



Final report on Isos Partnership support to address the challenge of falling primary rolls in Haringey

Summary

This paper sets out the conclusions of the first phase of work undertaken by Haringey Local Authority, supported by Isos Partnership, to address the issue of falling school rolls in primary schools in Haringey, and the associated impact on primary school finances. At the end of this report a plan for further work between January 2022 and November 2022 is set out to reach conclusions on how to address the shortfall in primary-aged pupils. The Local Authority will be working with schools to put this into effect over the next 11 months.

Scope of work

In September 2021, Isos Partnership was commissioned by Haringey Local Authority to support them, and schools in the borough, to address the issue of falling primary rolls. The purpose of this work was to:

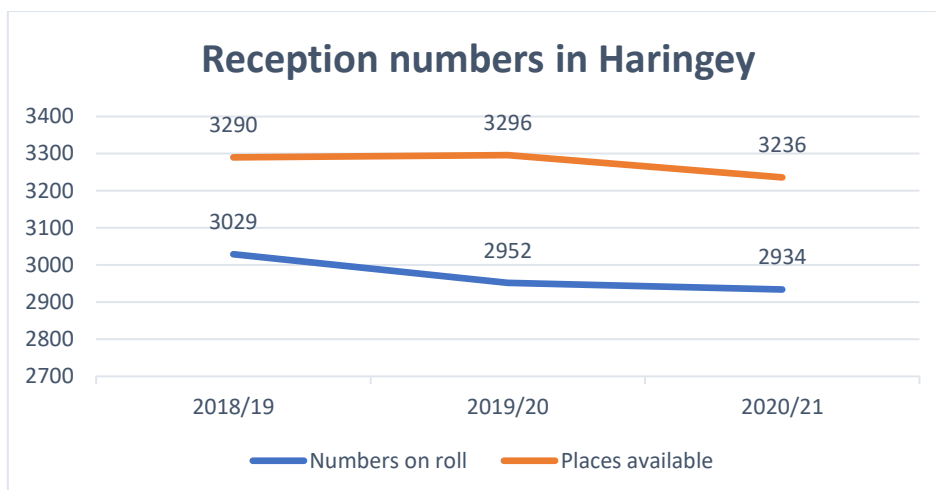
- Support the local authority and schools in developing a forward plan for addressing the shortfall in primary-aged children.
- Establish a shared understanding of the current context and future projections for primary rolls.
- Shed light on successful approaches that have been used elsewhere to address financial and capacity challenges.
- Recommend a process and governance options for taking forward decision-making in relation to primary capacity.

In carrying out this project we held individual interviews with headteachers, and in some cases also chairs of governors, in 13 primary schools; analysed the relevant data and documentation; engaged headteachers and chairs of governors in an open-invitation online briefing session; and carried out six locally based cluster meetings to explore the challenges and potential solutions in greater detail. This report brings together the findings of this process.

Current situation in terms of vacancies at borough level

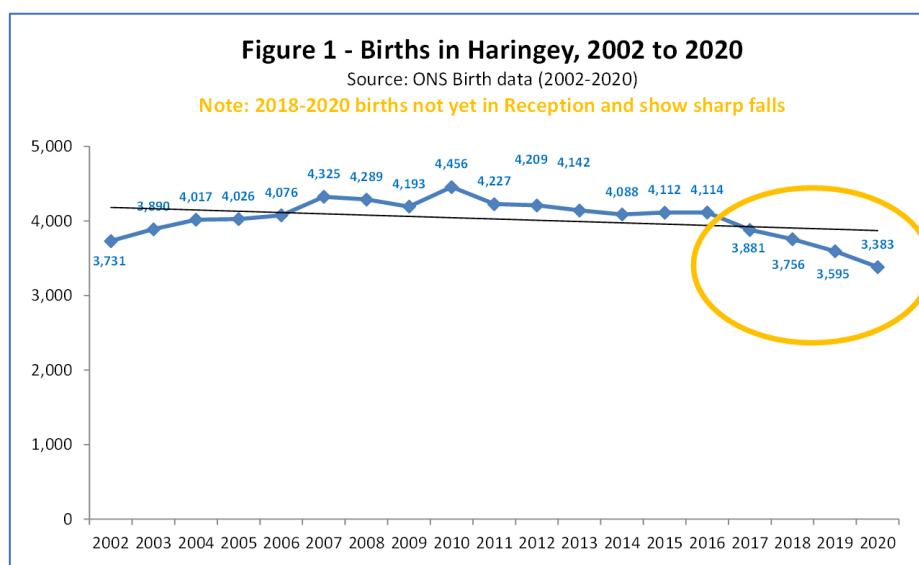
Overall vacancy numbers

As the chart below shows, the last three years have seen a reduction of 3% in the numbers of Reception-aged pupils on roll in Haringey primary schools. Currently, there are temporary caps in place in 6 primary schools, removing 6 forms of entry from the September 2021 intake. As of November 2021, there are 389 surplus Reception places – a vacancy rate of 13% across the whole borough. Across all primary year groups the overall vacancy rate is 10.7%.



Why are Haringey primary schools experiencing vacancies?

The experience of reducing numbers of primary-aged children is not unique to Haringey. It is being seen, to a greater or lesser extent, across almost all London boroughs. There are several factors which appear to be contributing to the reductions in primary aged children. Perhaps the most pertinent, and the easiest to demonstrate in terms of data, is the falling birth rate. The chart below shows that live births in Haringey fell from 4115 in 2015 to 3,383 in 2020. The September 2021 cohort of children entering Primary school was born in 2017, so the full extent of a falling birth rate has not yet fully worked through the system. This suggests that primary schools should prepare for further pupil reductions.



However, a falling birth rate is not the only factor contributing to the drop in pupil numbers. There is also evidence from schools, and others who engaged in this project, that:

- Reducing levels of inward migration, either as a result of Brexit or other economic or social forces, is leading to fewer families moving to London.
- Benefit caps and pressure on social housing has led to families being rehoused in other areas outside Haringey.

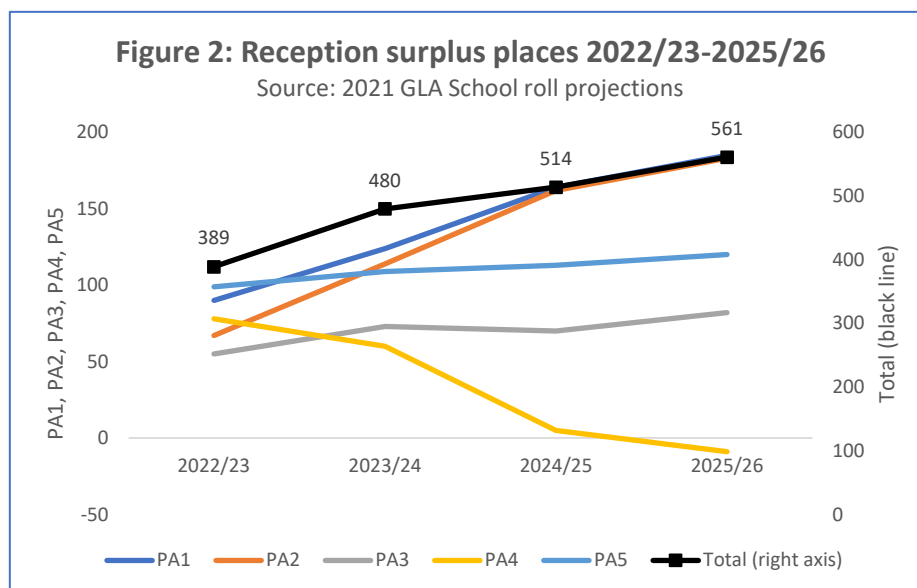
- The affordability and scarcity of family housing means that increasing numbers of families choose to move out of central London as their children get older.
- Increasing levels of vacancies in primary schools in other Inner London boroughs supports increased movement of primary-aged pupils across LA boundaries.
- Covid has amplified the trends of less inward migration and more outward migration of London families.

These compounding factors explain why, in addition to higher vacancy rates in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, schools are also experiencing increasing levels of pupil mobility leading to vacancies in older age ranges.

Future projections

Projecting the number of primary places needed in the future is very complex. Like any projections, estimates of pupil numbers tend to become less reliable the further forward one looks. The factors which are taken account in pupil projections include some known variables, such as the birth rate, and a range of unknown variables such as future levels of migration (both inwards and outwards), pupil yield from planned housing developments, parental decisions about whether to educate their children in the state sector or the independent sector, and movement of pupils between boroughs.

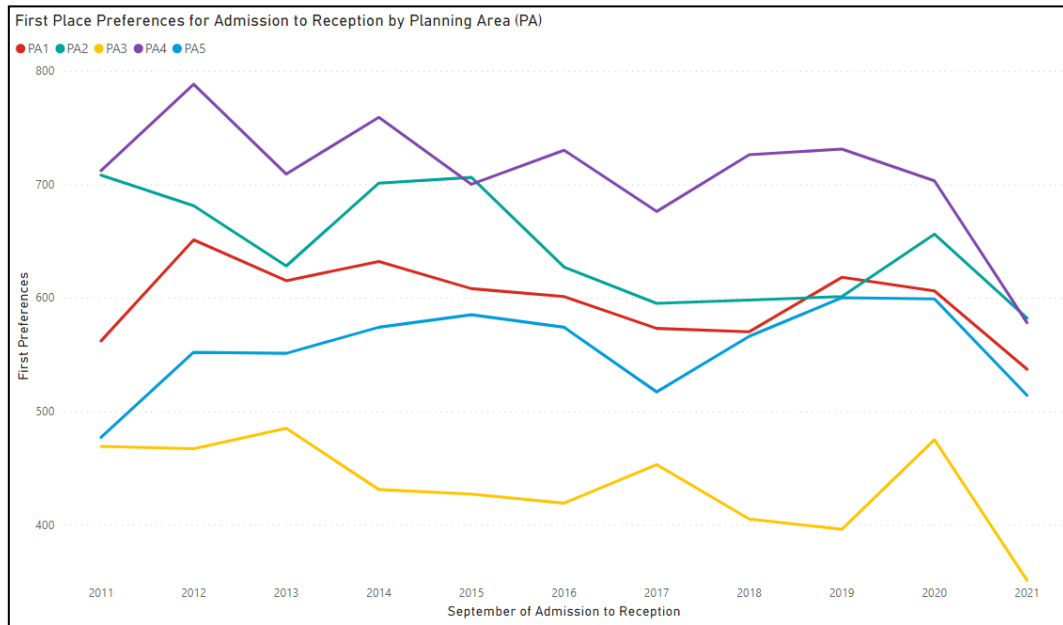
Haringey's forward projections, based on GLA school roll data, show that the anticipated number of Reception vacancies will rise from 389 to 561 over the next four years. Four out of the five planning areas in the borough are forecast to experience rising vacancy levels over this period.



Impact of Covid 19 pandemic on pupil numbers

There is an even greater degree of uncertainty at present around future pupil numbers due to the unknown long-term impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic. It is likely that the full ramifications will not be known for a few years. This makes it all the more important to build flexibility into any future decisions. Modelling by PWC suggested that the London population may fall by as many as 300,000 people as a result of the pandemic. Whether this is a long-term change in behaviour or a short-term response to the crisis is not yet clear.

The very sharp drop between 2019/20 and 2020/21 in first place preferences for Haringey schools, as shown in the chart below, may be indicative of the Covid impact in addition to the other factors discussed above.



Projections for individual schools

If pupil projections at borough level are complex, pupil projections for individual schools are fraught with difficulty. It was evident from our interviews and workshops with schools, and from analysis of the data, that the conditions that govern whether an individual school is empty or full are extremely difficult to model. School vacancies will of course be determined by the number of children of primary school age living in the immediate area, and by the concentration of other primary schools within walking distance. However, the popularity of the individual school, the ease of access and the demographic make-up of the intake will also play a significant part. For example, a school serving a relatively affluent population may lose more pupils to transfers to the independent sector or international families relocating with work. Schools serving more deprived communities may lose more pupils as a result of changes to benefits and rehousing outside London where social housing is not locally available.

It is also apparent that as overall pupil numbers fall, greater flexibility in the system allows for more parental choice which means that the difference between more or less popular schools in an area becomes amplified. Furthermore, oversubscribed schools are able to draw on their waiting lists if vacancies occur. This, in effect, means that the vacancies are passed on to other schools that are not oversubscribed.

Implications at planning area and school level

Although the borough average level of vacancies currently stands at 13% this differs markedly between different areas of the borough and between schools.

Variation in vacancy levels by locality

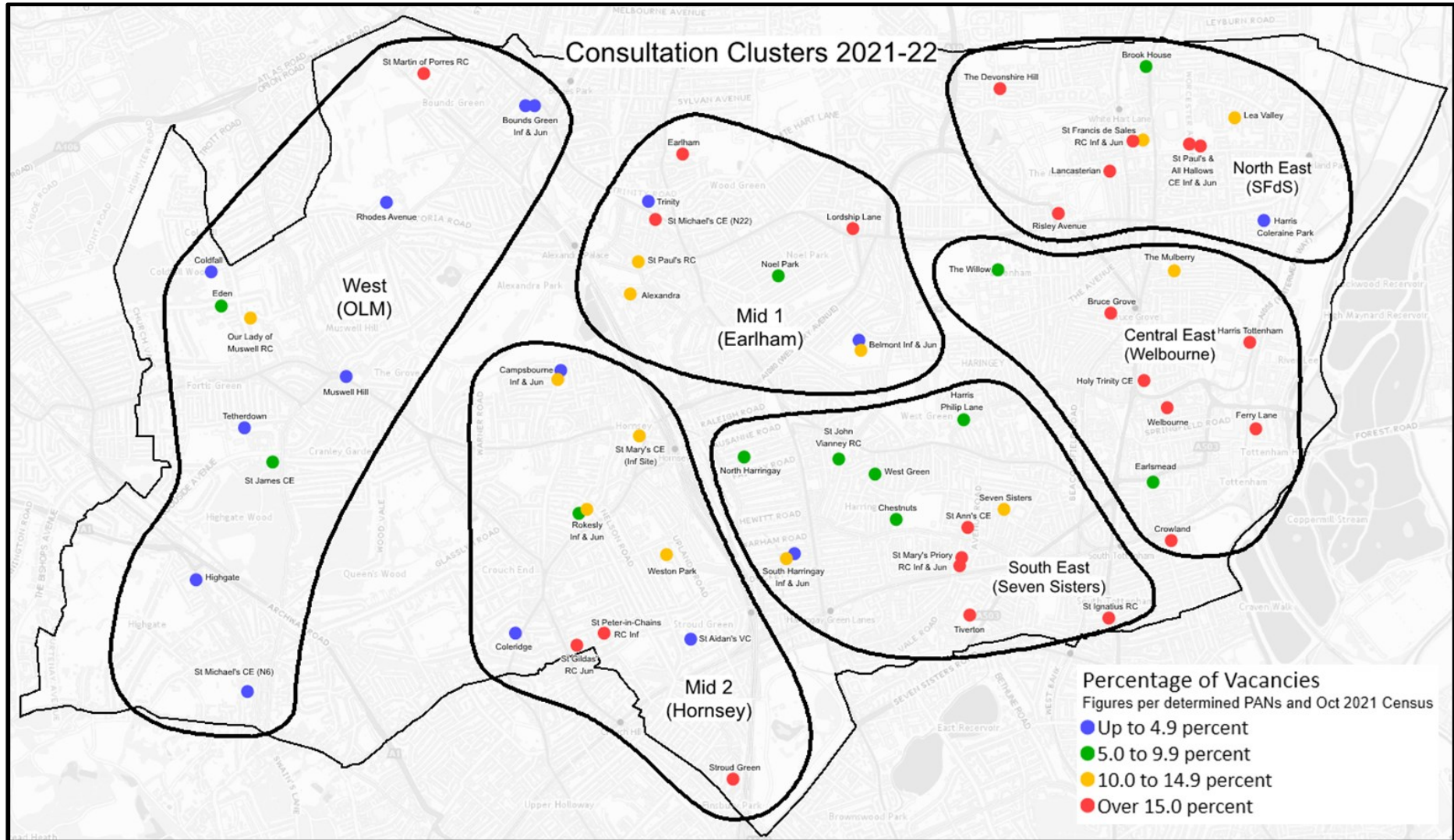
The table below shows overall primary capacity and vacancy levels across six locality clusters in November 2021. Annex A shows a breakdown of schools by cluster area:

Cluster name	Capacity	Numbers on roll	Vacant numbers	Vacant percentages
South East (Seven Sisters)	3,330	2,831	499	15.0%
Central East (Welbourne)	3,120	2,655	465	14.9%
North East (St Francis de Sales)	3,669	3,160	509	13.9%
West (OLM)	4,620	4,435	195	4.0%
Mid 1 (Earlham)	3,198	2,889	309	9.7%
Mid 2 (Hornsey)	4,590	4,157	433	9.4%

Variation between individual schools

At individual school level the variation in vacancies is unsurprisingly even more marked than at planning area level and range from no vacancies to around 35% vacant at a small number of schools.

The map below shows all schools and their level of vacancy. In general, schools in the East of the borough are experiencing higher vacancy levels than those in the West. It is also apparent from the geographical distribution that localities with very high concentrations of primary schools within a comfortable walking distance tend to have one or more schools with high vacancy levels. It also highlights the potential vulnerability of schools very close to a local authority border.



Financial implications of low pupil numbers

Overall finance situation

In Haringey, the overall financial situation for primary schools is challenging. In 2019/20, 40 primary schools in Haringey reported in-year deficits. Although this number is likely to fall in 2020/21, due to the financial impact of school closures on budgets, the expectation is that the respite will be short-lived.

Clearly there is a strong relationship between low pupil numbers and financial insecurity at school level. Estimating the financial impact of losing a pupil is challenging due to the range of different funding streams which can attach to individual pupils. In Haringey, the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) for primary schools in Haringey is set at £4,187 per pupil.

The modelled example below shows the impact of falling pupil numbers on a fairly typical 2 form entry primary school in another London Borough. A reduction in the pupil roll of about 7% in the pupil roll leads to a reduction in annual budget of over £100,000.

In 2019/20 the school had **374** pupils on roll, with **38** children in reception. The upper years of the school were close to full; the lower years of the school were not. The table below shows the school's income in 2019/20, based on 374 pupils and compares that with the projected income in 2024/25 for that school if it **continued to recruit at the same level as it did in 2019/20** for the next 5 years. This is **just** the impact of lower reception numbers working through the school. It does **not** assume any further reduction in numbers across the borough which may further impact the school in question. This is based on losing AWPU plus a percentage of other pupil-driven elements of the funding formula.

	2019/20	2024/25	Cumulative loss
Pupils	374	347	-27
Income	2,770,000	2,660,000	-£110,000

Summary of the activities undertaken during the course of this project to respond to these pressures

Supported by Isos Partnership, the local authority has worked with schools over the course of the Autumn term on three main activities:

Individual interviews with 13 primary schools

The individual interviews that Isos carried out with a selection of primary schools demonstrated schools' keen awareness of the problem, but less confidence in finding solutions.

Schools were coming to terms with the data, and recognised rolls were falling, but many were thinking more about how to minimise the impact for their school than the strategic challenge across the borough. There was uncertainty about the impact of regeneration planning and the relationship between housing strategy, capital spend and what the best solutions for the education community might be. There was also some concern that falling rolls planning is disproportionately impacting on disadvantaged areas.

Some schools were hoping that the LA would be able to give financial support whilst they went through a challenging period of low numbers. Others were considering the potential for permanent CAPs, and other possible changes, including different uses of the building.

Funding of SEND came up in many schools as a financial challenge. Some schools had been able to use space in their buildings to trial different approaches to SEND and AP.

Although data is in the public domain, and there is a Place Planning Strategy, few schools felt familiar with the principles involved or the likely impacts. Most said that they would welcome further information about what is likely to happen in their areas.

The issues raised all fed into planning for the Open Briefing and the Regional Workshops.

The Open Briefing

This was well attended, with 60 Headteachers and Chairs of Governors present.

Setting out the context in this way was very clear for schools and provided a good overview of issues the family of schools are facing.

Amongst points raised were

- Need to refresh School Place Planning Principles for a different era
- Concern about how the “Master Plan” and School Place Planning dovetail
- Re-assurance was given that Housing, Education and Regeneration Teams are working together
- Schools felt that a very clear message had now been given about the future and that it was time to consider future possibilities
- They would like further information about the LAs view of how much reduction is needed
- Finances are particularly pressured because of not receiving Inner London weighting but having to pay Inner London salaries, and the impact of SEND numbers and processes.
- They would like to be clearer about timescales and direction of travel

Regional workshops built on the points raised.

Regional Workshops

These were held on 25th and 29th November. Local Authority officers set out the context and the challenge facing primary schools in the locality, with Isos Partnership contributing information about partnership models and their impact, and some specific examples of the impact these changes had in some other Boroughs. In the second part of the sessions schools were asked to feedback to other schools present their current situation, and any plans they had that might reduce future risks.

The sessions were held in 6 areas around Haringey, and were attended by a range of representatives from schools including headteachers, governors and school business managers. Almost all schools attended at least one workshop.

Local data sheets were provided which included an indication for each area of the potential forms of entry that need to be reduced.

As a next step, schools said that they would value facilitated discussion in smaller groups, with more detailed inputs on the possible options for reductions that could be put in place in targeted areas.

Next steps

Reducing surplus capacity

Following the workshops, the Local Authority and schools will need to work together to identify the options for removing surplus capacity from the system in order to maintain the quality and financial sustainability of the primary offer in Haringey. Haringey Local Authority currently projects that up to

13 forms of entry will need to be removed by 2022/23 to sustain a well-functioning primary system. The table below shows how they are distributed between local cluster areas. It also shows existing temporary capping arrangements that are currently in place which account for 6 forms of entry. The target to remove 13 forms of entry is based on permanent published admissions numbers. If the existing temporary caps were made permanent, then a further reduction by 7 forms of entry would be required.

Cluster Name	Reduce PAN permanently by	Current temporary reception PAN reductions in place
Mid 1 (Earlham)	2FE	2FE
Mid 2 (Hornsey)	2FE	None
West (OLM)	2FE	None
South East (Seven Sisters)	2FE	1FE
North East (Frances de Sales)	2-3 FE	2FE
Central East (Welbourne)	2-3 FE	1FE
Total	Up to 13FE	6FE

The local authority, the Dioceses and individual school governing bodies will need to consider the full range of possible solutions to remove forms of entry in a fair and constructive way that prioritises the quality of education and good outcomes for children and young people. The range of possible solutions will entail temporary and permanent capping arrangements, federations, executive leadership models, and amalgamations.

Principles to guide the work

In order to guide such a significant programme of organisational change, the local authority, schools and partners will need to be informed by a set of principles. These were discussed with schools at the open briefing session and re-presented at the workshops. The following principles respond to the suggestions made by schools and could, following any further consultation and comment, be adopted as a foundation for the work going forwards:

- 1) When evaluating different options to reduce surplus places, prioritise those decisions most likely to deliver the best outcomes for children in Haringey.
- 2) Have regard to the impact of any changes on the viability and standards at existing schools, enshrining the sustainability of all schools where possible;
- 3) Bring forward proposals that make best use of scarce capital resources; prioritise forms of school organisation that will remain financially viable under a range of different funding scenarios and provide flexibility to address population change;
- 4) Work with schools to provide the optimum forms of entry appropriate to the capacity of the school site and the level of demand for that particular school, giving each school the capacity to meet our aspirations;
- 5) Maximise opportunities for children, families and professionals by working across institutions where applicable;
- 6) Wherever possible use changes in the supply of school places as an opportunity to improve and maximise the potential of sites and premises that can enhance flexibility and react to

changes in demand;

- 7) Where supply of school places exceeds demand undertake a process of research and consultation to establish which planning areas and schools should reduce in PAN on a temporary or permanent basis whilst observing principles 2-7 above.

Consideration of risk

Schools also asked for guidance on a range of risk factors that they might consider, with their governing bodies, in order to support a future assessment of options. The risk indicators should be objective, transparent and agreed with schools. An initial proposition for the indicators that might be included is set out below. However, more thought needs to be given to these both individually and in terms of how they interact. For example, a school may not be 'high-risk' if it hits just one of the risk indicators, but it may be if it hits three or more or if it exhibits both rolls risk and financial risk simultaneously. Further thought also needs to be given to the rapidity with which schools can change and therefore the time period over which the risk indicator set might be applied. A possible set of risk indicators, for further consultation with schools, is:

- a) Reception intake below 24 (in a 1 form entry primary school) or below 48 (in a 2 form entry)
- b) More than 3 vacancies per FE across the school (so more than 10% vacancies overall)
- c) Unsuitable/poorly positioned building
- d) Potential senior leadership (especially HT) changes
- e) In year deficit
- f) No (or negative) reserves
- g) School standards low or slipping

It is recommended that schools are engaged and consulted in the New Year on whether these are the right risks to consider, and how they might be used to inform meetings with governors or with other schools.

Governance

It is helpful, in implementing a complex and difficult change process, to be clear about where governance of that process lies. Key decisions, with regard to Local Authority maintained schools, will be taken by Cabinet. However, it is also helpful to have formal oversight of the process by a representative group that includes schools of all types. It is therefore proposed that Schools Forum should be asked to maintain a collective and collaborative governance of the process going forward.

Reaching decisions on where surplus capacity will be removed

The next period will be critical in evaluating potential solutions to the challenges facing primary schools and reaching decisions about how and where surplus capacity can be removed. Our experience from other areas suggests that this process is most likely to lead to secure and sustainable solutions when there is a coming together of bottom-up ideas, generated by schools, and top-down suggestions made by the local authority and the Dioceses, based on the best available data and analysis.

Over the coming months there are several key milestones which are likely to influence this process. The first is the new data on applications for the September 2022 intake that will be available in February. This will provide the first indication of how the trends in pupil numbers are playing out in Haringey. The second is the potential publication of a Schools White Paper at some point in the New Year. This may coincide with the findings of the national SEND review. Finally local elections will cement the borough’s local political priorities. These three factors make it prudent to use the January to April period to start to generate future options through further analysis of the data, more detailed modelling for example of pupil travel to school patterns, and schools’ own deliberations individually and collectively. The local authority will be ready to support this process with practical and technical advice.

In May, following the local government elections and the further information that will be available at that point, including early offers data, the plan is to bring schools together in smaller cluster workshops to develop and agree concrete proposals for reducing capacity that will form the basis for a formal September consultation for changes in September 2024/25. Prior to this, close working with the Schools Adjudicator should ensure that the opportunity for additional reductions to PAN at schools across the whole borough reduce immediate surplus capacity in advance of more permanent adjustments.

The timetable below describes these key activities on a monthly basis:

Month	Activity
February 2022	<p>LA to write to schools with a timetable to support the change process asking for comments and reminding schools that comments are welcome on risks and principles.</p> <p>Task Schools Forum with providing strategic oversight and governance of the process.</p>
February 2022	<p>LA to hold briefing to update schools on early applications information and January census. Latest data used to revisit proposed reductions in FE per area.</p> <p>Keep Schools Adjudicator updated Re. processes.</p> <p>Ensure Financial/HR/Strategic/Governance support is available for schools.</p>
March / April	<p>Provide schools with any further support that they may request on an individual or group basis in order to further their planning and consideration of options. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one to one discussion with LA - facilitated discussion between a group of schools - mapping of pupil routes to school - LA support to liaise with specific schools either within or outside LA, - Facilitated discussions with GBs - Timetable planning for change processes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of organisational change processes and timetables for staff reductions <p>During this period, any activity will need to be governed by the rules concerning the pre-election period.</p> <p>Depending on publication timing, the Local Authority will also want to consider the implications of the direction of travel set out in the anticipated DfE white paper and provide guidance to schools on this.</p>
May / June	<p>Share early offers data</p> <p>May 5th elections</p> <p>May/June Training for new LA administration.</p> <p>LA Cluster workshops with schools.</p> <p>Potential approach to Schools Adjudicator (maintained schools) / Secretary of State (Academies) re potential early CAPs (in-year variation) - this would need to include evidence of future consultation plans</p> <p>Discuss the possibilities for starting school level or borough wide consultation , share ideas about ways to manage consultations (for example, schools may want to delegate responsibility to LA to consult i.e. holistic approach).</p>
September	<p>Consultation(s) must take place to allow for statutory changes to be included as part of annual admissions cycle.</p>
October	<p>Preparation of Cabinet Report for changes planned for Sept 2024/5 (Adjudicator /Secretary of State briefed on planned reductions via consultation to allow scope for them to take effect immediately from Sept 2023/24)</p> <p>Further workshop/training on managing organisational change. Including input from HR, pensions, finance.</p>
November	<p>Cabinet decides on consultation outcomes.</p>

Longer term

It has become apparent, during the course of this project, that a likely implication of the need to reduce surplus capacity in the primary sector in Haringey will be an increase in the proportion of 1FE schools. The small number of larger primary schools (3FE+) in Haringey means that some of the burden of reduction is likely to fall on 2FE schools reducing to a single form of entry. In the current financial climate, when schools budgets are under pressure from many sources, 1FE schools can often experience more significant financial challenges than larger schools. This is often because the “fixed costs” of the school – leadership, teaching staff, premises etc – form a greater proportion of the overall budget than in a larger school leaving less flexibility for achieving savings. If the future shape of the primary system in Haringey is to be financially sustainable, this may require a conscious

strategy to put in place measures that will enable 1FE schools to operate as efficiently as possible. This is likely to involve exploring the full range of partnership options, including federation and executive leadership, that enable costs to be shared across multiple schools.

Conclusion

The delivery of the suggested programme will be led by Council Officers with oversight and decision making from Cabinet and continuing support by the Haringey Education Partnership and the ISOS Partnership. ISOS Partnership will be able to provide a breadth of experience and suggest objective informed approaches whilst HEP will be in a position to support school business and governance processes including training on alongside curriculum, pedagogy, inclusion and leadership.

Isos Partnership will be able to provide some strategic, training and mentoring support but the LA, HEP and Schools themselves will need to consider how they will develop the capacity to manage change whilst protecting quality.

The evidence seen by Isos so far suggests that whilst this is a challenging time the strength of the partnerships in Haringey mean that collectively there is the commitment, as well as the skills and experience to move forward positively, but there is a need to shift from discussing the problem to active development and implementation of solutions. In the long run this will be positive for Haringey children, but there will be some difficult decisions along the journey.