

Children's Services
222 Upper St
London N1 1XR

Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 8 February 2024

Ward(s): Borough-wide

Admission to Islington Community Schools 2025-26

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The School Admissions Code, 2021 requires all admission authorities to determine their admission arrangements by **28 February 2024** for admission in **2025-26**.
- 1.2. Admission authorities must publish a copy of the determined admission arrangements on their website by **15 March 2024**. Where an admission authority has determined a Published Admission Number (PAN) that is higher than in previous years, they must make specific reference to the change on their website.
- 1.3. Admission authorities need only consult every seven years, unless substantial changes are being proposed to the arrangements made following the previous consultation. Where substantial changes are proposed, the consultation period must be for a minimum of six weeks running between **1 October 2023 and 31 January 2024**.
- 1.4. As changes to primary admission numbers are being proposed, a consultation took place between **20 October** and **1 December 2023**.
- 1.5. This report outlines proposals and recommendations for the co-ordination of, and arrangements for Primary and Secondary Transfer and local protocols for the management of in-year applications to Islington primary and secondary schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To agree the co-ordinated schemes and timetables for admission to Islington primary, secondary schools, and academies in 2025-26, and in-year admission protocols for 2025-26 as set out in **Appendices 1, 4, and 7**.
- 2.2. To agree the policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to community primary and secondary schools and Highbury Fields Sixth Form for 2025-26 as set out in **Appendices 2, 5, 8 and 9**.
- 2.3. To agree the admission numbers for Islington community primary and secondary schools and for external applicants to Highbury Fields Sixth Form for 2025-26 as set out in **Appendices 3, 6 and 10**.

3. Background

- 3.1. All admission authorities must consult others locally before determining their admission arrangements.
- 3.2. Admission authorities must consult every seven years, unless substantial changes are being proposed to the arrangements made following the last consultation.
- 3.3. Where significant changes are proposed, admission authorities must:
 - consult on their proposed arrangements by **31 January** in the determination year
 - allow at least a 6-week period for consultation
 - in light of consultation, determine their admission arrangements by **28 February** in the determination year
 - publish the determined admission arrangements on their website by **15 March** in the determination year.
- 3.4. All admission authorities must determine admission arrangements by **28 February** even if they have not changed from the previous years and a consultation has not been required.
- 3.5. Therefore, the Executive is required to agree the admission arrangements and admission numbers for all Islington community primary and secondary schools, and Highbury Fields Sixth Form for admission in 2025-26 and local protocols for in-year admissions in 2025-26.

CONSULTATION

- 3.6. All local authorities are required, by section 88M of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and the Co-ordination Regulations, to have in place a scheme each year for co-ordinating admissions arrangements for maintained schools within their area.
- 3.7. The School Admissions Code requires every local authority to draw up a scheme for maintained schools which ensures that every parent living in the local authority area applying for a place in the normal round receives the offer of one, and only one school place.

- 3.8. It also requires local authorities to provide a common application form and that it is made available to every resident in its area. Consultation must relate to admission arrangements. It must therefore include:
- The admissions policy
 - The procedures and timing for applications
 - Proposed admission numbers
 - Details of over-subscription criteria and how they will be applied.
- 3.9. The School Admissions Code imposes mandatory requirements, and provides guidance to local authorities and admitting authorities, for achieving good practice in setting oversubscription criteria to ensure admission arrangements are fair and transparent to all children and their families and promote social equity. The Code also details oversubscription criteria that are considered unlawful.
- 3.10. Any objections to the admission arrangements for 2025-26 must be referred to the Schools' Adjudicator by **15 May 2024**.
- 3.11. Local authorities must formulate and publish on their website a coordination scheme for all publicly funded schools within their area by **1 January** in the relevant determination year.
- 3.12. Where the scheme is substantially different from the scheme adopted the previous academic year, the local authority must consult the other admission authorities in the area and where relevant, any other local authority it determines.
- 3.13. Where the scheme has not changed from the previous year, there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement to consult at least once every seven years, even if there have been no changes during this period.
- 3.14. As changes to the admission number of three community primary schools are proposed, consultation took place between **20 October and 01 December 2023**.
- 3.15. The consultation paper and link to the response form were published for six weeks on [Islington Council's website](#) as a project on the 'Let's Talk Islington' microsite. The project was entitled '**Consultation on Proposed Admission Arrangements for Islington Community Schools 2025-26**' and received **529** visits to the webpage. Of these, **118** engaged with an aspect of the project, with **78** downloads of related documents over the consultation period. **14** participants provided a written response.
- 3.16. The consultation was also circulated to all London local authorities, Diocesan representatives and all Islington Childminders, Early Years Providers, primary and secondary schools. No responses were received through these channels.
- 3.17. A breakdown of the **14** written responses received was as follows:

Education professional	3
Unknown	11

A summary of consultation responses is provided in **Appendix 11**.

SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2025-26

A. Coordinated scheme for admission to secondary school 2025-26

- 3.19. The high level of applications to schools outside the child's home local authority (and the requirement for eradicating multiple offers) means there is a need to co-ordinate admissions across the 33 London authorities.
- 3.20. A computer-based Pan-London Admissions System enables this co-ordination to take place. The effectiveness of this system is contingent on the adoption of a common set of procedures across London authorities. Many elements of the scheme must be common to all London authorities to ensure effective Pan-London arrangements.
- 3.21. Once all applications are duly processed, arrangements for waiting lists and residents without a school place are for local determination. These arrangements must, however, be made in accordance with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code, 2021.
- 3.22. The consultation sought views on the proposed coordinated scheme for admission to secondary school in **2025-26**.
- 3.23. No changes to Islington's existing scheme were proposed. The scheme and timetable for 2025-26 are set out in **Appendix 1**. (*Please note that although Arts and Media School, Islington is technically its own admission authority, the school has asked the local authority to treat it as community school for the purpose of school admissions*).

Consultation Responses (Question 1)

- 3.24. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed secondary scheme and timetable, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were given for opposing the secondary scheme and timetable.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.25. To agree the co-ordinated scheme and timetable for admission to Islington secondary schools and academies in **2025-26** as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

B. Policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to community secondary schools 2025-26

- 3.26. There is no requirement for admission authorities within a local area's coordinated scheme to operate the same over-subscription criteria. Admission authorities must therefore set and apply their own admission criteria.
- 3.27. The School Admissions Code 2021 requires admission authorities to set out the criteria against which places at each school will be allocated in the event of more applications being received than there are places available.
- 3.28. Some oversubscription criteria are mandatory, for example all admission authorities are required to give highest priority to looked-after children and all previously looked-after children.

- 3.29. Other criteria are at the admission authority's discretion, so long as they comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation, and are reasonable, clear, objective, and procedurally fair.
- 3.30. Islington council seeks to ensure that its admission criteria enable residents to secure a local school place should they so wish. Prioritising siblings also supports family management, good attendance, and punctuality.
- 3.31. Our criteria for admission to community secondary schools have remained substantially unchanged for several years, save technical amendments to clarify definitions or implement required changes resulting from revisions to the School Admissions Code.
- 3.32. The council's existing criteria for admission to community secondary schools:
- **Criterion 1: Looked-after and previously looked after children** - Children who are in the care of a local authority in England and children who have been adopted or made subject to a child-arrangements order or special guardianship order immediately after being looked-after, including those who appear to have been in state care outside of England.
 - **Criterion 2: Sibling** - A sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or sister, stepbrother or sister or adopted brother or sister whose main residence is at the same address. This criterion will apply to applicants with a sibling living at the same address who is on the roll of the preferred school (Years 7 to 11), or co-located Special School, at the time of determined admission in the new academic year.
 - **Criterion 3: Exceptional Social, Medical or Special Educational Needs** - The Director of Children's Services, on an individual basis, may give priority to applicants who can demonstrate that admission to a particular school is necessary on the grounds of professionally supported exceptional medical, social, or special educational needs. Parents/carers must supply details of any such special factors at the time of the original application (together with recent supporting documentation), to enable these factors to be considered.
 - **Criterion 4: Distance** - Applicants who live nearest to the preferred school. Nearness to the school will be determined by a computerised mapping system using a straight-line distance measurement. Routes will be calculated from the home address (as defined by the Land and Property Gazetteer) to the midpoint of the school grounds (as determined by Islington Local Authority).
- 3.33. Officers have reviewed existing arrangements to assess whether Islington's oversubscription criteria for admission to community secondary schools continue to provide residents with equitable access to local schools as set out above. An analysis of the proportion of children admitted under each of the community school oversubscription criteria over the last three years was undertaken.
- 3.34. Our expectation is that most applicants will be admitted under the distance criterion, followed by admissions under the sibling criterion. Given that requests for consideration under the social-medical criterion should only be agreed in exceptional

circumstances, the expectation is that relatively few applicants will be prioritised for admission under this criterion.¹

- 3.35. **Table 1** overleaf summarises the findings of the analysis and confirms that over a three-year period, Islington's criteria for admission to community secondary schools are operating as intended, with most applicants being admitted under the distance criterion, followed by the sibling criterion.
- 3.36. The figures also confirm that offers made under the social-medical criterion remain 'exceptional' as intended, with an average of only 0% of applicants being offered a school place under this criterion over the three-year period.
- 3.37. In conclusion, the criteria for admission to Islington community secondary schools appear to be effective in securing fair access for eligible residents. No changes to the existing criteria are therefore proposed.
- 3.38. The consultation sought views on the proposed policy and oversubscription criteria. No changes were proposed.

Consultation Responses (Question 2)

- 3.39. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed secondary admissions policy and oversubscription criteria, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were given for opposing the secondary admissions policy and oversubscription criteria.
- 3.40. **RECOMMENDATION**
To agree the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to Islington community secondary schools in 2025-26 as outlined in **Appendix 2**.

¹ Please note that the 'looked after and previously looked after children' criterion has not been included in the analysis as it is mandatory for eligible children to be given top priority in admission arrangements.

Table 1: Breakdown of criteria offers for secondary community schools over last three years

Year of Secondary transfer	Community school places available	Number of offers for Community Schools	Number of offers made under the sibling criterion	Percentage of offers made under the sibling criterion	Number of offers made under the Exceptional Social Medical Criterion	Percentage of offers made under the Exceptional Social Medical Criterion	Number of offers made under the Distance Criterion	Percentage of offers made under the Distance Criterion
2020-21	590	590	116	20%	3	1%	350	59%
2021-22	590	590	107	18%	2	0%	381	65%
2022-23	590	590	131	22%	4	1%	343	58%
Average	590	590	118	20%	3	1%	358	61%

Please note - percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole; offers are as at National Offer Day.

C. Community secondary school admission numbers 2025-26

- 3.41. The local authority must publish admission numbers for secondary schools within its admission arrangements. Published numbers must take account of the school's net capacity as determined by the Department for Education (DfE) formula. Schools must be consulted before deciding their admission number.
- 3.42. Islington's school roll projections are based on a combination of local intelligence (e.g., housing developments with planning approval, pupil roll and demographic changes), and trend data provided by the Greater London Association (GLA) that incorporate national and regional developments, including inward and outward migration. To date, these projections have proved reliable and have supported the Council in making the most efficient use of its resources.
- 3.43. In line with population falls across Inner London, our latest evidence on births, health visiting and GP registrations (of children under 12 months), indicate that a year-on-year reduction in births across the local area is likely to remain an ongoing trend.
- 3.44. The impact of falling primary rolls is beginning to work its way through into the secondary phase. For the first time, Islington secondary school rolls fell in 2022/23 following gradual rises in previous years as falling rolls.
- 3.45. School census data for Autumn 2023 indicates that actual secondary school rolls are falling at a faster rate than projected, with provisional figures indicating there to be 100 fewer pupils than estimated in our previous projections.
- 3.46. A series of PAN reductions across the secondary estate have already been actioned. These include reductions to the admission number of Arts and Media School, Islington from 180 to 150 and Beacon High from 180 to 120. In addition, the City of London Multi-Academy Trust has reduced the admission number of City of London Academy, Highbury Grove from 240 to 210 for entry in September 2024.
- 3.47. While these reductions have supported the management of surplus capacity across the secondary estate, the proportion of unfilled places in the current Year 7 cohort stands at 16%. This figure is above both the DfE recommendation of 5% surplus capacity and 10% vacancy rate that most local authorities across London work towards.
- 3.48. Despite reducing its Published Admission Number (PAN) in 2020, Arts and Media School, Islington continues to hold significant numbers of unfilled Year 7 places with the three-year trajectory suggesting further increases to the school's vacancy rate as outlined in **Table 2** below.
- 3.49. As a result, in agreement with the school's governing body it is proposed to reduce the Year 7 admission number from 150 to 120 for entry in September 2025. This will support the school with managing their resources more effectively within their funding allocation.

Table 2: Vacancy rate at Arts and Media School, Islington over last three years

School	PAN 2023	Offers 2021	Offers 2022	Offers 2023
Arts and Media School, Islington	150	129	110	90
Number of unfilled places		21	19	20
Vacancy rate		14%	15%	18%

3.50. We are also aware that other schools that are their own admission authority are consulting on proposals to reduce their Year 7 admission number as outlined in **Table 3**. These include City of London Academy, Highbury Grove (from 210 to 180); St Aloysius' College (from 180 to 150) and St Mary Magdalene Academy (from 210 to 180), removing a further 90 places from the secondary estate.

Table 3: Proposed secondary school admission numbers 2025-26

School	Published Admission Number (PAN) 2024-25	Proposed Admission Number (PAN) 2025-26
Arts and Media School Islington ²	150	120
Beacon High	120	120
Central Foundation Boys' School	180	180
City of London Academy, Highbury Grove	210	180
City of London Academy, Highgate Hill	140	140
City of London Academy, Islington	165	140

² Please note that although Arts and Media School, Islington is technically its own admission authority, the school has asked the local authority to treat it as community school for the purpose of school admissions.

School	Published Admission Number (PAN) 2024-25	Proposed Admission Number (PAN) 2025-26
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School	180	180
Highbury Fields School	140	140
St Aloysius' College	180	150
St Mary Magdalene Academy	210	180
Total number of secondary school places	1,675	1,530

3.51. These proposals will further support the efficient management of secondary school places across Islington, while providing the flexibility to respond to changes in the school age population. Should the birth rate rise unexpectedly, and additional secondary capacity be required, the decommissioned places could be brought back into immediate use at no extra cost.

3.52. The consultation sought views on proposals for the admission numbers of Islington secondary community schools for entry in 2025-26 outlined in **Table 3**.

Consultation Responses (Question 3)

3.53. Nine respondents agreed with the proposed secondary community school admission numbers, while four disagreed with the proposals. One respondent did not provide a view. No reasons were given for opposing the secondary admission numbers for community schools.

RECOMMENDATION

3.54. To agree the admission numbers for Islington secondary community schools in 2025-26 as outlined in **Appendix 3**.

PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2025-26

D. Coordinated scheme for admission to primary school 2025-26

3.55. The high level of applications to schools outside the child's home local authority (and the requirement for eradicating multiple offers) means there is a need to co-ordinate admissions across the 33 London authorities.

3.56. A computer-based Pan-London Admissions System enables this co-ordination to take place. The effectiveness of this system is contingent on the adoption of a common set of procedures across London authorities. Many elements of the scheme

must be common to all London authorities to ensure effective Pan-London arrangements.

- 3.57. Once all applications are duly processed, arrangements for waiting lists and residents without a school place are for local determination. These arrangements must, however, be made in accordance with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code, 2021.
- 3.58. The consultation sought views on the proposed coordinated scheme for admission to primary school in **2025-26**.
- 3.59. No changes to Islington's existing scheme were proposed. The scheme and timetable for 2025-26 are set out in **Appendix 4**.

Consultation Responses (Question 4)

- 3.60. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed primary admission scheme and timetable, while three respondents disagreed with the proposals. No reasons were given for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.61. To agree the co-ordinated scheme and timetable for admission to Islington primary schools and academies in **2025-26** as outlined in **Appendix 4**.

E. Policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to community primary schools 2025-26

- 3.62. There is no requirement for admission authorities within a local area's coordinated scheme to operate the same over-subscription criteria. Admission authorities must therefore set and apply their own admission criteria.
- 3.63. The School Admissions Code requires admission authorities to set out the criteria against which places at each school will be allocated in the event of more applications being received than there are places available.
- 3.64. Some oversubscription criteria are mandatory, for example all admission authorities are required to give highest priority to looked-after children and all previously looked-after children, including those who appear to have been in state care outside of England.
- 3.65. Other criteria are at the admission authority's discretion, so long as they comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation, and are reasonable, clear, objective, and procedurally fair.
- 3.66. The council also seeks to ensure that its admission criteria enable residents to secure a local school place should they wish. Prioritising siblings as an admission criterion also supports family management, good attendance, and punctuality.
- 3.67. Islington's criteria for admission to community primary schools have remained substantially unchanged for several years, save technical amendments to clarify definitions or implement required changes resulting from revisions to the School Admissions Code.

- 3.68. Islington's existing criteria for admission to community primary schools are considered in the following order of priority:
1. **Looked-after and previously looked after children:** Children who are in the care of a local authority in England and children who have been adopted or made subject to a child-arrangements order or special guardianship order immediately after being looked-after, including those who appear to have been in state care outside of England.
 2. **Sibling:** A sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half-brother or sister, step-brother or sister or adopted brother or sister whose main residence is at the same address. This criterion will apply to applicants with a sibling living at the same address who is on the roll of the preferred school (Years 7 to 11), or co-located Special School, at the time of proposed admission in the new academic year.
 3. **Exceptional Social, Medical or Special Educational Needs:** The Director of Children's Services, on an individual basis, may give priority to applicants who can demonstrate that admission to a particular school is necessary on the grounds of professionally supported exceptional medical, social, or special educational needs.
 4. **Distance:** Applicants who live nearest to the preferred school.
- 3.69. Officers have reviewed existing arrangements to assess whether Islington's admission criteria for community primary schools continue to provide residents with equitable access to local schools as set out above. An analysis of the proportion of children admitted under each of the community school oversubscription criteria over the last three years was undertaken.
- 3.70. Our expectation is that most applicants will be admitted under the distance criterion, closely followed by admissions under the sibling criterion in the primary phase. Given that requests for consideration under the social-medical criterion should only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, the expectation is that relatively few applicants will be prioritised for admission under this criterion. *(Please note that the 'looked after and previously looked after children' criterion has not been included in the analysis as it is mandatory for eligible children to be given top priority in admission arrangements).*
- 3.71. **Table 4** summarises the findings of the analysis and confirms that over a three-year period, Islington's criteria for admission to community primary schools are operating as intended, with most applicants being admitted under the distance criterion, followed closely by the sibling criterion that supports family management of young children.
- 3.72. Although the proportion of sibling offers is much higher at primary than at secondary, this is unsurprising as the aim of the sibling criterion is to support families with young children in managing the school journey most effectively. At secondary, children are more likely to travel to school independently and therefore being offered a place at the same school as an older sibling is less important.

Table 4: Breakdown of criteria offers for primary community schools

Year of entry	Community school places	Offers for community schools	Number of offers under Sibling Criterion	Number of offers made under the sibling criterion	Percentage of offers made under the sibling criterion	Number of offers made under the Exceptional Social Medical Criterion	Percentage of offers made under the Exceptional Social Medical Criterion	Number of offers made under the Distance Criterion
2020/21	1,400	1,284	476	37%	9	1%	665	52%
2021/22	1,400	1,233	476	39%	11	1%	643	52%
2022/23	1,340	1,172	459	39%	13	1%	646	55%
3-year average	1,380	1,230	470	38%	11	1%	651	53%

Please note - percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole; offers are as at National Offer Day.

- 3.73. The figures also confirm that offers made under the social-medical criterion remain 'exceptional' as intended, with an average of only 1% of applicants being offered a school place under this criterion over the three-year period.
- 3.74. In conclusion, the criteria for admission to Islington community primary schools appear to be effective in securing fair access for eligible residents.
- 3.75. The consultation sought views on the proposed policy and oversubscription criteria for community primary schools. No changes were proposed.

Consultation Responses (Question 5)

- 3.76. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed policy and oversubscription criteria, while three disagreed. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.77. To agree the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to Islington community primary schools in **2025-26** as outlined in **Appendix 5**.

F. Community primary school admission numbers 2025-26

- 3.78. The local authority must publish admission numbers for primary schools within its admission arrangements. Published numbers must take account of the school's net capacity as determined by the Department for Education (DfE) formula. Schools must be consulted before deciding their admission number.
- 3.79. Islington's school roll projections are based on a combination of local intelligence (e.g., housing developments with planning approval, pupil roll and demographic changes), and trend data provided by the Greater London Association (GLA) that incorporates national and regional developments, including inward and outward migration. To date, these projections have proved reliable and have supported the Council in making the most efficient use of its resources.
- 3.80. The birth rate in Islington has fallen in recent years, in line with regional trends across London. Data on births indicated a significant drop in live births between 2021 and 2022, and as a result the 2022/23 primary school data demonstrated a significant drop in the reception class roll.
- 3.81. Our latest evidence on births, health visiting and GP registrations (of children under 12 months), indicate that a year-on-year reduction in births across the local area is likely to remain an ongoing trend.
- 3.82. Although the Department for Education (DfE) recommends that local authorities maintain surplus capacity at approximately 5%, along with several other London boroughs, we are of the view that a vacancy rate of up to 10% is a reasonable assumption as it provides the flexibility to respond to sudden changes in the school age population.
- 3.83. The figures in **Table 5** show that the number of unfilled reception class places is more than double our assumption of a reasonable vacancy rate (10%).

Table 5: Reception class vacancy rates as at National Offer Day (17 April 2023)

Vacancies by Planning Area	Number of places available	Vacancies	Vacancy rate
Planning Area 1: Holloway	465	88	19%
Planning Area 2: Hornsey	465	141	30%
Planning Area 3: Highbury	360	35	10%
Planning Area 4: Barnsbury	260	83	32%
Planning Area 5: Canonbury	340	60	18%
Planning Area 6: Finsbury	300	61	20%
TOTALS	2190	468	21%

- 3.84. As the majority of school funding is based on pupil numbers, fewer pupils means less funding with fewer resources available for a high quality and diverse curriculum offer.
- 3.85. The council is committed to driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools. The falling birth rate however continues to have a significant impact on many primary schools despite actions already taken to mitigate the effect of falling rolls on the quality of education provision, including school closure, amalgamation and reductions to published admission numbers.
- 3.86. Reducing the number of school places in a planned way will therefore support schools to manage change within their national funding formula allocations.
- 3.87. A series of managed reductions to the existing primary capacity are therefore proposed for implementation from 2025-26.
- 3.88. For the past three years, **Prior Weston** (Planning Area 6), **Rotherfield** (Planning Area 5), **Drayton Park** (Planning Area 3) and **Tufnell Park** (Planning Area 1) **Primary Schools** have held surplus capacity well above 10%.
- 3.89. To support these schools with financial planning over the medium term, with the agreement of the governing bodies, reductions to the admission number for entry in 2025-26 are proposed as follows:
- **Prior Weston Primary** from **60 to 30**

- **Rotherfield Primary** from **60 to 30**
- **Drayton Park Primary** from **45 to 30**
- **Tufnell Park Primary** from **90 to 60**.

- 3.90. The proposed removal of 105 community school places will contribute to the overall reduction of surplus capacity across the primary school estate while providing the flexibility to respond to changes in the school age population. Should the birth rate rise unexpectedly, and additional primary capacity be required, the decommissioned places could be brought back into immediate use at no extra cost.
- 3.91. Alongside the proposed reductions outlined above, other options for managing Islington's primary school estate are being considered, with the aim of securing its financial viability over the longer term through the efficient use of public resources.
- 3.92. It is worth noting that two consultations are currently underway on proposals to:
- amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on the Duncombe school site
 - close Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School.

Consultation Responses (Question 6)

- 3.93. Nine respondents agreed with the proposed primary community school admission numbers for 2025-26, while five disagreed with the proposals. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.94. To agree the primary admission numbers for Islington community schools in **2025-26** as outlined in **Appendix 6**.

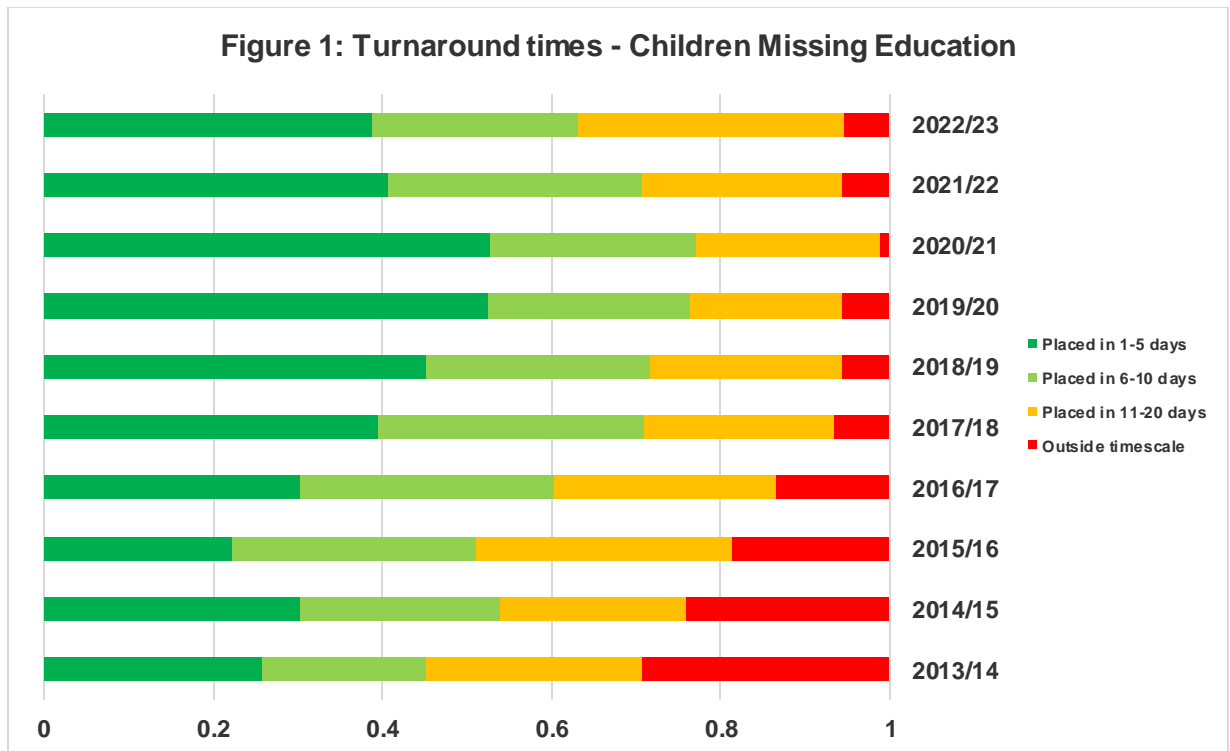
IN-YEAR ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2025-26

G. Local protocols for the management of in-year admission applications and waiting lists for Islington schools: 2025-26

- 3.95. The requirement for local authorities to coordinate in-year admission applications was removed by the 2012 School Admissions Code. This continues to remain the case in the School Admissions Code 2021.
- 3.96. Following consultation with all Islington schools, the management of in-year applications was delegated to schools, inclusive of own admission authority and community schools from September 2013.
- 3.97. The aim of delegating the management of applications in this way was to simplify the admission process for parents applying outside the normal points of entry (Primary and Secondary Transfer). It was also felt that delegating the management of in-year applications to community schools would ensure parity between different admission authority schools, reinforcing a local 'community of schools' approach.
- 3.98. As part of this development, an online application process was created to ensure simultaneous notification of applications to the preferred school and the local authority. Protocols were also agreed with schools on how applications should be processed and waiting lists managed. These protocols enabled the local authority to

maintain an overview of offers to ensure they were being made in line with the relevant published admission criteria, as well as safeguarding against unplaced children 'falling through the net'.

- 3.99. In addition, Islington's in-year protocols are underpinned by robust 'Children Missing Education' procedures to ensure that no child will ever be without the offer of a school place as close as possible to their home address.
- 3.100. Over time, these protocols have had a significant impact in reducing the amount of time unplaced children have spent out of education as evidenced in **Figure 1** below:



- 3.101. Applicants can apply for up to three schools at any one time. This can include a mixture of Islington and out-of-borough schools. Schools must provide applicants with an outcome letter within 15 school days in line with statutory guidance (School Admissions Code 2021). Applicants refused a place must be provided with the reason for refusal and offered the right of appeal.
- 3.102. Waiting lists are cleared at the end of each term. Applicants who wish to change schools after this period are required to submit a fresh application as highlighted on the online application form. Unplaced children, however, are automatically carried forward to the school's new waiting list.
- 3.103. These arrangements have been in place for several years and have for the most part, succeeded in providing residents with speedier admission to a preferred school. We are therefore not proposing any changes to the existing protocols.
- 3.104. It is worth noting that discussions are also underway with senior secondary school leaders regarding 'school to school' transfers and managed moves to ensure a more

consistent and transparent approach to the placement of pupils requiring a fresh start.

- 3.105. The consultation sought views on the proposed local protocols for the management of in-year admission applications and waiting lists for Islington schools in 2025-26.

Consultation Responses (Question 7)

- 3.106. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed protocols for the management of applications and waiting lists for in-year admissions to Islington schools in 2025-26, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.107. To agree the local protocols for the management of in-year admission applications and waiting lists for Islington schools in 2025-26 as set out in **Appendix 7**.

H. In-year admission criteria for community primary and secondary schools: 2025-26

- 3.108. For admission in 2025-26, where more applications are received than there are places available for in-year admission to Islington community primary and secondary schools, oversubscription criteria will mirror those for the normal points of entry:

Criterion 1: Looked-after and previously looked after children

Criterion 2: Sibling

Criterion 3: Exceptional Social, Medical or Special Educational Needs

Criterion 4: Distance.

- 3.109. Full definitions are set out in **Appendix 8**. The existing local arrangements have continued to work effectively over a sustained period and therefore no changes were proposed for in-year admission in 2025-26.

- 3.110. The consultation sought views on the proposed admission criteria for in-year admission to Islington community primary and secondary schools.

Consultation Responses (Question 8)

- 3.111. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed admission criteria for in-year admission to Islington primary and secondary community schools in 2025-26, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.112. To agree the admission criteria for in-year admission to Islington community primary and secondary schools in 2025-26 as set out in **Appendix 8**.

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR Highbury Fields Community School Sixth Form

I. Admission Policy and Oversubscription Criteria for Highbury Fields Community School Sixth Form 2025-26

- 3.113. Highbury Fields Sixth Form is a community secondary school for girls with attached sixth form provision.
- 3.114. Places at Highbury Fields Sixth Form continue to be available to all Year 11 students on roll at the school who meet subject entry requirements.
- 3.115. Where more applications are received than there are places available, we will apply the proposed oversubscription criteria for external applicants:
- **Looked-after and previously looked after children:** Children who are in the care of a local authority in England and children who have been adopted or made subject to a child-arrangements order or special guardianship order immediately after being looked-after by a local authority in England including those who appear to have been in state care outside of England.
 - **Students in Year 11 who attend Highbury Fields School** and meet the entry requirements for their chosen course.
 - External applicants who meet the entry requirements for their chosen course.
 - Distance will be used in the event of a tie-break.
- 3.116. The existing arrangements have continued to work effectively over a sustained period and therefore no changes are proposed to either the admission policy or oversubscription criteria for entry to Highbury Fields Sixth Form in 2025-26.
- 3.117. Places at Highbury Fields Sixth Form continue to be available to all Year 11 students on roll at the school who meet subject entry requirements.
- 3.118. The consultation sought views on the proposed admission policy and oversubscription criteria for admission to Highbury Fields Community School Sixth Form.

Consultation Responses (Question 9)

- 3.119. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed admission criteria for in-year admission to Islington primary and secondary community schools in 2025-26, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.120. To agree the admission policy and oversubscription criteria for entry to Highbury Fields Community School Sixth Form in **2025-26** as set out in **Appendix 9**.

J. Admission Number for External Applicants to Highbury Fields Sixth Form in Year 12 for 2024-25

- 3.121. The School Admissions Code 2021 requires secondary schools that operate a sixth form where external students from other schools are admitted for the first time at age 16 to publish an admission number for entry to the school in Year 12. This is in addition to the published admission number for Year 7.
- 3.122. The admission number for **external applicants** to Highbury Fields Sixth Form is currently **25**. No changes are proposed for first-time admission to Highbury Fields Sixth Form in **2025-26**.
- 3.123. The consultation sought views on the proposed admission number for external applicants to Highbury Fields Sixth Form in Year 12.

Consultation Responses (Question 10)

- 3.124. Eleven respondents agreed with the proposed admission criteria for in-year admission to Islington primary and secondary community schools in 2025-26, while three respondents disagreed. No reasons were provided for opposing the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.125. To agree the admission number for external applicants to Highbury Fields Sixth Form in Year 12 for 2025-26 as set out in **Appendix 10**.

4. Implications

○ Financial Implications

Schools are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The level of funding schools receive through the schools' funding formula is based on the number of registered pupils and their characteristics. There are therefore no direct financial implications from the proposals in this report.

The School Organisation Plan, agreed by the Executive in October 2022, is the borough-wide strategic approach to pupil place planning. Islington, like many councils across London is impacted by falling rolls – there are too few pupils to fill the number of school places available. This matters because the funding schools received is triggered by the numbers of pupils on roll, with each primary school pupil triggering £5,700.

The level of surplus capacity across the borough is too high with 536 unfilled places in reception year group alone this year (2023). Roll projections based on birth data show that the level of unfilled places will increase. This has impacted on the financial health of our schools, with 23.1% 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.

To address this, we are implementing our School Organisation Plan to reduce the overall capacity of school places across the borough. To do this, the Council must operate within a DfE presumption not to close schools. This means exhausting all other options first, including reducing schools' published admission numbers (PAN).

For schools to manage their budgets effectively and remain financially viable, there is a need for an optimum number of pupils in any given class. Should numbers fall below this figure, there is a greater risk of schools being unable to set a balanced budget that is sustainable over the longer term which in turn will affect the quality of education the school is able to provide. Therefore, if no changes are made to admission numbers while the school population continues to decline as projected, surplus capacity will continue to grow, leaving some schools at greater risk of having an increasing number of unfilled places. Our proposals for reducing the published admission number for those schools currently projecting a cumulative deficit by the end of 2025-26 will protect projected deficits from increasing still further.

○ Legal Implications

The council has a duty to undertake consultation on admission policies to determine admission arrangements, including admission numbers under Part III of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012/8. The council must comply with the mandatory

requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021 and have due regard to the discretionary elements of the Code.

- **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

The main environmental impact of the arrangements is how pupils travel to school, sometimes accompanied by parents; there is a risk that longer journeys are more likely to be made by vehicles and lead to emissions. The admission arrangements mitigate this by using distance as an admission criterion, with the majority of children being allocated a place under the distance criterion. This report recommends there be no changes made to the existing admissions arrangements, meaning no change to the existing environmental implications of the arrangements.

In addition, schools work with the council through the creation of school travel plans to promote safer, healthier, and more environmentally friendly ways to travel to schools including walking, cycling, and using public transport. The introduction of 34 School Street schemes since 2019 that specifically target air pollution outside the school gate and two environmental improvement schemes at schools on main roads, have already seen significant reductions in pollution levels in and around the school sites.

- **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The admission arrangements for community schools are designed to ensure all parents have an equal chance of securing the community school of their choice irrespective of the child's ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic group.

An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed on 01/12/2023. No adverse impacts were noted for children and their parents/carers.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- The proposed admission arrangements for both primary and secondary community schools and Highbury Fields Sixth Form promote fair access to educational opportunity and are compliant with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code, 2021.

- The Executive is therefore asked to agree the proposed primary and secondary admission arrangements for 2025-26; in-year admission protocols for 2025-26 and Highbury Fields Community Sixth Form arrangements 2025-26.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Proposed Arrangements for Secondary Transfer 2025-26

Appendix 2: Proposed Admission Criteria for Community Secondary Schools 2025-26

Appendix 3: Proposed Secondary Admission Numbers 2025-26

Appendix 4: Proposed Arrangements for Primary Transfer 2025-26

Appendix 5: Proposed Admission Criteria to Community Primary Schools 2025-26

Appendix 6: Proposed Primary Admission Numbers 2025-26

Appendix 7: Proposed In-Year Admission Protocols for Islington Schools 2025-26

Appendix 8: Proposed In-Year Admission Criteria to Community Schools 2025-26

Appendix 9: Proposed Highbury Fields Sixth Form Admissions Policy and Criteria 2025-26

Appendix 10: Proposed Admission Number for External Applicants to Highbury Fields Sixth Form 2025-26

Appendix 11: Summary of consultation responses

Appendix 12: Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Tool (School Admission Arrangements 2025-26)

Background papers:

None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Cllr Ngongo Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Date: 18 January 2024

Report Author: Jon Abbey, Corporate Director, Children's Services
Tel: 020 7527 5855
Email: jon.abbey@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Tim Partington, Assistant Director Finance, Children's,
Schools and Resources
Tel: 020 7527 1851
Email: tim.partington@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Rob Willis, Chief Corporate and Commercial Litigation Lawyer.
Tel: 020 7527 3302
Email: robert.willis@islington.gov.uk