

WESTMINSTER COUNCIL

SCHOOLS' FORUM – 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

REPORT BY BI-BOROUGH DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

**WESTMINSTER SCHOOLS FORUM PAPER PROVIDING THE ANNUAL SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING AND PROJECTIONS REPORT 2024-25 AND THE STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides the annual school place planning projections, and recommendations by the Strategic Working Group that met on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**FOR INFORMATION AND DECISION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The accompanying School Place Planning and Projections 2024-25 report provides Schools Forum with the annual overview of primary and secondary school capacity and future projections.

**2. SCHOOL ROLL PROJECTIONS**

Pupil place projections and school capacity analysis are undertaken annually and form part of a statutory process that is submitted to the DfE - the School Capacity Annual Projections (SCAP). This annual report provides the LA, and all key stakeholders, with forecasts that will need to inform decisions when managing supply and demand of school places. All London LAs subscribe to the GLA who provide the birth and migration data and the methodology for forecasting. Whilst the GLA methodology is the basis of the forecasts, the borough's Business Intelligence Team then applies its in-house modelling tool, using local roll projections, to the GLA forecasts, which has led to largely accurate surplus capacity projections in recent years.

- 2.2 The on-roll data source of the report is the **summer pupil census (May 2024)**, as required by the statutory DfE SCAP (School Capacity Annual Projections). The surplus capacity data and overall Published Admissions Numbers for schools is calculated as at October 2024. This takes account of the removal of school capacity that took effect from the start of the academic year.

### 3. PLACE PLANNING REPORT KEY HEADLINES

- 3.1 **Primary forecasts** are presented as a whole borough, and then broken down by the six primary planning areas in Westminster: Bayswater, Maida Vale, St John's Wood, Central, South and Marylebone, as required by the DfE when submitting the annual SCAP return (School Capacity Annual Projections). The highest surplus capacity is in the Central planning area, with the South and Bayswater close behind. Unlike many other London boroughs, the surplus is quite evenly spread and not concentrated predominantly to one area.
- 3.2 When projecting forward, estimates will take account of any additional pupils that may derive from approved housing developments. Whilst there are currently developments in the pipeline or at the planning stage, as indicated in the report, the potential child yield suggests that there is sufficient spare capacity to meet any additional demand from new housing.
- 3.3 Action has been taken to address surplus capacity, with the removal (including the proposed removal), of fourteen forms of entry between 2018-2025. Even with this large amount of capacity removed, the annual pupil place projections indicate a continuing decline in pupil numbers which will result in a continuing increase in surplus capacity across schools. When taking account of the removal of agreed and proposed capacity, the forecast surplus is estimated to be 25% from September 2025. Whilst this does stabilise what would be a much higher surplus if no action is taken, it remains too high, with further reductions needed.
- 3.4 **Financial implications** – As of March 2024, there were 13 schools in deficit, with a total deficit of £3.4 million, but an overall net surplus balance of £3.7 million. It is projected that by the end of the current financial year, 16 schools will be in deficit, with a total deficit of £4.7 million, and an overall net **deficit** balance of about £0.6 million deficit.
- 3.5 **Secondary forecasts** are presented with one planning area. Whilst the projected-on roll numbers are forecast to fall over the next five years, as the primary cohort works through to the secondary phase of education, the surplus forecast from September remains low and is estimated to be no more than 10% by 2026. Six secondary schools exceed their Published Admissions Number (PAN), mainly in order to offer a school place to resident girls at the Year 7 point of entry. When managing the placement of in-year new arrivals, all schools agree to offer places above PAN via the normal in-year admissions route or the mechanisms of the Fair Access Protocol for hard-to-place cases. As there is some surplus capacity in secondary schools in neighbouring boroughs,

demand can be met that accords with the legal requirement to offer a school place to resident 11-16 year olds within a reasonable travelling distance.

#### 4. STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP UPDATE

- 4.1 The Working Group met on the 10<sup>th</sup> December and were presented with the primary school forecasts as an extract of the full place planning report. The current and forecast capacity and financial position was the key focus for the group, and to agree recommendation to the Schools Forum.
- 4.2 The surplus capacity is revised following each pupil census point of the year to allow for up-to-date analysis, and to ensure that any changes in trends are identified, such as noticeable increases or decreases in roll numbers for individual schools.
- 4.3 When allowing for the checking and cleansing of data, and the inclusion of data for academies which is collated via the DfE, the census data is published approximately 8-10 weeks after the census collection dates in January, May and October.
- 4.4 The October 2024 school census data is published in December each year. As of **January 2025**, overall primary surplus capacity now stands **at 23.8%**. As a comparison, surplus capacity in January 2024 was 26.6%.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Schools Forum are asked to note the School Place Planning report for 2024-25
- 5.2 Schools Forum is asked to agree the recommendations of the Strategic Working Group;
  - 5.2.1 that the remaining schools larger than one form of entry consider reducing their PAN to align with lower enrolment numbers.
  - 5.2.2 that schools without a deficit recovery plan in place continue to be supported to submit a 3-year budget plan or agree an alternative plan to ensure their future viability.
  - 5.2.3 the need to provide support to amber schools to help them improve their financial position and avoid going into deficit.
  - 5.2.4 that amber schools engage with the local authority for budget reviews and cost-saving measures.

- 5.2.5 that amber schools utilise the DfE-led SRMA process for an objective review of their financial position and advice on steps they might take with regard to 3-year budget planning.

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