

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 11 October 2016

Agenda item:

Subject: Provision of school places in Merton

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley

Lead member: Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah

Contact officer: Tom Procter, Head of Contracts and School Organisation

Recommendations

For Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel to comment and note:

1. The progress and current position regarding the provision of primary, secondary and special school places outlined in this report.
2. To note the changes in admission arrangements for Community schools in recent years and the intention that there will be no substantive changes proposed for September 2018 entry.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the latest projections for school places demand, including the requirement to facilitate sufficient good quality secondary school provision for its residents in time to meet the rising need for year 7 (start of secondary school) places over the next few years.
- 1.2 With regard to primary school places, 21 extra forms of entry (FE) in permanent accommodation have been provided compared to 2007 levels through the council's school expansion programme, plus the provision of a new 2FE Free School. The forecast is for a modest drop in demand for primary school reception places over the next couple of years, although higher numbers continue to flow through the primary school year groups.
- 1.3 The higher number of primary school pupils are now reaching year 7 and for some time the most significant concern has been the major rise in September 2018.
- 1.4 Through various reports to Cabinet, the latest being on 18 January 2016 and 4 July 2016, the council's agreed strategy is to provide sufficient secondary places by expanding the smaller schools to the east as needed, and to provide a new school accessible to residents in the general Wimbledon area through Harris Academy Wimbledon, which received pre-opening approval from the Secretary of State in early 2015.

1.5 This report also outlines the rise in demand for SEN places, which is proportionally higher than for mainstream education.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Merton in its role as the Local Authority seeks:

- To provide the highest standards of education and ensure all our schools are good or outstanding;
- Results for attainment and progress which compare with the best in London;
- To ensure that all children and young people enjoy learning opportunities, feel rewarded by their experience and achieve their full potential;
- Provision which contributes to the broader well-being of children and families
- Provision which is a positive choice for families

2.2 Our approach in relation to school expansion has been based on these principles, whilst also being pragmatic to ensure that school expansion is delivered as cost effectively as possible to reduce the impact on Council Tax.

2.3 This report considers the school provision in the sectors of mainstream primary, mainstream secondary, and special education.

Primary school places

2.4 With regard to primary school places, the council experienced an exceptional increase in demand for places, which required a substantial increase in reception year places from 2008 to 2015.

2.5 The primary school expansion projects are now largely completed, with just two schools remaining under construction in summer 2016. Singlegate is now fully completed and the additional classroom block at Dundonald Primary School has been completed, with the related adaptation work due for completion by the end of November.

2.6 The council's primary school expansion programme has provided an additional 21 forms of entry at 20 separate schools. In addition a Free School has opened - The Park Community School, so the expansion has been 23 extra forms of entry (FE) compared to 2007 levels. This is 690 additional places per year - 4,830 places across all the primary school year groups.

2.7 As shown in table 3 (appendix 1) the level of surplus places in reception year was 5.8% in 2015/16. This is in-line with the generally accepted recommendation of 5-10% to balance efficiency and an element of parental preference, originally proposed by the Audit Commission. The forecast from the Greater London Authority roll projection service (table 1 in appendix 1) is for a modest drop in demand for primary school reception places over the next couple of years so this

will increase slightly, though the 2015 calendar year birth figures released over the summer and since these projections indicate that demand will go back up again in 2020.

- 2.8 The primary school roll number across all year groups will continue to rise until 2017/18 as the higher numbers flow through primary school .
- 2.9 The surplus in reception year is slightly higher than planned due to the approval of the Free School in a new location and the expansion of an outstanding Lambeth school adjacent to Merton's border after the LB Merton school expansions had commenced.

Secondary school places

Level of demand

- 2.10 With the substantial increase in demand for primary school places starting in 2008, it follows that since 2015 there has been an increase in demand for year 7 places. As illustrated in table 4 (below and in appendix 1), the level of surplus places in year 7 has reduced from just under 13% three years ago to 5.5% in 2015/16.
- 2.11 Over the past three or so years the council and GLA forecasts for increased secondary school places has been moderated to reflect a reduced retention of pupils from year 6 in LB Merton state funded schools (last year of primary school) to year 7 in LB Merton state funded secondary schools. The forecast submitted to the DfE in its annual School Capacity ("SCAP") return in July 2016 is based on LB Merton state funded secondary schools only providing for 79% of pupils that leave primary school.
- 2.12 From the mid-2000s to 2012 this retention rate was 85% to 90% and part of the reason for this reduction is that some Authorities including LB Sutton have 'front loaded' secondary school expansions at popular schools; this may not continue given the substantial increase in pupils coming through primary school throughout South West London, though the impact of this largest increase in demand for year 7 school places in over a generation alongside many providers adding new places including new Free Schools throughout the region is difficult to forecast. In any situation, secondary schools with high parental preference levels will fill, and any surplus in the region will be at schools with low parental preference levels.
- 2.13 Based on school roll information from admissions for September 2016 (the official draft pupil count information is not available until later in the autumn), the total school roll in LB Merton's eight secondary schools is less than the forecast with a retention from year 6 reducing to approximately 75%. The major change to last year is a reduction in the parental preferences for one Academy school which has led to a substantive reduction in its year 7 roll.

2.14 Table 4 shows that with the Harris Merton expansion and Harris Wimbledon new school allowed for, the surplus based on the council's July 2016 SCAP return is forecast to be only 1.6% in 2018/19, but this will be 4.8% (so close to the recommended level referred to in paragraph 2.7) if the retention level stays at 2016/17 levels rather than goes back to the most recent norm or higher.

TABLE 4 - LB MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS YEAR 7 ACTUAL AND FORECAST SURPLUS BASED ON SCAP* RETURN AND EXPANSION PLANS

	YEAR 7 ROLL (actual and forecast)	TOTAL PAN (Published admission numbers)	SURPLUS	SURPLUS %	
2012/13	1,454	1669	215	12.9%	
2013/14	1,465	1669	204	12.2%	
2014/15	1,492	1669	177	10.6%	
2015/16	1,578	1669	91	5.5%	
2016/17	1,651	1699	48	2.8%	Harris Merton extra 30 places
2017/18	1,687	1729	42	2.4%	Harris Merton further extra 30 places
2018/19	1,879	1909	30	1.6%	Harris Wimbledon extra 180 places
2019/20	1,873	1909	36	1.9%	
2020/21	1,844	1909	65	3.4%	
2021/22	1,882	1909	27	1.4%	
2022/23	1,891	1909	18	0.9%	

* The "SCAP return" is the council's school capacity return to the DfE required by the end of July each year, which includes the requirement to provide a forecast of the school roll in the council's state funded schools. The 2016 forecasts used are based on a retention rate from LB Merton primary schools of 79%. The forecasts are relatively similar to the Greater London Authority's roll projection service standard model.

As described in paragraph 2.13 above, our latest information from admissions is that the roll will only be circa 1560 so 8.2% surplus, due to changes in admissions preferences for one school. If the model is adjusted to only be a 76.4% retention for future years the surplus is forecast to be 4.8% rather than the 1.6% in the table above, with similar changes in other years.

2.15 Table 5 (appendix 1) illustrates that there will reliably be over 360 additional children finishing primary school in LB Merton in summer 2018 compared to summer 2016, and if the proportion of these children requiring a school place increases back up towards previous levels then further expansion will be required. The council's capital programme allows for two further secondary school expansion to provide a further four additional forms of entry i.e. 12 forms of entry in total.

Secondary school expansion strategy

2.16 The council's strategy as reported to Cabinet in January 2016 is therefore to provide up to 12 additional forms of entry in secondary school, but only subject to

demand. Up to 6 forms of entry can be provided by expanding Harris Merton, Harris Morden and St. Mark's Academy by 2 forms of entry each, and therefore making them 8 forms of entry - the same capacity as Rutlish, Ricards Lodge and Raynes Park High Schools. However, to ensure that places are only provided when they are definitely needed Cabinet agreed in January 2016 to only proceed with Harris Academy Merton at this stage, with 240 places being offered for September 2017.

- 2.17 The other 6 forms of entry will be provided by a new school – Harris Academy Wimbledon has pre-opening approval by the Secretary of State which has now been deferred to September 2018; as shown above, this reflects when there is the increase in demand to require it.
- 2.18 The expansion strategy therefore has the flexibility to provide an equal number of additional places to the west and east of the borough
- 2.19 With regard to the new school, although the final decision on site is for the EFA, the council has facilitated the acquisition of the site and has supported its proposed location in South Wimbledon for the following reasons:
- The choice of primary school expansion was carefully undertaken following yearly reviews to provide the most local school place possible to children and this led to approximately 70% of the primary school expansions being to the west of the borough (15 of the addition 23 FEs in SW19 and SW20, 2 in Lower Morden, and 6 in the Mitcham area). It therefore follows that there needs to be extra provision accessible for these children and families. Following lack of support from schools in the Wimbledon area to expand to more than their present 8 forms of entry, the only opportunities to expand school provision to the west is through a new school.
 - We can provide the same extra capacity as a new 6FE school in the Mitcham area through the expansion of the Harris Merton, Harris Morden, and St. Marks Academies. These are all presently 6FE each. It therefore follows that the new school should be accessible to children residing in the general Wimbledon area.
 - The South Wimbledon location is quite central and, as well as Wimbledon, it is extremely accessible for Colliers Wood and north of Mitcham town centre where there is presently no school. A simple look at the map of our present secondary school shows it is in a location currently without a school, being broadly equal distance between existing schools in the west and east of the borough
http://www.merton.gov.uk/location_of_merton_secondary_schools.pdf
 - Although there are presently more schools in LB Merton to the west of the borough two of the schools have a Catholic faith admissions policy rather than distance so location is not a significant factor

2.20 The report to Cabinet on 4 July 2016 on the site acquisitions for the new Harris Wimbledon School was restricted to the public due to the detailing of confidential property transactions that had not been completed. At the time of writing this report this remains the case.

Special school places

2.21 LB Merton caters for pupils with SEN (Special Educational needs) through mainstream schools, specialist provision within mainstream schools (“additional resourced provision”), special schools, and use of independent provision. There are three maintained special schools; in addition three primary and three secondary schools provide specialist provision for pupils with ASD (autistic spectrum disorders) and SCLN (Speech, language and communication needs). There is also a Pupil Referral Unit (SMART centre) which operates under the same management as Melrose, our special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

2.22 Over the past eight years the council has substantially increased the capacity of Cricket Green and Perseid special schools, and provided an additional base for primary school age ASD pupils at Hatfeild Primary School. In order to provide for the further increase in demand the following will be required and capital finance is included in the council’s four year capital programme:

- Increase the capacity of Perseid upper school from 56 to 84 places to match the higher numbers in the recently expanded lower school
- Increase the capacity of Cricket Green School to provide some further primary age capacity, but mainly to provide for the substantial number of MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) and ASD children reaching secondary school age over the next few years – Cricket Green provides substantially more places for secondary age children as some SEN children can be educated within a mainstream primary school, especially in the key stage 1, but cannot for the higher demands of a mainstream secondary school
- Increase the number of additional ASD places in specialist provision within mainstream school in the secondary school sector

School admissions

2.23 In enabling parents to access sufficient good quality school places it is also important to have fair admissions policies.

2.24 The council is the admissions authority for all Community schools and co-ordinates the admissions process for all state funded schools within LB Merton including Voluntary Aided schools, Free Schools and Academies.

2.25 To facilitate fair access the council has adjusted the following admissions policies in recent years.

- Providing Admission Priority Areas (APAs) for some expanded schools (Wimbledon Chase, Wimbledon Park and Poplar Primary Schools) so that the additional places are accessible where there is the highest demand and where there is not a local alternative school
- Revising the Dundonald and Wimbledon Chase APA and siblings policy. Due to concern that siblings residing some distance from these schools were 'blocking' places at these highly popular schools, the policy is amended for September 2017 entry so that only siblings living within an amended APA get the higher priority
- Clarified that a home address for admissions purposes remains with an owned property if a family moves to leased properties for a period of less than three years, to prevent families moving for the purpose of being in the traditional catchment area of a popular school
- A joint sibling policy at Ricards and Rutlish School to improve choice for families who have children of both sexes.

2.26 The council may review its admissions arrangements on an annual basis, and if there are any changes would consult in November or December of this year for September 2018 entry. However, officers do not propose to consult on any further substantive changes this year.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The main body of the report sets out the council's strategy for secondary school places, and the rationale for it, previously approved by Cabinet.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 No new decisions are set out in this paper

5 TIMETABLE

5.1 Table 4 sets out the forecast surplus of places based on the council's minimum secondary school expansion plans. Additional year 7 places have to be met by these dates to ensure the council fulfils its statutory function to provide sufficient school places. Of most note, there is a substantial single year jump of demand for year 7 places for September 2018, hence the council has been actively working with the EFA and Harris Federation to ensure the new Harris Academy Wimbledon can meet the demand when it is needed.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 All school expansions outlined in this paper have been approved in the council's capital programme.

Capital funding for a new school – Academies and Free Schools

- 6.2 As outlined in the legal implications section, there is a presumption that all new schools should be Academies or Free Schools. Free Schools are actually the same legal entity as Academies and the only difference is the way they are established and receive capital funding as new schools.
- 6.3 To establish an Academy the council would advertise a competition for a provider. The council would make recommendations to the Secretary of State for the provider, who would then make the final decision. The council would then have to meet the full capital cost for the new school, with the use of Basic Need grant from government as available, but which does not meet the higher costs associated with the infrastructure of an entirely new school or land purchases .
- 6.4 A more financially advantageous route for a council is to support a provider that has applied to the Secretary of State for a Free School. In this case the Education Funding Agency is financially responsible for the capital cost of the new school, though Local Authorities are expected to provide some contribution when it has a landholding and when there is basic need grant available to contribute. The council has therefore facilitated this route to enable Harris Academy Wimbledon (Free School) to assist in providing for the growth in the secondary school population.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The council has a duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available for its area. The Act provides that schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. The local authority must exercise its functions under section 14 with a view to securing, diversity in the provision of schools, and increasing opportunities for parental choice. The Local Authority must in particular have regard to: (a) the need for securing that primary and secondary education are provided in separate schools; (b) the need for securing that special educational provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs; and (c) the expediency of securing the provision of boarding accommodation (in boarding schools or otherwise) for pupils for whom education as boarders is considered by their parents and the authority to be desirable. A local authority is required to respond to any parental representations on the exercise of its duty under section 14.
- 7.2 Since February 2012 under an amendment introduced by the Education Act 2011 there has been a presumption that new publicly funded schools will be academies. Under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended), if a local authority think a new school needs to be established in their area, they must seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy. Under this duty, once the council had identified a site for a new school it has a duty to advertise for an academy provider. If the Secretary of State agrees an academy

proposal, then the council would be required to transfer the site for a new academy to a new provider and provide capital funding for the new school. In the unlikely event of there being no approved academy proposals, the council would be required to run a competition for a provider for the school on the site, for a foundation or voluntary school or an academy. The Local Authority cannot propose a new community school unless such a competition did not result in approved proposals.

7.3 The government is encouraging communities to propose new 'free schools' which have the same legal structure and requirements as academies. Free schools may be established in response to invitations for academy proposals by local authorities seeking to establish a new school or may be established through an application process under the government's free school programme. Where a local authority has advertised for an academy provider under section 6A of the 2006 Act, the Secretary of State has power to require the transfer of the site to any academy provider, including a free school provider.

7.4 Under the Academies Act, Schedule 1, subsections (2) and (2A) of section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (disposals of land by principal councils) do not apply to a disposal of land to a person for the purposes of an Academy. This means that the Council could if it wished transfer land to an academy or free school provider at less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable. There is however no requirement to do so in the absence of a transfer scheme as described above.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The school expansion programme will be considered in the light of equalities legislation, and ensure that all children, including with special education needs, have access to a suitable school place

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No specific implications from this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The school expansion programme risks are managed at project and programme level.

10.2 There are particular risks associated with the new secondary school which are being managed by officers in partnership with the EFA to ensure the required year 7 places will be delivered for September 2018.

11 APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

Appendix 1:

TABLE 1 - LB MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS ROLLS TO 2015/16 AND SCAP (SCHOOL CAPACITY RETURN TO DfE) FORECASTS

TABLE 2 - LB MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS ROLLS TO 2015/16 AND SCAP FORECASTS

TABLE 3 -LB MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS YEAR R ACTUAL AND FORECAST SURPLUS BASED ON SCAP RETURN

TABLE 4 - LB MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS YEAR 7 ACTUAL AND FORECAST SURPLUS BASED ON SCAP RETURN AND EXPANSION PLANS

TABLE 5 - PRIMARY SCHOOL EXPANSION WITH PUPILS REACHING YEAR 7 (STARTY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL) 2016-18

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet 18 January 2016 - Secondary School expansion including new school

Cabinet 4 July 2016 – Harris Wimbledon Secondary School – Required Site (Exempt)

Cabinet 19 September 2016 - Expansion of Harris Academy Merton – contract award for construction works

APPENDIX 1 – SCHOOL ROLL FORECAST INFORMATION

Tables 1 to 4 below provide the borough wide school projection forecasts that LB Merton submitted in July 2016 for its SCAP (School capacity return) to the DfE.

TABLE 1

LB MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS ROLLS TO 2015/16 AND SCAP (SCHOOL CAPACITY RETURN TO DfE) FORECASTS

Forecast Year	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2012/13	2,599	2,612	2,284	2,197	2,082	1,888	1,817	15,479
2013/14	2,547	2,577	2,557	2,224	2,149	2,028	1,848	15,930
2014/15	2,627	2,532	2,554	2,502	2,209	2,109	2,024	16,557
2015/16	2,628	2,591	2,509	2,486	2,458	2,156	2,081	16,909
2016/17	2,594	2,615	2,575	2,460	2,422	2,471	2,129	17,266
2017/18	2,542	2,588	2,575	2,546	2,393	2,404	2,447	17,495
2018/19	2,459	2,529	2,549	2,539	2,482	2,377	2,382	17,317
2019/20	2,462	2,450	2,492	2,512	2,471	2,454	2,349	17,190
2020/21 *	2,472	2,454	2,416	2,457	2,446	2,448	2,438	17,131

* Live birth figure for 2015 published summer 2016 showed a rise of 138 compared to 2014.

Forecasts don't take this into account until next year, so a rise in 2019/20 and 2020/21 projections for year R expected

TABLE 2 - LB MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS ROLLS TO 2015/16 AND SCAP FORECASTS

	7	8	9	10	11	Total 7-11	12	13	Total post 16	Total all school
2012/13	1,454	1,450	1,508	1,571	1,590	7,573	699	455	1,154	8,727
2013/14	1,465	1,459	1,440	1,503	1,532	7,399	856	499	1,355	8,754
2014/15	1,492	1,462	1,450	1,446	1,497	7,347	805	657	1,462	8,809
2015/16	1,578	1,482	1,451	1,454	1,416	7,381	754	632	1,386	8,767
2016/17	1,651	1,578	1,482	1,451	1,454	7,616	732	579	1,311	8,927
2017/18	1,687	1,651	1,578	1,482	1,451	7,849	747	566	1,313	9,162
2018/19	1,879	1,687	1,651	1,578	1,482	8,277	745	578	1,323	9,600
2019/20	1,873	1,879	1,687	1,651	1,578	8,668	762	575	1,337	10,005
2020/21	1,844	1,873	1,879	1,687	1,651	8,934	811	589	1,400	10,334
2021/22	1,882	1,844	1,873	1,879	1,687	9,165	848	626	1,474	10,639
2022/23	1,891	1,882	1,844	1,873	1,879	9,369	867	655	1,522	10,891

TABLE 3**LB MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS YEAR R ACTUAL AND FORECAST SURPLUS BASED ON SCAP RETURN**

	YEAR 7 ROLL (actual and forecast)	TOTAL PAN (Published admission numbers)	SURPLUS	SURPLUS %
2012/13	2,599	2670	71	2.7%
2013/14	2,547	2670	123	4.6%
2014/15	2,627	2790	163	5.8%
2015/16	2,628	2790	162	5.8%
2016/17	2,594	2790	196	7.0%
2017/18	2,542	2790	248	8.9%
2018/19	2,459	2790	331	11.9%
2019/20	2,462	2790	328	11.8%
2020/21 *	2,472	2790	318	11.4%

TABLE 4 - LB MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS YEAR 7 ACTUAL AND FORECAST SURPLUS BASED ON SCAP RETURN AND EXPANSION PLANS

	YEAR 7 ROLL (actual and forecast)	TOTAL PAN (Published admission numbers)	SURPLUS	SURPLUS %
2012/13	1,454	1669	215	12.9%
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2020/21	1,844	1909	65	3.4%
2021/22	1,882	1909	27	1.4%
2022/23	1,891	1909	18	0.9%

Harris Merton extra 30 places
Harris Merton further extra 30 places
Harris Wimbledon extra 180 places

TABLE 5**PRIMARY SCHOOL EXPANSION WITH PUPILS REACHING YEAR 7 2016-18**

School	Cohort Year 7 in 2018/19(Year 4 in Jan 2016 schl census)	Cohort Year 7 in Sept 2017 (Year 5 in Jan 2016 schl census)	Cohort Year 7 in Sept 2016(Year 6 in Jan 2016 schl census)	
SW19/SW20				
All Saints' CofE	48	25	30	
Bishop Gilpin CofE	60	88 *	57	* One year bulge class only
Dundonald	59 **	29	27	** One year bulge then permanent 4 years later
Joseph Hood	42	27	26	
Merton Abbey	51	29	29	
Singlegate	59	30	30	
St Mary's RC	59	30	30	
The Priory CofE	83 *	41	50	* One year bulge class only
Wimbledon Park	83	52	42	
Morden/Lower Morden				
Aragon	77	79	55	
Hillcross	81	60	57	
Mitcham				
Cranmer	87	87	59	
Gorringe Park	81	54	57	
Liberty	77	56	55	
William Morris	47	30	30	
Total at above schools	994	717	634	Rise of 360 pupils
All LB Merton schools	2458	2156	2081	Rise of 377 pupils

Holy Trinity CE , Hollymount, and Wimbledon Chase (SW19/20), St. Thomas of Canterbury and Benedict Primary Schools not included in above table as expanded numbers reached year 7 by September 2016
 Later expansions to enter year 7 in September 2019 or later are at Pelham, Poplar, a further 30 at Singlegate, and Park (Free School)

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