City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committees: Community and Children's Services Committee	**Dated:** 30/06/2026
Subject: School Admissions Update	**Public report:** For Information Appendix A is **Non-Public**
This proposal: • **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?	Local Risk
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 2026/27.

The City of London Corporation (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 whose parents applied on time for a school place for entry in September 2026 received a place on National Offer Day.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London 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, Academies and Free Schools in England and sets out how school applications must be 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 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 only 30 pupils in each year group), 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 2026 was 15 January 2026. Offers for school places were confirmed on 16 April 2026.

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, non-public) illustrates the primary school place offers for City of London pupils offered on 16 April 2026.

8. The City of London received 23 applications by the closing date for primary school places. All primary school pupils were allocated places in April 2026.

Key Data

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

Summary of Primary School Offers (2026)

- 74% (17 children) received their 1st preference offer.
- 26% (6 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
2026	**23**	**74% (17 apps)**	**26% (6 apps)**
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. While application numbers have fluctuated year-on-year, the most recent data suggests a partial recovery following a dip in 2025. Importantly, based on NHS GP registration data and City birth figures, there is no current indication that application numbers will decline further in the immediate term.

11. However, there has been a decrease in first preference offers, alongside a corresponding increase in second preference allocations, which was due to parents opting for schools outside their usual local or preferred areas. The City of London 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.

12. 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 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
2026	11	9

13. In 2026, The Aldgate School was oversubscribed, receiving 73 applications for Reception places, including 37 first preference applications. In February 2026, the Governing Body met to consider all applications and allocate places for September 2026 entry in accordance with the school's published oversubscription criteria. Despite wider concerns regarding falling pupil numbers across London, it is encouraging that The Aldgate School continues to remain a popular choice for families (see Table 3).

14. Application numbers for 2026/27 increased compared with 2023/24, which represented the lowest point for applications in recent years. This raised concerns that numbers might continue to decline in line with falling pupil rolls across London. While total applications and first preferences are lower than 2024/25, demand for places remains comparatively strong and above the levels recorded at the lowest point. This indicates that the school continues to maintain a positive reputation and sustained parental interest, particularly following its 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection outcome in 2024.

Table 3: Applications over 7 years at The Aldgate School

Year	**Total applications**	**First preferences**
2025/26	73	37
2024/25	95	48
2023/24	66	30
2022/23	77	39
2021/22	81	42
2020/21	83	38
2019/20	93	45

15. Unlike many schools in neighbouring boroughs, The Aldgate School appears to be managing the challenge of falling pupil rolls relatively well, having successfully filled all Reception places for September 2026 entry. By comparison, several schools in neighbouring areas within the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney, have either closed, merged, reduced Published Admission Numbers or are facing increasing difficulty in filling Reception classes.

16. The Education and Early Years Service continues to monitor local demographic trends closely and works collaboratively with The Aldgate School to help address these challenges, including consideration of potential revisions to the school's oversubscription criteria. In addition, a promotional video was developed and published in December 2025 as part of a wider marketing strategy to raise the school's profile among prospective families.

17. At COLPAI, the data indicates that demand for places remains resilient despite year-on-year fluctuations. The increase in applications in 2025/26 may suggest a resurgence in demand following the dip experienced in 2024/25. Continued monitoring will be important to determine whether this improvement is sustained over the longer term (see Table 4).

Table 4: Applications over six years at COLPAI		
Year	**Total applications**	**First preferences**
2025/26	170	60
2024/25	135	50
2023/24	149	64
2022/23	183	89
2021/22	157	60
2020/21	171	69

Secondary School Places

18. The deadline for applications for a secondary school place for entry in September 2026 was 31 October 2025. Offers for secondary school places were confirmed on 2 March 2026.

19. 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, non-public) illustrates the secondary school place offers for City of London pupils on 1 March 2026.

20. By the closing date of 31 October 2025, 23 applications were received for secondary school places. (See Table 5 for year-on-year comparisons.) On 2 March 2026:

- 65% (15 pupils) received their 1st preference offer
- 30% (7 pupils) received an offer for another preference
- 5% (1 pupil) 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
2026	23	65%	30%	5% (1 pupil)
2025	32	66%	19%	16% (5 pupils)
2024	18	78%	17%	5% (1 pupil)
2023	32	81%	16%	3% (1 pupil)

21. Overall, the data indicates that the majority of applicants continue to secure one of their preferred secondary school places, with allocated offers remaining consistently low across most years.

22. One pupil who initially received an allocated offer subsequently submitted further applications to other schools and has since secured a place at a more preferred school. In addition, four applicants who secured one of their preferred offers have chosen instead to attend independent schools. Of these, three pupils were already enrolled within the independent sector. These outcomes represent positive parental choice and movement that is not fully reflected within the initial national offer day statistics.

23. The number of applications from families currently educated within the independent sector has remained relatively stable. There is no evidence to suggest that the introduction of VAT on independent school fees has resulted in a significant increase in applications to maintained secondary schools.

City Resident Children

24. 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".

25. As of May 2026, the team identified 297[1] City of London resident children of statutory school age on the roll at 62 different schools. This information is obtained through the Department for Education's new View Your Education Data (VYED) system, which has been made available to all local authorities to support the monitoring and tracking of children resident within their area. The data provides valuable intelligence on children's school placements, including details of children receiving Special Educational Needs (SEN) support and those whose attendance falls below 90%.

26. In addition, the VYED system provides data on children who have left one school but have not subsequently appeared on the roll of another educational setting. This has proved to be an extremely valuable safeguarding and tracking tool. It has enabled the City of London to identify and follow up potential Children Missing Education (CME) cases at an earlier stage. The availability of this information significantly strengthens the City's ability to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to education welfare, safeguarding, school attendance, and ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable education.

27. The City of London also commissions the London Borough of Islington to undertake a 'no-show' check at the start of each academic year. This ensures that all pupils who secured a place through the City's co-ordinated admissions process are in active attendance at school. This process helps to quickly flag potential children known as 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

28. London continues to face significant decreases in demand for school places, driven primarily by falling birth rates, changing migration patterns, increasing housing costs, and wider demographic shifts across the capital. The latest London Councils report, *Managing School Rolls and Maintaining Educational Standards in London* (2026), forecasts that pupil demand will continue to decline between 2025/26 and 2029/30. Across London, Reception demand is projected to fall by 2.5%, while demand for Year 7 places is expected to decline by 3.8%. Inner London boroughs are expected to experience the greatest impact, with projected decreases of 6.2% in Reception and 7.2% in Year 7 pupil numbers.[2]

29. The report highlights that the impact of falling rolls now increasingly affects both the primary and secondary sectors, with secondary schools experiencing particularly significant reductions in demand for the first time. London Councils estimate that declining pupil numbers could reduce school funding across the

[1] Maintained and Independent Sector. Data source: DfE VYED & City of London Education and Early Years Service

[2] London Councils, *Managing School Rolls and Maintaining Educational Standards in London*, January 2026.

capital by approximately £45 million over the next four years, placing additional financial pressure on schools and local authorities. Since 2019, around 90 schools in London have either closed or merged because of falling rolls and financial viability concerns.

30. The report also identifies wider challenges associated with falling school rolls, including pressures relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, persistent absence, school avoidance, mental health and wellbeing concerns, and the increasing difficulty schools face in maintaining a broad curriculum offer with reduced budgets. Local authorities therefore continue to play a critical strategic role in school place planning, safeguarding educational standards, and supporting schools to manage the impact of changing demographics across London.

31. 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 Service is monitoring application data very carefully. The demand for secondary school 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

32. **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.

33. **Financial implications** – There is a cost associated with the School Admissions Service and access to the Pan-London Admissions Scheme.

34. **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.

35. **Legal implications** – There is a statutory duty to ensure that the City of London co-ordinates all school applications at standard transition points.

36. **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.

37. **Equalities implications** – All children have the right to a school place. If a child is not offered a school place, then the Education and Early Years Service will allocate

a place at a school within a reasonable distance.

38. **Climate implications** – n/a

39. **Security implications** – n/a

Conclusion

40. 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)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

This report's appendices are exempt by virtue of the paragraphs 1 & 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Appendix A contains sensitive information which may be exempted under the Act, and as this cannot be presented to Members as a separate appendix this report needs to be considered in closed session. Appendix A contains two tables of preference data (one for primary applications and one for secondary applications), which could identify individual children. It is considered that information falling under the following paragraphs outweighs the public interest in disclosing information:

1	Information relating to any individual.
2	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

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