

**Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission**

**Briefing Note**

<b>Report From:</b>	Nina Dohel, Director Education	<b>For:</b>	Chair, Councillor Peter Babudu
<b>Subject:</b>	Pupil Place Planning	<b>Date:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2021

**1. What are the projections and long term planning for the anticipated shortfall in pupil numbers in Southwark?**

The annual Place Planning report is due at Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and as always will provide detailed information about the shortfall in numbers and where these are located.

In short Southwark has considerable overcapacity in primary, both at reception and across the school year groups. This is the situation to a greater or lesser degree in all but one of the planning areas.

**2. What is the Council's strategy on communication, mitigating impact of schools closures or mergers and research undertaken on pupil place planning?**

An officer/member working group has been established. The focus of this group is strategic place planning and risk and interventions and communication required to address the current level of falling rolls and spare capacity across Southwark's primary schools. This is chaired by the lead member for education. Lead member for finance, the Strategic Director for Children and Adults and the Director of Education are senior members with relevant officers from finance, admissions, communications and legal in attendance as required. At present there are regular meetings with school leaders, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and a commitment to regular briefings for Ward Councillors and MP's.

**3. How does the Council plan to mitigate the financial impact of falling roles on one form entry Primary and Secondary schools?**

The critical focus to date has been on mitigating impact on primary schools. A range of approaches including limiting the number of pupils on roll to help manage staffing costs i.e. capping the Pupil Admission Number (capping PANs) , joining together schools as federations to encourage economies of scale, supporting and encouraging

schools to generate revenue through hiring out of surplus space. We have also seen the first outright closure of a Church of England Primary school in the last academic year. The council has begun to increase capacity in the finance team and are working with education officers in reviewing and strengthening the procedures for financial control of school finances. All Secondary schools are very aware of the decreasing numbers in primary schools. Almost all Secondary schools are part of a larger trust and I would encourage the scrutiny commission to explore this further with the RSC and/or with a wide range of Chief Executives of Trusts as opposed to individual head teachers.

**4. What are the outcomes from the discussions (if any) with Chief executives of Multi Academy Trusts with Schools in Southwark. Directors of the Commission for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Director of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education for Church of England Schools.**

CEOs of our secondary schools are aware of the forthcoming reduction in Places. We work closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner in relation to how we manage surplus capacity locally. We continue to work closely with the SDBE and the Catholic Archdiocese. This has resulted in the closure of an SDBE primary school, capping of PANS and plans to rationalise split site accommodation onto one site.

**5. Has there been a review of Published Admission Numbers of reception class in Primary Schools? How does the Council plan to implement any reductions equitably across all schools including Academy Schools.**

Southwark admissions team maintain a close oversight of numbers of applications for places and adhere closely to legal requirements for consulting on and publishing a schools' Pupil Admission Number (PAN). Decisions about reduction in capacity will take into account the level of surplus capacity within and across the five planning areas. The Local Authority does not have the powers to direct Academy schools to reduce their PANS.