



Islington School Organisation Plan

School Place Planning 2022-25



ISLINGTON

For a more equal future

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Executive Summary

1. Our Education Plan sets out our mission that, by 2030 every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school.
2. The School Organisation Plan is crucial to meeting this ambition, as it sets out the approach as to how we will confidently manage surplus capacity in our schools to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people and sustainability of schools.
3. The School Organisation Plan sets the strategic direction for pupil place planning across the borough and has been developed alongside The Education Plan to ensure that the principles applied to managing our school estate reflect our corporate and political commitment to driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools, and supports the delivery of a quality educational experience for all children and young people through a diverse curriculum offer.
4. We have a legal duty to ensure that every child has a school place and need to plan to ensure that we have capacity for this. However, we must also ensure the financial viability of every school and pupil numbers are critical to determining the funding of a school.
5. Across London, there has been a reduction in pupil numbers because of falling birth-rates, changes to EU migration (Brexit), the impact of COVID, and associated with housing, families relocating to places outside of London. Islington is not immune to this, and this is reflected by the growing number of surplus places available at our schools.
6. The situation is particularly acute in primary schools and specifically at Reception. Across our 46 primary schools, almost one in five Reception places are unfilled. The primary roll dropped by over 300 pupils across all year groups in the last year. This has contributed to surplus places across all primary schools in all year groups totalling over 18%, or 2,800 of places. At six primary schools, surplus places exceed 30%. We expect this surplus to continue to rise if no action is taken.
7. In the context of increased financial pressures brought about the surge in energy bills and falling rolls, many schools are experiencing financial difficulties. The impact of this financial pressure is that the quality of the educational experience for children and young people is compromised. This is because less money impacts on staff numbers that then impacts on the diversity of the curriculum offer. The School Organisation Plan aims to develop an educational offer across the borough that is financially viable for schools through working with schools and all key stakeholders to review the school estate so that where schools are experiencing financial difficulty opportunities for federation and/or amalgamation are explored where appropriate.
8. There is also a surplus of places at Secondary, currently at just above 10% which we expect to remain stable over the next five years. Although high, this is not yet as critical as the situation in primary.

9. Schools operate most efficiently when full or nearly full and any surplus places should be kept to a minimum. National guidance suggests this should be 5%, to allow for in-year admissions, errors in pupil forecasts and parental choice. Our current figures and future projections are double this at secondary and nearly four-times higher at primary.
10. The School Organisation Plan sets out how we will confidently manage surplus capacity in our schools to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people. For each planning area we will consider all possible options available to effectively manage surplus places. These are summarised under eight headings:
 1. Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)
 2. Maximise Pupil Numbers
 3. Make better use of school sites with spare capacity
 4. Vacant Premises Managers Houses
 5. Including children with SEND
 6. Collaboration and Federation to achieve economies of scale
 7. Amalgamate schools
 8. Close schools

In this first phase, our focus will be on primary schools where there is currently the most surplus capacity. We will continue to monitor secondary places annually, with a full review in three-years' time.

Introduction

Children's Services vision is that every child and young person feels safe and thrives, leading to a fulfilling life. Education is the key tool to transforming outcomes for children and young people. Our mission by 2030 is to ensure that every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school.

By attending a good and viable school, our young people can enter the world of work as successful and confident school leavers empowering them to shape their individual and their community's prosperous futures.

Central to the delivery of this is our partnership with headteachers and leaders, teachers, practitioners, and school governors.

The Islington School Organisation Programme Board was established to drive the delivery of Islington's strategic School Organisation and Pupil Place Planning approach. The Board's members are Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and Local Authority Officers. The Board's approach is set out in this School Organisation Plan.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Ensure Islington has appropriate levels of high-quality school places at primary and secondary
- Promote good choice and diversity in our local school offer and that the most vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs are supported through effective school place planning
- Ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of how robust decisions are reached about pupil place planning.

This plan sets out:

1. the **context** of falling rolls leading to a high level of surplus school places
2. the **principles** for managing places
3. the current **organisation** of Islington's education provision
4. the **options** to reduce surplus places in primary schools and maximise the use of the school estate

This is an ambitious plan that sets out our approach to school place planning in Islington. The current context of Islington includes schools of varying sizes and an increasing number of schools with deficit budgets caused by falling rolls and increased cost, further exacerbated by rising energy costs.

The School Organisation Plan will drive a strategic approach to pupil place planning underpinned by some common principles set out on page 13. Working in partnership with schools, the School Organisation Plan will deliver the ambitions of the Education Plan. The Education Plan is predicated on strong and effective partnerships across all schools and

settings regardless of whether they are maintained schools or academies this is because our commitment is to children and young people, not the status of the school they attend. To grow and sustain effective partnerships, the ambition of the Education Plan is to drive a new relationship with schools and settings that is underpinned by a shared vision for education across the borough.

The School Organisation Plan will operate within the context of this new relationship and therefore will be an iterative process in the continued development of educational offer delivered through strong, sustainable and inclusive schools by:

- Reviewing the school estate to ensure the viability of schools which are currently 1FE through exploring options for federation and reducing the number of 1FE schools through amalgamation where appropriate.
- Improve the quality of education across all schools by ensuring there is a diverse curriculum offer by proactively addressing financial instability in schools projecting deficits.
- Reduce the pressure of inflated energy costs by supporting partnerships across schools through amalgamation, federation to mitigate the risk of financial pressures.
- Support an inclusive culture across all schools through the development of specialist provision through the development of Additional Resourced Provision (ARPS) on mainstream school sites-this will ensure more children remain in mainstream provision where appropriate. This is better for children and ensures more money remains in school to support financial viability.

Reconfiguring the school estate to create strong and sustainable schools that will deliver the ambitions of the Education Plan, the School Organisation Plan will need to drive some ambitious plans that will critically be delivered in collaboration and with full consultation with schools and all relevant stakeholders including residents.

Operating within the DfE prescribed process will ensure that there are opportunities for informal and informal decision making so that the impact on communities is well understood and reflected within decision making.

The delivery of the School Organisation Plan, therefore, will be an iterative process. Currently there are 15 one form entry schools across the borough. To move to a policy of no one form entry schools would trigger significant upheaval across the communities where these schools are located.

The School Organisation Plan will therefore work with communities through a consistent process underpinned by common principles with a shared vision to put children first. In practice this will mean creating schools that are financially viable with strong and effective leadership offering a diverse and inclusive curriculum offer.

The context: assessing school places in Islington

Islington commissions school roll projections from the Greater London Authority (GLA) who consider population changes across all of London.

School pupil numbers from the January school census and the latest housing trajectory are submitted to the GLA so that their projections are based on actual pupil rolls and the availability of local housing. Housing development data provided by Islington Council Planning is compared with the previous year to identify major new sites, project delays and to estimate the number of new homes and children.

After years of growth in the demand for school places in the previous decade, a growing number of surplus places is now estimated across London. This drop in demand has partly been driven by a decline in births as reported in the London Councils [‘Do The Maths’](#) report.

Falling live birth rates

Over 300 fewer babies were born to Islington residents in 2020-21 compared to 2017-18. Projection data indicates that this lower number of births is likely to remain a trend in Islington, particularly among mothers under 30. We are seeing fewer births to UK-born mothers and a slowdown in growth in births to EU mothers.

Falling EU migration

In 2019, the GLA identified problems of over-estimation in ONS migration estimates. This is particularly acute in areas of Inner London with high international flows and can lead to inflated numbers of children in projections.

Falling EU migration is a recognised factor driven by the decrease in immigration, particularly for work. The drop in EU inflows is clear since the Brexit referendum in 2016 (see Figure 1).

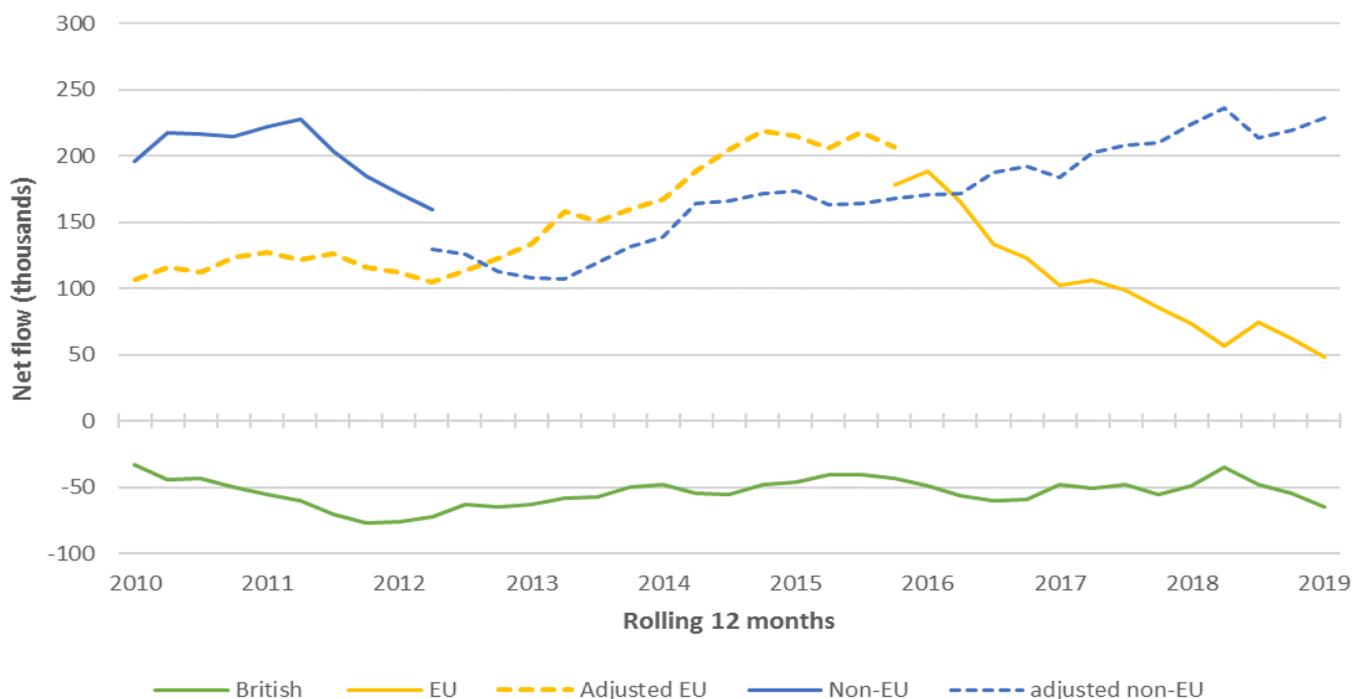


Figure 1: Chart showing netflow of school rolls, 2010-2019 (source: GLA School Roll Liaison group)

COVID impact

Though it remains too early to reliably measure population change since the start of the pandemic, it is hard not to conclude that the population is likely to have fallen.

Anecdotally, families who rode out the pandemic outside London have stayed: families have continued to move out of London and fewer graduates came to London for jobs during this period, with more workers choosing to live further away from central London due to remote working.

Some impacts, notably net outflows of those that worked in the hospitality and tourism sectors, are likely to be readily reversed by economic recovery and a return of jobs to London. Others, such as the likely additional net loss of families to the wider region, are likely to take more time to undo ([City intelligence Unit, 2021](#)).

Falling Rolls

Reception roll

Falling rolls is a pressing issue and is leading to a decline in funding for some schools. Across 46 Islington primary schools, almost one in five reception places remained unfilled as of January 2022 (18%). Admissions arrangements for 2022-23 may temporarily bring surplus reception places down, however falling births will mean the surplus will likely rise again the following year if no further action is taken (see figure 2).

Focusing on Reception entry is important to understand demand for future places and October to November 2022 is the admissions consultation period for the Reception 2024-25 entry. There is a broader issue of capacity across all year groups, and figures based on the sum of Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) do not fully reflect actual building space as determined by net capacity assessments.

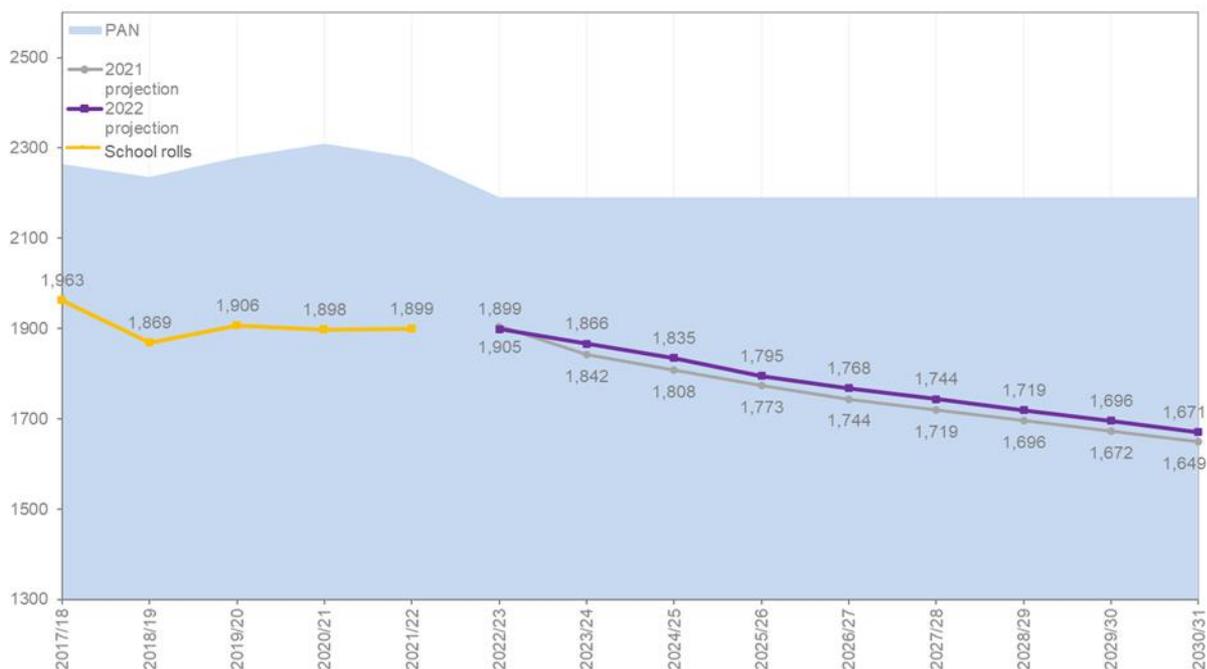


Figure 2: Chart showing actual and projected rolls against PAN at Reception from 2017-18 to 2030-31

Primary roll (Reception to Year 6)

In the last year, the primary roll has dropped by over 300 pupils (across all year groups), about 2 in 100 of the whole school cohort; continuing the declining trend seen in the previous year.

There is a rising surplus of places across all primary year groups, 18% as of January 2022 (around 2,800 places). There is an above 30% surplus at six primary schools, with two more schools approaching 30% and having high vacancy rates in Reception (see figure 3).

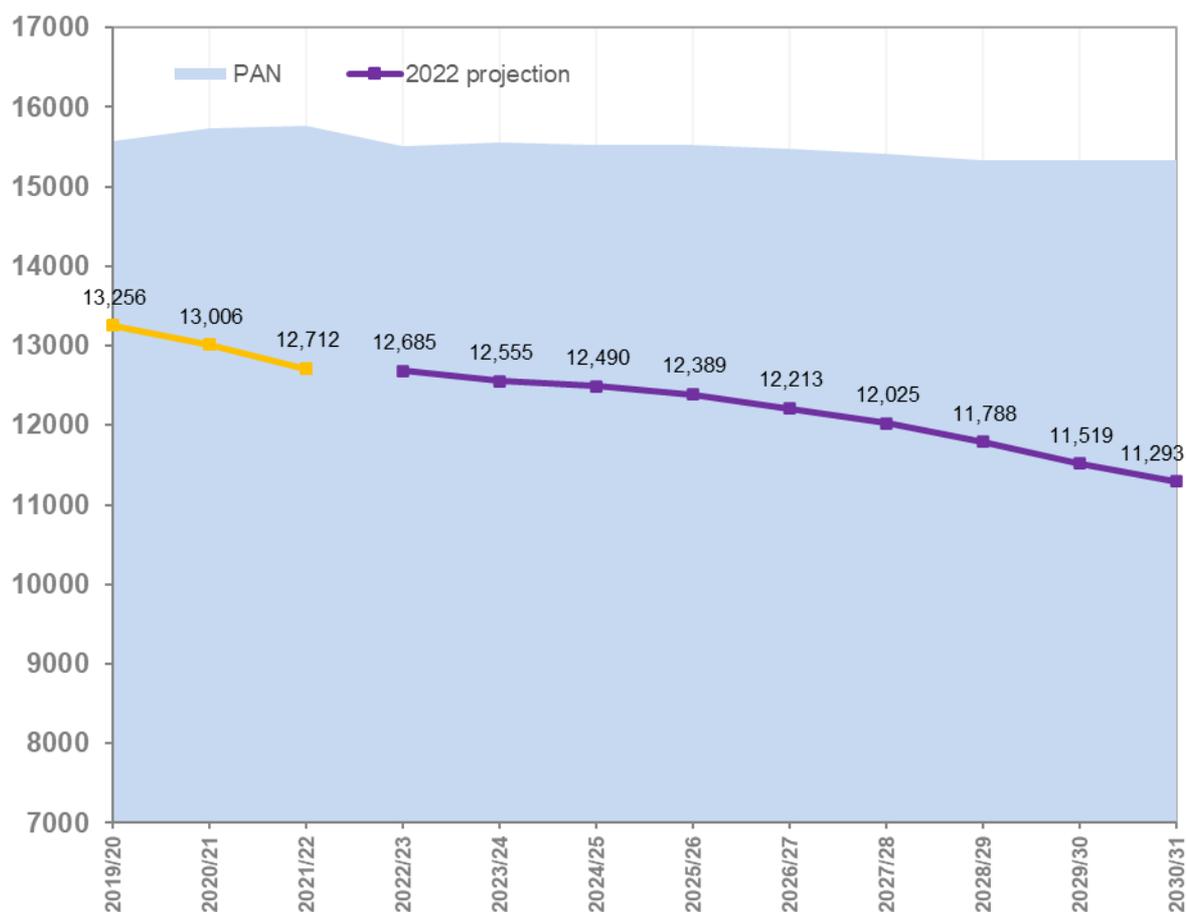


Figure 3: Chart showing actual and projected rolls against PAN at Primary from 2019-20 to 2030-31

Secondary rolls

Reductions agreed at two schools will help manage a growing surplus of secondary places, and projections are relatively stable with a surplus just above 10% projected over the next five years.

As of January 2022, there is a surplus of 14% of places across all secondary year groups (around 1,000 places), and 13% in Year 7 (see figure 4).

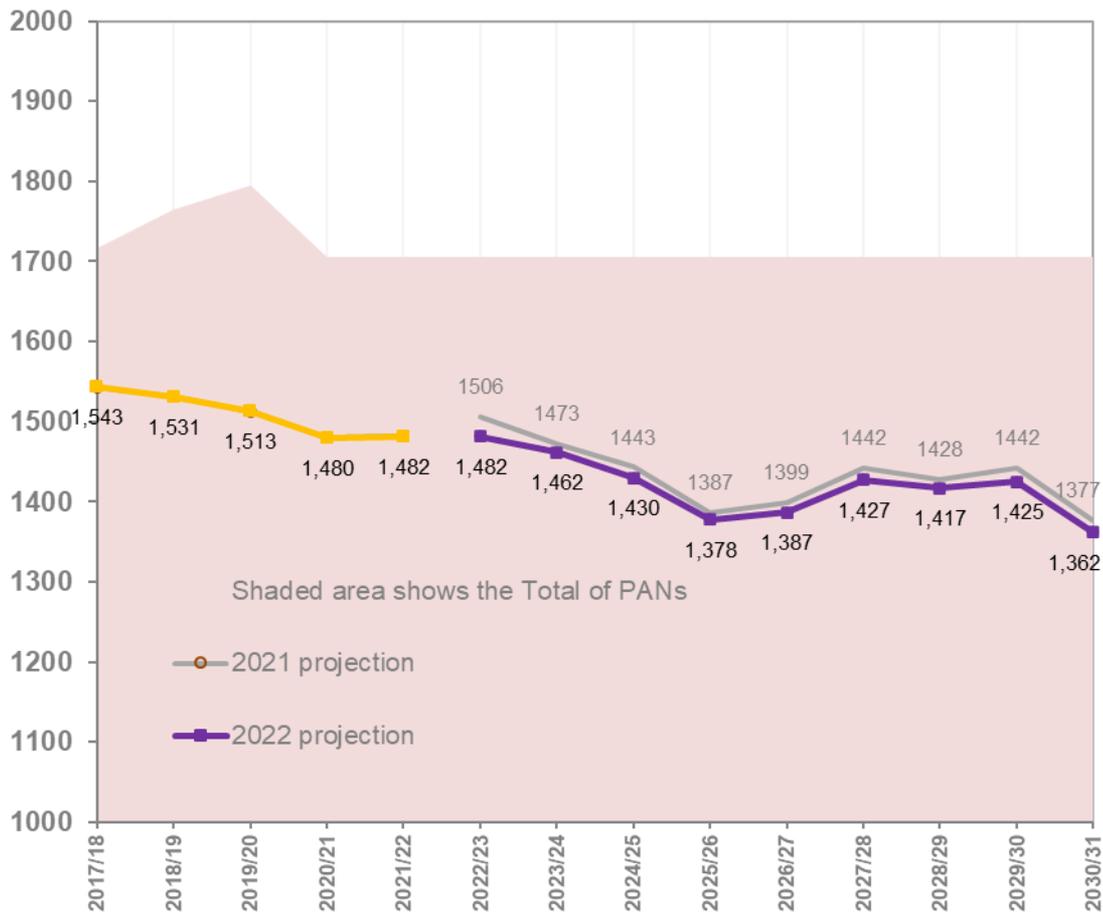


Figure 4: Chart showing actual and projected PAN at Secondary from 2017-18 to 2030-31

Post-16 and sixth form rolls

Post-16 rolls have recently fallen at Islington schools. London Screen Academy opened in 2019, providing 302 additional places and stabilising a declining post-16 student population, when free schools are included.

Surplus capacity at post-16 was projected at around a third of places (over 530) in 2020. The proposed further expansion to London Screen Academy, and the opening of City of London Highgate Hill sixth form in September 2022 will result in additional places and a possible increase of surplus places (see figure 5).

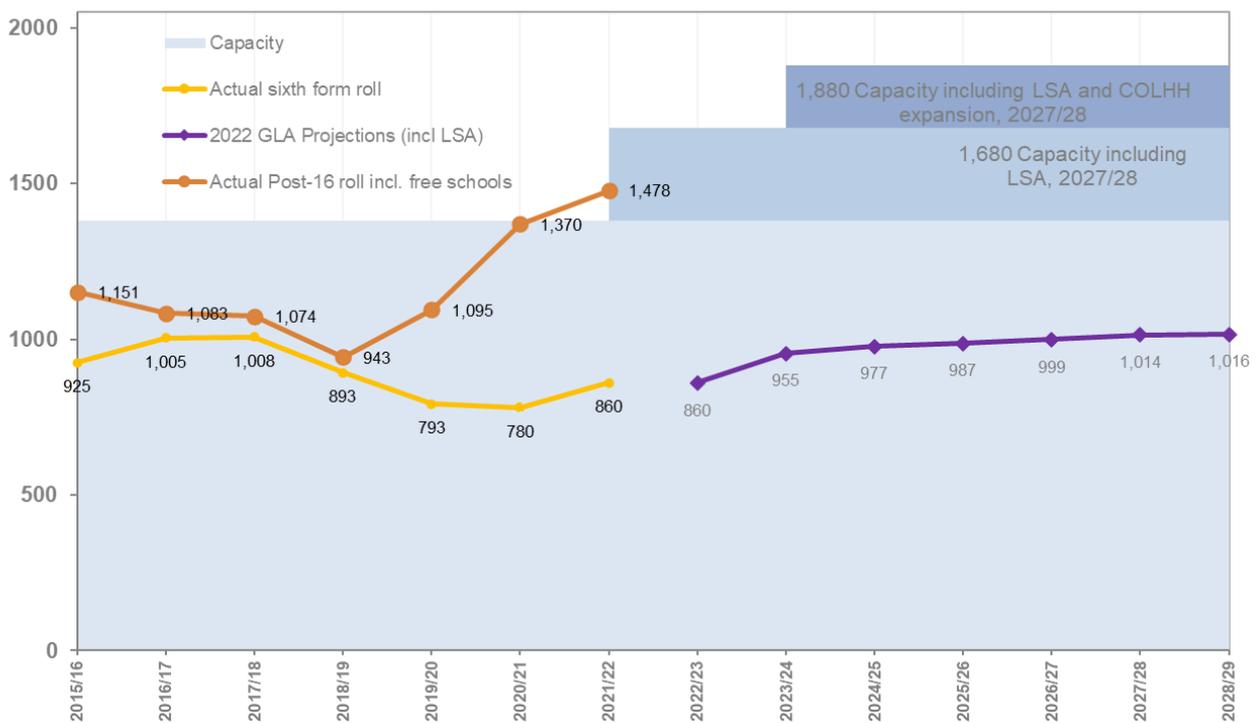


Figure 5: actual and projected post-16 capacity 2015-16 to 2028-29

SEND Provision

Our special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision is considered a strength by parents, schools, settings, and partners for many years, with significant investment and redesign of specialist provision. Demand for these SEND places has accelerated over recent years. This is reflective of a national trend.

Conversations with parents, schools and partners reflect a perception that too many of our children and young people go to special schools to have their education, health and care needs met because the right provision, skills and appropriate level of funding is not available in mainstream schools. Building more local special schools is neither affordable or in line with our vision for a fair and inclusive system.

Our strategic focus is therefore shifting towards strengthening our mainstream offer, and there is strong interest from parents and schools in developing a network of Additionally Resourced Provisions i.e., where a mainstream school receives additional funding to provide extra specialist support or facilities for children with SEND, within a mainstream setting.

Any consideration of future options relating to SEND provision must therefore also be closely aligned with the overall approach to pupil place planning across the borough to ensure most efficient use of resource.

Principles for managing places

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full, so we should seek to keep the number of surplus places to a minimum. However, we accept that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, and that some margin of capacity is necessary to allow parental choice.

National guidance suggests that 5% surplus should be maintained in an area to facilitate parental preference and allow for a margin of error in pupil forecasts. Given the context of falling rolls and surplus capacity of well above 5% at both primary and secondary, we recommend that capacity be permanently reduced in the primary phase over the next three years and reduce secondary capacity in the longer term.

Proposals to reduce surplus will be guided by the following principles:

- The most important consideration in making any decisions regarding school organisation is to act in the best interests of the children of Islington
- Reducing the surplus of places to below 10% is in the best interests of Islington children, because maintaining a large surplus is likely to increase the financial fragility of schools, which will impact the quality of education
- We will take a strategic approach that is not viewed at the individual school level to ensure that proposals fit with our wider ambitions for children. For example:
 - How any proposals support and contribute to our duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school
 - How we maintain choice and diversity in our schools
 - How we encourage collaboration and build a strong school led system
- We should also consider our local SEND Profile and projections and any specific needs of this cohort, which has grown by 40% over the past 5 years despite the reduction in the overall child population.
- It will be necessary to propose school closures or mergers, formal and informal partnerships, but only as a last resort. We will use innovative and creative thinking, for example Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs), centres of excellence hubs, and alternative use of buildings
- In the event of closure or merger we will consider using school sites for alternative education or community use to the benefit of the local community
- Any proposals would be informed by equalities impact assessment for all groups together with consideration of the geographical basis of the catchment area
- As far as possible, proposals will be developed in partnership with the key stakeholders including schools, Diocese's and the Regional Schools Commissioner and subject to full consultation with the local community

The criteria and questions we will consider when making proposals for reducing capacity at any school or setting are shown in Appendix B.

The Organisation of Education Provision

Types of Schools in Islington

Nursery schools

- Three nursery schools

Primary schools

- 26 Community schools
- 14 Voluntary-aided schools
- Four Academies
- Two Free Schools

Of the total primary schools, 14 are one-form entry schools, six are between one and two forms of entry; 25 are two form entry and one is a three-form entry school.

Secondary Schools

- Five Community schools
- One Voluntary-aided school
- Four Academies

Special Schools

- Two maintained special Schools: both co-located with mainstream schools
- One Academy
- Two Free Special schools
- One Alternative Provision: a consortium of three Pupil Referral Units (PRU) split across four sites.

The table describes the types of school in Islington and the implications for school organisation if there are any change proposals.

School Type	Description	Proposer	Decision making body
Community	The local authority owns the buildings and determines admission arrangements	LA	LA
Voluntary Aided	A trust or diocesan body owns the building, employ the staff and determine their own admission arrangements	LA or Governing Body	LA

School Type	Description	Proposer	Decision making body
Academy	The trust owns or has a long lease on their site, they operate under a Funding Agreement with the government and can follow a different curriculum	Academy Trust	Secretary of State advised by RSC
Free school	Schools that have opened as new academies, rather than being converted to an academy from a maintained school. A free school is still an academy and is funded and controlled in the same way as other academies	Academy Trust	Secretary of State advised by RSC

Strategy for managing surplus places

Our strategy for managing surplus places is crucial to meeting our ambition for children. It sets out how we will confidently manage surplus capacity in our schools to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people. For each planning area we will consider all the possible options available to effectively manage surplus places. These are summarised under eight headings:

1. Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)
2. Maximise Pupil Numbers
3. Make better use of school sites with spare capacity
4. Vacant Premises Managers Houses
5. Including children with SEND
6. Collaboration and Federation to achieve economies of scale
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8. Close schools

1. Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)

Any proposal to reduce the Published Admission Numbers across Islington primary schools for admission in September 2024 would be through the formal consultation process in autumn 2022.

We anticipate that we will consult on several PAN reductions to reduce the overall PAN for Islington by 105: equivalent to removing 3.5 forms of entry from Islington primary schools.

As of September 2022, there are fifteen one-form entry (FE) primary schools in Islington and nine 1.5 FE primary schools out of a total of 45 primary schools.

2. Maximise Pupil Numbers

Data demonstrates that in Islington, 90% of Islington children attend primary schools in Islington but this figure reduces to 70% in Secondary school. An objective of the Education Board is to reverse the trend at secondary through an ambitious communication strategy that will re brand our Secondary Schools and enhance the reputation of education overall in Islington so that parents and carers make active choices to educate their children in Islington. This will include:

- Greater social media presence – Twitter/Instagram - role of Education Board to support and promote
- Secondary School Fair – Assembly Hall
- Target secondary school assemblies to those primary schools with the greater exodus to out of borough schools
- Local paper/Islington Life articles on a rotation

3. Make better use of school sites with spare capacity

We will explore opportunities to use spare space in schools effectively. This is the case in several schools where PAN reductions have meant there are less pupils occupying the space where the school was originally designed to accommodate more pupils. In order to take this forward we are:

- Planning to further co-locate public and community related services where this will enable us to offer services for the locality whilst complementing the school offer.
- Exploring the feasibility at a number of school sites for commercial leasing arrangements with due consideration of the regulatory consent framework for any such arrangement.
- Working with our property management team who can assist with commercial requirements and confirming current rental rates.

4. Vacant Premises Managers Houses

We have completed a property survey of Premises Managers Houses across Islington. The findings of this will be used to inform the approach to maximising the potential and opportunity of these assets for the benefit of schools and the Local Authority in meeting our vision for children. There is potential to release capital funding or reconfigure these properties for alternative uses to support the financial sustainability of schools.

5. Including children with SEND

520 Islington resident children and young people attend special school either in Islington or in other boroughs. Conversations with parents, schools and partners reflect a perception that too many of our children and young people go to special schools to have their education, health and care needs met because the right provision, skills and appropriate level of funding are not available in mainstream.

By strengthening our mainstream offer, including the development of Additionally Resourced Provision, we estimate that we could retain up to 70 more children at primary and 40 more children in Secondary schools, and that this number may increase as parents and schools become more confident that local provision can meet need.

6. Collaboration and Federation to achieve economies of scale

We expect all schools to be viable and provide a high quality of education so that every child in Islington has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school. We will develop a collegiate approach in the school led system where resources, capacity and expertise are shared between schools to support quality teaching through a diverse curriculum in all schools. This will be achieved through informal and formal collaborations; further developing and extending our good collaborative practice.

It is particularly important that our 1 Form of Entry schools adopt this approach, and meet the following conditions:

- The school is full in all year groups

- A sufficient staffing structure to manage the school's statutory duties as well as needs of the pupils
- A mix of qualified and Early Career Teachers – not all to be on upper pay scales as this would be too costly
- Sharing of, across other schools:
 - specialist teachers
 - administration, and potentially, premises staff
 - SENCO
 - Pastoral care
- Maximised Income generation e.g., market and community-based lettings
- Review of annual contracts, ensuring best value and potentially procuring across multiple schools ensuring efficient and effective purchasing power
- Effective use of TAs, not simply one in each class or one for every EHCP child (unless required)

7. Amalgamate Schools

School amalgamation brings together two (or more) schools as one single school, located on the same site and under the same leadership and governance. We will only consider school Amalgamation where it is in the best interest of children to do so. Where it is necessary to reduce the number of schools to achieve our vision for education in Islington, amalgamation, rather than closure, is the preferred option as this allows children to move together at one time to another school; to stay with their cohort and familiar staff; and reduces the risk of redundancy for staff.

8. Close Schools

We will only consider school closure as a very last resort where it is in the best interest of children to do so.

The Department for Education guidance on school closures includes a presumption not to close. All options will have been exhausted to avoid school closure although ultimately, where there is no alternative long-term option, this may have to be considered.

Appendices

Appendix A: the Legal Context

Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires a local authority to secure that sufficient schools are available at primary and secondary stages of education for their local area. Decisions on how to achieve this are taken at local level, based on forecast pupil numbers across the planning areas (PAs) in a local authority. These PAs are groups of schools, often (but not exclusively) in a similar geographic area, reflecting patterns of provision.

Sufficient means sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of:

- a) the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes, and
- b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school and includes practical instruction and training appropriate to pupils' different needs.

A local authority must exercise its functions under this section with a view to securing diversity in the provision of schools and increasing opportunities for parental choice. This duty applies to pupils of compulsory school age only. In exercising its functions under this section, a local authority shall have regard to:

- a) the need for securing that primary and secondary education is provided in separate schools (except that this duty does not apply to special schools),
- b) the need for securing that special educational provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs, and
- c) the expediency of securing the provision of boarding accommodation for pupils for whom education as boarders is considered by their parents and the authority to be desirable.

Appendix B: Criteria and Questions

When making proposals for reducing capacity at any school or setting, we will consider the following criteria and questions:

1. How financially stable is each school?

What is the current and future budget projection? This is important to ensure the sustainability of the offer and the ability to offer a full and balanced curriculum and support services for children. Stability will be measured by three-year budgets submitted by schools; any deficit reduction plans and the use of the Schools Financial Value Standard and DfE Benchmarking data as indicators to identify risks.

2. What are the actual numbers on roll and what is the level of surplus capacity against both the most recent PAN and the net physical capacity of the school?

This is important as schools are funded on a per pupil basis, so a high level of surplus capacity suggests that financial instability is likely. Schools operating with low numbers well below the physical capacity of their building tend to be less efficient to run. Numbers on roll will be reviewed across all year groups over a three-year period to ensure solutions address whole school viability and are based on trend data

3. What are the roll projections at a borough and planning area level?

How will these affect the future budget of the schools in the area? Roll projections help us to see if the numbers are likely to increase in the foreseeable future. Projections at Planning area level are more attuned to local need. These projections take account of children travelling in from other parts of the borough or other boroughs.

4. What do we know about parental preference for each school in the last three years?

This is important as we have a duty to meet parental preference where possible and to increase the proportion of places allocated as a first preference. This will be based on the latest admissions data including sibling patterns

5. What do we know about the quality of education at each school? Are there any indications that low numbers are having an impact on the quality of education?

This is important as due to our legal duty to secure good school places for the children of Islington. This will be influenced by Ofsted reports and pupil outcomes at all Key Stages.

6. What are the demographics of the pupil population in each school?

Are there any communities or disadvantaged groups that are being disproportionately affected by the impact of surplus capacity? Are there any communities or disadvantaged groups that

would be disproportionately impacted by proposals to reduce surplus capacity. What can be done to minimise any impact of any proposals to CLA, pupils with SEND and those who will be in exam years?

A full Equalities Impact Assessment will need to be carried out for any proposals to consider these questions.

7. Are there steps available to improve the viability of the school? e.g., PAN reduction, restructure, partnerships, co-location?

This is important because we want to explore all options before making a proposal for closure or merger.

8. If it seems that there are no options to improve viability and closure appears inevitable – are there any opportunities to merge with another school?

This is important because merger allows children to move together at one time to another school, merger also reduces the risk of redundancy for staff

9. What is the suitability and condition of school buildings? Are there alternative uses for the buildings for the benefit of children and young people in Islington?

This is important because we want to ensure that all children are education in high quality learning environments. Proposals for merger may enable us to make better use of existing high-quality buildings. We also want to retain school buildings for education or community use and minimise disposals

10. Are there other facilities run by the school that may be affected by proposals to reduce surplus, for example, children's centres? How will this be managed?

This is important because we want to ensure other services supporting children and families are also sustainable