

**WESTMINSTER COUNCIL****SCHOOLS' FORUM – 13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023****REPORT BY BI-BOROUGH DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION****ISOS WORKING GROUP (JUNE 2023) UPDATE REPORT****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides feedback from the Isos Working Group, a summary of the current position and recommendations for next steps.

**FOR DECISION****1. INTRODUCTION**

The Isos working group last met in June 2023. Verbal feedback was provided by Ian Heggs and Aaron Sumner, the Chair of the group. The working group agreed to reconvene meetings to focus on strategies to address the continuing increase in the surplus of school places across Westminster primary schools. This paper covers key headlines raised at the meeting in June but also provides a summary of the current position. The full 2023-24 School Place Planning and Projections report is currently in draft form and will be presented to Schools Forum in January.

**2. SURPLUS CAPACITY**

- 2.1 As calculated by the May 2022 pupil census, Westminster Council reported a 23.4% surplus capacity across all its primary schools. The May 2023 census reports a 23.7% surplus. To enable the presentation of the most current picture of primary provision, this latest figure takes into account the amalgamation of St Mary Magdalene and St Stephen's and Published Admissions Number (PAN) reductions that took effect from September 2023.
- 2.2 To provide some context to the above and historical trends, in October 2021, the surplus was 22.1%. In 2017 the surplus was 15%. Whilst there is no regulated surplus figure that LAs must work with, historically, place planners and the DfE operate based on a minimum surplus between 5% to 10%. The appropriate level will be dependent on local mobility to allow for in-year movement and an element

of choice for parents. As Westminster has a high level of transitional mobility, a minimum of 10% is considered a realistic surplus capacity.

- 2.3 For the purpose of place planning, and as required by the DfE when submitting the annual SCAP return (School Capacity Annual Projections), the borough is organised by planning areas. There are six primary planning areas in Westminster: Bayswater, Maida Vale, St John's Wood, Central, South and Marylebone. Unlike many other London boroughs, the surplus is quite evenly spread and not concentrated predominantly to one area. When removing capacity, it is essential to safeguard that not too much or too little is removed in one area, and there is a varied school choice for parents within a reasonable walking distance that takes account of adjacent planning areas.
- 2.4 The removal of capacity through permanent PAN reductions and amalgamations has mitigated a further increase in surplus capacity, and has stabilised even though the child population continues to decrease. Whilst this is moving in the right direction, the surplus remains high with further capacity needing to be removed.
- 2.5 Informal capping of year groups continues to be in place for several schools that are larger than one form of entry to support the resourcing and staffing. Capping is intended to be a temporary measure that is agreed between the LA and the school to support resourcing and financial management. However, this measure is not recognised legally and cannot be a long-term solution. The working group will be looking to schools where informal capping has been in place for some time to move to a formal reduction in PAN from the 2025 year of entry.
- 2.6 Looking back to 2022, the initial recommendation to remove 4-5 forms of entry was reviewed by the working group that was established during the initial Isos review. The decision to increase the recommendation to 7-8 forms to be removed in total by 2025 was presented and approved by Schools Forum and the Education Partnership Board. It has been necessary however to continue to review this recommendation with the support of the Isos Working Group, as the surplus is forecast to increase at a rate faster than the ability and feasibility to remove capacity.
- 2.7 As indicated, the surplus has been increasing at a fast rate, by 10% in the last 5 years. Whilst action has been taken and continues, as set out in para.3, all options to remove capacity permanently must follow a regulated process and this takes time. For a school to formally reduce its Published Admission Number (PAN), a formal consultation must take place 18 months prior to the year of entry that it will take effect from. Schools that are indicated in the table in para.3 to reduce their PAN for September 2024, were required to consult between October 2022 and January 2023. An amalgamation process can be implemented much sooner but entails a much more stringent legal process that will also be emotive for the parents, staff, children and the community.

### 3. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE SURPLUS CAPACITY

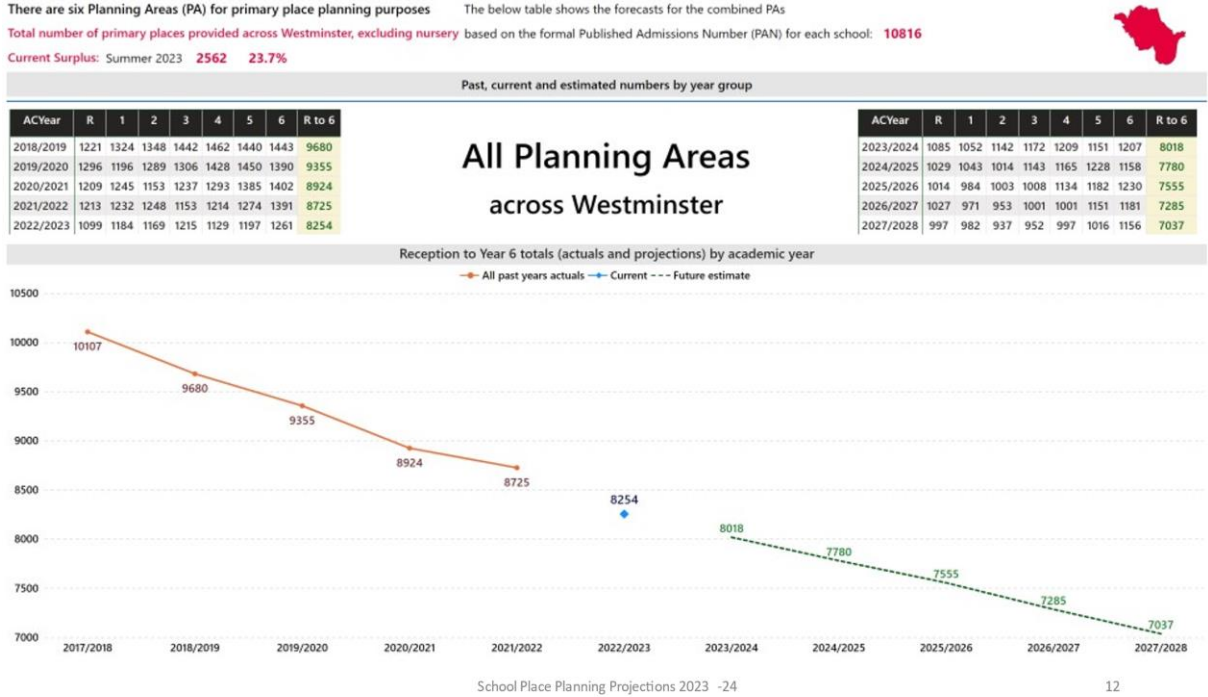
- 3.1 Since September 2018, 9.5 forms of entry have been removed from primary provision. A further 1.5 form of entry will be removed from September 2024. When including the proposed removal of capacity for St. Peter's Eaton Square from September 2025, a total of 12 forms of entry will have been removed (see table below).
- 3.2 When taking account of approved capacity reduction, and the proposed PAN reductions from 2025, the surplus capacity is forecast to be approximately **25%** by 2025. This surplus capacity remains at a level that is not sustainable for schools in the long term.

School	PAN Previous	PAN New/proposed	PAN Removed/to be removed/proposed	School places Removed	Date: Completed/ Approved/ Proposed
Ark Paddington Green and Ark King Solomon	120 (Joint PAN)	90	30	210	Completed 2018 Amalgamation
Burdett Coutts	54	30	24	168	Completed 2018 PAN reduction
Hallfield	90	60	30	210	Completed 2019 PAN reduction
Minerva Academy	56	0	56	392	Completed 2018 Closed
Wilberforce	60	30	30	210	Completed 2018 PAN reduction
Our Lady of Dolours	45	30	15	105	Completed 2022 PAN reduction
Westminster Cathedral and Vincent de Paul RC	60	30	30	210	Completed 2022 Amalgamation
George Eliot	60	30	30	210	Completed 2023 PAN reduction
St Mary Magdalene and St Stephen's CE	60	30	30	210	Completed 2023 Amalgamation
Essendine	60	45	15	105	Approved 2024 PAN reduction
Hallfield	60	45	15	105	Approved 2024 PAN reduction
St Mary of the Angels RC	42	30	12	84	Approved 2024 PAN reduction
St Peter's Eaton Square	50	30	20	140	Proposed 2025 PAN reduction
<b>Totals</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>337 (equates to 12 forms of entry)</b>	<b>2359</b>	

**4. PROJECTIONS**

4.1 School place projections are carried out annually to ensure the right strategies are in place to address any changes in trends. The data sources are school rolls (census), births, population and approved housing developments (all by ward/planning area). Education and Business Intelligence apply GLA modelling for its forecasting.

4.2 The following table provides a historical and current roll number, and a five-year forecast that is based on GLA modelling and local intelligence.



**5. FINANCIAL IMPACT OF SURPLUS PLACES**

5.1 Local Authorities do not fund schools directly; funding for schools comes into the Local Authority through the annual Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and, in 2023/24, a new Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) and the LA then passports this funding to schools.

5.2 The 2023/24 Schools' Block of the DSG which provides most of the schools' funding is £125.4m for Westminster, a reduction of £1.0m (0.8%) from 2022/23 due to a reduction in pupil numbers, and the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) brings an additional £4.4m; the total grant allocation therefore comes to £129.8m, an overall increase in funding of £2.386m (2.7%), per pupil funding has increased by 6.4%. However, this is against a background of teacher pay awards not being fully funded alongside rising energy costs. In addition, schools will receive the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) announced in the summer, which schools will receive as a separate grant from September 2023 to fund 3% of the 6.5% 2023 teachers pay award.

5.3 The formula to determine the DSG is mainly based on pupil numbers. With Westminster's pupil numbers falling across primary schools, this means that

although the rate of funding per pupil has increased, the overall level of funding is decreasing in local primary schools. This is creating a sustainability challenge for several small schools in Westminster.

- 5.4 Fourteen LA maintained schools reported a deficit at the end of 2022-23 and a further 4 are at risk of going into deficit within the next two years.
- 5.5 The government is planning to move to a national funding formula, which will mean that most of the money currently allocated through the DSG and managed by Schools Forum will transfer directly to schools. Currently, a local funding formula is used and overseen by Schools Forum which allows us to provide additional support to schools where necessary, for example to support with the costs of staff reorganisation given reduced pupil numbers. This flexibility will change when the national funding formula is fully implemented.
- 5.6 In October 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) published amended provisional school, central school services and high needs DSG allocations for **2024/25**. Nationally funding for mainstream schools through the schools block is increasing by **1.9% per pupil** compared with 2023/24.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Schools Forum is asked to:

- 6.1 agree that the continued focus of the Isos Working Group is to consider all possible options to mitigate forecast surplus capacity in Westminster primary provision;
- 6.2 agree that the Isos Working Group should continue to receive information on the deficit position of schools with significant surplus places to inform options to reduce capacity.

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