

Leaders' Committee

Meeting London's secondary school places need

Item no: 8

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Summary

The rising demand for school places is now reaching secondary school level. This presents a more complex challenge for London local government than at primary level in terms of securing larger sites and appropriate levels of funding, which will require more creative and collaborative efforts to manage. This report sets out the benefits of quantifying the scale of the challenge facing London local government over the next eight years and identifying areas that may need additional support in order to provide sufficient places within this timescale. The report suggests next steps to enable local authorities to be able to deliver these places to meet this predicted increase in demand, including through working with key partners and providing targeted support.

Recommendations

Leaders' Committee is asked to comment on the analysis of the scale of the challenge and the intention to provide targeted support to areas identified without confirmed plans in place. It is also recommended that London local government consider developing local arrangements to ensure greater cross-borough collaboration on planning secondary places going forward.

Meeting London's secondary school place need

Introduction

1. London local government has successfully managed an unprecedented demand for additional school places in London over the past decade. From 2010-2015 London's pupil population increased by 112,000, which amounts to 35% of the overall national pupil growth during this timeframe. Such rapid growth, alongside insufficient capital funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and higher costs of creating places in the capital, have intensified London's school place challenge.
2. And this growing need for places is forecast to continue to increase in London. London Councils is predicting that the capital needs an additional 113,000 places between 2015-2020 to cope with rising demand. This amounts to 78,275 places at primary level and 34,835 at secondary.
3. At the same time that London has experienced considerable increases in demand for places, the DfE has been rolling out its Free School programme which has its own capital funding budget. Of the first wave of Free Schools set up in London between 2011-2013, only 11 (23%) were in areas of high need. Free schools were not originally conceived to meet demand for places, but due to ongoing pressure the DfE has begun to work more closely with local authorities to better align new schools with areas of high need. However, the Ministerial commitment to deliver 500 free schools nationally by 2020 will put pressure on the DfE to expedite free school provision wherever sites are available.
4. During the first few years primary schools experienced the bulk of the increase in demand for places, but this wave has been working its way through primary schools and is now reaching London's secondary schools. London Councils is predicting that London's secondary school places shortfall will increase yearly between the years 2015 and 2020, if new places are not created. Table 1 (see next page) provides a yearly breakdown of London's school places shortfall.

Table 1 yearly shortfall of pupil places in London schools 2015/16 to 2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Primary	13,620	16,814	18,417	16,095	13,329	78,275
Secondary	1,906	3,333	5,481	10,106	14,009	34,835
Total	15,526	20,147	23,898	26,201	27,338	113,110

5. In 2019/20 the secondary school places shortfall will be larger than primary for the first time since the school places pressure began, with a predicted 13,329 primary places needed compared to 14,009 at secondary.
6. Demand for primary places remains significant but the increase for secondary places presents local government with an additional challenge in terms of planning for sufficient places in the system.
7. London Councils has been working with the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to understand the scale of the predicted increase in demand for secondary places by 2023/24 and to consider options to work with local authorities to ensure sufficient places are created to meet this demand.

Scale of delivering sufficient secondary school places by 2023/24

8. All local authorities complete a school capacity survey (SCAP), a statutory data collection, the results of which are published by DfE. To supplement this information London Councils collated data from all London local authorities used to inform individual council cabinet reports on school place projections and plans beyond 2020.
9. London Councils' preliminary analysis of the borough data reveals that London local authorities predict that they collectively will need 572 secondary forms of entry by 2023/24. Of these, 422 forms of entry are already planned for, although these are at different stages of development. However, 150 forms of entry have not yet been planned for, at the time of collating the information.

10. Of the 422 forms of entry where plans are in place, 122 have both funding and site secured. Further analysis will be required to better understand the stage which development plans are at and when they are likely to be confirmed. This process should also help identify whether there are any hurdles that additional support could help with, such as acquiring appropriate sites, overcoming planning restrictions or securing additional funding to meet the Building Research Establishment Environment Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards.
11. Where boroughs have outlined plans, irrespective of development stage, forms of entry will be created either through expanding existing schools and new schools being set up. The data shows that 273 forms of entry are planned in new secondary schools to be opened by 2023/24 and 149 forms of entry are planned in existing secondary schools in the same timeframe.

The secondary school places challenge for London

12. London local government has successfully met the surge in demand for school places experienced in the capital over the past decade largely by expanding capacity in existing schools, particularly at primary level. As demand reaches secondary level, it will not be so easy to find similar solutions.
13. Generally, secondary schools tend to be larger than primary schools. In order to provide a sustainable, broad and balanced curriculum there is a presumption by government that primary provision should have at least two forms of entry and secondary provision have at least four forms of entry. As this is the minimum requirement, many schools across the country have more forms of entry.
14. London secondary schools are, on average, two forms of entry larger than the national average to meet the needs of its existing pupil population. As a result, according to DfE data, 16 per cent of all London secondary schools are either at or above full capacity.
15. While some of the demand will be met through schools with existing capacity and redesigning schools operating at maximum capacity, new schools will be needed in some areas.

16. Secondary schools need a specialist mix of classrooms, e.g. science labs, to deliver the broad curriculum entitlement to their pupils. Therefore expansion by a single form of entry is not always appropriate. Even where capacity for one classroom is available there may not be sufficient capacity or funding available to provide the full specialist curriculum entitlement.
17. Secondary schools generally require larger sites to accommodate this range of provision. However, identifying suitably sized sites for secondary schools is complex in London where land is at a premium and there are a range of competing priorities, such as increasing housing supply and protecting green space, for local authorities to contend with.
18. Where appropriate land is available, it is often very difficult to purchase the site. The DfE basic need funding allocation does not include funding for sites. Therefore, local authorities often have to fund the purchase from their own resources in order to secure the site, ahead of identifying a school provider.
19. The lead-in times for schools to acquire sites, complete planning requirements and undertake any building work means that it can be at least three – and more often four or five – years before a new school is ready to take in pupils. This means that a school approved this year might not be taking in pupils until 2020 based on optimistic estimates.
20. One of the biggest challenges facing local authorities in securing sufficient places is the funding shortfall. Basic need funding from the government only met 59% of the total cost to provide school places during 2010-2015. The remaining 41% funding shortfall had to be met by London local government in order to secure enough school places for all the children that required one.
21. The challenges set out above highlight how the process of providing secondary places is inherently more complicated than with primary places. When the bulk of the increase in demand for places was felt at primary level local authorities managed to meet most of this demand locally largely through expansion of existing schools. However, with demand for places now reaching secondary schools London local government is facing a larger challenge. The lack of

appropriate sites and funding options will require creative solutions and collaborative cross-borough efforts to address.

22. Recent DfE data has shown that 20 per cent of all pupils in London (approximately 80,000) currently attend a secondary school in London that is outside the local authority they live in. This percentage could change dramatically as demand increases and locally available places become limited. To be able to plan effectively it is important that local authorities work across borough boundaries to be able to factor their neighbouring authorities' plans into their own plans to meet demand in order to avoid double-counting and ensure value for money.
23. London Councils has been working with ALDCS and the GLA to pool intelligence and expertise that could underpin collaborative work to develop a London-wide analysis of secondary school places planning over the next eight years. The purpose of this work would be to describe the detail and scale of the challenge in providing sufficient school places, identify areas that may need additional support and to foster greater cross-borough collaboration.
24. This work will provide a snapshot of need for places forecast up until 2023/24, including an overview of plans in place to meet this need (which is set out in paragraphs 6-9 of this report). It will help to identify areas where additional support could be offered to ensure sufficient places are made available by 2023/24. Using this information to support collaboration between boroughs ALDCS intend to fund a consultant to undertake some targeted work in areas where confirmed plans are not yet in place to provide some problem-solving support, including brokering potential cross-borough partnerships. This process should also help to identify any common issues with the planning process that London Councils could help to fix.

Next steps

25. Incorporating guidance from Leaders' Committee, London Councils will finalise its analysis of the scale of the challenge and identification of areas that may need additional support, and disseminate to local authorities and key partners.
26. London Councils will initiate conversations with the Regional School Commissioners, Education Funding Agency and faith groups with the aim of

joining up planning efforts to avoid duplication of effort and deliver an effective planning system across the capital.

27. In addition, London Councils will produce its annual *Do the Maths* publication in the summer that sets out the scale of the need for places at both primary and secondary, and presents a list of lobbying asks to help improve the school places planning system. This document will be informed by London Councils' work on secondary school place planning.

Recommendations

28. Leaders' Committee is asked to comment on the analysis of the scale of the challenge and the intention to provide targeted support to areas identified without confirmed plans in place. It is also recommended that London local government consider developing local arrangements to ensure greater cross-borough collaboration on planning secondary places going forward.

Financial Implications for London Councils

29. None

Legal Implications for London Councils

30. None

Equalities Implications for London Councils

31. None