

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committees: Community and Children's Services Committee	Dated: 19/06/2025
Subject: School Admissions Update	Public report: For Information <u>Appendix A is Non-Public</u>
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	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
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
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 2025/26.

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 2025 received a place on National Offer Day.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note 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 at standard transition points (children moving into Reception and Year 7) 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 of 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 2025 was 15 January 2025. Offers for school places were confirmed on 16 April 2025.
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 2025.
8. The City of London Corporation received 18 applications by the closing date for primary school places. All primary school pupils were allocated places in April 2025.

Key Data

9. The paragraphs below show the key data related to this report.

Summary of Primary School Offers (2025)

- 89% (16 children) received their 1st preference offer.
- 11% (2 children) received their 2nd preference offer.

Table 1: Year-on-year primary school application comparative analysis			
Year (April offer day)	Total applications	1st preference offers	2nd preference offers
2025	18	89% (16 apps)	11% (2 apps)
2024	26	81% (21 apps)	19% (5 apps)
2023	24	96% (23 apps)	4% (1 app)
2022	34	94% (32 apps)	6% (2 apps)
2021	28	89% (25 apps)	11% (3 apps)

10. Similar to other local authorities in London, the City of London Corporation has witnessed a downward trend in the number of Reception school applications over the past five years. The spike in applications in 2022 resulted from processing applications for our Afghan children who were with us during the 2021/22 academic year. Based on NHS GP registration and City births data, it is expected that the number of applications may not decline further.
11. City of London Primary Academy Islington (COLPAI) has become popular with City families and is a suitable alternative to The Aldgate School in the north

west of the City of London. (see Table 2). Both schools are rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, and both are part of the City of London family of schools.

Table 2: Offers at The Aldgate School 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
2025	6	5

12. In 2025, The Aldgate School was oversubscribed. The school received 95 applications, with 48 first preferences. The governing body met in February 2025 to process all applications and allocate places at the school for entry in September 2025 in line with their oversubscription criteria. Even with a concern about falling pupil numbers in parts of London, it is pleasing to see that The Aldgate School remains a popular preference (see Table 3). The number of applications has exceeded 2019/20 figures, which demonstrates The Aldgate School’s resilience and reputation, especially since receiving an outstanding Ofsted inspection outcome in 2024.

Table 3: Applications over 5 years at The Aldgate School		
Year	Total applications	First preferences
2024/25	95	48
2023/24	66	30
2022/23	77	39
2021/22	81	42
2020/21	83	38
2019/20	93	45

13. Unlike other schools in the area, The Aldgate School seems to be handling the challenge of declining pupil numbers well, having successfully filled all its places for September 2025 entry. Some other schools in Tower Hamlets and Hackney, close to the City of London’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 monitors the situation closely and supports The Aldgate School to help address these challenges, including possibly revising its oversubscription criteria. Discussion and advice on marketing the school has been undertaken this term.

14. 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 4).

Table 4: Applications over 5 years at COLPAI		
Year	Total applications	First preferences
2024/25	153	50
2023/24	149	64
2022/23	183	89
2021/22	157	60
2020/21	171	69

Secondary School Places

15. The deadline for applications for a secondary school place for entry in September 2025 was 31 October 2025. Offers for secondary school places were confirmed on 4 March 2025.
16. 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 2025.
17. By the closing date of 31 October 2024, 32 applications were received for secondary school places. On 1 March 2025:
- 66% (21 pupils) received their 1st preference offer
 - 19% (6 pupils) received an offer for another preference
 - 16% (5 pupils) received an allocated offer (a school not listed in their preferences).

Table 5: Year-on-year secondary school application comparative analysis				
Year	Total applications	1st preference offers	Other preference offers	Allocated offers
2025	32	66%	19%	16% (5 pupils)
2024	18	78%	17%	5% (1 pupil)
2023	32	81%	16%	3% (1 pupil)

18. There is a growing trend of families whose children attend independent schools applying to high-performing maintained schools. If they are unsuccessful in securing a place, they often return to independent schools.

19. Of the five children allocated school places, four will be attending independent schools, all of whom are already enrolled in the independent sector. One child received an offer from their first-choice school during another round of offers. This represents a positive outcome not captured in the initial offer day statistics.
20. The number of applications from families with children in independent schools has remained relatively stable, indicating that the upcoming VAT changes have not yet influenced an increase in applications.

City resident children

21. In line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Education Team maintains school tracker data under the statutory duty 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".
22. As of 31 May 2025, the team identified 330 City of London resident children of statutory school age on the roll of 69 different schools. Information gathered from this census includes children receiving special educational needs (SEN) support and children whose attendance is below 90%.
23. At the start of each academic year, the City of London Corporation commissions Islington local authority to carry out a 'no-show' report to identify pupils who were expected to attend but have not arrived at the school they had confirmed with us. This process helps to quickly flag potential children known as children missing education (CME) and allows for early intervention to ensure their safety and re-engagement with education. Currently we have no known CME in the City, meaning those not enrolled at a school or Electively Home Educated.

Managing Falling Pupil Numbers in London

24. 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
25. 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

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

challenges facing schools and local authorities about planning school places, and recommendations for what 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.

26. Conversely, 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 and Early Years 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. Three City-sponsored schools continue to offer priority places to City resident children.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

27. **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.
28. **Financial implications** – There is a cost associated with the School Admissions Service and access to the Pan-London Admissions Scheme.
29. **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.
30. **Legal implications** – There is a statutory duty to ensure that the City of London Corporation co-ordinates all school applications at standard transition points.
31. **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.
32. **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.
33. **Climate implications** – n/a
34. **Security implications** – n/a

Conclusion

35. 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 2025 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**

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