

# School Organisation Scrutiny Update

January 2023

# Putting Children First

- A strategic approach to school organisation in Islington that will enable all children and young people to do their best in strong, financially viable schools.
- Three big plans, one ambition: ‘driving educational excellence through inclusive, financially viable schools’ linking in phases to the Asset Management Strategy
- This presentation sets out the phased implementation of the School Organisation Plan and how it will reduce surplus places across our schools.
- **The current position is unsustainable and life chances for Islington children are being put at risk.**



# Two Challenges: Pupil numbers and financial sustainability

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## Primary

- We have **536** surplus places in reception, in our primary schools.
- This is equivalent to **25% surplus capacity**.
- The number of children in primary schools is decreasing. The total number on roll from Reception to Year 6 is now **12,112**, compared to **13,598** five years ago

## Secondary

- We have **307 surplus** places in year 7 classes in our secondary schools.
- This is equivalent to **18% surplus capacity**.
- Total number on roll from Year 7 to Year 11 is now **7259**, compared to **7455** five years ago

## Financial Sustainability

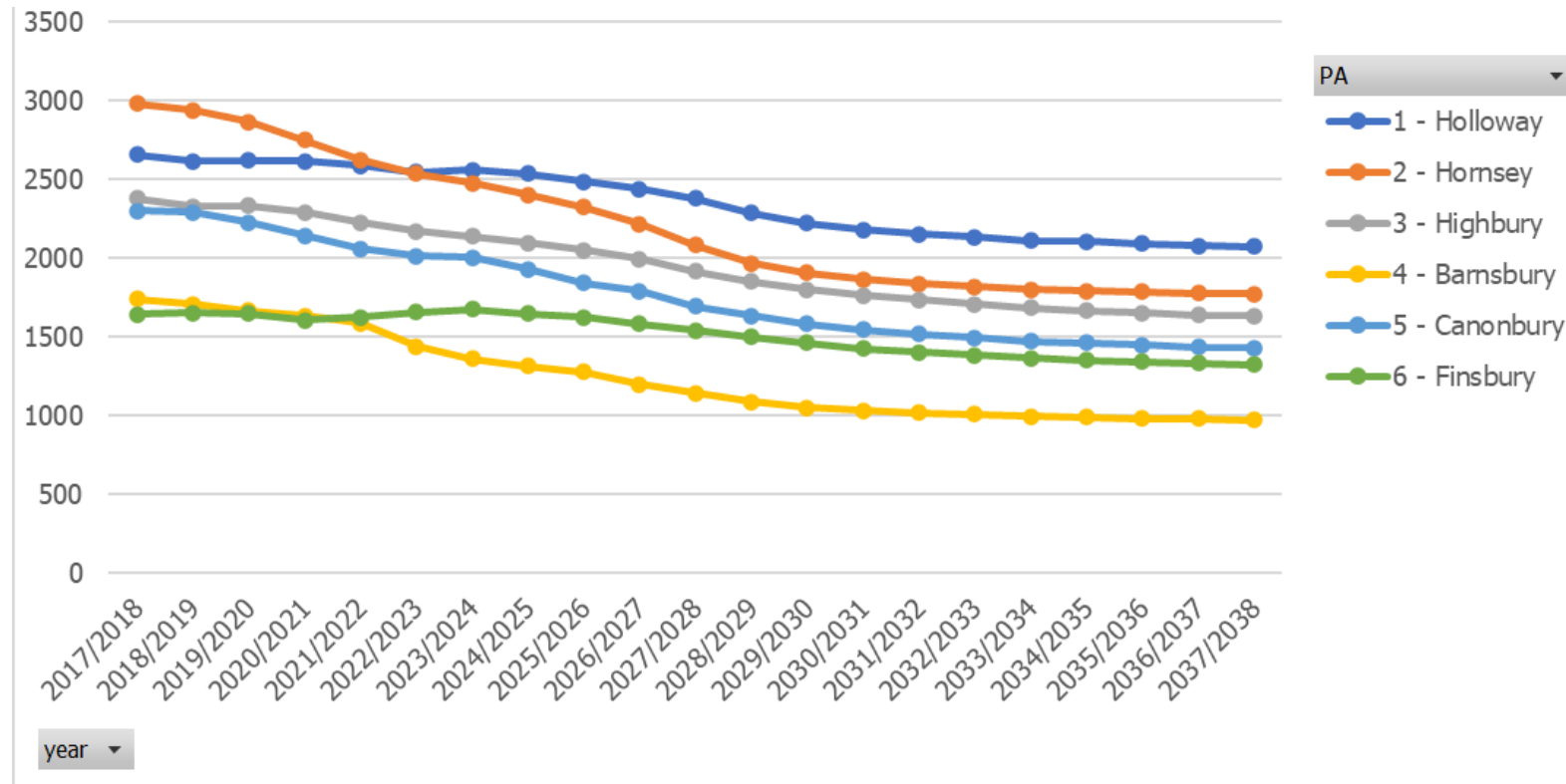
- **23.1%** of our schools projecting a deficit by the end of financial year 2023-24.
  - In total, this deficit equates to **£4.5m**
- The financial picture is set to worsen by the end of **2025-26 with 46.2%** of schools forecasting to end the year in a deficit position.

# Surplus Capacity by Planning Area

| Planning Area | October 2023 Roll - Reception | October 2023 Reception Capacity | Surplus Reception Capacity |
|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Holloway    | 357                           | 465                             | 23%                        |
| 2 Hornsey     | 315                           | 465                             | 32%                        |
| 3 Highbury    | 298                           | 360                             | 17%                        |
| 4 Barnsbury   | 171                           | 245                             | 30%                        |
| 5 Canonbury   | 268                           | 340                             | 21%                        |
| 6 Finsbury    | 230                           | 300                             | 23%                        |
| Total         | 1639                          | 2175                            | 25%                        |

| Year 7 – October 2023 Roll | Year 7 Capacity | Surplus Year 7 Capacity |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1401                       | 1705            | 304                     |

# Reception – Year 6 Roll Projections by Planning Area



**Two Solutions:** School organisation plan and tightening management oversight of school deficits

# Solution 1 - How do we decide what future plans look like?

The DfE advises LAs not to close schools unless every other alternative has been exhausted. The School Organisation Plan reflects this guidance. We have developed a methodology that routinely reviews the following variables to inform the prioritisation of our School Org Plan:

- Application preferences
- School vacancies against PAN
- Ofsted rating
- Outcomes in KS2 or KS4
- School balances (which are weighted higher than other factors)
- A factor for inclusion



# Applying the Methodology

Step 1:  
Understand demand and  
capacity - data and evidence

Step 2:  
Apply the analysis

Step 3:  
Review the prioritisation list

Step 4:  
Test the prioritisation list  
against contextual factors  
and agreed principles and  
criteria (e.g. community  
need, distances, equalities)

# School Closure Process

| Stage   | Description   | Timeline   |
|---|---|--|
| Proposal to go to 1st Stage Informal Consultation   | Confidential exempt report to Council Executive   | Internal governance from CSMT through to Executive = typically 8 weeks |
| 1st Stage informal consultation   | Public consultation with published documentation and meetings not during school holidays    | Timeline not prescribed - can be up to 6 weeks                         |
| Outcomes of consultation reported and proposal to go to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage of Statutory Notice | Formal report with recommendations to Council Executive                                     | Internal governance from CSMT through to Executive                     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage statutory notice issued and formal representation period                    | Formal period prescribed at exactly 4 weeks from date of local paper publication date       | 4 weeks  |
| Outcome of 2nd Stage consultation reported and final decision made                                | Formal report with final recommendation to Council Executive                                | Internal governance from CSMT through to Executive                     |
| Implementation  | Implementation of the process includes staff consultation and school allocations for pupils | 1 school term  |

# Who makes the decisions and the variables we cannot control

| School Type            | Description  | Proposer             | Decision making body              |
|------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Community</b>       | The local authority owns the buildings and determines admission arrangements   | LA                   | LA                                |
| <b>Voluntary Aided</b> | A trust or diocesan body owns the building, employs the staff and determine their own admission arrangements   | LA or Governing Body | LA                                |
| <b>Academy</b>         | 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 |
| <b>Free school</b>     | 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 |

# Phased Implementation of School Organisation Plan

| Phase                          | Actions   | Surplus places removed   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Phase 1 of School Organisation | Amalgamation of Copenhagen and Vittoria by <b>September 2023</b> (Removes 0.5 FE)<br>The amalgamated Vittoria Primary School on the former Copenhagen site is now in its second term of successful operation<br>New River College now based on the former Vittoria site as an interim arrangement | Removes <b>2.5 FE (75 places)</b>  |
|                                | PAN Reduction of 4 schools agreed for <b>September 24</b> (Removes 2 FE)  |  |
| Phase 2 of School Organisation | Two proposals put forward for September 2024 Implementation - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amalgamation of Duncombe and Montem Primary schools</li> <li>Closure of Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School</li> </ul> Informal consultations held in Autumn 2023                            | Primary – if all proposals proceed this would remove <b>6 FE (180 places)</b><br>Secondary – removes <b>4.8 (145 places)</b> |
|                                | PAN reductions proposed at 5 primary schools and 5 secondary schools  |  |
| Phase 3 of School Organisation | Schools with the biggest sustainability challenges have been identified<br><br>Dialogue is underway with these schools exploring solutions.   | <b>TBC</b>   |

## Solution 2 - Managing School Balances

Setting a balanced budget is the **responsibility of the governing body**, and the LA can exercise statutory powers if this is not achieved.

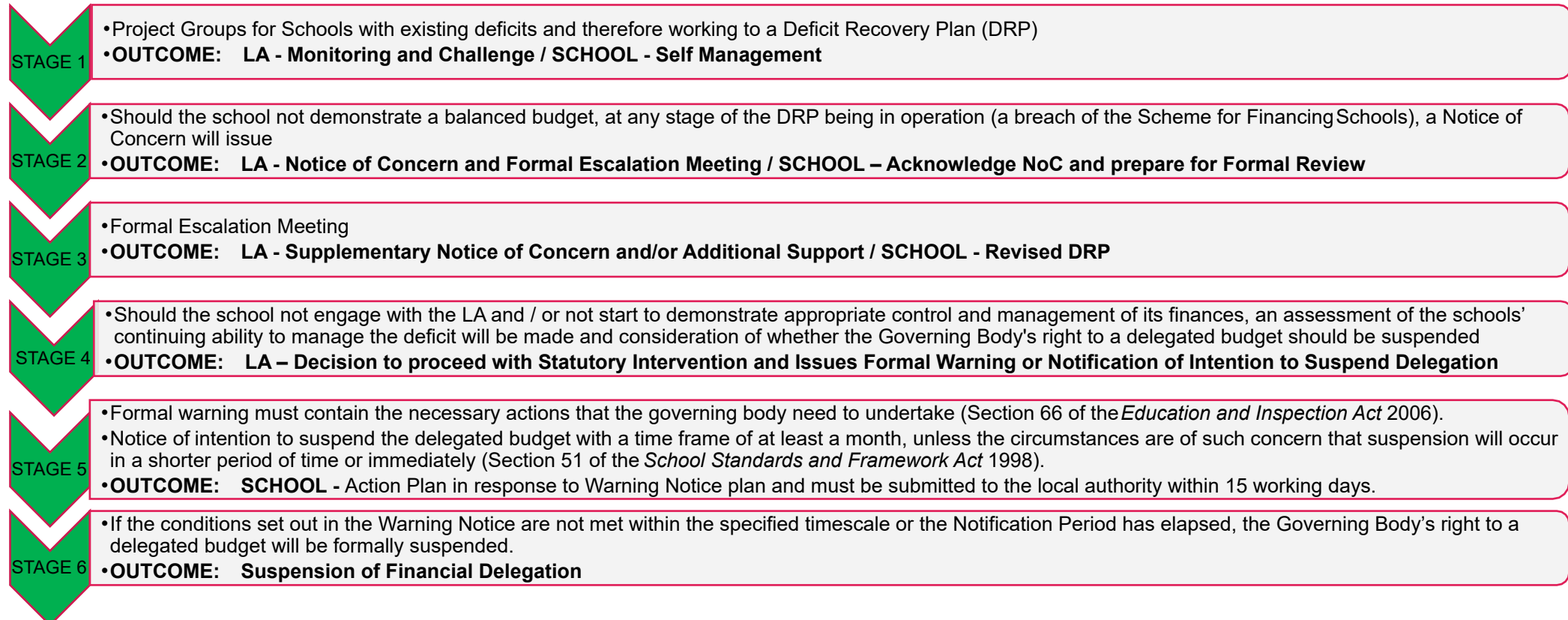
The Council **cannot write off the deficit balance of any school**

Three options for managing deficit balances:

- **The individual school manages it**, either in year or by way of a Deficit Recovery Plan, with LA support, monitoring, challenge and (potential) statutory intervention (impacts on the individual school's pupils)
  - A deficit recovery plan must be **approved by two statutory chief officers: the Corporate Director for Children's Services and the Section 151 officer**
- The Dedicated School Grant (DSG), for **de-delegation for schools** in financial difficulty (impacts on all pupils/schools)
- **The General Fund**, when a school in deficit closes (impacts all residents)

# Managing Deficit Budgets - Escalation Process

- If progress within the agreed timescales of the Deficit Recovery Plan is not being met or at significant risk of not being achieved then the following stages are implemented.



# Risk

- **Academisation**

Schools are able to apply to the DfE to academise. If successful, the LA is unable to propose closure. The Diocese of Westminster has approached the DfE to convert Blessed Sacrament into an academy. If this was to succeed, it would compromise the LA's ability to manage the school estate

- **SEND**

Children with SEND are at particular risk during transition. There is additional risk of support for children with SEND being interrupted. The SEND team will require additional resource to ensure all EHCPs and needs are identified and supported consistently throughout any potential processes.

# Future proofing Islington Children's Future

- This strategic approach will enable all children and young people to do their best in strong, financially viable schools.
- The School Organisation Plan will reduce surplus places across our schools.
- Next steps will include developing phase 3 proposals, ready for initial consideration in Summer 2024
- **The current position is unsustainable and life chances for Islington children are being put at risk.**





