

# Merton Council Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 20 September 2023

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Council chamber - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

## AGENDA

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## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

### Councillors:

Usaama Kaweesa (Chair)  
Chessie Flack (Vice-Chair)  
Michael Butcher  
Caroline Charles  
Jil Hall  
Billy Hayes  
Andrew Howard  
Linda Kirby MBE  
Samantha MacArthur  
James Williscroft

### Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor  
Representative Secondary and Special  
Sectors  
Roz Cordner, Church of England Diocese  
Becky Cruise, Parent Governor  
Representative  
Dr Oona Stannard, Catholic Diocese

### Substitute Members:

Max Austin  
Sheri-Ann Bhim  
Jenifer Gould  
Edith Macauley MBE  
Robert Page

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Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

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# Agenda Item 3

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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

21 JUNE 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.40 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Butcher (online). Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor James Williscroft, Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner, Becky Cruise and Dr Stannard.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sally Kenny (Cabinet Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning)

Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer), Hilina Asrress (Senior Public Health Principal), Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help) and Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families) Toby Podger-Taylor (Participation and Engagement Worker), Marakie Tilahun, (Young Inspector). David Michael (Interim Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion.) Maisie Davies (Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships) Fiona White, (Nurse Consultant, NHS England). Shelley Heffernan (Head of Clinical Services) Hanan El-Aidouni (0-19 Clinical Lead CLCH)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chessie Flack and Councillor Jenifer Gould attended as a substitute.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### 4 0-19 HEALTHY CHILD SERVICES UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

The Head of Public Service gave an overview of the report. In response to questions it was reported that:

A number of workstreams are being undertaken to support childhood obesity including promoting healthy eating and an active environment. There is a social prescribing pilot aimed at children specifically. Family start will provide support to families on making healthier choices.

There is support available to tackle head lice which is often a seasonal issue. Health visitors can prescribe medication and visit families to provide targeted support when needed.

The antenatal check is not universal. The team deliver targeted work to vulnerable families. The service is offered to those who request it. There is also support available online.

In regard to the success of the breast-feeding clinic it was reported that there is expertise in the community on breast feeding. There is an Instagram page with info, lots of positive feedback. Run one specialist clinic one day a week.

Improving access became apparent during rapid reviews. The team are looking at innovate ways people can ask questions anonymously as well as looking at best practice. People can self-refer, there are drop in clinics and a health matters social media platform. There are three public health young inspectors who will look at these issues during the re-procurement process.

Resolved

The Panel would like an update on re-procurement process to future meeting.

## 5 CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATIONS IN MERTON (Agenda Item 5)

The nurse consultant gave an overview of the report.

A panel member said it is disappointing we are still behind on uptake rates and asked if advice has been taken from the LGA report on increasing uptake particularly for MMR2. The nurse consultant said they have taken on all recommendations from the report. Barriers include some parents deny consent, some come from abroad and use their own counties immunisation schedule.

A panel member asked if local pharmacies and mosques can administer vaccines. The Nurse consultant reported that pharmacies can do adult immunisations but would need specific training for children. More promotion work is required with mosques.

A panel member congratulated the immunisations team as all measures are on an upward trajectory. There are concerns amongst some groups and some ethnic minority groups who resist immunisations. The Nurse Consultant said anti-vax movement have spread mis-information. Many are still concerned about MMR. The vaccination team provide webinars about childhood immunisations to different ethnic groups.

RESOLVED

The chair thanked the Nurse Consultant for the report.

## 6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships gave an overview of the report.

A panel member asked if the rise in re-offending has been linked to cuts in youth workers. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said there are small numbers within the youth offending cohort in Merton and the team works effectively with youth workers to focus on prevention. The team will continue to focus on preventative work as serious offending behaviour is more challenging to resolve.

In response to questions, it was reported that key indicators on roll out of family hubs, can be included in department update report.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help said there are no planned school closures as they will be working with schools to manage budgets and pupil numbers.

It was reported there will be regular updates to scrutiny on persistent absenteeism.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

## 7 SELF HARM AND EATING DISORDERS TASK GROUP REVIEW (Agenda Item 7)

The Chair thanked the task group for the work undertaken to gather research in a very sensitive area.

Councillor Linda Kirby, Task Group Chair gave an overview of the report and recommendations, Councillor Hall said preventative work must be undertaken as well as raising awareness. Councillor McArthur said parents need access to support and advice.

The Panel agreed for the report and recommendations be sent to Cabinet for approval.

The Young Inspector said young people want to get involved in decision making and services need to respond to their needs.

Councillor Hayes said this work was a good example of cross party working and commended the commitment of the task group.

## RESOLVED

That the report and recommendations will be subject to some minor amendments, following discussions with the task group and Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department, then forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

## 8 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families gave an overview of the report.

A panel member raised concerns about exclusions amongst girls. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said she had met with Headteachers of Secondary Schools to discuss behaviour and exclusions where this issue has been discussed and will share more information in a future meeting.

A panel member asked if there are likely to be any issues with the roll out of free school meals. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said they are not anticipating challenges and the central catering contracts will help.

A panel member asked what initiatives have been put in place in schools to help Merton become the borough of sport. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said Merton Schools' Sports partnership have events, some schools already have excellent facilities.

## 9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The Chair gave an overview of the selected scrutiny topics and said he would like to include site visits as well as invite service users to give feedback.

Councillor Kirby said she is happy to do a task group review on Female Genital Mutilation as this is a big concern nationally and the rates of conviction are very low. The Chair thanked Councillor Kirby for her interest and said they need to decide best way to look at this issue.

A panel member said we need to look at events to celebrate teachers.

## RESOLVED

The work programme was agreed.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Officer for many years of service in the borough and wished her well in her new role.



## **Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 20th September 2023**

Wards: All

### **Subject: Departmental Update**

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services, and Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Maisie Davies - Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

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### **Recommendations:**

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (CLLF) Department, and not covered elsewhere on the agenda. It focuses on those aspects of particular relevance to the department.

## **2 DETAILS**

### **CHILDREN, LIFELONG LEARNING & FAMILIES**

- 2.1 Since my last update in June, there have been some changes to the senior leadership team in Children, Lifelong Learning and Families. Our interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation, Richard Ellis, has moved on to take up a new role at Kent County Council. I am pleased to say that Tom Procter, currently our Head of Contracts and School Organisation, will be covering the Assistant Director post until we go out to permanent recruitment. Our Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships, Maisie Davies, will be going on maternity leave from October and we are currently in the process of recruiting to her maternity cover. In Children's Social Care, Teresa Hills, who is our interim Head of Corporate Parenting, is moving on to an Assistant Director position at Luton Council. Our Head of School Improvement, Rachel Bowerman, will also be moving on at the end of the autumn term.
- 2.2 The rest of this report highlights some of the Department's key activity over the last few months.

### **Children and Young People Consultation**

- 2.3 The Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department have launched a new consultation for children and young people who live, study or socialise in the London Borough of Merton, on behalf of the Children's Trust.
- 2.4 Merton's Children's Trust works with partners to agree actions that will improve the lives of children and young people, which is set out in the Children and Young People's Plan. A substantial part of the plan is ensuring we are hearing from children and young people, and therefore we have been running a survey and conducting focus groups over the summer to ensure as many children and young people as possible are able to have a say. Feedback from the survey will also contribute to other strategies that are currently being refreshed within Merton (our Early Help Strategy and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy, for example).
- 2.5 We hope to reach a wide range of children and young people, hence why we are running both a survey and targeted focus groups. We are working with primary and secondary schools to increase our reach, and the survey will run into the Autumn term to enable more schools to participate. Additionally, we have promoted the survey via the Participation and Engagement team's Instagram page, shared the survey materials with stakeholders who support Merton's children and young people (such as Student Spectra who support our LGBT+ youth community) and will be visiting some of our Holiday, Activity and Food (HAF) programmes and youth centres.
- 2.6 The Department have run similar engagement activity work previously to inform the work of our Children's Trust Board. The last major engagement survey we ran under the remit of the Children's Trust Board was our Young residents survey on the impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton in 2021. This survey reached over 2,000 children and young people and informed our current action plan overseen by the Board.

## **Supporting Schools**

### **Children Missing Education**

- 2.7 Merton runs a monthly multi-agency Children Missing Education (CME) panel. This approach was recognised as an example of good practice in our Ofsted ILACs inspection last year. The panel is chaired by the Head of Service for Education Inclusion, and core membership consists of representatives from the Education Welfare Service, School Nursing and the Virtual Behaviour Service, with the Executive Headteacher of Melbury College. Team managers from Children's Social Care, and lead officers from the Youth Justice Service, SENDIS, the Family Wellbeing Service, School Admissions and the Virtual School also attend to discuss the cases that are tracked.
- 2.8 The panel oversees children who are off roll and not yet moved into a school. In addition, Merton has always reviewed a much larger group of children and young people, who are on the roll of a school but have less than 25% attendance.

- 2.9 Performance with regards to CME is reported to members every year within the Schools' Standards' Report (in February/March). Anticipating some of the contents of this report, it should be noted that we have seen a rise in the number of children and young people not on a school roll, and of those whose attendance at school is below 25%. A noticeable group are cases where families who arrive in Merton, register for a school place, but then do not attend school. Education Welfare Officers track those children and families, most of whom have moved out of the borough again.
- 2.10 Of the group with below 25% attendance, a large subgroup are children with special educational needs or disabilities, where the authority is looking for a specialist placement in a market where there is nationally increasing demand and limited supply.
- 2.11 The Education Welfare Service also follows up children who are removed from school rolls. Schools can only take children off roll on specific legal grounds and should endeavour to find out where the family are moving to so the new host authority can be made aware. If the school cannot find this out, officers follow up including undertaking home visits where appropriate.
- 2.12 In 2021/22 there were 2,634 children who came off roll from Merton schools during the academic year. Education Welfare had to track 560 and had a clear up rate of finding children and informing local authorities of 96%.
- 2.13 Another group of children that are outside the school system are those who are Electively Home Educated (EHE). The number of families choosing to educate their own children rose sharply during the pandemic. The number has reduced again, but is still at a higher level than before the pandemic. The annual data is reported in the Schools' Standards' Report, but levels of EHE are monitored on a monthly basis by senior leaders.

### **Early Help and Early Years**

- 2.14 On 2<sup>nd</sup> August a range of events were held across our two Family Hub sites to launch the Merton Family Hub brand and locations. Family Hub One is based at the Phipps Bridge Youth Centre and Church Road Children's Centre, and Family Hub Two at the Acacia Adventure Playground and Acacia Children's Centre. Over 500 families and local organisations came to help us celebrate, which also coincided with National Play Day. Please see web pages for more details [Family Hubs | Merton Council](#), and plans for further developments over the coming months
- 2.15 In June we established our Start for Life Partnership, focusing on the first 1001 days from conception until a child is aged two. By the end of the autumn term we intend to publish our Start for Life Offer which aims to make information, access and take up of early years services easier for families and professionals, providing earlier intervention and family support during this very important phase of early childhood. [Publishing your Start for Life offer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- 2.16 The recent announcement regarding the expansion of free early years education and childcare for working families with children from 9 months up to 5, and the wraparound provision for school aged children in all primary schools will require significant planning over the coming months. Work is currently taking place to better understand the supply and demand for free early years places from 9 months to 3 years, running alongside our wider project and programme planning. Key to the success will be coproduction and engagement with service users (families), and with our range of childcare and early education providers (including childminders). Merton has existing and well established partnerships with the childcare and early years sector. We will build on this to deliver this ambitious programme across the early years sector so that there is sufficient free early education and childcare that meet the needs of families in Merton.
- 2.17 In line with government's timescales we will incrementally introduce free places across the early years age range from April 2024 up until September 2025, whereby we will be at full rollout. [Early education entitlements and funding update: March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-education-entitlements-and-funding-update-march-2023)

### **Free School Meals**

- 2.18 Over the summer period children in Merton Schools on benefits related Free School Meals were able to receive an £80 supermarket food voucher. We are continuing to provide these for the school holidays until at least Easter 2024, with £30 for each of the Christmas and Easter holidays, and £15 for the half terms.
- 2.19 From the start of term in September all Key Stage 2 children are able to benefit from a free school meal during term time irrespective of income, funded by the Mayor of London. Officers have been working with schools and the catering provider that provides meals for the vast majority of primary schools.

### **Supporting Vulnerable Children**

#### **Supporting Vulnerable Children with Education, Health and Care Plans**

- 2.20 As at the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, Merton maintained 2469 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), an increase of 49 in comparison with the same time last year.
- 2.21 In this calendar year (Jan to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023), the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS) has received 308 requests for an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). This calendar year the LA has agreed to undertake 233 EHCNA's, and agreed to issue 172 EHCPs.
- 2.22 The EHCNA process should be completed within 20 weeks. As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, and excluding exceptions, 58% of EHCNAs led to EHCPs being issued within the statutory 20 weeks. This is a decrease in timeliness in comparison with the last report and is due to a combination of factors which include: delays in receiving professional advice; challenging staffing issues across education, health and social care; and an increase in demand for EHCNA's. The

partnership have met to discuss how the capacity issues will be addressed in order to ensure our timeliness improves in the next quarter.

- 2.23 Following annual review processes the Local Authority has ceased to maintain 171 EHC Plans since January 2023. In addition, 85 children and young people with an EHCP moved out of Merton to another Local Authority and 7 pupils moved abroad, whilst 46 children and young people with an EHCP moved into Merton and their plan was adopted.

### **Corporate Parenting - supporting and celebrating our children in care and care leavers**

- 2.24 At the end of July, we had our summer parties for our children in care and care leavers. On 25 July we had an event for the younger group (0-15) at the Acacia Children's Centre, which Cllr Fraser attended. This was a fancy-dress party with staff and children showing us their superhero talents. On the 27 July, we had the party and barbecue for our older cohort (16-25) including competitions for young people, staff and Cllr Fraser. As last year the young people won the tug of war! It was a lovely opportunity to enjoy social activities and fun and luckily the rain held off. Thank you to everyone who supported and enabled our young people to have such a special time.
- 2.25 On the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup>, we also held our Corporate Parenting Board Awayday. We went to Morden Park House, which is a lovely location and had a great turnout with members of the Board, staff, foster carers and many of our young people. The evening was facilitated by Mark Riddell, the DfE Adviser on Children in Care and Care Leavers, who is care experienced himself. We spent time listening to the young people and planning for what we need to improve as well as reflecting on what works well for our young people. It is always a privilege and a pleasure to spend time with our children and enjoy their insights and enthusiasm and everyone came away from the evening feeling positive and inspired. Thank you to our Participation team and Young Inspectors for their support of this event.

### **Supporting Families experiencing Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA)**

- 2.26 In April this year, Children, Lifelong Learning and Families applied for grant funding from the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to support our local partnership drive improvements to the ways in which CAPVA is identified and responded to. In July we were delighted to find out our bid for the two year programme had been successful and we are liaising with the VRU to implement the project. As part of the bid, we will be working with our partners to better identify and respond to CAPVA through specialist consultation support, reviewing our systems and processes, and supporting increased learning and development opportunities across our multi-agency workforce.

### **Local Research on Youth Violence**

- 2.27 Merton has received funding of £5,000 from the Violence Reduction Unit following a stabbing incident in February 2023 in order to seek consultation from a field expert and formulate recommendations relating to multi-agency responses to youth violence within the borough involving gangs and groups. Junior Smart from Smart Training and Consulting was commissioned to conduct the research with the final report for consideration to be produced by September 2023.
- 2.28 The overall focus of the work is on disruption and prevention, looking at the 12 months prior to March 2023, with particular emphasis placed on the period from the stabbing incident summer 2022 onwards, a time where the commissioning and steering group describes as pivotal to the incident itself.

### **Working Together Consultation**

- 2.29 On 21 June, the Department for Education launched their consultation on changes to the statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguarding Children<sup>1</sup>. The guidance sets out what is expected of agencies, organisations and individuals to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. It follows the publication in February 2023 of the Government's Stable Homes, Built on Love Consultation<sup>2</sup>, which responded to the recommendations of three national reviews<sup>3</sup>. The guidance proposes changes in five key areas:
- A shared endeavour introduces expectations for effective multi-agency working and practice principles for working with parents and carers
  - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements clarifies roles and responsibilities, introduces a partnership chair and deepens accountability and transparency
  - Help and support for children and their families includes stronger expectations on Early Help and family networks, clarifies permissions on working with children under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and emphasises support for disabled children.
  - Decisive multi-agency child protection introduces new national multi-agency child protection standards for practitioners and approaches to harm outside the home
  - Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents.

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<sup>1</sup> [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 - consultation document \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.education.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [Children's social care stable homes built on love consultation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (The Care Review) 2022; The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) review into the deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes (the National Review) 2022; and The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) Children's Social Care market study 2022

- 2.30 Children, Lifelong Learning and Families responded to the consultation and have considered the implications with our safeguarding partners in the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Safety Valve**

- 2.31 The most recent monitoring return to the Department for Education was submitted on the 15<sup>th</sup> September. It continued to show good progress to delivering financial balance within the five years of the plan.
- 2.32 The number of Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) has stabilised in contrast to the pre-plan estimate of year-on-year growth in the number of plans on more than 300 per year. As at end of July 2023 there were 2,470 EHCPs compared to 2,497 as at the end of March 2022. Underneath this headline figure there are new plans being agreed every month as well as plans being ceased due to young people leaving education or moving out of borough.
- 2.33 We have expanded in-borough special schools places at Whatley Avenue, with 41 new places filled so far, rising to 60 by September. We have also included Additional Resourced Provisions (ARPs) by 33 places. The further expansion of in-borough provision remains a priority for both ARPs and Special School places.
- 2.34 DfE announced funding for the new special free school in Merton on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. We are currently working with DfE on site identification and the process to find an operator.
- 2.35 We remain on track to meet the plan over the five years agreed with DfE, and continue to achieve balance ahead of that timescale.

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## **Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 20 September 2023**

Agenda item:

Wards: All

### **Subject: Schools Places Planning Strategy**

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Cabinet Member: Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officers:

Tom Procter, Interim Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation

Paul Stemp, School Admissions and Interim Place Planning Manager

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. To note the draft School Places Planning Strategy document showing the actual falling demand for primary school places and the forecast fall in demand for secondary school places, but the significant increase in demand for specialist provision that transcends these trends
  - B. To note and comment on the strategies to address this
- 

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report and accompanying document outlines the falling demand for primary school places, and forecast fall in demand for secondary school places, and increased demand for specialist provision.
- 1.2. It set out the supply and forecasting information and the strategy for managing the changing demand. It is primarily an update of last year's strategy.

## **2 DETAILS**

### **Background**

- 2.1. The council has a legal responsibility for the sufficiency of school places. There has been no legal requirement for a published sufficiency plan since the requirement for a School Organisation Plan stopped in the mid-2000s but since this time there have generally been annual reports to committees on supply and demand. Up to 2016 this focussed on the rising demand for primary school and then secondary school places.
- 2.2. Since around 2016 the position has changed significantly in Merton, in London, and generally throughout the country, in there being a significant fall in demand for primary school places which is expected to feed into secondary schools in the coming years. However, at the same time there

have been unprecedented increases in demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and specialist school places associated with this.

- 2.3. The School Places Planning Strategy documents the detail of the supply and demand, and this cover paper outlines the main issues.

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

- 2.4. From the mid-2000s there was a rising demand for primary school places, requiring an extensive expansion programme. However, since around 2016 the position has changed significantly in Merton, in London, and generally throughout the country, in there being a significant fall in demand for primary school places.

- 2.5. Reception year numbers decreased in 2022/23 for the seventh consecutive year and, further falls are expected from 2023/24. The extent of the further fall is dependent on the forecast model used. As the lower numbers flow to all year groups, the total primary school roll by the GLA forecast model is 14,242 in 2026/27 and 13,767 in 2027/28, nearly 3,000 less than the 2017/18 peak. Our 'pupil retention' modelling suggests it will be 13,741 in 2026/27 and 13,293 in 2027/28, some 3,500 less than the 2017/18 peak, with further falls thereafter.

- 2.6. The council has already facilitated the reduction in the published admission number by 13 forms of entry from 2016 to the present 2023/24 reception year entry. However, based on the GLA forecast, if there are no further reductions the Year R surplus will be 20% by 2026/27, and 26% based on our pupil retention model.

- 2.7. There is therefore a need to manage the falling demand for school places to ensure that schools can continue to improve and manage a balanced budget. The broad strategy agreed in autumn 2021, is now slightly more robust to challenge maintained schools that cannot meet a balanced budget:

- Continue to encourage schools to reduce admissions numbers to multiples of 30 for education efficiency when practical to do so
- Encourage schools to work in cluster areas with the council to agree reductions in admission numbers at an area level
- Consider use of compatible alternative uses for space where appropriate such as primary age SEND Additional Resourced Provision when it can be agreed with schools
- Where appropriate consider alternative models to operate schools for school improvement and to manage a balanced budget e.g. hard and soft federations
- When a maintained school, the council has ultimate financial responsibility for the school. When the school cannot meet a robust forecast in-year balanced budget position the council may (in the case of Community Schools) enforce a reduction if it is financially advantageous to do so, and (in the Case of Voluntary Aided Schools) consider others levers to enforce the admission authority school to apply for a reduction

- No plans to close schools unless absolutely necessary, as per the statutory guidance. This would be where standards are poor without a viable strategy for school improvement, the school is not viable financially after all options have been exhausted, and that there are places elsewhere for children that would be displaced, and pupil forecasts do not suggest an increase in demand, The council will also be wary that once land is lost for schools it may not be possible to get it back for any future increase in demand that cannot be foreseen
- The council has no statutory power to propose the closure of an Academy school and does not have the financial responsibility for any budget deficit. The council seeks to work in partnership with Academy schools. Were an Academy or Free School to elect to close, the council would need to review its maintained school capacity in light of any revised capacity within the local area.

## **SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

- 2.8. The significantly increased pupil numbers reached secondary age through the 2010s and the Year 7 roll has since broadly plateaued following the significant increase up to September 2018, when the council facilitated the opening of the Free School Harris Academy Wimbledon for September 2018 to enable sufficient places.
- 2.9. In 2022/23 we operated below the recommended minimum surplus level of 5% in Year 7 and this is also expected in 2023/24.
- 2.10. Whilst Merton applicant numbers have reduced in the last two years, overall Year 7 numbers have held due to increased numbers in neighbouring boroughs and a slight increase in retention of home residents in our schools. However, the lower numbers flowing through primary schools combined with predicted reductions in neighbouring boroughs will reach Year 7 by September (2024 or 2025) and so there is concern there will be surplus places and a need to eventually reduce the capacity of some schools.
- 2.11. The level of demand continues to be dependent on the pupil retention from Year 6, as there is extensive cross border movement.
- 2.12. The significantly higher pupil numbers reach 6th form age from this September (2023) and there will be significantly increased demand.

## **SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION**

- 2.13. There has been a more than doubling increase in the number of EHCPs over the last 7 years, from 1075 in January 2016 to 2585 in January 2023 (SEN2 count).
- 2.14. The council has been active in implementing special school expansion in recent years. However, this has not been sufficient keep up with the increase in demand and the council still places more children with EHCPs to independent sector provision than most councils. As part of the High Needs 'safety valve' intervention programme agreed with the DfE in early 2022 a series of new expansions are being implemented over the next 5 years,

including the proposal for a new Special Free School. This has now received pre-opening approval by the Secretary of State. As of Autumn 2023, there is a selection process for a new provider expected to be chosen in early 2024 and opening of the school for September 2026.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. The report described the various options to address the reduction in demand for schools places and increased demand for specialist provision.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. Previous versions of this document have gone to schools for comment and this version will also.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The various timescales are set out in the document

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The increase in demand for specialist provision for SEND children with EHCPs has resulted in a significant overspend in the Dedicated School Grant. The increased numbers outlined above has also resulted in a significantly increased number of requests for travel assistance for children with EHCP, which is leading to overspends in the council's general fund
- 6.2. The majority of funding to individual schools is provided through the national funding formula based on their school roll, council officers will continue to work closely with maintained schools to facilitate decisions that will provide a balanced budget.

### **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 are available for its area to provide the opportunity of appropriate education for all pupils. It must exercise this function with a view to securing diversity in the provision of schools, and increasing opportunities for parental choice.
- 7.2. A reduction in the published admission number (PAN) of a maintained school (community, controlled and voluntary aided schools) can be agreed by the admission authority for the school as part of the annual determination of admission arrangements. Admission arrangements must be determined in March in the year prior to the admission year so that this is approximately 20 months prior to implementation (consultation in late 2021 for determination in March 2022 for September 2023 entry). The council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and the governing body for voluntary aided schools. Before determining a reduction in a PAN, the admission authority must carry out a consultation exercise in accordance with the School Admission Code and the School Standards and Framework Act. Objections may be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator. Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish. An application can also be made to the Schools Adjudicator for a change in the PAN in-year where this is necessary in view of a major change in circumstances occurring since the PAN was determined.

- 7.3. The Council can propose the closure of a maintained school following the statutory process under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. There must be consultation prior to publication of proposals and publication of a statutory notice inviting representations, following which the council will determine whether to approve the proposals. Regard must be had to the statutory guidance. The statutory guidance for opening and closing maintained schools is here:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/851585/Opening\\_and\\_closing\\_maintained\\_schools1012.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851585/Opening_and_closing_maintained_schools1012.pdf)
- 7.4. Closing a school should only be undertaken when ‘necessary’ and reasons for closing a maintained school are stated in the statutory guidance as to include, but are not limited to, where:
- There are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;
  - It is to be merged or amalgamated with another school;
  - It has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and there is no sponsored academy solution;
  - It is to acquire, lose or change its religious character;
  - It is no longer considered viable; or
  - It is being replaced by a new school
- 7.5. School size: The statutory guidance states that Decision-makers should not make blanket assumptions that schools should be of a certain size to be good schools, although the viability and cost-effectiveness of a proposal is an important factor for consideration. The decision-maker should also consider the impact on the LA’s budget of the need to provide additional funding to a small school to compensate for its size
- 7.6. The statutory guidance requires a statement explaining the reason why closure of the school is considered necessary, and further requirements including the requirement to consider equality issues, travel, displaced pupils, and impact on the community.
- 7.7. In determining statutory proposals for school closures, the guidance requires that the council as decision maker should be satisfied that there are sufficient surplus places elsewhere in the local area to accommodate displaced pupils, and the likely supply and future demand for places in the medium and long term. The council as decision maker is required to take into account the overall quality of alternative places in the local area, balanced with the need to reduce excessive surplus capacity in the system. The decision-maker should have regard for the local context in which the proposals are being made, taking into account the nature of the area, the age of the children involved and, where applicable, alternative options considered for reducing excess surplus capacity.
- 7.8. The governing body of a voluntary or foundation school may also publish proposals to close its own school following the statutory process. Such proposals are then determined by the council. Alternatively, the governing

body of a voluntary or foundation school may give at least two years' notice of its intention to close the school to the Secretary of State and the local authority.

- 7.9. Changes to academies (including free schools) including changes to the PAN and school closures are a matter for the Secretary of State acting through the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) and in accordance with the school funding agreements. Where the PAN of an academy is reduced, an objection can be made to the Schools Adjudicator.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The legal implications above show the implications to be considered of any change in school organisation

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None specific

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are a series of risks in reducing the supply of school places, and the increase in DSG expenditure has been identified as one of the greatest risks for the council

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

School places Planning strategy – updated September 2023

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1. None

**Merton School Places  
Planning Strategy  
2023-2028**  
**(subject to annual review)**

Updated September 2023

## **Introduction and summary of position**

Merton Council started adopting a more formal School Places Strategy document from Autumn 2021 and now updates it on an annual basis. This document is therefore an update of the 2022 plan with updated forecasting information. The general position has not changed significantly since last year except the forecast reduction in numbers has been relatively accurate and shows no sign of reversing in the medium term and in some cases requires more urgent action. This is therefore primarily an update of information and some change in emphasis rather than any proposed change in strategy.

This revised plan sets out the existing supply and demand for school places, and projections based on the annual review in summer 2023. After a commentary on the basis of projections it has three sections: primary school, secondary school, and specialist provision.

The next formal review will be in summer 2024 as part of the timetable for the council's annual school places ("SCAP") return to the Department for Education.

A summary of the position on supply and demand of school places is as follows:

### **Primary school places**

From the mid-2000s there was a rising demand for primary school places, requiring an extensive expansion programme. However, since around 2016 the position has changed significantly in Merton, in London, and generally throughout the country, in there being a significant fall in the primary school age population and therefore demand for primary school places.

Reception year numbers plateaued in 2022/23 after six consecutive year of falls, but the school census figure for 2023/24 will show a further fall and more falls are expected from 2024/25. The extent of the further fall is dependent on the forecast model used. As the lower numbers flow to all year groups, the total primary school roll by the GLA forecast model is 14,242 in 2026/27 and 13,767 in 2027/28, nearly 3,000 less than the 2017/18 peak. Our 'pupil retention' modelling suggests it will be 13,741 in 2026/27 and 13,293 in 2029/30, some 3,500 less than the 2017/18 peak, with further falls thereafter.

The council has already facilitated the reduction in the published admission number by 13 forms of entry from 2016 to the present 2023/24 reception year entry. However, based on the GLA forecast, if there are no reductions the Year R surplus will be 20% by 2026/27, and 26% based on our pupil retention model.

This document sets out the strategy for managing the surplus places.

### **Secondary school places**

The significantly increased pupil numbers reached secondary age through the 2010s and the Year 7 roll has since broadly plateaued following the significant increase up to September 2018, when the council facilitated the opening of the Free School Harris Academy Wimbledon for September 2018 to enable sufficient places.

In 2022/23 we operated below the recommended minimum surplus level of 5% in Year 7 and this is also expected in 2023/24.



Whilst Merton applicant numbers have reduced in the last couple of years, overall Year 7 numbers have held due to increased numbers in neighbouring boroughs and an increase in retention of home residents in our schools. However, the lower numbers flowing through primary schools combined with predicted reductions in neighbouring boroughs will reach Year 7 by September (2024 or 2025) and so there is concern there will be surplus places and a need to eventually reduce the capacity of some schools.

The level of demand continues to be dependent on the pupil retention from Year 6, as there is extensive cross border movement.

The significantly higher pupil numbers reach 6th form age from this September (2023) and there will be significantly increased demand.

### **Special School provision**

There has been a more than doubling increase in the number of EHCPs over the last 7 years, from 1075 in January 2016 to 2485 in January 2023 (SEN2 count).

The council has been active in implementing special school expansion in recent years. However, this has not been sufficient keep up with the increase in demand and the council still places more children with EHCPs to independent sector provision than most councils. As part of the High Needs 'safety valve' intervention programme agreed with the DfE in early 2022 a series of new expansions are being implemented over the next 5 years, including the proposal for a new Special Free School.

## Background

In Merton there are the following state funded schools:

- 27 Community primary schools all with a nursery
- 11 Voluntary Aided primary schools, all with a nursery
- 6 Primary school Academies (including a Free School)
- 3 Community/Voluntary Controlled secondary schools, all with sixth forms
- 2 Voluntary Aided secondary schools, both with sixth forms
- 4 Secondary school Academies (including a Free School)
- 3 Special Schools
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) including specialist medical service

## Overall aims

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

Providing sufficient, good quality school places is a key part of this role.

## Definition of capacity

The DfE prescribe a number of measures for measuring surplus places:

- Net capacity is the physical capacity measure of a school. For maintained schools this is based on a prescribed method for calculating the accommodation available, and so reducing the admission number will not reduce the net capacity unless there is a specific alternative use of spare classrooms e.g. a special needs additional resourced provision. For Academy Schools it will be prescribed in the school funding agreement so it could be that in reality a school has some spare physical space.
- The 'capacity in year group' will reflect admission number changes and will specify the level of surplus that schools are operating to based on their admission numbers.

The first measure is therefore a good means for measuring efficiency of buildings, but the second measure reflects shorter term measures that the council can facilitate to assist the efficient operations of schools and managing the school budget. By concentrating on Reception year we can see how the trend of higher or lower numbers will flow through the rest of the school.

## **Level of surplus places**

Deciding an appropriate level of surplus places is a balance between choice and efficiency. Surplus places across schools provide more choice of school places, but since schools are largely funded based on numbers on roll, surplus places have a negative impact on the school budget, and therefore potentially teaching and learning. Key Stage 1 primary school classes cannot be in classes of more than 30 pupils yet it is difficult to balance a budget when classes are substantially smaller than 30. With a high number of surplus places primary schools are more likely to have year group numbers that are not possible to manage in a traditional 1-form/2-form/3-form entry classes of 30 structure.

In the late 1990s the Audit Commission recommended that a surplus of 5-10% would enable the appropriate balance of choice and to economically provide sufficient school places, and this is still considered a reasonable estimate of best practice. Since the Merton Council area is a compact area with its schools relatively close together and any surplus can be disproportionately placed in a small number of schools, a surplus of 5% is considered an ideal at reception year, with a tolerance for slightly less at the peak of demand. Since there is a net loss of pupils after reception year the surplus across the year groups would be higher.

## **Basis of school roll projections**

The council use the service of the Greater London Authority (GLA) demography team of pupil projections, based on the Borough Preferred Option population projections

The GLA school roll projection model creates a roll projection for each school based on the GLA population projections of the wards where its pupils live. For each ward of residence in London, National Curriculum (NC) year (R to 11) and sex, the proportion of children of the corresponding age attending each mainstream state school is calculated. These proportions are carried forward as the pupils age through the school in the years being projected.

For new pupils entering a school in future years, for example at reception, proportions are calculated as averages over the latest years of actuals, with 4 being the standard number of years used (2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022). The same approach is used at years 7 and 12, even if the school is an all through school, as it is assumed that there will be significant changes in the cohort at this point.

The rolled forward and calculated new intake proportions for future years are then applied to the population projections to give projections of the number of children on roll by school by age and sex. Due to lower retention rates, sixth form projections are calculated using a survival ratio as the cohort ages through sixth form. School level projections are then aggregated to planning areas (in the case of primary schools) and borough totals.

The Council checks the GLA forecasts against school admissions intelligence for the following academic year, and also against a simple pupil retention model, which calculates retention percentages on the last 3 years based on a 3:2:1 ratio, with published and forecast live births used as the source data to forecast reception year.

While last year the GLA forecasts did not seem to reflect the full changes in migration patterns there has been an adjustment this year and so the GLA forecasts for primary age

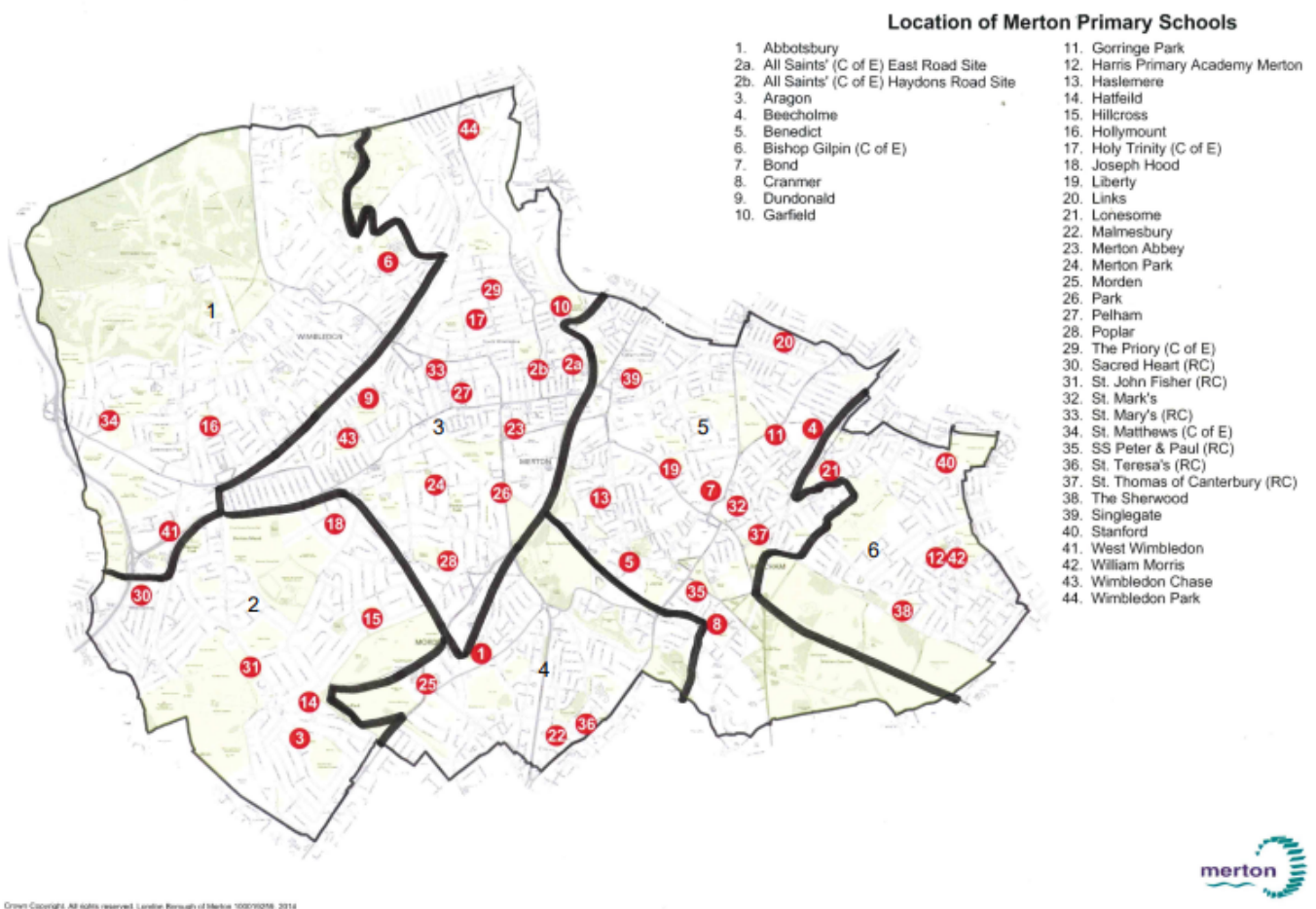
are for a greater fall than last year. However, they are still higher than Merton's simple pupil retention model that does not take into account 'child yield' from additional housing.

# Primary schools

## Place planning areas

For the purposes of school places planning Merton has 6 primary school place planning areas, which are groups of wards. However, there are few natural barriers preventing easy travel across the planning areas so when making decisions on school expansion and reductions it is necessary to look beyond individual planning areas.

### MAP OF MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH PLANNING AREAS



Note – the planning areas have changed moderately to be consistent with new ward boundaries but schools are all still in the same planning area – map currently being updated

## Rise and fall in demand

- 1.1 From 2008 to 2015 the council experienced an exceptional increase in demand for primary school places, which required a substantial expansion programme that expanded more than twenty schools. In 2017/18 there were more pupils in Merton primary schools for more than a generation – a rise of 4,367 pupils from 12,683 to 17,050 on roll (35% increase) compared to 11 years previously.

1.2 However, in 2016/17 there started to be a drop in demand for reception year places which is flowing through primary schools, and the fall in demand in reception year demand has continued to 2021/22. This fall was not forecast at London or national level prior to 2016, and seems to have been highly influenced by changing migration patterns as a result of the Brexit referendum and then Brexit itself.

1.3 The table below shows this exceptional rise and now fall in the primary school roll by year group.

MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL ROLL 2007/08 TO 2022/23 (JANUARY CENSUS)

Acad emic year	200 7/08	200 8/09	200 9/10	201 0/11	201 1/12	201 2/13	201 3/14	201 4/15	201 5/16	201 6/17	201 7/18	201 8/19	201 9/20	202 0/21	202 1/22	202 2/23
Recep tion	193 7	214 0	222 9	228 5	265 1	259 9	254 7	262 7	262 8	252 4	243 7	230 5	237 0	227 9	218 9	219 2
Year 1	188 5	192 9	214 8	222 8	231 3	261 2	257 7	253 2	259 1	259 5	246 5	239 2	225 0	228 3	220 1	219 0
Year 2	181 6	188 5	192 1	211 5	222 7	228 4	255 7	255 4	250 9	253 5	252 9	242 0	232 2	220 4	223 1	220 0
Year 3	180 1	183 5	185 9	190 5	209 3	219 7	222 4	250 2	248 6	245 5	246 3	245 0	233 8	223 7	211 0	218 9
Year 4	178 1	177 3	183 3	183 0	190 1	208 2	214 9	220 9	245 8	241 9	238 5	241 7	241 4	224 1	215 6	211 0
Year 5	178 9	177 8	174 2	183 2	181 7	188 8	202 8	210 9	215 6	240 7	239 3	233 9	237 4	231 1	218 5	214 7
Year 6	179 4	176 2	175 6	172 5	183 7	181 7	184 8	202 4	208 1	211 3	237 8	236 3	227 0	231 1	227 4	216 8
<b>Prima ry Total</b>	128 03	131 02	134 88	139 20	148 39	154 79	159 30	165 57	169 09	170 48	170 50	166 86	163 38	158 66	153 46	151 96

## Current position

### Current level of surplus places in primary school

The table below provides by school and planning area:

- The total roll (January 2023 school census for the statutory school years R to 6)
- The Net capacity
- The surplus and surplus percentage
- The current reception year admission number (those in red have reduced)
- The reception roll
- The reception year surplus and surplus percentage

This shows that against net capacity there were 20.2% surplus places in spring 2023. However, because admission numbers have been reduced the percentage was only 11.4% for reception year against admission number.

Despite the overall surplus in each planning area there are still some heavily oversubscribed primary schools in Merton, with six community schools still offering to less than 600 metres on offer day.

MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND PLANNING AREA – SURPLUS AGAINST NET CAPACITY AND AGAINST RECEPTION YEAR ADMISSION NUMBER 2022/23

	Total roll (excl. nurs)	Net capacity	Surplus	Surplus %	R admission No.	R roll	Surplus R	Surplus R %
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PA1: Hollymount , West Wimbledon, St Matthew's CofE, Bishop Gilpin CofE.

<b>Total PA1</b>	<b>1270</b>	<b>1490</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
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PA2:Hatfeild, Joseph Hood, Hillcross, Aragon, Sacred Heart RC, St John Fisher RC, Hatfeild

<b>Total PA2</b>	<b>2431</b>	<b>2928</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
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PA3: Dundonald, Garfield, Merton Abbey, Merton Park, Park, Pelham, Poplar, Wimbledon Park, Wimbledon Chase, All Saints' CofE, Holy Trinity CofE, St Mary's RC, The Priory CofE

<b>Total PA3</b>	<b>4663</b>	<b>5648</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
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PA4: Morden, Abbotsbury, Malmesbury, St Teresa's RC

<b>Total PA4</b>	<b>1375</b>	<b>1431</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
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PA5: Beecholme, Bond, Benedict, Links, Haslemere, St Mark's Primary, Singlegate, Cranmer, Gorringe Park, Liberty, St. Peter and Paul RC, St Thomas of Canterbury RC

<b>Total PA5</b>	<b>3976</b>	<b>5652</b>	<b>1676</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>18.3%</b>
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PA6: Harris Primary Academy Merton, Stanford, Lonesome, The Sherwood, William Morris

<b>Total PA6</b>	<b>1481</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>23.7%</b>
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<b>Total all borough</b>	<b>15196</b>	<b>19039</b>	<b>3843</b>	<b>20.2%</b>	<b>2475</b>	<b>2192</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>11.4%</b>
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### Actions to date to reduce surplus places (by planning area)

The recent fall in the primary school roll, especially at a time of financial constraint, has the potential to cause budget issues for a number of primary schools so some schools have reduced their admission numbers by a multiple of 30, to ensure that they have largely full classes. Because the increase in demand was catered for by expansion of existing schools, with the exception of one Free School, schools are of a larger size so are more equipped to deal with the reduction in demand than previously.

The following 13 schools have reduced their admission number over the last 7 years:

#### MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS THAT HAVE REDUCED THEIR ADMISSION NUMBER SINCE 2015

	2015 PAN*	2023 PAN	
West Wimbledon	60	30	Schools Adjudicator agreed Dec 2020 (ARP in spare space)
Hillcross	90	60	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2020
Merton Abbey	60	30	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2019
Park	60	30	Officially changed for new provider
The Priory C of E	60	30	Schools Adjudicator agreed to 45 in Jan 2021 then to 30 in Jan 2022
Benedict	60	30	Unofficial cap in 2019 and 2020. Officially changed for new provider

Cranmer	90	<b>60</b>	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2022 (ARP in spare space)
Gorringer Park	90	60	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2019
Liberty	90	60	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2020
St Thomas of Canterbury	90	60	Included in School Admission arrangements from 2021
Stanford	60	30	Permanent change to school capacity with ARP
Bond	60	30	Schools Adjudicator agreed Jan 2021
SS Peter and Paul	60	30	Schools Adjudicator agreed Jan 2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>Total reduction of 390 Year R places (13FE)</b>

Note - PAN is "published admission number"

## Merton forecasts submitted to DfE in July 2023

### Primary school projection figures and projected surplus

The primary school projections provided in the council's SCAP (annual school capacity survey) return to the DfE in July 2023 were as follows:

#### MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS – WHOLE BOROUGH SCAP FORECASTS JULY 2023

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23 (actual)	<b>2192</b>	<b>2190</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>2189</b>	<b>2110</b>	<b>2147</b>	<b>2168</b>	<b>15196</b>
2023/24	<b>2128</b>	<b>2151</b>	<b>2146</b>	<b>2159</b>	<b>2176</b>	<b>2087</b>	<b>2149</b>	<b>14996</b>
2024/25	<b>2068</b>	<b>2090</b>	<b>2104</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>2142</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>2085</b>	<b>14753</b>
2025/26	<b>1964</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2048</b>	<b>2065</b>	<b>2094</b>	<b>2116</b>	<b>2155</b>	<b>14477</b>
2026/27	<b>1962</b>	<b>1940</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2048</b>	<b>2072</b>	<b>2111</b>	<b>14134</b>
2027/28	<b>1900</b>	<b>1935</b>	<b>1897</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2062</b>	<b>13767</b>

Taking the borough as a whole, the implications of these projections on surplus places in future years is as follows:

#### MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS – FUTURE SURPLUS PLACES BASED ON OFFICIAL SCAP PROJECTIONS AND NO CHANGE

Year actual and forecast	Total roll	Net capacity	Surplus	Surplus %	R admission No.	R roll	Surplus R	Surplus R %
2022/23 (actual)	15196	19039	3843	20.2%	2475	2192	283	11.4%
2023/24	14996	19039	4043	21.2%	2430	2128	302	12.4%
2024/25	14753	19039	4286	22.5%	2430	2068	362	14.9%
2025/26	14477	19039	4562	24.0%	2430	1964	466	19.2%
2026/27	14134	19039	4905	25.8%	2430	1962	468	19.3%
2027/28	13767	19039	5272	27.7%	2430	1900	530	21.8%

Therefore without further action (some of which will be apparent in 2023 with opening of ARPs in spare space and so reducing the official net capacity) there will be 28% surplus of physical space and 22% against Reception year admission number.



However, our pupil retention model based purely on retention from live births up to 2022 and forecast live births thereafter suggests a reception roll of only 1788 by 2026/27 and 1786 in 2027/28, suggesting further action may be required. Whilst accepting the forecast nature of the figures, the indicated loss of over 400 reception pupils from 2022/23 to 2026/27 highlights the need for action to future proof our primary schools. The likely uneven nature of any reductions should also be considered. Current trends would indicate that schools in the east of the borough are likely to experience a far greater reduction than those based in the west.

#### MERTON PUPIL RETENTION PROJECTIONS SEPTEMBER 2023

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23 (actual)	2192	2190	2200	2189	2110	2147	2168	<b>15196</b>
2023/24	2128	2150	2151	2129	2139	2066	2112	<b>14875</b>
2024/25	2019	2090	2128	2086	2094	2104	2042	<b>14563</b>
2025/26	1923	1985	2071	2066	2054	2061	2080	<b>14240</b>
2026/27	1788	1889	1965	2009	2032	2021	2037	<b>13741</b>
2027/28	1786	1757	1871	1907	1977	2000	1997	<b>13293</b>

The pupil projections by planning area in the SCAP return are as follows:

#### MERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS – FORECASTS BY PLANNING AREA JULY 2023

##### PLANNING AREA 1

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23 (actual)	174	181	177	184	190	189	175	1270
2023/24	170	169	183	175	183	187	185	1252
2024/25	160	167	169	181	176	182	181	1216
2025/26	161	158	168	167	181	172	177	1184
2026/27	163	159	160	167	166	179	168	1162
2027/28	157	160	159	159	167	163	175	1140

##### PLANNING AREA 2

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23	371	380	331	355	326	323	345	2431
2023/24	348	364	377	326	359	324	321	2419
2024/25	330	343	359	371	327	356	320	2406
2025/26	319	325	340	352	373	325	351	2385
2026/27	305	314	322	333	353	369	318	2314
2027/28	294	301	311	316	334	347	362	2265

##### PLANNING AREA 3

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23	700	699	693	666	634	661	610	4663
2023/24	678	684	679	677	657	622	648	4645
2024/25	661	664	663	667	667	644	609	4575
2025/26	627	649	645	650	660	654	633	4518
2026/27	635	619	631	632	641	648	644	4450
2027/28	619	625	601	619	623	629	634	4350

#### PLANNING AREA 4

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23	202	174	198	201	196	196	208	1375
2023/24	189	198	173	196	201	198	201	1356
2024/25	180	186	197	171	196	204	203	1337
2025/26	167	179	186	195	171	198	208	1304
2026/27	166	166	178	183	194	174	203	1264
2027/28	162	165	166	176	183	196	177	1225

#### PLANNING AREA 5

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23	539	542	582	563	561	572	617	3976
2023/24	540	527	525	570	556	552	580	3850
2024/25	546	527	513	513	562	548	559	3768
2025/26	513	532	511	502	504	553	556	3671
2026/27	519	502	514	501	496	497	557	3586
2027/28	502	508	486	504	494	490	502	3486

#### PLANNING AREA 6

Forecasts	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2022/23	206	214	219	220	203	206	213	1481
2023/24	203	209	209	215	220	204	214	1474
2024/25	191	203	203	206	214	221	213	1451
2025/26	177	192	198	199	205	214	230	1415
2026/27	174	180	187	193	198	205	221	1358
2027/28	166	176	174	183	192	198	212	1301

There is therefore a need to manage the falling demand for school places to ensure that schools can continue to improve and manage a balanced budget. The broad strategy agreed in autumn 2021, is now slightly more robust to challenge maintained schools that cannot meet a balanced budget:

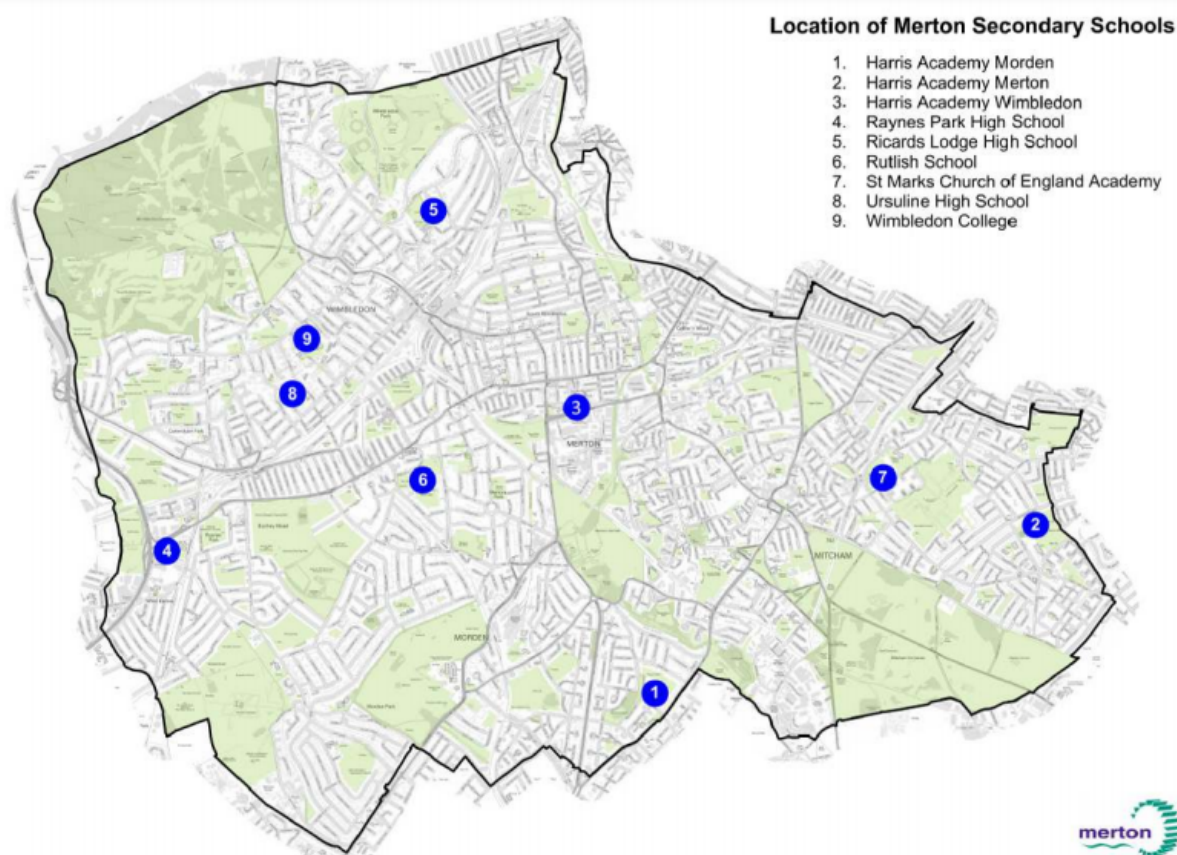
- Continue to encourage schools to reduce admissions numbers to multiples of 30 for education efficiency when practical to do so
- Encourage schools to work in cluster areas with the council to agree reductions in admission numbers at an area level
- Consider use of compatible alternative uses for space where appropriate such as primary age SEND Additional Resourced Provision when it can be agreed with schools
- Where appropriate consider alternative models to operate schools for school improvement and to manage a balanced budget e.g. hard and soft federations
- When a maintained school, the council has ultimate financial responsibility for the school. When the school cannot meet a robust forecast in-year balanced budget position the council may (in the case of Community Schools) enforce a reduction if it is financially advantageous to do so, and (in the Case of Voluntary Aided Schools) consider others levers to enforce the admission authority school to apply for a reduction.
- No plans to close schools unless absolutely necessary, as per the statutory guidance. This would be where standards are poor without a viable strategy for school improvement, the school is not viable financially after all options have been exhausted, and that there are places elsewhere for children that would be displaced, and pupil forecasts do not suggest an increase in demand, The council will also be wary that once land is lost for schools it may not be possible to get it back for any future increase in demand that cannot be foreseen.
- The council has no statutory power to propose the closure of an Academy school and does not have the financial responsibility for any budget deficit. The council seeks to work in partnership with Academy schools. Were an Academy or Free School to elect to close, the council would need to review its maintained school capacity in light of any revised capacity within the local area.

## Secondary schools

Secondary school places planning is undertaken on a borough wide context, but local factors are considered when major school planning decisions are made e.g. the new Harris Academy Wimbledon secondary school was facilitated to be in the South Wimbledon area to meet a gap in school provision in this area.

A map of the mainstream state funded secondary schools in Merton is below:

MAP OF MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS



### General issues for provision of secondary school places in Merton

#### Years 7-11 (age 11-16)

The pattern of demand for Merton secondary schools is very different to primary schools, with families willing to travel much greater distances and parental preference patterns being more significant.

For many years more Merton resident children have travelled to out of the borough state schools for their secondary schooling than the other way around. Since the movement in the primary sector is relatively minor and more children attend independent schools from Year 7, there is a significant net reduction in pupils in Merton state funded schools from Year 6 to year 7.

Standards in Merton secondary schools have risen significantly over the last 10 years, and the DfE figures from 2017 to the last exam based publication in 2019 showed that they

were consistently in the top 10 in the country for progress from primary school to the end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE year). All Merton secondary schools (maintained and academy) are at least 'good' in Ofsted terms, with five judged to be outstanding.

As shown in the table below, the Year 6 to Year 7 transfer rate fell from circa 88% in the 2000s to 75% in the mid-2010, and the council therefore reduced its previous secondary school expansion plans to only 8 forms of entry (FE – 1 FE is a year group of 30 pupils) – 2FE through the expansion of Harris Academy Merton and 6 FE through Harris Academy Wimbledon.

Over the last 4 years it has recovered with a figure of 80% for 2021/21 and a further increase to 82.1% in 2022/23. Taking the position for the last three years and admissions allocation information into account, a figure of around 85% is expected for 2023/24.

YEAR 6 TO YEAR 7 TRANSFER PERCENTAGE ON MERTON SCHOOLS 2010/11 TO 2022/23

	2010 /11	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23
	85.5 %	84.5 %	79.2 %	80.6 %	80.7 %	78.0 %	74.8 %	74.3 %	74.9 %	79.5 %	79.4 %	80.0 %	82.1 %

### Rise in demand

The significant increased pupil numbers has reached secondary age over the last few years and the Year 7 roll has broadly plateaued following the significant increase to September 2018 when the council facilitated the opening of the Free School Harris Academy Wimbledon for September 2018 and which moved to its permanent site in autumn 2020.

However, the lower numbers flowing through primary school will reach Year 7 from this September (2023) and so there is concern there will be surplus places and a need to reduce the capacity of some schools

The level of demand continues to be dependent on the pupil retention from Year 6. A slower rate of decline in neighbouring boroughs is also helping to hold Year 7 numbers up at the present time. Those neighbours are predicting reductions in coming years so this is only a temporary situation.

MERTON SCHOOLS SECONDARY SCHOOL ROLL 2010/11 TO 2022/23

Academic year	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23
Year 7	1502	1457	1454	1465	1492	1578	1556	1569	1782	1878	1803	1848	1866
Year 8	1547	1516	1450	1459	1462	1482	1553	1547	1593	1767	1854	1795	1864
Year 9	1618	1573	1508	1440	1450	1451	1477	1564	1587	1583	1722	1811	1801
Year 10	1551	1630	1571	1503	1446	1454	1419	1460	1573	1534	1557	1713	1811
Year 11	1540	1548	1590	1532	1497	1416	1403	1383	1497	1518	1508	1530	1677
Year 12	606	609	699	856	805	754	239	774	716	724	814	849	795
Year 13	298	398	455	499	657	632	585	616	700	643	665	727	759
Secondary Year 7 - 11	7758	7724	7573	7399	7347	7381	7408	7523	8032	8280	8444	8697	9019
Secondary Year 12+	904	1007	1154	1355	1462	1386	824	1390	1416	1367	1479	1576	1554
<b>Secondary Total</b>	<b>8662</b>	<b>8731</b>	<b>8727</b>	<b>8754</b>	<b>8809</b>	<b>8767</b>	<b>8232</b>	<b>8913</b>	<b>9448</b>	<b>9647</b>	<b>9923</b>	<b>10273</b>	<b>10573</b>
<b>Year 6/7 Transfer Rate (%)</b>	<b>85.5 %</b>	<b>84.5 %</b>	<b>79.2 %</b>	<b>80.6 %</b>	<b>80.7 %</b>	<b>78.0 %</b>	<b>74.8 %</b>	<b>74.3 %</b>	<b>74.9 %</b>	<b>79.5 %</b>	<b>79.4 %</b>	<b>80.0 %</b>	<b>82.1 %</b>

## Current level of surplus places in secondary school

The table below provides:

- The total roll (January 2023 school census)
- The Net capacity
- The surplus and surplus percentage
- The current Year 7 admission number
- The Year 7 roll
- The Year 7 surplus and surplus percentage

This shows that against net capacity there were 3.2% surplus places in spring 2023, and 2.3% in Year 7 against published admission number. Based on draft October 2023 census figures we expect the Year 7 surplus to be less than 3% in 2023/24. These numbers are therefore below the 5% that is considered the ideal level.

### MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SURPLUS AGAINST NET CAPACITY AND AGAINST YEAR 7 ADMISSION NUMBER 2022/23

2022/23	Total roll	Net capacity	Surplu s	Surplu s %	Year 7 admission No.	Year 7 roll	Surplu s Yr 7	Surplu s Yr 7 %
<b>Total all 9 secondary schools*</b>	<b>10573</b>	<b>10918</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>1909</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2.3%</b>

\*The 9 secondary schools are Harris Academy Morden, Harris Academy Wimbledon, Ricards Lodge High School, Raynes Park High School, Rutlish School, Wimbledon College, Ursuline High School Wimbledon, Harris Academy Merton, St Mark's Church of England Academy

## Secondary school projection figures and projected surplus

The introduction section of this strategy describes the basis of the council using the GLA projections. The GLA projections show that the number of pupils entering year 7 will start to fall from 2023/24 only moderately, by the equivalent of 3-4 forms of entry within the next five years.

### MERTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS – OFFICIAL SCAP JULY 2023

Forecasts	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total 7-11	Total 12-13
2022/23	1866	1864	1801	1811	1677	795	759	9019	1554
2023/24	1860	1857	1863	1804	1840	895	723	9224	1618
2024/25	1796	1846	1852	1859	1837	954	810	9190	1764
2025/26	1767	1782	1839	1846	1888	988	864	9122	1852
2026/27	1736	1752	1774	1835	1875	994	894	8972	1888
2027/28	1744	1723	1745	1771	1862	985	900	8845	1885
2028/29	1663	1729	1718	1741	1799	978	893	8650	1871
2029/30	1627	1651	1723	1715	1766	949	884	8482	1833

However, given the much lower numbers flowing through Merton primary schools there is the concern that the GLA model is projecting significantly more pupils than there will be. Merton also runs a simple 'pupil retention model' which projects pupil retention percentage from the previous 3 years on a 3:2:1 ratio, therefore giving more weighting to the most recent year. Based on the Year 6 to Year 7 transfer being 85%, this projection shows that Year 7 numbers will fall sharply from 2024/25, such that by 2029/30 the fall will be equivalent to nearly 7 forms of entry (FE) less than at present.

A detail not considered in the pupil projections is the increase in migration from Hong Kong. This has been more pronounced in the neighbouring Kingston and Sutton but continues to increase demand for places in all year groups in Merton. An increase in demand has also been noted for students arriving from Ukraine. Whilst the current predictions are for Year 7 numbers to reduce in coming years, the requirement for in year capacity in secondary schools remains acute across most London boroughs. In 2022/23, Merton was required to use growth funding to provide additional capacity in Year 8. Further growth fund spending may be required in 2023/24 in order to ensure sufficient capacity across all year groups for Merton residents.

MERTON PUPIL RETENTION PROJECTIONS SEPTEMBER 2023

<b>85% Pupil retention projections</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Total 7-11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Total whole school</b>
2023/24	1860	1866	1864	1801	1811	<b>9202</b>	900	714	<b>10816</b>
2024/25	1765	1860	1866	1864	1801	<b>9156</b>	970	806	<b>10932</b>
2025/26	1716	1765	1860	1866	1864	<b>9071</b>	960	869	<b>10900</b>
2026/27	1751	1716	1765	1860	1866	<b>8957</b>	996	861	<b>10815</b>
2027/28	1711	1751	1716	1765	1860	<b>8803</b>	997	893	<b>10693</b>
2028/29	1679	1711	1751	1716	1765	<b>8622</b>	994	894	<b>10509</b>
2029/30	1661	1679	1711	1751	1716	<b>8518</b>	943	891	<b>10352</b>

While the proposed new secondary Free School in Sutton was cancelled in summer 2021, with only the special school element remaining, there remains concern regarding the proposed opening of a new Voluntary Aided school in Kingston (Norbiton area) that is relatively close to the west of Merton. In June 2021 this was approved to open by Kingston Council but a planning application is yet to be submitted and it is not expected to open until at least September 2025.

Based on a fall in demand of 10FE, there would be opportunities for schools to reduce admission numbers, with the possibility of Additionally Resourced Provision (reserved provision for pupils with SEND) provided in the spare space.

Any strategy of reducing admissions numbers should be considered as a pan borough process. Simply reducing the admissions numbers of undersubscribed schools will not achieve the required change and would put those undersubscribed schools at further financial risk.

**Post 16**

The figures in the above secondary school section shows the forecast increase in post-16 numbers. Capacity is being increased by Harris Academy Wimbledon opening its 6<sup>th</sup> form from September 2023. Ricards Lodge was successful in a DfE bid to increase its 6<sup>th</sup> form physical capacity but Rutlish School was not successful in a similar bid. The supply compared to demand will need to be monitored as the higher numbers from years 7-11 flow through to post-16.



# Specialist school provision

LB Merton caters for pupils with SEND (Special Educational needs and disabilities) through mainstream schools, specialist provision within mainstream schools (“additional resourced provision”), special schools, and use of independent provision. For children with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan which replaced SEN statements) 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 SEMH (Social, emotional and mental health).

When there is not a suitable placement for a child with an EHCP within the state funded sector the council is financially responsible for commissioning suitable specialist placements within the Independent sector.

The growth in demand for SEND placements is a national issue, and the problem is significant in Merton. The growth in EHCPs and the specialist placements by school type over the past 6 years is shown in the table below, with the proportions by percentage shown overleaf .

NUMBER OF MERTON RESIDENT EHCPs JANUARY 2016 TO JANUARY 2023 AND SCHOOL PLACEMENT TYPE (SEN 2 RETURNS)

	Jan 2016 Total EHCPs *	Jan 2017 Total EHCPs *	Jan 2018 Total EHCPs *	Jan 2019 Total EHCPs*	Jan 2020 Total EHCPs	Jan 2021 Total EHCPs	Jan 2022 Total EHCPs	Jan 2023 Total EHCPs
Mainstream School (inc. Academies)	422	461	526	584	682	816	832	851
ARP (Additional Resourced Provision)	110	111	116	125	125	133	160	153
State Funded Special School	358	388	416	440	474	520	550	613
Independent/Non-Maintained Provision)	132	153	176	228	305	367	393	310
Post 16 College and traineeships	25	93	183	212	194	268	340	291
Post 16 Specialist	10	25	44	37	40	44	46	34
Other (including Early years, alternative education, NEET and hospital schools)	18	11	57	86	108	104	146	233
<b>Total</b>	<b>1075</b>	<b>1242</b>	<b>1518</b>	<b>1712</b>	<b>1928</b>	<b>2252</b>	<b>2467</b>	<b>2485</b>

\* Included statements up to 2019

There has therefore been more than doubling in the number of EHCPs in the years from 2016 to 2023.

The council has been active in implementing special school expansion in recent years, increasing the number of special school placements from 358 to 520. The number of ARP places capacity in 2016 was 101 and by 2020 it had risen to 150. This has been through a new site for Perseid School in the early 2010s and then over the past five years further expansion of Perseid School, Additional Resourced Provision (ARP) at Hatfeild and Stanford Primary Schools, the expansion of Cricket Green School, the expansion of Melrose School including the provision of a primary department.

However, as shown by the EHCP placement data, this has not been sufficient keep up with the increase in EHCPs and the council still places more children with EHCPs to independent sector provision than most councils. The budget allocation from the DfE has not kept up with the growing expenditure in Merton and so the council has a significant and growing deficit in its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs block.

In autumn 2021 the DfE invited Merton to participate in the second round of their ‘safety valve’ intervention programme with the aim of agreeing a package of reform to the high needs system that will bring the DSG deficit under control. As part of this the council has agreed a range of actions and this includes a significant increase in the number of local special school places, with additional capital funding provided. This includes the opening of a new special school approved for pre-opening by the Secretary of State. As of Autumn 2023 there is a selection process for a new provider expected to be chosen in early 2024 and opening of the school for September 2026.

The table overleaf summarises the expansions completed for September 2022 and planned over the next five years:

School	Additional places	
Melrose School/Whatley Avenue	*110	Project for 80 places completed autumn 2022
West Wimbledon Primary School	24	First phase completed for September 2022, second phase completed for September 2023
Hatfeild Primary School	10	Completed for September 2022
Cranmer Primary School	24	First phase completed for September 2022, second phase completed for September 2023
TBC	12	On hold pending review of demand
TBC Raynes Park High School	24	On hold pending a review of role of secondary school ARPs
TBC	24	On hold pending a review of role of secondary school ARPs
TBC Ricards Lodge	14	On hold pending a review of role of secondary school ARPs
TBC Rutlish	14	On hold pending a review of role of secondary school ARPs
Perseid School (SLD/PMLD)	28	Design work progressing
New Free School	120	Competition for an approved provider commenced summer 2023 for appointment in early 2024. Aim for school to open for September 2026
	<b>404</b>	

Notes:

\* 80 places delivered initially; expected to increase with possible 6<sup>th</sup> form

## Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Wards: All

### Subject: Performance Report

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services, and Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Maisie Davies, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

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#### Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report

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#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report summarises the performance information for 2023/24, up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, as set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2023/24.

1.2. As reported at June's Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Performance Index has been updated with some additional/amended target measures, as well as a selection of new indicators for care experienced young people.

#### 2 DETAILS

##### *Exception Report*

2.1. The following indicators are marked as amber or red.

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
3	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale	A	This indicator is RAG rated Amber with 63% of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks against a new target of 65% (increased from 60% in 22-23). However, our performance remains above the national average in this area (in 2022 the England average was 50.7%). Nevertheless, we continue to scrutinise this data regularly and work with partners to

			address variability in performance.
8	% of children subject of a CP plan who had a CP visit within timescales in the month	R	<p>This indicator is Red as performance at June was 86% compared to our target of 90%.</p> <p>The numbers of children on a CP plan has risen significantly in the last 6 months (albeit from a low bar and we remain below London and National average). Weekly operational performance meetings are being implemented from September.</p>
9b	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) for the second or subsequent time.	R	<p>This indicator shows the % of children with an open CPP as at the end of the period who are the subject of a CPP for the second or subsequent time.</p> <p>Performance averaged 24% during 2022/23 and remained high at 26% in April. However, it has now reduced slightly to 23% at June 2023. We are closely monitoring this indicator and a thematic audit was previously undertaken, which gave assurances that thresholds were being applied correctly.  </p>
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	R	<p>Performance declined in quarter 4 increasing from 25 weeks to 52 weeks; however, Q3 was an outlier due to only one care proceeding being completed during this period. The data for June 2023 had not yet been released when this report was being prepared. See further contextual information in the commentary section below.</p>

17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	R	<p>The target for this indicator was increased to 71% from 65% following performance consistently above target during 2022/23 and to bring in line with regional performance at 71%. Currently it is RAG rated Red as there was a dip in performance at June to 63%.</p> <p>The cohort includes 42 children so % variance relates to small numbers of children. Placement stability is tracked in weekly oversight meetings.</p>
28	Secondary school surplus places	R	See commentary below
34a	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) in suitable accommodation	A	This is a new indicator for Overview and Scrutiny panel to provide elected members with oversight of performance around care leavers. The indicator is currently RAG rated Amber as performance is at 94% compared to a 95% target. However, Merton's current performance is above both national and London benchmarks.
34b	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	R	<p>This is a new indicator for Overview and Scrutiny panel to provide elected members with oversight of performance around care leavers. The indicator is currently RAG rated Red as performance is at 35% compared to a 32% target. However, Merton's current performance is better than the national average.</p> <p>Merton has a monthly NEET panel to track care leavers not in ETE.</p>

35	% agency social workers (HR data)	R	The service previously agreed a target for this indicator (22.7% to align with London benchmarking) and the service will work towards this new target. This is a stretching target as last year the proportion of agency social workers peaked at 36% in September 2022, but with focused attention on this area the Department has reduced this to 25% in June 2023.
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## Commentary

### *Indicator 28: Secondary school surplus places*

2.2. Surplus places in secondary school year 7 have remained stable at 2.3%, but remaining below the 5% target, hence has a red rating. However, as the lower roll numbers flow through from primary school there will be more surplus places in future years.

2.3. To reduce the surplus in primary schools, and within the context of the School Place Planning Strategy (which was brought to Scrutiny in autumn 2021), officers continue to review school admission numbers to reduce capacity, with two further schools reducing their reception intake in September 2022.

### *Indicator 13: Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks*

2.4. Nationally, the duration of care proceedings has increased. This is a result of court closures during the pandemic.

2.5. A range of influences impact on the duration of court proceedings – some of which are outside of the authority’s immediate control. These include court availability, the availability and timeliness of expert witness input, and the desire to engage effectively with the wider family network to explore alternatives (where appropriate and safe to do so).

2.6. The service has monthly court and PLO tracking meetings including legal representatives. On a quarterly basis, representatives from the Children and Families Court Advisory Services (Cafcass) attend. These meetings allow the authority to raise concerns about timeliness. A permanent court progression officer is now in place with positive anecdotal feedback on her impact.

2.7. Merton continues to receive positive feedback from Merton’s link judge on the Council’s PLO work.

### 3 AMENDMENTS, CORRECTIONS AND DATA CAVEATS

#### Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

3.1. We are currently unable to report against the following indicators:

No	Indicator	Service Commentary
6	% of quorate attendance at CPP conferences	Following amendments to the system workflow, as part of the Mosaic Repair Project, a report has now been built to extract this data and we are currently in the process of user acceptance testing.
29	Youth services participation rate	This data is no longer collected nationally, and the indicator is on hold until new guidance is published later this year.

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

- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2023/24.

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Performance Index 2022/23

Please note that Year to date performance - unless otherwise stated indicates April - March

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2022/23	Benchmarking and trend			BRAG rating	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
				Merton 2022/23 PROVISIONAL	England	London																
<b>Assessments</b>																						
1	Number of Early Help Assessments undertaken by the Authority	Monthly	Not a target measure	165	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	6	8	15	11	14	12	13	21	19	12	19	10	17	22	12
2	% of Single Assessments authorised within the statutory 45 days	Monthly	91%	89.7%	84.5% (DfE 2022)	86% (DfE 2022)	Green	91%	94%	92%	97%	94%	94%	94%	93%	89%	82%	90%	96%	97%	99%	91%
3	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (YTD Calendar Year /Monthly)	YTD/Monthly	65%	81% (2022 calendar year)	50.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	54.7% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2023 for the 2022 calendar year)	Amber	81% 67%	76% 67%	75% 67%	71% 60%	77% 95%	77% 82%	79% 92%	80% 92%	81% 100%	100% 100%	79% 69%	69% 56%	70% 74%	63% 41%	63% 61%
<b>Child protection</b>																						
4	Child Protection Plans rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure	34.8	42.1 (DfE 2022)	37.5 (DfE 2022)	Not a target measure	21.2	24.1	23.3	21.6	24.7	25.3	26.4	25.3	26.6	27.0	31.6	34.8	35.4	33.5	35.2
5	Number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan - as at end of month	Monthly	Not a target measure	166	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	101	115	111	103	118	121	126	121	126	129	151	166	169	160	168
6	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Quarterly	95%	N/A	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A		N/A				
7	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	Monthly	95%	97.6%	89.3% (DfE 2022)	92.6% (DfE 2022)	Green	98%	94%	95%	96%	97%	98%	98%	98%	94%	91%	95%	96%	92%	88%	97%
8	% of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a CP visit within timescales in the month	Monthly	90%	96%	No relevant benchmarking available	87% (Q4 2022/23)	Red	94%	86%	90%	91%	88%	95%	90%	93%	91%	94%	87%	93%	90%	88%	86%
9a	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time during the month (within 2 years)	Monthly	<20%	NEW indicator			Green													17%	0%	6%
9b	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time (Ever)	Monthly	<20%	25.3%	23.3% (DfE 2022)	18.4% (DfE 2022)	Red	14%	19%	24%	24%	25%	24%	25%	25%	24%	28%	26%	25%	26%	22%	23%
<b>Looked After Children</b>																						
10	Looked After Children rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure	25.6	69.8 (DfE 2021/22)	52.5 (DfE 2021/22)	Not a target measure	26.4	26.2	25.1	25.6	25.8	25.8	25.3	26.2	25.3	25.8	26.0	25.6	26.0	26.2	26.8
11	Number of Looked After Children as at end of month	Monthly	Not a target measure	122	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	126	125	120	122	123	123	121	125	121	123	124	122	124	125	128
12	Number of UASC children and young people	Monthly	48 (Agreed Quota)	25	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Below Quota	19	19	19	20	19	23	22	22	23	22	24	25	26	26	28
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	Quarterly	26 weeks	53 (CAFCASS Avg 2022/23)	46 (CAFCASS Avg 2022/23)	No relevant benchmarking available	Red			57			64			25			52			
14	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	Monthly	96%	94%	No benchmarking available	95% (Q4 2022/23)	Green	94%	94%	96%	96%	98%	96%	97%	98%	97%	99%	98%	94%	85%	90%	97%
15	% of Looked After Children participating in their reviews in month (excludes children aged 0 - 4)	Monthly	Not a target measure	92%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	100%	80%	93%	92%	91%	100%	100%	100%	74%	100%	77%	100%	90%	80%	100%
16	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - number of placements (3 or more in the year)	Quarterly	10%	6.8%	10% (DfE 2022/23)	10% (DfE 2022/23)	Green			7.5%			7.3%			5.8%			6.6%			4.7%

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2022/23	Benchmarking and trend			BRAG rating																			
				Merton 2022/23 PROVISIONAL	England	London		Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23				
17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	Quarterly	71%	70%	70% (DfE 2020/21)	71% (DfE 2020/21)	Red			66%				71%				71%				70%				63%
18	% of Looked After Children in foster placements who are placed with in-house foster carers	Quarterly	60%	59%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			57%				61%				60%				61%				61%
19	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	Quarterly	2 per quarter	6	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			1				2				1				2				4
20	Number of <u>Looked After Children</u> who were adopted (YTD)	Monthly	Not a target measure	3	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	
21	Number of <u>Looked After Children</u> for whom agency Special Guardianship Orders were granted (YTD)	Quarterly	Not a target measure	1	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure			0				0				1				1				2
<b>Childrens Centres and Schools</b>																										
22	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services (cumulative)	Annual	65%	47%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Initial RAG rating for new target to follow later in year			39%				46%				52%				47%				85%
23	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	Quarterly	95%	95%	87% (30/04/2022)	94% (30/04/2022)	Green	Ofsted dashboard			95%				95%						95%				95%	
24	Number of Primary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	0	4.9% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	0.8% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	Not a target measure	0	0	0	0	n/a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
25	Number of Secondary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	19	28.5% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	14.6% (National exclusion statistics for AY 2019/20)	Not a target measure	5	6	7	7	n/a	1	4	9	11	12	16	19	19	21	22	19	21	22	
26	Persistent absenteeism - All Schools (10% or more sessions missed)	Annual	21%	NEW indicator	22.3% (DfE AY Aut-Spr 2021/22)	18.8% (DfE AY Aut-Spr 2021/22)	Initial annual RAG rating at end of academic year																			
27	% of Reception year surplus places*** (calculated October and January)	Reported Quarterly	5-10%	9.8%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			11.6%				11.6%				9.7%				9.8%				9.8%
28	% of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places *** (calculated October and January)	Reported Quarterly	5-10%	2.3%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red			3.2%				3.2%				2.4%				2.3%				2.3%
<b>Young People and Services</b>																										
29	Youth service participation rate	Annual	Not a target measure	N/A	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure																			
30	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	1.2%	1.1%	2.6% (2021/22)	1.5% (2021/22)	Green	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.2%	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	
31	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) education, employment or training status 'not known'	Monthly	Not a target measure	2.1%	2.2% (2021/22)	1.9% (2021/22)	Not a target measure	1.2%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	Not published	11.3%	2.6%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.4%	1.3%	
32	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (cumulative)	Monthly	50	23	144 (rate per 100,000, 2022)	N/A	Green	0	2	4	5	8	10	11	12	17	18	18	23	1	1	1	1	1	1	
33	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system - quarterly / annual (annual is 20/21)	Quarterly	41.8%	33% (Provisional Annual)	31.2% (2021/2022 YJB pub)	41.8% (2020/2021 YJB pub)	Green			27.3%				28.6%				53.8%				38.1%				22.2%
										46.8%				46.8%				46.8%				46.8%				33%

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2022/23	Benchmarking and trend			BRAG rating																
				Merton 2022/23 PROVISIONAL	England	London		Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	
34a	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) in suitable accommodation	Monthly	95%	97%	88% (DfE 2021/22)	86% (DfE 2021/22)	Amber														94%	95%	94%
34b	% of care leavers (aged 19-21) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	32%	37%	38% (DfE 2021/22)	32% (DfE 2021/22)	Red														38%	36%	35%
35	% agency social workers (HR data)	Quarterly**	22.7%	26%	17.6% DfE Census Sept 2021	22.7% (DfE Census Sept 2020)	Red			34%				36%			29%			26%			25%
36	Average total caseload for social workers (working with looked after children and/or children subject of child protection plans) (total caseload including non LAC and CPP cases as at end of month) <b>Combines and replaces previous indicators 7 and 15</b>	Monthly**	Not a target measure	14	14.36 (DfE Census Sept 2021 - Awaiting validation)	14.6 (DfE Census Sept 2020)	Not a target measure	14	15	14	13	14	12	13	11	10	11	13	14	15	15	15	
Indicators 27 & 28 :* all pupils educated in Merton Schools (including special schools)																							
Indicators 29, 30 & 31: *** all pupils educated in Merton Schools (excluding special Schools)																							
Indicators 35 & 36* Quarterly and monthly data reported from live date reported by Human Resource or Mosaic respectively. There is no direct comparable benchmarkable data as the DfE uses a different definition of a 'social worker' for the purpose of who is included in the annual Children's Social Workforce Census.																							

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# Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Work Programme 2023/2024



This table sets out the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2023/24; the items listed were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 21 June 2023. This work programme will be considered at every meeting of the Panel to enable it to respond to issues of concern and incorporate reviews or to comment on pre-decision items ahead of their consideration by Cabinet/Council.

The work programme table shows items on a meeting-by-meeting basis, identifying the issue under review, the nature of the scrutiny (pre-decision, policy development, issue specific, performance monitoring, partnership related) and the intended outcomes.

**Chair:** Councillor Usaama Kaweesa  
**Vice-chair:** Councillor Chessie Flack

## Scrutiny Support

For further information on the work programme of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel please contact: -  
Octavia Lamb, Policy and Scrutiny Manager  
Tel: 020 8545 4728; Email: [Octavia.lamb@merton.gov.uk](mailto:Octavia.lamb@merton.gov.uk)

For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

**Meeting date:** 20 September 2023 (***Deadline for papers:*** 12pm, 11 September 2023)

<b>Item/issue</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead member and/or lead officer</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>
Departmental update	Report to the Panel	Jane McSherry, Executive Director Children Lifelong Learning and Families	Review priority work streams within the Children Schools and Families Department.
Future of primary school places given birth rates are down	Report to the Panel	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review approach to managing school places.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships	To review the basket of indicators
Work programme 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes

**Meeting date:** 01 November 2023 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 23<sup>rd</sup> October*)

<b>Item/issue</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead member and/or lead officer</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>
Budget/business plan Round 1	Written Report	Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services	To discuss and make recommendations to forward to Commission
Quality of School Meals	Report to the Panel	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review quality of provision
Youth Services	Report to the Panel	Keith Shipman, Head of Education Inclusion	Review service and gaps in current provision
Youth Task Group - Report and Recommendations	Report to the Panel	Cllr Max Austin, Task Group Chair.	Agree the recommendations and for report to go to Cabinet.
Departmental Update	Report to the Panel	Jane McSherry, Executive Director; Children, Lifelong Learning and Families.	Review priority work streams within the Children Schools and Families Department.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern

Work programme 2022/23	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes
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## BUDGET

**Meeting date:** 10 January 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 29 December 2023*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Budget/business plan scrutiny	Written Report	Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services	To discuss and make recommendations to forward to Cabinet
Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	Written Report	David Michael, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	Review services over last 12 months.
Conditions of local playgrounds	Written Report	John Bosley, Assistant Director of Public Space Contract and Commission	Review quality of provision
Departmental update report including	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director; Children, Lifelong Learning and Families.	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.



Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Work programme 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To review the work programme and agree any changes

**Meeting date:** 01 February 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 12pm 23 January 2024*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Childhood Immunisations	Report to the Panel	NHS England	Review uptake of immunisations.
Healthy Weight Report	Report to the Panel	Public Health Merton	Review services to tackle childhood obesity
0-19 Health Update	Report to the Panel	Public Health Merton	Review services in for children aged 0-19
Departmental update report	Written Report	Jane McSherry, Executive Director; Children, Lifelong Learning and Families.	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.
Topic suggestions for 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To identify topics for the 2023/24 work programme

**Meeting date:** 11 March 2024 (**Deadline for papers:** 12pm 28 February 2024)

<b>Item/issue</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Lead member and/or lead officer</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>
Corporate Parenting	Report to the Panel	David Michael, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion	Review service performance
Education Standards Report	Report to the Panel	Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director of Education and Early Help	Review overview of performance in schools and pupil exam results.
Departmental update report	Report to the Panel	Jane McSherry, Executive Director; Children, Lifelong Learning and Families.	An overview of the key issues within the Children, Schools and Families Department.
Performance monitoring	Basket of indicators	Maisie Davies, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance	To review the Basket of indicators and highlight items of concern
Work programme 2023/24	Written Report	Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, CYP Panel Chair	To review the work programme