Pupil Place Planning Peer Review in Lambeth

Date of Review: February 2016

Carried out by: Sean Hayes

Review of School Place Planning in Lambeth

Introduction

This report was commissioned by Lambeth Council and it is the outcome of an independent, time limited review of the council's current and planned system and methodology for calculating demand and projections for primary and secondary school places in the borough. The review was carried out over eight days which included five days on site in the Lambeth Council Offices at International House in Brixton, south London and three days working remotely. The review was carried out between December 2015 and February 2016. The specification for the work was agreed by the Director of Education, Learning and Skills and the reviewer, a copy of which is available at Appendix 1. I had a series of five key meetings with Lambeth's Pupil Place Planning Officer, who provided me with a comprehensive set of information, statistical data and reports to carry out the review and I had subsequent meetings and discussions with other Lambeth personnel involved in school place planning. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to support the information gathering process and a copy of the questionnaire is at Appendix 2. See Appendix 3 for a list of the Lambeth personnel who gave up their time and shared their expertise and in so doing helped to inform this review.

Executive Summary

- The overall conclusion from this review is that the Lambeth systems and methodologies for calculating demand and projections for primary and secondary school places are fit for purpose.
- The methodologies are based on a sound approach, grounded in the right data sources and are shared appropriately within the local authority and with elected members.
- The primary phase projections are produced at the most appropriate geographic level, that is, at planning area, of which there are five, based on the five town centre areas in Lambeth.
- In several aspects the primary phase projections go beyond what would be expected by existing standards for good pupil forecasting, specifically by producing demand based projections, which take account of parental needs by not limiting projections to the number of places available when there is a shortage of places is an area. The model also takes account of in-year admissions as well as incorporating child yield from new housing developments. The modelling provides a reliable set of projections for the next five years.
- The priority matrix system of scoring and weighting the factors brings a high level of transparency and openness to the decisions regarding which schools are selected for expansion projects. The review finds that this is a robust process, based on an appropriate range of evidence.
- The secondary phase projections take account of the number of primary pupils leaving Year 6 and compare these to the numbers turning up in Year 7, which provides a net transfer rate. The numbers starting Year 7 are then compared with PANs to show if there is a surplus or deficit of places.
- The secondary projections take a weighted average of four different scenarios of the transfer rate, add child yield and then roll out the projections across all year groups. The modelling provides a reliable set of projections for the next seven years.

- The primary and secondary phase projections ensure that the local authority is complying with its statutory duty to provide a school place for every Lambeth child that wants one and, as far as possible, in the place where they want it.
- Lambeth Council understands where the greatest pressures on school places are and it knows where the surplus places are.
- In line with any good system for school place planning it has the capacity to resolve any minor inconsistencies that it produced in the past, which provides evidence that the system is reflective.
- The report makes three recommendations for Lambeth Council to consider implementing. These are as follows:
  (1) To produce roll-based projections for the primary phase (e.g. using the GLA roll projections) alongside demand based projections.
  (2) To get school place planners to build on the existing good links with the council's Planning and Development Division, to formalise more regular data and intelligence sharing between both sides.
  (3) To get the school place planners to produce an annual report on each year's round of pupil projections, in an accessible format, which can be shared with schools and other partners.

Background

Rising pupil numbers in Lambeth, the whole of London and across England mean that local authorities must have robust systems in place for the purpose of school place planning. Nationally the pattern of demand for pupil places in England has been changing, with greater pressure on school places in the last five years than in the previous fifteen years. In July 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) released its latest set of national pupil projections[1]. The report states that the primary school population in England is projected to continue rising until 2019 and after 2019 the pace of increase is likely to be much slower up to 2024. The secondary school population in England has been falling since 2005; however, the number of pupils in state-funded secondary schools starts to rise in 2016 as a result of increases in the birth rate since 2002. The increase in primary numbers nationally and in boroughs like Lambeth is now expected to start to transfer into secondary, where the increase in numbers in that phase is likely to accelerate for several years.

Of all the regions in England, the increase in pupil numbers has been greatest in London, with all London boroughs witnessing rising numbers in the primary phase. The large increase in demand for school places across London is underpinned by demographic changes and is explained in a 2012 Greater London Authority (GLA) publication[2]. An understanding of the factors that drive these demographic changes is essential to better understand both the rise in demand that has occurred and the demand for places in the future. Population change can be broken down into three components: migration, births and deaths and in London the first two of these have had the most significant impact on rising pupil numbers.

London is a net exporter of people to the rest of the United Kingdom but is a net importer of people resulting from international migration and alongside this the birth rate has been rising in London. In fact, the most significant factor in the rise in demand for school places has been the boom in births that has occurred since 2001. Lambeth has witnessed the impact of these

demographic changes through the rising pupil numbers in the primary phase and now expects those increases to carry through to the secondary phase.

A GLA Demography briefing (*Projected demand for school places in London*[3]*)* from November 2015 provides two sets of projections which confirm that this is the likely direction of travel, with secondary pupil numbers in the borough projected by these models to increase by around 10% by 2019/20 and by 20% by 2024/25. Lambeth Council's most recent Cabinet report from July 2015 (*Pupil place planning and capital projects*[4]) recognises this: *"Secondary demand is beginning to increase significantly as the rapid growth that began in primary schools around 7 years ago works its way through into secondary*." Secondary provision has in fact already been growing in the borough and the Cabinet report also indicates that: *"Lambeth has seen a significant expansion of places in recent years for secondary provision. Four new schools were created between 2004 and 2013."*

Pupil forecasting methodology in Lambeth

The primary and secondary pupil forecasting models in Lambeth incorporate all schools, including those that have become academies. The current pattern of school provision in Lambeth includes a diversity of schools with a religious foundation and background as well as the non-denominational schools established from public funds. Whenever necessary, the diocesan authorities and the local authority co-operate over planning school places to provide opportunities for parents to express a preference for denominational schools. There is clear evidence that Lambeth engages with the appropriate range of partners, including schools, planners, and its neighbouring local authorities when it undertakes school place planning. The following sections provide an explanation and a review of the primary and secondary models.

(i) Primary Phase

In Lambeth the primary school pupil forecasting methodology includes the following data sources:

- Live births
- General Practitioner (GP) registrations
- Population projections from the ONS and the GLA
- Admission applications for reception places
- Child yield from housing developments

The methodology involves collating this data in a spreadsheet and splitting it into the five planning areas and then producing for each area, demand based projections, which take account of parental needs by not limiting projections to the number of places available when there is a shortage of places in an area.

The model first calculates age 4 population estimates, which are based on a weighted average of GP registrations plus Mid-Year population estimates and live births. This model also relies on determining the number of applicants (rather than applications) for schools from residents of Lambeth so that there is a picture of the potential future demand. The data on applications is pulled from the Lambeth admission system, filtered for the relevant year and

date of application, then aggregated to town centre level to create the number of individual applicants (as opposed to applications) from residents of each town centre area. The number of applicants each year and from each town centre are compared directly with the pupil place planning population estimate for that year in the same town centre area to determine the number of applicants as a proportion of the resident population in that area that year. This proportion is multiplied by the estimated population to create the projected number of applicants.

Two further refinements are made to the model, the number of applications is further reduced to only include those who were subsequently given an offer of a place in a school and the expected additional child yield is added. These two refinements are applied to the projected number of applicants to produce the estimate for the potential demand for Reception places. Once this has been established the next step is to roll out the estimated numbers for Reception places through Year 1 to Year 6. The best way to project Year 1 to Year 6 is to roll forward the estimates for Reception pupils then adjust to take account of the average cohort change. Most pupils move from one school year to the next but there are some who move on or to other schools elsewhere. This equates to around 0.5% of each year group, every year. Average cohort change, also known as the cohort survival ratio, is calculated by taking the actual school rolls in each year group in primary schools in Lambeth in January of each year from 2007/08 to 2014/15 and calculating the change in the size of each cohort as it moved through the school system. These percentages are applied to each of the Reception demand forecasts as the cohort moves through the school system. Year R becomes Year 1 then Year 2 and so on. To complete the picture, the Reception forecast model is applied historically to calculate the estimated demand for Reception places and these Reception demand estimates are rolled forward, child yield is added for each year group and the in-year cohort change is applied to complete a full set of primary school demand based projections for the next five years.

The model can also accommodate input from local authority officers involved in school organisation and school place planning, who can gather local intelligence through their direct contact with schools.

(ii) Secondary Phase

In Lambeth the secondary school pupil forecasting methodology starts with the number of pupils who transfer from Year 6 in primary schools to Year 7 in Lambeth secondary schools. The number of pupils in Year 7 in Lambeth secondary schools in September 2014 represents 83.6% of pupils in Year 6 in Lambeth primary schools, although one should note that they are not necessarily all the same children. This is known as the transfer rate and it is a net effect as some will move to other boroughs or to private schools and others will come into Lambeth from elsewhere. Approximately 600 pupils who are resident in Lambeth and attend a Lambeth primary school tend to go out of borough at secondary. Meetings with neighbouring boroughs tell us that there are higher numbers of Year 7 pupils coming into their secondary schools. Many neighbouring boroughs are running out of secondary school places so Lambeth anticipates that by 2017/18 a greater proportion of the Year 6 residents who would usually go out of borough for secondary school are more likely to stay in Lambeth for their secondary education.

There are four different scenarios which are modelled for secondary projections:

1. A linear transfer rate. This assumes that the transfer rate will remain steady at the average rate of the last 2 years.
2. An increasing transfer rate of 2 percentage points every year.
3. An increasing transfer rate growing to 100% by 2017/18 then growing steadily 1% per year.
4. An increasing transfer rate growing to 100% by 2017/18 then growing steadily 2% per year.

A weighted average (4:3:2:1 for scenarios 4, 3, 2, 1) produces a transfer rate which is applied to the Year 6 demand based forecasts to create Year 7 estimates. In the same way as for primary forecasts, the Year 7 forecasts are rolled forward through the school system. Child yield is added for each age group and the average in-year change is applied to each cohort to calculate Year 8 to Year 11 and Year 12 to Year 13 forecasts. To complete a full set of secondary projections for the next seven years, the actual most recent school roll numbers from January PLASC are used and rolled forward. The inclusion of actual school rolls is where the secondary model differs from the primary.

Having studied the primary and secondary models in some depth, the review finds that they are both fit for purpose. In several aspects the primary phase projections go beyond what would be expected by existing standards for good pupil forecasting, specifically by producing demand based projections, which take account of parental needs by not limiting projections to the number of places available when there is a shortage of places in an area. The model also takes account of in-year admissions as well as incorporating child yield from new housing developments. As Lambeth enters an era of increasing secondary roll numbers, the secondary projection modelling provides a reliable set of projections for the next seven years.

Commentary on Lambeth's demand based model for pupil forecasting

From the outset of this review I spent a significant amount of time with Lambeth's Pupil Place Planning Officer and we addressed the questions raised in the reviewer's questionnaire and, specifically, we discussed the demand based projection model in some detail. After an in-depth discussion about the demand based model the review finds that it is fit for purpose because, first and foremost, it meets the duty on local authorities to ensure the supply of sufficient school places in their area. This means that it adheres to the Audit Commission publication: *Trading Places*[5] (1996 and updated in 2002) which reminds us that the Education Act 1944 gave Local Authorities a series of responsibilities for the provision of public education services, including the duty to ensure the supply of sufficient school places in their area. Particularly in an era of a rising school age population, the demand based model's focus on the supply of sufficient school places is its most obvious strength, alongside a focus on the supply of school places in the locations where parents want them.

A demand based model has other strengths compared to roll-based projections. It enables the local authority to understand better where it needs to put new school places, making it more informed than a standard roll projection model which is largely predicated on projecting how many pupils will turn up in schools each year into the future. While knowing how many pupils we predict to turn up in schools in the future is important, having a more robust

understanding of the likely future demand for school places provides the local authority with a much sounder basis for making practical decisions to increase the number of school places available. Another additional benefit from the demand based model is its usefulness in answering questions in relation to the need, or otherwise, for free schools, as the model can help to show that there are sufficient places already available to meet the projected demand. The demand based roll projections can serve a useful purpose in the rebuttal of potentially poorly evidenced claims for the opening of free schools, where there is actually limited or no real demand for additional school places.

The review addressed the issue of accuracy testing of pupil projections and concluded that, while it is possible to do this retrospectively on a year on year basis, it is more difficult to do this in a demand based model for more than one year, for the following reasons:

- Any annual modifications to the model make it hard to measure accuracy for more than one year working backwards in time.
- Being demand based means that it cannot be tested for accuracy by just comparing it to the number of pupils who end up on school rolls the following year.
- The demand based model potentially takes greater account of more elements of real world complexity, which on the one hand clearly improves its robustness, but also possibly makes it harder to accuracy test.

In relation to good practice in projecting demand for school places the GLA Demography Report[6] from November 2015 reported that: *"a demographic study of the highest quality, when combined with local boroughs' intelligence about planned increases in school capacity, would provide the DfE with the most accurate possible indication of London's and boroughs' actual needs, to inform their funding decisions."* The Lambeth demand based model meets these criteria.

Testing the outcomes from the demand based primary projection model

As part of the review, I asked Lambeth's Pupil Place Planning Officer to match primary school applicants by planning area of residence to schools and planning areas where the applicant children ended up, based on first preference and matched to school census data. This showed some movement from the south of the borough northwards to Brixton in the primary phase but not from Norwood and Streatham the whole way to North Lambeth. Although total reception roll numbers in Lambeth have been flat for four years, there are significant variations between planning areas. Reception numbers are rising in Streatham and Norwood and according to the July 2015 Cabinet report[7], even with the expansions under way in those two planning areas, there are significantly fewer places available in Norwood and Streatham than applicants from those areas.

This test has confirmed the patterns of demand detailed in the graphs in the appendices to the July 2015 Cabinet report[8]. These graphs plot for each of the town centre planning areas, the total places available in Reception classes based on the sum of PANs, the demand for places based on places offered and, for reference purposes, the pupil place planning population estimate of four year olds. The graph for Norwood shows the demand for places outstripping the places available from 2009/10 to 2014/15 and for the period of projections from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The pattern is similar for the Streatham town centre planning

area, although here the demand for places is rising, yet demand for places is not so much higher than places available as it is in Norwood.

Prioritisation of schools for expansion projects

When Lambeth has had to create additional capacity in its schools it uses a system of prioritisation which ensures that the capacity is put in the right schools in the right part of the borough. The council uses a priority matrix for expansion projects in both the primary and secondary phases. All of the expansion projects will have been the subject of feasibility studies and they will have been listed in order of priority. The priority matrices use the following factors to prioritise schools:

- Parental choice
- Location
- Cost per form of entry (FE)
- Ease of delivery
- School is single sex (secondary priority matrix only)

These factors are all weighted and given scores and the schools in each phase with the highest total scores will be the ones prioritised for being in an expansion project. The list of primary and secondary schools that Lambeth has prioritised can be found in appendices to the July 2015 Cabinet report[9], which means that that this information is in the public domain.

The priority matrix system of scoring and weighting the factors brings a high level of transparency and openness to the decisions regarding which schools are selected for expansion projects. The review finds that this is a robust process, based on an appropriate range of evidence.

As part of the review, I met with the Delivery Lead for Capital Programmes, who works at the interface between pupil place planning, the annual SCAP returns to the DFE, the funding which they provide to local authorities and the delivery of new capital programmes, to address the demands for school places. He deals with issues of feasibility and site procurement and can vouch for the importance of the priority matrices in the process.

Cross borough movement at secondary transfer

I discussed cross borough movement at secondary transfer with the Pupil Place Planning Officer and posed the following two questions:

(1) Are we keeping more Lambeth resident pupils in borough at secondary transfer than we are losing to out borough schools?
(2) Is the pressure on secondary school Year 7 places in neighbouring boroughs increasing the pressure on Lambeth secondary places and resulting in more Lambeth residents having to accept a school place in Lambeth than would otherwise have been the case if the neighbouring boroughs had more spare places?

In relation to question 1, Lambeth has been a net exporter and around 10 years ago approximately 50% of Year 6 pupils went into Year 7 in schools in other boroughs; however,

the proportion of Lambeth pupils going to out borough schools at secondary transfer has reduced significantly over recent years. The number and proportion of Year 6 pupils retained in Lambeth is increasing rapidly with the percentage of Year 7 pupils in September 2014 being 83.6% of the number of Year 6 pupils in the previous academic year. In relation to question 2, neighbouring boroughs to Lambeth are expected to begin to run out of secondary places from 2017 and when that happens, Lambeth will probably be unable to export many pupils to those boroughs and may become a net importer. The number of places, or more likely, the lack of them, in adjoining boroughs is very much more significant in terms of its impact on secondary place planning than in primary, because of the greater mobility of pupils at this age. These trends provide further evidence that the numbers of pupils in secondary schools are going to rise in Lambeth in the coming years. It was very useful as part of this review to sit in on a cross borough meeting of school place planners and to witness the detailed information that gets shared by neighbouring boroughs.

Commentary on in-year admissions and surplus places

Lambeth is a borough that has historically had high levels of pupil mobility and in-year cohort changes. This has meant that Lambeth schools have had to maintain a level of surplus places to meet in-year demand. In 2014/15 school year, there were 1,433 in-year admissions, which give a good indication of the volume of surplus places that need to be maintained to meet in-year demand. In Lambeth the Pupil Place Planning Officer has produced a very effective automated analysis tool for tracking casual admissions which is very informative and can be updated on a weekly and monthly basis. It helps the Admissions team understand the patterns of casual admission to schools and enables the team to meet the demand for in-year places in a more systematic way than previously.

Recommendations

Given the independent nature of this review, I have also given consideration to areas where Lambeth Council might improve their current approaches to school place planning. One recommendation is that Lambeth should consider producing roll-based projections alongside demand based projections for the primary phase. Although the demand based model has clear strengths, I think there is also a strong argument for this dual approach, for the following reasons:

- Roll based projections mean that it should be a lot easier to complete the DfE's SCAP return.
- The roll based projections are more relatable back to schools.
- If Lambeth use the GLA roll projections, the local authority can rely to some extent on the external validity which the GLA projections offer.
- The GLA have developed a tool for local authorities to produce their own population projections, which can incorporate local factors and which can be fed into the GLA's school roll projection methodology. This will allow local authorities more influence over the roll projections than previously.
- The GLA roll projections and range of models can be modified to reflect Lambeth's local circumstances and any local concerns about the accuracy of the GLA projections can be addressed through open and frank dialogue with the GLA.

- This approach has worked in other local authorities e.g. Islington Council[10], where their annual report explains how their school place planners discussed and agreed modifications to the GLA's model to ensure that it reflected local circumstances.

A second recommendation would be for the school place planners to develop the existing good links with the planners in the council's Planning and Development Division. They should formalise regular data and intelligence sharing between both sides. This would ensure that the planners know where the pressures on school places are and where the priorities for expansion are most likely to be and that the school place planners know where the next housing developments are most likely to be built, so that they can make the most accurate estimates of child yield.

A third recommendation, in addition to producing the Cabinet Reports for elected members, would be for the school place planners to produce an annual report on that year's round of pupil projections for sharing with schools and other partners. The report could also be expanded to include data on school admissions.

Conclusion

The main conclusion from this review is that the Lambeth systems and methodologies for calculating demand and projections for primary and secondary school places are fit for purpose. The projection methodologies are based on a sound approach, grounded in the right data sources and are shared appropriately within the local authority and with elected members. The primary and secondary phase projections are robust and ensure that the local authority is complying with its statutory duty to provide a school place for every Lambeth child that wants one and, as far as possible, in the place where they want it. The priority matrix system of scoring and weighting a range of relevant factors brings a high level of transparency and openness to the decisions regarding which schools are selected for expansion projects. The review finds that the projection methodologies involve a robust process that is based on an appropriate range of evidence. Lambeth Council understands where the surplus places are and where the greatest pressures on school places are. The council has strategies in place to deliver enough school places to relieve those pressures and meet demand. Those strategies are informed by robust modelling and the use of reliable evidence.

Appendix 1

Specification for a Review of Lambeth Council's School Place Planning System

This is a copy of the specification for carrying out a broad brush review of Lambeth Council's current and planned system and methodology for calculating demand and projections for primary and secondary school places in the borough.

I am offering to carry out the review in two parts:

1. Focussing on primary school methodology
2. Focussing on secondary school methodology.

The outputs produced from the review will be:

- A concise summary report outlining findings in each area above [Introduction and Executive Summary]
- A more technical report providing back up information [Background and Pupil Forecasting Methodology in Lambeth]

As agreed with council officers, Lambeth Council will enable me to interview relevant staff members and will make the following available for the review:

- Modelling data
- SCAP returns
- Annual Cabinet reports which will provide a historic background
- Underlying birth data
- Child yield allied to Housing data
- Admissions data
- In year admissions data

I am offering to carry out the review by spending four or five days working on-site in Lambeth Council and three or four days working off-site, i.e. up to a maximum of eight days in total.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire used in the review

- Provide an explanation of the roll projection methodology?
- How do you test accuracy of the modelling?
- How do you test the historical reliability of the model?
- If it is mainly a demand based model, how will you know if your forecasts are correct?
- A good projection system will have built-in retrospective checks on its accuracy, is this the case?
- What are the perceptions of reliability across the department and the council?
- What are the supporting arguments for the demand based projection model?
- Does Lambeth buy into the GLA roll projections?
- Does Lambeth use the GLA roll projections?
- Is there an argument for maintaining both demand and roll based models?
- Have there been any previous reviews of school place planning? If yes, can you provide any information?
- Are roll projections done at sub-planning area, e.g. individual school?
- Is there a record of DfE feedback and critiques of SCAP Returns?
- What is the in-year and cross year validity of the SCAP data?
- Do the school place planners share information with the housing planners?
- How is housing and child yield data factored in?
- How reliable is cross borough information sharing?
- Does the modelling account for cross borough pupil movement?
- Regarding roll projections, what does Lambeth LA share with its schools?
- Regarding school place planning more generally, what does Lambeth LA share with its schools?
    - Does the LA share its cabinet and/or other committee reports with schools?
    - Are there meetings where schools are involved with the LA in discussions about school place planning, i.e. not just individual schools who are being asked to expand, but involved in a more strategic sense?
- Does the LA involve the diocesan boards (RC & CofE) in their school place planning discussions and processes? If yes, how and to what extent?
- Does Lambeth produce a report on school place planning for its own internal purposes, i.e. over and above cabinet/committee papers for elected members?

Appendix 3

Lambeth staff who contributed to this review

Name	Position
Cathy Twist	Director, Education, Learning and Skills
Mike Pocock	Director Strategic Capital Programmes
Karen Osborne	Pupil Place Planning Officer
Maggie Harriott	Delivery Lead for Education and Strategy, Access and Inclusion
Peter Dawes	Delivery Lead, Capital Programmes
Leanne Osbourne	Head of Service School Admissions
Chris Williams	Senior Admissions Officer
Catherine Carpenter	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Amy Tanner	Planning, Information and Research Officer

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About the author: He is a graduate from Queen's University Belfast, with a BSc (Hons) in Business Administration and Accounting and he holds the Professional Qualification of the Chartered Institute of Housing. His career has spanned over 30 years and he has worked as a senior manager of research and statistics teams in local government education and children's service's departments since 1990. He developed the school roll projection methodology from the outset in one London council and has worked on school place planning in three councils, two in London and one outside London. He is a member of the Executive Council of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), a secondary school governor and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts (FRSA).

Date of the review: February 2016

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