

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 14th June 2021

Attendees

Sophie Conway (Councillor) (Chair)
Margaret Gordon (Councillor) (Vice Chair)
James Peters (Councillor)
Humaira Garasia (Councillor)
Richard Brown (Statutory Co-optee)
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)

In attendance:

- Cllr Lynne Troughton
- Cllr Anya Sizer
- Cllr Sarah Young
- Steven Olalere, PG Representative
- Salmah Kansara, North London Muslim Community Centre
- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play
- Annie Coyle, Director of Children & Families Service
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Stephen Hall, Assistant Director, School Performance, & Improvement
- Marian Lavelle, Head of Admissions and School Place Planning
- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Wellbeing
- Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager

Cllr Conway in the Chair

1. Welcome and introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. It was noted that this was a hybrid meeting with members of the Commission in attendance and officers connecting virtually.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Cllr Anna Lynch
- Justine McDonald, RC Representative
- Michael Lobenstein, UOHC Representative
- Andrew Carter, Director of Community & Children's Social Care

3. Urgent Items / Order of Business

- 3.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as published.

4. Declarations of interest

- 4.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:
- Richard Brown as Executive Head Urswick Secondary School declared an interest in item 7 (School Places);
 - Cllr Peters was a governor at a school in Hackney;
 - Shabnum Hassan, was a governor at a school in Hackney;

- Jo McLeod was a governor at a school in Hackney.

5. Pupil Attainment

5.1 An update on educational attainment is provided each year to help the Commission maintain oversight of the achievement of children and young people across Hackney. Given that there were no statutory examinations in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, an update of the school assessment processes to be used for 2021 has been provided. In addition, the report provides a summary of the following:

- Support provided by the Local Authority to children undertaking teacher assessments;
- Equalities issues arising from teacher assessment process;
- Impact of assessment outcomes from 2020 on demand for post 16 and post 18 provision;
- Local learning accrued from the 2020 teacher assessment process.

5.2 The Cabinet member for Children, Education & Children's Social Care introduced the item. It was noted that the pandemic had caused severe disruption to national educational testing systems in 2020. Hackney Education (HE) had worked to support local schools and teachers to ensure that appropriate testing and examination systems were in place for the coming year (2021) and that children and young people are adequately supported. The Director of Education noted that children had lost 8 weeks of on-site teaching this year (21/22) which whilst was fewer than last year, was still a significant loss to young people.

5.3 The Assistant Director for School Performance and Improvement presented the report and highlighted the following issues:

- Schools have been evaluating pupils since their return to school to help understand gaps in knowledge and learning. As in 2020, a school based assessment will be used to determine pupil's grades for 2021, and schools have been busy setting up their assessment processes for KS2, KS4 and KS5.
- Schools have developed their own schemes to assess pupils which have encompassed a wide range of methods (mock exams, tests, project work). Schools have also set up their own moderation schemes to ensure that marking and assessments are fair (e.g. blind marking).
- Guidance has been issued from DfE and Exam boards on local assessment processes and it has been made clear that children can only be assessed on those areas of the curriculum which they have been taught or studied.
- HE has provided support to schools both directly and via School Improvement Partners to support assessments at KS2, KS4 and KS5. Seminars have been held to support exam moderation (which have been well attended) as well as sharing good practice more broadly. Support has also been offered to faculty and subject leaders via network meetings to support the development of centre assessed grades.
- Exam results from 2020 and 2021 cannot be used for school accountability purposes, schools are primarily using this as a parental feedback tool on pupil performance.
- In response to concerns around unconscious bias, HE has offered training and support to local schools and many schools have taken up this offer. School Improvement Partners have also provided advice to schools to ensure

that local assessment schemes were fair and did not discriminate or disadvantage any particular groups of children. It was noted that no concerns had been raised about any provider in this respect.

- Pupils will be given their exam results in August, and may appeal the outcomes of their results directly to the school. As schools administer the appeals process there is an additional incentive to ensure that assessment systems are robust and fair.

Questions from the Commission

5.4 To ensure that appropriate adjustments are made for disabled students, exam guidance for this year requires that local heads seek the input of SENCO into assessment processes. What assurance can you provide that local schools are actively involving local SENCO's in their assessment processes? What support is the Education Service providing to SENCO's to support them in this role?

- There is clear guidance on the reasonable adjustments that schools must make for children with SEND. Given that this will be a criteria in which pupils may be able to appeal their results, schools will undoubtedly ensure that there is appropriate support and adjustments made for children within their exam processes. It was noted that centre assessed grades may also be more beneficial to pupils with SEND as new assessments may be more informal and cater for a wider range of educational and learning needs. HE also supports a SENCO forum for local practitioners to meet and share best practice.

5.5 Although the Education Service cannot use local exams data from schools for 'accountability purposes', what data has the Education Service collected (or intending to collect) from local schools to assure itself that disadvantaged groups of young people are not further disadvantaged by assessment processes used in local schools? How many local secondary schools have supplied their exams data from 2020 to the Education Service? Can you provide an overview of attainment from 2020 results data?

- Although there was limited outcome data from 2020, HE had visited individual schools in September 2020 to help understand how they were using their own assessment and outcome data to evaluate and improve their performance. Schools are self-determining and therefore it is important that they undertake their own evaluation of their performance and set their own improvement programmes and goals. The HE then works with schools to provide an overview and checks and balance function to compliment these improvement programmes. The progress and development of disadvantaged children, children with SEND and looked after children throughout the pandemic has been raised with all schools during termly visits to ensure that these students were adequately supported during the period of school closures.
- Whilst some of the measures that schools have put in place during the closure of schools would have helped mitigate the impact on disadvantaged children, it is likely that the attainment gap will not have shrunk and may have even grown, though HE was not in possession of the data to make such an assessment as yet. Schools will have a huge piece of work to address this attainment gap, particularly as national evidence would suggest that the gap had been widening even before the pandemic. This will be the focus of HE and schools in the year ahead.

5.6 Can the Education Service provide an overview of the Hackney wide attainment figures for GCSE and A Level from 2020 and how these may have differed from 2019 figures.

- It is clear that the pandemic has disrupted young people's education, and that school closures and the requirement to school from home has exposed the inequities in the home learning environment of children. A wider range of young people were able to attend school during the second lock down which limited the impact, but still a significant proportion of young people continued to receive lessons virtually. School closures have had an impact particularly in relation to the teaching of practical science and physical education. There was some evidence to suggest that children's reading, writing and oracy development may have been hampered by school closures. Problem solving was also difficult to teach virtually. It was expected that the lack of peer to peer contact would have a negative impact on young children's social skills, but local evidence would suggest that this may not be as great as anticipated. Similarly, concerns around children's behaviour on their return to school after a long period of school closure have not materialised.
- KS4 outcomes were strong in 2020, with local results being above national averages. It was hoped that strong results would also be achieved in 2021. At KS2 and children reaching the expected level of development ahead of secondary transfer, schools had reported that they had managed to close the learning gaps quite quickly on their return to school.
- Whilst conversations had been had with individual schools on their individual performance there have been no borough wide assessments. Schools would be required to submit full data sets to enable HE to do this, and schools have been advised that the LA should not be requesting this for any accountability purposes. Whilst this was not ideal and not what HE would like, officers reassured the Commission that they were visiting and providing challenge to schools via School Improvement Partners.
- A member of the Commission noted that schools not being able to compare results had been positive and had allowed schools to focus on their own results and development programme. It was also noted that it would be difficult to compare outcomes from 2019, 2020 and 2021 examinations as the process of assessment has been very different for each year.

5.7 What assurance can be provided that the assessment processes set up by schools for 2021 exams are fair, open and don't discriminate against particular groups of young people? What has been learnt from the 2020 exams process to inform the best practice for 2021 exams?

- It was noted that schools often used blind marking of students in which assessments scripts are anonymised. In addition, assessment results are usually moderated by another teacher at the school and by the head of faculty. The exam boards will be seeking clarification that schools assessment processes are robust.
- Whilst it was positive that the school has much more control over the exams process, ultimately this was a lot more work for schools and teachers, not only in setting and marking exams but also in supporting appeals. It was noted that schools felt very empowered by the new exams process for 2021.
- There were also positives for young people at KS2 as the tests that were now

being undertaken were less formal and stressful.

5.8 Could Hackney Education provide further clarification on the cultural competency training on offer to local schools? Is this a whole school offer or is it directed more to key staff in leadership roles? What has been the take up of cultural competency training across local schools? What specific measures are taken by school to eliminate unconscious bias?

- Unconscious bias training is undertaken on a whole school basis. The first session explores what unconscious bias is in the context of the school, and there is reassurance to ensure that staff feel comfortable talking about this issue openly. Schools are offered a follow-up session in which the issues are explored in greater depth and where there is an opportunity to explore people's personal experiences of unconscious bias. The training also looks at those behaviours and approaches that can counter unconscious bias.
- Specific unconscious bias advice and guidance was provided to schools around the exams process.

5.9 It is likely that there will be increased demand for post 16 places in local 6th forms and colleges for September 2021. Can Hackney Education clarify if there has been any increase in capacity across the Hackney schools sector to meet this expected increase in demand? Can an overview be provided of the post 18 destinations from the 2020 cohort? It has been reported that because additional university places were given out in 2020, this may reduce the number of places on offer in 2021 - can this be confirmed?

- The LA was in a relatively good position in respect of 2020 post 16 exam outcomes as there was a surplus of 6th form places heading into 2020/21. As a result, schools were generally able to accommodate the needs of young people wanting to stay on and study for A Levels.
- In respect of the post 18 position, after the abandonment of the algorithm, grades were reported to be stronger. There were however some issues with young people who were initially rejected by their chosen institution as they had not reached the required grade determined by the algorithm based assessment. These results were subsequently revised and young people were supported in finding an alternative place.
- Anecdotally, there was evidence to suggest that some universities had reduced capacity for the year ahead, though the situation would not become clear until the summer when 2021 results were announced. Young people would be supported over the summer by school career guidance and support and Prospects.

5.10 The Chair summed up highlighting the following:

- It was positive to note that schools had embraced the exams process for 2021 and that this could have a positive impact in helping to remove some of the competition between local schools. Also, it was clear that the exams process for 2021 could help children with different or additional learning needs.
- The Commission felt assured that school improvement partners were providing challenge to local schools on their attainment of disadvantaged groups of children. It would be useful for the Commission to understand what the impact of the 'digital divide' has had upon certain groups of children and if this has led to any underperformance.

- The Commission will be looking at this item again in 2022 when it will consider the exam results from 2021.

5.11 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

6. Childcare Sufficiency

6.1 The Local Authority is required to undertake a childcare sufficiency assessment every two years and to provide an annual update to members. Through this reporting the Commission maintains oversight of childcare provision across the borough to ensure there are sufficient places to meet the demand of local families. Given the impact of coronavirus on childcare services, two updates were provided to the Commission in the 2020/21 work programme, the last being in December 2020. A full childcare sufficiency is not due until 2022, so the attached report provides an update for the Commission.

6.2 The Early Years Strategy Manager summarised a number of key issues from the report:

- Parents are able to access free childcare entitlements through childminders, PVI childcare settings, maintained nurseries and children centres. Assessments have shown that there is sufficient capacity across the sector to meet the needs of parents at this time. If demand increases in September, HE was confident that there was sufficient local capacity.
- It was feared that there would be mass closures of childcare settings as nurseries and other childcare providers may have struggled with the financial impact of the pandemic. These concerns have not materialised however, for whilst there have been two nursery closures, three are currently registering with Ofsted to open in September.
- Over 40 people have attended introductory childminder sessions, for those considering a career in this field of childcare.
- It was probable that an increase in capacity was in part related to declining demand. With more parents now working from home, it was clear that parents were not using childcare in the same volume as prior to the pandemic.
- It was noted that there had been a 16% reduction in the number of 2 year old children taking up their free childcare offer. Many 2 year olds traditionally commence their free childcare in January of each year, however as the 2nd lockdown commenced in January of this year, this had an impact on numbers. In some cases it was also nurseries not taking on 2 year olds.
- Data for September admission was not yet available but the Early Years service was confident that there would be an upturn in numbers for children of all ages using childcare. Comparative data on childcare usage across England would be published on July 1st by DfE and HE would be in a better position to comparatively assess local demand and usage data.
- In terms of quality, Ofsted had re-commenced inspections for those settings where improvements have been required or where there are specific safeguarding concerns. 98% of all childcare providers are either good or outstanding.

Questions from the Commission

- 6.3 Funded childcare provision for 2 year olds is of critical importance as this is targeted at children most in need. Data in the report indicates that the number of 2 year old children receiving funded childcare/education has fallen from 1,317 to 1,080 since 2019? How is the Education Service targeting those families most in need and encouraging uptake of provision? How does our performance compare to other authorities?
- Whilst the benefits of free 2 year old childcare were well documented, the pandemic had clearly impacted on take up of this entitlement. Whilst schools closed, this perhaps gave rise to a misconception that childcare settings were also closed which was not the case. Childcare settings were also operating very strict 'bubbles' which may have inhibited take-up of childcare. Similarly, childcare settings could not let parents into their setting to help settle their children in and of course, could not show parents around who were considering a childcare placement with them. Home visits, which are an important part of reaching out and engaging with new families, were also not possible during this time.
 - Not all 2 year olds are entitled to free provision as eligibility is determined by DWP who provide a list to local authorities each year. This number varies from year to year and therefore comparison between years is difficult. The list of eligible families is shared with Children's Centres who then make contact with families to encourage them to take up the free childcare offer. There has been a higher level of handholding for families during the pandemic to support parents to access childcare, be this in person or online.
 - It is not possible to ascertain how Hackney compares to other authorities at present as this data is not yet available.
- 6.4 What has been the position of providing childcare support to those families which have been assessed to have 'no recourse to public funds'?
- The multi-agency teams based in local children's centres provide wide ranging support for local families in need, including those families with no recourse to public funds. The data shows that referrals to this service throughout the pandemic have not diminished and that the service continues to support around 400 families in need, including those without recourse to public funds. This includes families living in temporary accommodation, in a hostel or where there are vulnerabilities in the family (e.g. mental health issues). The Early Years service has continued to offer respite childcare for these families in need throughout the pandemic.
- 6.5 Children's Centres are a key part of the authorities early years strategy. In the last report submitted to the Commission it was noted Children's Centres had suffered a decline in parental fees income due to the pandemic and were running at an operating loss in excess of £1m p.a. Has the government refunded this loss income? Can you provide an update on the financial position of local children's centres and plans for this service going forward?
- An operating shortfall in fees was projected for the end of 2020/21. The LA was able to recoup these fees at a rate of 75%. For maintained children's centres this reimbursement was paid to the LA. Non-maintained children's centres (i.e. those operated from schools) were directly reimbursed.
 - A new fee structure was introduced in 2019/20 which reduced the subsidy for higher income families. Covid has of course impacted the income and

circumstances of families which has made the new fees structure challenging. Whilst children centres have been able to keep places, they have not been able to maintain a register of admissions or a waiting list. Parents were noted to be using services differently, with many parents now choosing not to use childcare beyond their free entitlement (15/30 hours). Fewer parents were also using the wrap-around childcare hours (before 9am and after 3pm) and Children Centres and other childcare settings were adapting to this new environment.

6.6 Given the widespread impact on the working arrangements of parents, what analysis has been undertaken to assess the capacity / spare places at childcare settings to give a fuller picture of sustainability or viability of the local childcare sector? How will this affect the viability of places in the future?

- March 2022 will be the date of the next childcare sufficiency assessment which will really help to determine future demand. The census has also been undertaken this year and this will add to understanding of local demography and future childcare usage. At the moment it is not clear if the issues being seen in the childcare sector are related to Covid, or part of a wider long-term trend. In a paper being assessed later, it was noted that the number of children entering reception has also been falling and predicted to fall further in the coming years. It was clear at the moment however, that numbers of providers had remained steady though with falling demand, there was capacity in the local childcare sector. The key question in the coming months will be is there sufficient demand to sustain all these providers?

6.7 The Covid-19 financial support measures have allowed many childcare providers to stay afloat during the pandemic. With the end of this support approaching there is a risk that some providers may close. What financial support is currently available and when does this cease? What business support is the Local Authority offering to enable providers to adapt and transition? What other corporate support can be provided to the sector?

- A dedicated officer at HE works with local childcare providers, offering business advice and support. The officer works with them on fees, hours of opening, shift patterns and how to generally maximise income and reduce outgoing. The Early Years Service works closely with many local providers to support them through these challenges. Fundamentally however, local demand is centred on the number of children in Hackney and of the 118 providers on non-domestic properties many of these have vacancies at the moment. The Council can support providers to advertise and to encourage parents to take up their free childcare offer.

6.8 Many children are first diagnosed with SEND when they enter childcare settings. With fewer children entering child care in the past year, will this lead to delays in early diagnosis and support of children with SEND? Has there been any increase in the Inclusion Fund (a dedicated fund to support children with an undiagnosed SEND in childcare settings)? How is the SEND service working with local childcare services to develop and improve access?

- It is correct to assume that there is a concern that lower uptake of childcare may lead to later diagnosis of children with SEND. Every setting is supported

by Local Area SENCO's who can help with early assessments of children and support settings to make applications to the Inclusion Fund.

6.9 Is there sufficient childcare provision outside of 'mainstream provision' that caters for parents who may work unsocial hours or for parents who need care for older children 8-12 years or children with SEND?

- In respect of demand for childcare in unsocial hours, childminders are a key part of the provision as they provide wrap-around services and have the flexibility to respond to individual needs of parents.
- There is also childcare provision for parents of children with SEND available within the locality. There are funded places available for children with new or emerging SEND who are supported to take up childcare through the Inclusion Fund. Other Children In Need or Looked After Children are supported through the Early Help team and are able to offer respite child care or funded childcare provision.

6.10 With fewer children accessing childcare and for shorter periods, what are the repercussions for children's preparedness and readiness for school? How is HE planning to re-engage parents locally to underline the benefits of childcare and early education? How are Children's Centres trying to re-engage parents to support them back into childcare provision?

- It is known that children born during this period and other toddlers have not been socialised and this will have had an impact on their development. Also those older children who have not been using childcare or not as frequently, this will have impacted on their physical, educational and emotional wellbeing and development. It is therefore a priority to work with settings to accelerate young people's learning when they do return to childcare settings. Of course, as has been noted before, the home environment and stimulus that children receive varies enormously and children will be impacted in different ways.
- There has been a Covid response policy in place to make sure that Children's Centres have remained in contact with families throughout the lockdown period, not just those using childcare but others who may just use Stay and Play. Audits revealed that parents were using the on-line resources and wanted more. Parents also noted that they needed other resources like paper, colouring pens and crayons and the Children's Centres responded by making sure resource packs were supplied to parents that needed them.
- School readiness is a concern and the Early Years service is alert to the issues that may arise. The focus was currently on getting children entitled to free 2 year old childcare to take up their places. Staff were running outdoor sessions for families and putting a number of sessions on line. It should be remembered however, that staff have also been hit by the pandemic and have contracted Covid and some are suffering the effects of long-covid, so the service response has to be managed in a covid secure way and the wellbeing of staff.
- The Early Years Service is aware of the issues around attachment and trauma for children accessing childcare at this time. Those children who do not gain safe and secure attachments in settings can develop trauma and the service is providing advice and training on this issue.
- It was noted that the a new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is in place from 1st September 2021, and this has provided an opportunity for the

Early Years Service to engage with settings, offer training and underline the importance of key early years fundamentals; quality teaching, positive interactions, assessment and recording to inform individual development plans.

- 6.11 How are children and families who are in hostels or other forms of temporary accommodation supported to use childcare services? Is the Early Years Service confident that living in temporary accommodation is not a barrier, and are comparable numbers of children in these settings accessing childcare services?
- All of the Children's Centres work with Hostels in their local area together with Multi-Agency Teams. Where Children's Centres can gain access to hostels they will offer services from these sites, but this is not always possible. A recent audit undertaken by the Early Years Service had recorded that 75% of children in local hostels were known to their local Children's Centre. Given the number of children who live in Temporary Accommodation more broadly, this is a significant challenge and the Early Years Service would not be able to support these families in the same way in which they support those living in hostels.
- 6.12 The Chair summarised some key issues to emerge from the discussion.
- Whilst it was worrying that childcare was experiencing problems as a result of the pandemic, it was reassuring that the number of providers in operation had remained stable.
 - The Commission would like to maintain oversight of how the sector has been and continues to be impacted by Covid and will ensure that this is taken at the earliest opportunity in the next work programme.
 - Given the number of children living in temporary accommodation it is clear that further work may be necessary to ensure that this group of families do not face additional barriers to accessing childcare.
- 6.13 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

7. School Places

- 7.1 Schools Places is a standing item on the agenda in which data on admissions to reception and transfer to secondary school is provided annually to the Commission. A report was presented to the Commission on this area, together with the measures that were being taken to plan for school places in the future.
- 7.2 The Cabinet member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care introduced the item. The report provided an overview of the admissions at reception and transfer to secondary, and which noted those schools which were both oversubscribed and undersubscribed. The Cabinet member also noted the development of local strategy to secure more SEND provision in-borough, and this had relevance as this may be used to maintain demand in local primary schools. The Cabinet member also noted that school place planning was also being linked to new development taking place within the borough.

- 7.3 The Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefit highlighted a number of issues from the report:
- In respect of admission to reception 98.1% of parents applied on-line, 98.3% of parents had a Hackney primary school as their 1st preference and a higher proportion of parents in Hackney were allocated either their 1st, 2nd or 3rd preference school than the London average. 33/58 local primary schools were under subscribed and there were 505 surplus places in the current reception class. The surplus of places was expected to grow in future years.
 - In respect of secondary transfer, 99.6% of parents applied on-line and 84.5% had a Hackney secondary school as their 1st preference. A higher proportion of parents in Hackney were allocated either their 1st, 2nd or 3rd preference school than the London average. 11 of the 16 secondary schools were oversubscribed, but there were sufficient secondary school places available locally. A local secondary surplus is expected to grow however, as the surplus in primary schools feed into secondary schools in the years to come.
 - Children with an EHCP are admitted to schools through a different process. 59 children with an EHCP were given a place in primary settings, 38 of which were allocated their first preference. 234 children with an EHCP were allocated to a secondary school, 147 of which were given a place at their first preference school. 171 (73%) of this cohort of children were at a secondary school located in Hackney.
 - The number of children on roll in reception in 2015 was 2,846 but this has fallen by 316 to 2,530 in the current year (2020/21).
 - In terms of secondary children on roll, whilst there was a good match at present, a surplus of places was predicted from 2023 onwards. A new education sufficiency and estates strategy was being developed (from autumn of 2021) which would seek to address under capacity in some areas (SEND) with over capacity in other areas (primary and secondary).

Questions from the Commission

- 7.4 The number of children who did not get a place at any of their chosen secondary schools rose considerably this year to over 180. Given that almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of these children were in the lower ranking CAT score and these children are allocated a place at schools where there is a vacancy, how can the authority be sure that places are being allocated fairly across the borough? Why has there been an increase in the number of children who did not get any of their chosen schools?
- Historically children from lower banding CAT scores are over represented in the cohort of those who do not get any of their choices of secondary schools. HE works with schools to ensure that they support parents to make use of all their preferences and make realistic choices for their children. A printed guide is sent to all parents via their primary schools and training sessions are run for both schools and parents. It was acknowledged that the in-take at undersubscribed schools could be skewed to lower band groups in this process. Banding only applies at secondary transfer and does not apply to in-year admissions other than in the year 7 autumn term at a small number of schools. All LA's have a Fair Access Protocol which ensures that hard to place children do not all go to the same school and are evenly distributed across local schools.

- 7.5 Following on from the above, are local schools which are under subscribed having to take on a disproportionate number of children who have lower CAT scores?
- A member of the Commission confirmed that it was likely that if local secondary schools had vacancies, then they were more likely to be allocated to children who had achieved lower CAT scores (C and D scores). There were of course disproportionalities in this cohort of children, particularly in relation to disadvantages such as FSM.
- 7.6 A number of issues were raised by the Commission:
- 1) It was noted that a neighbouring borough was building a primary school in response to planned new development (and despite region wide evidence of declining demand). New development needs to be recognised in forward planning or children may be travelling across the borough to access schools.
 - 2) Although the surplus of places predicted for secondary schools was relatively small (and predicated on falling rolls at primary) secondary CAPs were already being discussed. This was a concern given that this would lead to a diminution of parental choice.
 - 3) It was also noted that data from the report indicated that Mossbourne Riverside Academy admitted 57 out of borough children and that Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy would give preference to 42 children on roll at Mossbourne Riverside Academy who lived nearest to the secondary school, if sufficient numbers applied. This could lead to a higher number of children outside the borough being given places in local secondary schools and distort school place planning.

In response HE noted that the scale of the issues at Mossbourne Riverside Academy was perhaps not as great as reported. Given the projected over supply of places this may also be of benefit to other schools and reduce the likelihood of reduction in PANs. Children with SEND are also travelling to more out of borough schools and the availability of more in-borough choices was a priority for the council. The primary places projections do take into account local housing developments as details are submitted to the GLA who make these forecasts.

- 7.7 Will secondary school place planning reflect local housing developments which will come on stream in future years?
- The Cabinet member assured the Commission that the Council was aware of these issues. Much of the housing being developed was being targeted at families so it was right to ensure that this is recognised in school place planning in future years. This is part of the strategic planning of the Council. It was also noted that Free Schools can be opened in this or any other borough which could of course impact on school place planning and for which the local authority has no control.
- 7.8 Have the predictions for school place planning offered by the GLA been accurate over the past few years?
- Projections from the GLA have been relatively accurate in the short- medium term. But of course, longer term projections were subject to wider, unforeseen influences which may affect the accuracy. The sudden fall in pupil numbers has been seen across London and in other large urban areas, and has been attributed to a number of factors including the cost of

accommodation, benefit changes, Brexit and of course, Covid. Projections are revised each year based on actual school rolls.

- 7.9 Although many primary schools received more allocations than places available, after all the choices were applied 33 primary schools were eventually under subscribed, 21 of which were substantially undersubscribed (by more than 25%). What strategic analysis takes place of those schools which are under-subscribed (e.g. where they are, type of school etc.) How are schools which are undersubscribed supported? At what point do affected schools and Hackney Education agree to the process to establish a place CAP?
- Work is taking place at two levels. Schools which are undersubscribed by 5 or so pupils can generally manage ok, but when numbers fall significantly for example, it can become uneconomical to run a two class entry (60 places) for 35 children. Schools are allocated resources on a per pupil basis and the local authority cannot give schools additional resources. It is always helpful to have some capacity in the primary sector as there will always be in-year admissions. The increase in demand for specialist places will hopefully work positively with the decline in demand for mainstream primary provision.
- 7.10 Through the course of its work parents continue to highlight the difficulties of selecting secondary schools that will meet the needs and aspirations of their child. Parents often cited how difficult school websites were to navigate when trying to obtain important information - for example Behaviour Policies, SEND Policies. Is there any guidance for schools on accessibility of on-line documentation? Are there any provisions or requirements for schools to provide information for parents where English is an additional language? Do parents have access to any independent advice or information in selecting preferred secondary schools?
- All schools are required to put all their policies on their website, though where they appear on the individual school websites may vary. HE may be able to audit these policies as part of its general governance assurance work across schools. It is not a requirement for schools to provide these policies in additional languages aside from English. Headteachers in primary schools are a key point of advice and information for parents in choosing their child's secondary school.
 - All parents receive a printed leaflet summarising the key issues that parents need to consider when selecting their child's secondary school. All applications are made through a pan-london on-line process. Primary schools can view this data and can therefore check to ensure that their parents are applying on time.
- 7.11 Could further details be provided on the Education Sufficiency and Estates Strategy detailed at 11.4 of the report? Is this something that scrutiny could contribute to?
- This document is being developed and a number of member drop-in sessions have been held. Strategy development is due to commence in the autumn and members will be invited to participate in this process.
- 7.12 The Chair summed up this item as follows:
- In terms of next years item:
 - It would be helpful to have more detail on the school preference system for children with an EHCP.

- Further information on the allocation of children to local schools whose preferences were not met (and disproportionate impact on undersubscribed schools).
- Further details as to how projections are calculated.

7.13 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

8. Work Programme

8.1 The Commission is developing a new work programme for the year ahead. A draft outline programme had been developed using the standing items on the work programme as submitted.

8.2 A consultation had taken place with key stakeholders including the local community and voluntary groups, other statutory organisations, senior officers within the council and of course, local residents. This had yielded 15 suggestions to date, all of which were detailed in the report. There was limited capacity in the work programme so the Commission would need to prioritise those issues which it considers for the meetings ahead. This session would provide members with the opportunity to reflect on the suggestions put forward and to make recommendations for inclusion.

8.3 The following suggestions were put forward from the discussion:

- That the Commission's review into unregistered educational settings is followed up in 2021/22.
- Housing allocations for care leavers and other vulnerable young people could be explored together with Living in Hackney;
- The impact of LTN on young people and how this group young people are supported to use low carbon transport/neighbourhoods; and also how transport is used by young people;
- The CHSCP also suggested that disproportionalities in safeguarding children and young people those taken into care, this could also encompass the role of 'adultification' and racial stereotyping of children in these assessment processes;
- What do we know about our SEND children in mainstream schools and how we identify and support this cohort of children? What level of support is available to this group of young people from within and external to the school. Also reported to be wide variability in provision across schools. How parents and families are involved in supporting provision.
- How do we support children in temporary accommodation, particularly when families may be placed outside of the borough. It would be useful to also consider disproportionalities in this process;
- Recent national reports on sexual harassment in schools needs to be assessed in Hackney and to seek reassurance that appropriate work is being undertaken to address this;
- The lockdown may have exacerbated the impact on children whose parents are alcoholics or who have other addictions, or who have been exposed to domestic violence. It would be useful to understand what impact this may be having in terms of children coming into contact with children's social care and what support is available for these families.

8.4 The Chair noted that all the suggestions would be discussed and to develop a number of priorities in the work programme ahead. An outline programme would be developed in consultation with the Commission and in discussion with senior officers and Cabinet members.

9. Minutes

9.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 14th June 2021 were agreed by the Commission.

10. Any other business

The date of the next meeting is the 12th July.

Meeting closed at 21.40