

Questions & Answers

Projected Demand for School Places

November 2015

This document should be read alongside Intelligence Briefing [2015-02: Projected Demand for School Places](#).

Why is the GLA publishing these figures?

Over the last decade London has experienced a very high birth rate and low out-migration leading to rapid growth in the number of children living in the city. This has resulted in the need for a significant expansion in the number of available primary school places. These children are now reaching secondary school age, requiring a similar expansion in secondary provision. In light of these challenges the 2013 London Assembly Education Panel's 'London Learners, London Lives' report and the Mayor's 2012 Education Inquiry both included recommendations that the GLA should work towards producing pan-London projections of demand for places to help support strategic planning work. These figures are the first output from this work. It is hoped that the resulting projections will inform decisions about the future provision and funding of places across the capital. We also hope to further develop the model in future to draw on emerging data sources to help us quality assure our estimates and assumptions.

How urgent is the situation?

Urgent action is required now to ensure that enough secondary places are available in time for the surge of children currently passing through London's primaries. This surge will begin to come through next year and most boroughs are reporting real pressures from 2018. 3,500 new secondary classes will be needed by 2025. This is equivalent to roughly 90 standard 1,200-pupil comprehensive schools.

Brand new secondary schools will require considerably greater lead times to deliver than extensions to existing schools.

2,000 new primary classes will also be required over the same period.

Given the urgency of the situation, the Mayor is determined to do all he can to assist and ensure everyone involved plays their part in an overall strategy to guarantee a good secondary place for every London child.

Why does primary school place demand level off in the future rather than keep growing?

Recent births data suggest that the birth rate in London is slowing and as a result population projections for the capital are predicting a peak in the primary school-aged population at around 2020. The impact on school places for London as a whole will be to stabilise primary school place demand in the medium to long term, although there will be variation between Boroughs.

Will secondary school place demand also level off?

Our model suggests that the demand for secondary school places will keep growing throughout the projection period for this model which is 2015-2025.

What is the Mayor doing?

The Mayor has made land available for 16 new schools through, for example, the re-use of surplus police stations and fire stations. He will continue to try to find suitable school sites even though he has exceeded his original target of 10 sites.

The Mayor has also made representations to government for additional funding for new schools in London to cover the higher costs of both land and building costs in the capital.

Working from this GLA Demography study the GLA has launched a joint project with London Councils and the EFA to identify the areas of the capital with the greatest probability of requiring a new secondary school in the next decade. This will help Boroughs and the EFA to make sure there are secondary schools in the right places in time for when they are needed.

Who is responsible for ensuring sufficient new schools and school places?

The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty of local authorities. However, under the statutory Academies Presumption (Education Act 2011 s6A) new schools must be free schools, i.e. new academies, not under the aegis of local authorities and financed directly by the DfE. This means that London Boroughs can extend their own schools (provided they are rated Good or Outstanding by OFSTED) but if they identify the need for a new school, it must be a free school.

The scale of the challenge is much greater than can be absorbed by extending schools. London will need to increase secondary provision mainly by building new schools. We are committed to working with the boroughs, the DfE and the Education Funding Agency to support the creation of the new schools required. The major challenges are the costs of the building required and the costs of site acquisition in the capital. In many cases the finding of those sites is also very challenging.

What are the obstacles to creating schools?

In London, land is exceptionally scarce and exceptionally expensive and the need to preserve green spaces greatly restricts the possibilities of using open land for schools.

Identifying sites for secondary schools well in advance will also allow more time for the planning process, which sometimes struggles to cope with the usual quick tempo of the free school programme.

Where is the demand for new schools greatest?

The main purpose of the model is to estimate the total number of new places that are required across London as a whole. Pockets of high demand can be found across the capital with almost all boroughs having some wards with significant increases in demand. The (Hybrid, static proportion variant) model suggests that over the next five years the greatest demand for secondary school places will be in East London: North Greenwich, South Barking and Dagenham and along the Tower Hamlets/Newham border. However other Boroughs such as Barnet, Enfield and Croydon also have particular concentrations of increased demand.

How do the figures take account of independent schools?

The main outputs from the model are the estimates of demand for state school places. In order to estimate this, we have subtracted estimates of independent school take-up and modelled how this might change over time in two different ways:

The Static Number variant assumes the number of pupils in each ward in independent provision will remain constant in each given year

The Static Proportion variant assumes the proportion of pupils in each ward in independent provision will remain constant, and will grow (or decrease) in line with the school population growth.

Our estimates for independent school take-up also include home-schooled children.

How do these estimates of independent school take-up compare to other sources?

The pan-London model estimates 12.7 per cent of children resident in London attend independent school. The DfE's 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' annual statistics suggest the proportion is closer to 10.6 per cent. The difference is in part accounted for by the fact that the DfE numbers include those attending 6th form while the GLA number covers 4 to 15 year olds. Independent take-up in post-16 education is lower than at primary and secondary level and so the inclusion of this group in the calculation will suppress the overall proportion. Also, while the pan-London estimate is labelled 'independent take-up' it is in fact a group which includes anyone not on the state roll, for example those who are home schooled. These additional children in the GLA calculation will serve to increase the proportion estimated to be attending 'independent school'. Finally, the two estimates count slightly different populations: the DfE number is children attending independent school in London while the GLA estimate is those who live in London and attend independent school.

The DfE data does lend some weight to the static proportion variant methodology used in the model. The data shows that the proportion attending independent school in London held constant over the last four years. This makes the assumption that such a relationship will hold in the future stronger.

How do the figures take account of cross-border mobility?

Cross-border mobility is the movement of children from one borough to another borough for schooling. Traditionally this has been difficult to incorporate into projections of school rolls because in order to understand the flow structures between local authorities an overview of the entire system is required. The pan-London school place demand model was commissioned to provide exactly this type of integrated strategic overview of schooling London. The model uses pupil-level data to understand the current patterns of cross-border mobility, both within London and across the GLA boundary, and then projects these forward to distribute projected populations to ward of schooling.

Why are there different methodologies for projecting demand?

The pan-London school place demand model is a tool to assist planners and stakeholders in understanding the often complex relationship between population change and school place demand. The model is based on the most up-to-date data available but in order to project forward assumptions about future conditions and behaviours must be made. The different variants of the model are provided so that users can assess the impact of these assumptions on size and distribution of demand in London.

To what extent are your figures for Boroughs and Wards consistent with Borough's own school roll projections submitted to the DfE?

London Boroughs are responsible for submitting school roll projections to the DfE for their own areas. The figures in this model in no way replace or supersede those provided by the Boroughs. The advantage of this model is that it provides a strategic-level indication of where additional demand may arise in future using a consistent method of estimation across the capital in order to provide a pan-London picture. It is not intended that these projections be considered as definitive evidence that additional provision is required in a particular ward. Boroughs draw on their own detailed local knowledge in order to understand the complex dynamics underpinning patterns of pupil mobility – for instance planned new provision; housing and transport development; changes to cross-border mobility and the proportion of pupils who will be educated in their home borough. These projections are not a replacement for this knowledge.

How do these figures add to the data already available on the London Datastore 'London School's Atlas'?

The Atlas provides pupil place planners with a consistent picture of current patterns of schooling across the capital and allows this to be superimposed over projections of future population change and other contextual data. However, it does not constitute a projection of where future demand will manifest. The pan-London model offers a view on where demand may arise in the future, giving planners a new tool for understanding the relationship between school place demand and population change. The pan-London projections will be added to the School's Atlas when the Atlas is refreshed later this year.