

Committee:	Dated:
Community and Children's Services Grand Committee	04/07/2024
Subject: School Admissions Update	The main report is Public <u>Appendix A is Non-Public</u>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Providing Excellent Services – Supporting people to live healthy, independent lives, and achieve their ambitions, is dependent on excellent services. Vital to that continued pursuit is enabling access to effective adult and children's social care, outstanding education, lifelong learning, quality housing, and combatting homelessness
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	The Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Kirstie Hilton, Head of Education and Early Years Service	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the allocation of primary and secondary school places for City of London resident pupils for the academic year 2024/25.

The City of London Corporation has complied with the statutory duty to co-ordinate school applications as part of the cross-borough, Pan-London Admissions Scheme process.

All children whose parents applied on time for a school place for entry in September 2024 received a place on National Offer Day.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the points raised in the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available within the area for every child of school age whose parents wish them to attend school. There is only one maintained primary school in the area – the Aldgate School. City of London residents also apply for school places at schools in neighbouring boroughs.
2. The School Admissions Code (the Code) has been issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The Code came into effect on 19 December 2014, and was last updated in 2022.
3. The Code applies to admissions for all maintained schools in England and it sets out how school applications are processed. It is the responsibility of admission authorities to ensure that admissions arrangements are compliant with this Code. Where a school is the admission authority, this responsibility falls to the governing body or Academy Trust for that school.
4. Regulations 26 to 32 and Schedule 2 of the School Admissions Regulations 2012 require local authorities to co-ordinate school applications and ensure that cross-borough processes are compatible with each other. The City of London Corporation is part of the Pan-London Admissions Scheme process, where all 33 London local authorities and Surrey County Council have reciprocal admissions arrangements.
5. The governing body is the admission authority for The Aldgate School. This means that the governors set the admissions policy for the school and make the decisions about which pupils are allocated places and admitted to the school. The school is a one-form entry school, with pupil admission places set in each year group.

Current Position

Primary School Places

6. The deadline for applications for a primary school place for entry in September 2024 was 15 January 2024. Offers for school places were confirmed on 16 April 2024.
7. When parents make their application for a primary school place, they can apply to a maximum of six schools in order of preference. They only receive one offer based on their order of preference and the highest preference offer that can be allocated. Table A1 (in Appendix A) illustrates the primary school place offers for City of London pupils offered on 16 April 2024.

8. The City of London Corporation received 26 applications by the closing date for primary school places. All primary school pupils were allocated places in April 2024: 81% (21 children) received their first preference) and 19% (five children) received their second preference. In comparison to 2023, 24 applications were processed, and in April 2023, all primary school pupils were allocated places. Out of these 24 offers, 96% (23 children) received their first preference and 4% (one child) received their second preference.
9. Compared to other London local authorities, the City of London Corporation has not witnessed a significant decrease in the number of reception school applications over the past five years. During the academic year 2019/20, the City processed 28 primary school applications, compared to 26 applications in the current application year. During the five years, the number of applications dipped to 24 in 2019. Therefore, 26 applications are within the expected range.
10. City of London Primary Academy Islington (COLPAI) has been very popular with City families and has surpassed the Aldgate School as the most popular school (see Table 1). Both schools are rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, and both are part of the City of London family of schools.

Table 1: Offers at Aldgate and COLPAI		
Year	Offers at the Aldgate School	Offers at COLPAI
2017	6	6
2018	10	8
2019	6	9
2020	11	12
2021	10	14
2022	14	9
2023	9	10
2024	6	10

11. In 2024, the Aldgate School was oversubscribed. The school received 66 applications, with 30 first preferences. The governing body met in February 2024 to process all applications and allocate places at the school for entry in September 2024 in line with their oversubscription criteria. Unfortunately, the Aldgate School is not immune to the current decline in the London population and has seen a year-on-year decrease in the number of applications and first preferences (see Table 2).

Table 2: Applications over 5 years at the Aldgate School		
Year	Total Applications	First Preferences
2023/24	66	30
2022/23	77	39
2021/22	81	42
2020/21	83	38
2019/20	93	45

12. The Aldgate School appears to be navigating through this difficult period as, unlike other schools in the area, it has managed to fill all its places for entry in September 2024. Other schools in Tower Hamlets and Hackney, close to the City’s border, are either closing or merging, and those that remain open are finding it a challenge to fill a whole reception class. The Education and Early Years Service will monitor the situation closely and support the Aldgate School to help address these challenges, including possibly revising its oversubscription criteria.
13. At COLPAI, the total number of applications has not decreased as much over time, but they are seeing a decline in the number of first preferences (see Table 3).

Year	Total Applications	First Preferences
2023/24	150	47
2022/23	148	64
2021/22	184	88
2020/21	155	62
2019/20	168	69

Secondary School Places

14. The deadline for applications for a secondary school place for entry in September 2024 was 31 October 2023. Offers for secondary school places were confirmed on 1 March 2024.
15. When parents make their application for a secondary school place, they can apply to a maximum of six schools and mark them in order of preference. They receive only one offer, which is based on their order of preference and is the highest preference offer that can be allocated. Table A2 (in Appendix A) illustrates the secondary school place offers for City of London pupils on 1 March 2024.
16. By the closing date of 31 October 2023, 18 applications were received for secondary school places. On 1 March 2024, 78% (14 children) of the City of London's secondary-aged pupils received an offer for their first preference, while 22% (four children) either received an allocated offer or an offer for other preferences.
17. The City of London was only second to Barking and Dagenham, where 82% of children received their first preference. The average London-wide first preference figure is 70.5%.
18. In comparison, during the 2022/23 application year, 32 applications were received for secondary school places before the closing date of 31 October 2022, with 81% of secondary-aged pupils receiving their first preference. During the 2021/22 application year, 34 applications were received for secondary school places by the closing date of 31 October 2021, with 74% of secondary-aged pupils receiving their first preference offer. It is worth noting that the elevated number of applications during both these years was a direct result of the bulge class at the Aldgate School entering Year 6, and the number of Afghan families temporarily residing in the City of London.

City resident children

19. Every year, in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Education team carries out an annual census to fulfil its statutory duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to "...make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise".
20. During April and May 2024, the team contacted all schools with known City of London resident children on the school roll to update its School Tracker. As of 31 May 2024, the team identified 247 City of London resident children of statutory school age on the roll at 60 different schools. Information gathered from this census includes children receiving special educational needs (SEN) support and children whose attendance is below 90%.

Managing Falling Pupil Numbers in London

21. London is facing significant decreases in demand for school places, as the birth rate has dropped, and other local factors such as a demographic shift. Most London boroughs are expected to see a decline in reception pupil numbers from 2023/24 to 2027/28. Over these four years, there is a forecast drop in demand of, on average, 4.4% at reception across London. This masks some larger decreases, including seven boroughs in London that are forecasting a demand decrease of more than 10%. At the secondary school level, forecast demand is also falling. The number of pupils in Year 7 across London is expected to decline from 2023/24 to 2027/28. There is a forecast drop in demand of 4.3% for Year 7 places, on average, across London.¹
22. The fall in demand reflects the decline in the birth rate since 2012, and changes in migration patterns in London. *Managing Falling School Rolls in London* analyses boroughs' four-year demand forecasts, the current challenges facing schools and local authorities about planning school places, and recommendations for what local government, London councils, and the government can do to support the school system through this challenging period. An example of mitigation opportunities is the repurposing of mainstream school capacity to special education resource.
23. As the City of London has one maintained primary school in the local area, a shortfall of places is a potential concern. Currently, the Aldgate School remains a very popular school and is oversubscribed, however, the education team is monitoring application data very carefully. The demand for secondary places has also not had any impact on City of London pupils to date. The choice of secondary schools is largely within neighbouring boroughs, and the number of parents interested in City-sponsored schools has increased. Three City-sponsored schools continue to offer priority places to City resident children.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

¹ London Councils, [Managing Falling School Rolls in London](#), January 2024.

24. Strategic implications – Corporate outcome: Providing Excellent Services – Supporting people to live healthy, independent lives, and achieve their ambitions, is dependent on excellent services. Vital to that continued pursuit is enabling access to effective adult and children’s social care, outstanding education, lifelong learning, and quality housing, and combatting homelessness.
25. Resource implications – There is an Admissions and Attendance Manager who oversees the operational admissions function within the local authority. The School Admissions Services is a commissioned service, which is currently being delivered by Islington Borough Council.
26. Financial implications – There is a cost associated with the School Admissions Service and access to the Pan-London Admissions Scheme.
27. Legal implications – There is a statutory duty to ensure that the City of London Corporation co-ordinates all school applications at standard transition points.
28. Risk implications – The City of London has sufficient school places for primary-aged children. There has been a reduction in school places across London in recent years, but this has not been an issue for City of London resident families. Children continue to apply to a wide range of schools, primarily in neighbouring areas, but also further afield.
29. Equalities implications – All children have the right to a school place. If a child is not offered a school place, then our service will allocate a place at a school within a reasonable distance.
30. Climate implications – n/a
31. Security implications – n/a

Conclusion

32. The City of London has complied with the statutory duty to co-ordinate school applications as part of the cross-borough, Pan-London Admissions Scheme process. All children and young people who applied for a school place for entry in September 2024 have been offered school places, and therefore the City of London has fulfilled its statutory duty.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Preference Data for City Children – Non-Public

Kirstie Hilton

Head of Education and Early Years Service

T: 020 7332 3274

E: kirstie.hilton@cityoflondon.gov.uk