recommended⁶ for schools to have 6th Forms of at least 200 pupils and, either directly or through partnership, offer a minimum of 15 A level subjects. Although, small school sixth forms can still provide access to a broad range of courses to meet students interests.
- 3.59 Many Local Authorities have one or more well- established and successful sixth form partnerships. A joint report from OFSTED and the Further Education Inspectorate outlined the considerable benefits of Post 16 collaboration; these include - a broader curriculum offer, since there are more students to access less popular courses; appropriate courses for all learners leading to higher participation rates, including a stronger affordable offer at L1 and 2, greater flexibility in progression routes, financial benefits linked to efficient group sizes through pooling small numbers of students (particularly in enabling smaller Year 2 cohorts to continue studies) and best use of staff expertise and facilities.
- 3.60 Nearby examples include:
- Westminster 6th Form Partnership, established in 2001 to improve co-ordination and provision for high quality education and training. The partnership includes secondary schools and FE colleges.
 - Camden 'LaSWAP' 6th Form Partnership, a group of four schools working together to create a single campus sixth form over four sites and providing learners with an extensive curriculum choice.
- 3.61 The council will shortly begin work with schools to explore Post-16 models of school organisation that will optimise expertise and ensure resilience of courses and inclusive provision. This work will explore opportunities and support proposals for school partnerships that will strengthen options across Levels 1-3 and vocational as well as academic options for students. The council will therefore consider what additional resources can be made available to support the development of this collaborative work.

Nursery Places

- 3.62 The table below shows a steady decline in the number of children requiring nursery places at Tower Hamlets maintained nursery schools/classes over the last four years. This is in line with the fall in birth rates and the other factor affecting the pupil population growth in the borough.

Table 14 Admissions to Nursery Schools and Classes (Sept Entry)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
No of children offered places at nursery schools/classes (Sept Entry)	2607	2306	2303	2238

- 3.63 In view of the challenges that these figures present to the sustainability and continued high quality of the council's maintained nursery schools there have been a number of school organisation changes implemented over the past year. Harry Roberts Nursery has amalgamated with Ben Jonson Primary and Old Church Nursery has amalgamated with Marion Richardson Primary to form two all-though 3 – 11 primary schools. The remaining four nursery schools have established new models of schools organisation. Rachel Keeling and Children's House Nursery Schools have 'hard' federated where they now share one head teacher and have

⁶ DfE Guidance on making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools

one governing body. Alice Model Nursery and Columbia Market Nursery are in a 'soft' federation where they share a head teacher.

- 3.64 These changes will give the four remaining nursery schools greater financial stability and ensure that they can continue to operate and provide children and families with access to extended services and facilities.

School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy

- 3.65 Managing the demand for school places in the context of these constant fluctuations in the pupil population presents significant challenges for the council and its schools. Measures to address the oversupply of primary school places in parts of the borough through the earlier 'Primary Review' resulted in several school organisation changes, including reductions to the place capacity at a number of primary schools, school amalgamations (mergers) and, in a few cases, permanent school closures. However, the council will continue to take action to remove surplus places for the following benefits:

- Enabling schools to remain financially viable;
- Reducing waste (keeping spend per pupil up);
- Increasing the proportion of pupils in good or outstanding provision;
- Better targeting of capital resources;
- Improving the overall condition of the schools' estate.

- 3.66 This work will now be undertaken as part of the council's newly developed School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy. The strategy sets out the key principles and direction that the council is taking to meet its statutory duty to provide suitable, sufficient and sustainable school places.

- 3.67 To oversee the delivery of the strategy the council is in the process of establishing a new School Organisation Strategy Group (SOSG). This group will consist of representatives from all of the key stakeholders, including council maintained schools, academy trust leaders and the relevant diocesan bodies. It will monitor activities across early years, 4 - 16, Post 16 and SEND and discuss the overall strategic development in the context of the council's statutory duties, as well as advise on options for school organisation, place planning and education capital investment.

- 3.68 The work of the SOSG will be informed and supported by two regional working groups, in recognition that the current pupil place planning activities are now quite different between the planning areas east and west of the borough. The Working Groups will include council officers and headteacher representatives from across the two regions and will be tasked, primarily, with the following:

- providing an understanding of local context and impact on demand for school places across the planning areas in each region;
- reviewing and monitoring the demand for school places from local authority data, local intelligence and good practice; and the strategic approach set out in the SOCIS;
- working collaboratively with admission authorities across each region to manage the supply and suitability of school places for the benefit of all schools;
- identifying schools suitable for a temporary reduction in PAN (published admission number), reviewing and recommending other relevant

strategies in support of financial and organisational efficiencies such as federations / amalgamation;

- identifying the school sites in the Local Plan suitable for development and or identifying existing schools suitable for expansion in areas where there is rising pupil demand;
- identifying the school sites suitable for the delivery of resource/alternative provisions in accordance with priorities in the SEND Sufficiency Plan;
- examining proposals put forward by the council in view of the local context;
- challenging decisions made by admission authorities in favour or against a reduction in pupil numbers.

3.69 The School Organisation and Capital Investment Strategy will be reviewed annually and updated periodically to respond in an agile manner to pupil population change; strategic developments within the council and to national policy changes that impact on school organisation and sufficiency planning.

Special Educational Needs Provision

3.70 The number of Tower Hamlets children and young people with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) remains on an overall upward trajectory. There are currently 3464 resident children and young people with EHCPs in 2022, compared with 2842 in 2019.

Table 15 Number of Children in LBTH with Education, Health and Care Plans

EHCPs in LBTH by Age Category	2019	2020	2021	2022
Under 5	212	165	76	54
Age 5 to 10	1075	1136	1140	1179
Age 11 to 15	890	956	1049	1121
Age 16 to 19	540	589	681	698
Age 20 to 25	125	170	311	412
Total Number	2842	3016	3257	3464

3.71 The numbers of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have shown the biggest increase and will continue to do so over the coming years, in line with the London and national trend. Children and young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs have also accelerated beyond past projections, exacerbated by the impacts of the Covid lockdown. We can also expect to see rises in Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) alongside the increases in ASD and SEMH.

3.72 A summary statement on the breakdown of need, projected demand, sufficiency pressures, and priorities for additional specialist provision is provided at Appendix 4.

4. SCHOOL SITES PROVIDED THROUGH THE LOCAL PLAN

Site Deliverability

4.1 The Local Plan allocates a number of school sites to meet projected need as well as improve the existing schools' estate. Some of these sites are mentioned in Section 3. This provides the council with the necessary options and flexibility required to manage the risks relating to site deliverability as well as ensure it can

meet its legal duty as an education provider in the medium to long term. The rationale for this is explained in Appendix 5.

School Development Funding Streams

- 4.2 A summary of funding streams available for the development of new schools and improving the council's existing schools' estate is set out in Appendix 7.

5 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Providing access to good quality school places is essential to raising achievement and addressing poverty and inequality in the long term. The council undertakes its role in the planning of school places with the aim of ensuring efficient, effective, and sustainable provision. The reorganisation of school places and the development of new schools in areas of need will have a positive impact on all groups by improving accessibility, increasing parental choice and promoting inclusive education.
- 5.2 When the council undertakes its plans to consult on changes to existing schools or when it seeks to establish new schools and works with the DfE to appoint new school providers, it will ensure that the offer is universally applicable to children and young people of school age and there is no unequal impact on different groups. This is particularly relevant to children and young people with SEND, ensuring that, as far as possible, they can be educated in mainstream settings with adapted, relevant, and bespoke support that ensures they can learn.

6 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

(i) Best Value Implications

- 6.1 The report sets out plans for managing the supply of school places and meeting future need. These plans seek to make the best use of existing and future council assets as well as opportunities to secure maximum funding from central government.
- 6.2 Any proposals for expanded or new provision will be subject to consultation as they are developed and before implementation. Implementation of capital schemes will be subject to competitive procurement.

(ii) Environmental (including air quality)

- 6.3 The proposals to provide additional school places to meet the needs of the population will be implemented taking account of sustainable design standards and materials. The planned organisational changes to school provision is intended to ensure that children can access a local school place and so minimise travel.

(iii) Risk Management

- 6.4 The council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient and sustainable school places. In order to plan to meet this requirement pupil population projections are obtained annually and reviewed each year against the known school capacity. It is clear that the projections indicate that significant changes in the need for places must be planned for. There will likely be regular variations in the projections, given the current volatility of the population across London. It is therefore essential for the council to retain some operational flexibility to respond, according to its sufficiency and or sustainability requirements.

- 6.5 The plans required to meet the need for school places can often require the balance of complex and competing considerations, for example for other social infrastructure requirements. Because of the length of time that is required to implement capital projects, decisions need to be taken in sufficient time to plan the use of resources and to identify potential shortfalls.
- 6.6 The council has to manage the risk of failing to meet its statutory duties by having a number of options available for implementation and also by keeping the changing circumstances under regular review.
- 6.7 (iv) Safeguarding
- The report deals with the council's approach to providing school places for the local population. The supply of good quality school places contributes to the safeguarding of children by ensuring their early and continued access to appropriate education.
- (v) Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment
- 6.8 When implementing the plans presented in this document, the council will undertake a full public consultation on the proposed school organisation changes. All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected to be included in the analysis of feedback received. Responses to the consultations will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposals and not for any other purpose.
- 6.9 Tower Hamlets Council will handle information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information the privacy notice for Pupil Services can be accessed [here](#).

7 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications in this report. However, it should be noted that the revenue costs of meeting School places are met through the Dedicated Schools grant (DSG) which are based on pupil count. The Capital costs of delivering extra capacity are met through different sources, which are detailed in Appendix six. There would be no expectation of the costs of Schools places being met from General Fund resources.

8 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 8.1 A local authority has a general duty under section 13 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires local authorities to exercise their functions so as to promote the participation of young people aged 16-18 in education and training.
- 8.2 A local authority has a number of duties relating to pre-school provision. Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires a local authority to secure (whether or not by that authority) that there is sufficient childcare for the working parents in their area. Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 requires a local authority to secure (whether or not providing it themselves) that there is sufficient free childcare for certain children as set out in regulations. There is also a requirement under sections 1 and 2 of the Childcare Act 2016 for local authorities to provide free childcare for certain children.

- 8.3 In order to amalgamate two maintained schools, one must close and the other must expand. Parts 2 and 3, and Schedules 2 and 3 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 set out the procedure for closing and expanding schools. The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations and the statutory guidance Opening and Closing Maintained Schools (2019) give further details for the closure of a school. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the statutory guidance Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to Maintained Schools (2018) set out further details of the process for the expansion of a school.
- 8.4 Part 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires a local authority to seek proposals for a new Academy if they believe that a new school is required in their area.
- 8.5 The proposals in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance.
-

Appendices

• Appendix 1	Map of Primary School Planning (catchment) Areas
• Appendix 2	GLA School Roll Projections Model
• Appendix 3	Commissioning of New School Places
• Appendix 4	LBTH SEND Sufficiency Statement
• Appendix 5	The Local Plan approach to allocating school sites
• Appendix 6	Funding Streams Available for the Development of School Sites

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.
- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- List any linked reports
- State NONE if none.

Appendices

- List any appendices [if Exempt, Forward Plan entry MUST warn of that]
- State NONE if none.

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.
- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

Officer contact details for documents: N/A