

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 5 March 2019

Schooling Options for Children Living in City of Edinburgh

Item number	7.4
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 note the contents of this report.
 - 1.1.2 note the intention to establish better information sharing with neighbouring local authorities.
 - 1.1.3 note the intention to continually seek improvements in the methodology, data integrity, presentation, and accuracy of school roll projections.

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Schooling Options for Children Living in City of Edinburgh

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides details of the schooling options outside of those offered by City of Edinburgh Council for school aged children living Edinburgh. It sets out how this information is captured in the current roll projection methodology used by City of Edinburgh Council to forecast future school rolls.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 11 December 2018 the Education, Children and Families Committee approved the “The Growing City, School Roll Projections and Future Accommodation Requirements” report. The Committee asked that a further report be returned in March that considered the impact of alternative education providers on school roll projections.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The degree to which school aged child living in Edinburgh appear in statistics currently available to the School Estate Planning Team for the purposes of projecting future school rolls varies according to the means by which children receive their schooling. By analysing current and historic information the graphic in Appendix 1 has been produced to illustrate what a cohort of Edinburgh children would look like passing through the key stages of our education system.
- 4.2 The following sections describe the options available for schooling in Edinburgh and the data available.
- City of Edinburgh Council Primary and Secondary Schools***
- 4.3 The data held by City of Edinburgh Council for pupils attending one of its schools is comprehensive and may be used by the School Estate Planning Team to analyse patterns of nursery and school attendance from as high as a citywide level right

down to current and historic attendance from individual properties. This level of information is available for schools from 2002 and for nurseries from 2016.

- 4.4 The detailed and accurate nature of the school registration data available to City of Edinburgh Council means that it is possible to reasonably predict what the mainstream P1 cohort will be across the city when it is used with birth data received from the NHS. A study of data from the last five years has shown that the P1 population averages an 18% drop compared to births, equating to approximately 1,000 children. Accordingly, the assumption within the school roll projections is that approximately 1,000 P1 children in Edinburgh do not receive their schooling at a local authority establishment.
- 4.5 The total number of children not attending a City of Edinburgh school increases as stages of education roll forward. As a citywide total, over the past 5 years City of Edinburgh Council's primary schools have averaged a total net loss of 45 pupils per stage, with higher losses being at P5-P6 and P6-P7, averaging 74 and 63 pupils. A full analysis of the cause of these losses has not been undertaken as the data trail is often incomplete or difficult to collate, however, evidence from the sources available does suggest that the principal cause of the losses is transfer to the independent sector.
- 4.6 The loss from P7 to S1 averages 132 pupils. Losses after S1 are negligible while the drop-off from S4-S6 is to be expected in these stages and is unlikely to be attributable in high numbers to secondary schooling outside of those offered by the authority.
- 4.7 These losses between births and P1 and between stages in both the primary and secondary sectors are captured within City of Edinburgh's roll projections for individual schools by applying drop-off rates based on 5 year averages at an individual school and catchment level.

City of Edinburgh Council Special Schools

- 4.8 As a citywide total, over the past 5 years City of Edinburgh Council's Special School sector accounts for an average of 275 primary and 376 secondary pupils. The primary stages average 33 pupils at P1 and 49 at P7 with a steady increase of pupils in the stages in between. There is a drop of an average of 10 pupils from P7 to S1 and then the pupils increase steadily to a peak at S4.
- 4.9 Representing only 1.27% of the total City of Edinburgh Council school roll, the impact of Special Schools on school roll projections is minimal. As attendance at a Special School is based on referral and the needs of the pupil rather on catchment areas it is difficult to forecast the impact Special Schools will have on individual school roll projections.

Early Years

- 4.10 Data for all City of Edinburgh Council Early Years establishments and partner providers in Edinburgh is available but there are limitations to its usefulness. The partner provider data has only recently been integrated into the SEEMiS system so

there is only two full years' worth of data. The stage directly before primary, N5, is not updated on the system in time to be of real use to P1 predictions and although the N5 data paints a near full picture of children in Edinburgh (only 2% drop off from birth figures four years earlier) it is not comprehensive as nursery attendance is not compulsory and some parents choose not to send their children to a nursery.

Home Schooling

- 4.11 There is only a limited amount of information available on home schooling records. The Council holds records of all 'known' pupils that are being home schooled but due to GDPR rules only a fraction of the information can be gleaned. These pupils are only known because they have already attended one of our establishments and therefore have had to notify us of their change of status. However, there is no legal requirement to register at a local authority school or with any other official body, so there may be more home schooled pupils in Edinburgh of which we have no knowledge.
- 4.12 As of January 2019 there were 78 known school aged children being home-schooled in the city, 41 at primary and 37 at secondary, equating to around 6 pupils per stage for both sectors. In 2017 the Scottish Government estimated that 0.1% of Scottish children (969) were home-educated, based on Edinburgh's population that would increase the city's overall number to 89, which would raise the stage total to 7. Even if Edinburgh had twice the national average of home-schooled pupils the total figure would remain negligible compared to the citywide cohort of same aged pupils. Accordingly, the impact of home schooling on school roll projections is extremely small and is not something that directly feeds into the Council's School Roll projection methodology.

Independent Sector

- 4.13 There are 20 Independent schools within Edinburgh with another 2 in Musselburgh serving the city's population. The schools range in size from less than 20 pupils to more than 2,000.
- 4.14 Information available to the Council on all independent schools is currently limited. Independent schools provide the Independent Schools Council (ISC) which represents all but one of Edinburgh's independent schools with roll figures and boarder figures however there is no information provided as to where the pupils live. This means that we cannot be sure how many of these pupils live in Edinburgh and, if they do, what catchment area they live in.
- 4.15 We estimate that there are around 10,570 pupils aged between 3 and 18 living in Edinburgh attending independent schools. This represents around 17.5% of the school age population of the city. However, the information available to the Council provides no details on the stage breakdown for any of the independent schools and age ranges vary from school to school.
- 4.16 The drop of 1,000 pupils between birth records and City of Edinburgh Council's own registered P1 cohort would account for around 9% of the independent sectors total roll which would be approximately in line with a split across all stages.

- 4.17 Concerns have been raised about the potential impact a downturn in the financial climate could have on attendance at independent schools and the impact this could have on City of Edinburgh Council's school roll projections.
- 4.18 After the 2008 financial crisis data suggests that there was a slow decrease from 17.5% to 14.5% of Edinburgh's School age population attending the independent sector. It is estimated that this was the equivalent of 158 additional pupils at P1 across the Council's primary school estate (an increase of approximately 3.48% on the average City of Edinburgh Council P1 cohort over the past 5 years). The impact of this on individual schools is hard to assess as the data available does not allow the Council to pinpoint the schools directly affected. However, the increase at that time was absorbed into existing capacity or the Council's Rising Rolls programme which has been principally driven by rising birth rates and housing development.
- 4.19 A gradual shift from the independent sector like that experienced in the 2008 financial crisis would now be reflected in annual changes in the birth to P1 drop off rates applied to the projections for individual schools.

Other Local Authorities Schools

- 4.20 Previously, it has been assumed that cross authority schooling has been balanced, with approximately the same number of pupils from outside Edinburgh attending our schools compared to Edinburgh pupils attending schools outside the authority (with the exception of Kirknewton pupils attending Balerno High School, who have been factored out of this report). The Council holds full details of "outwith" pupils attending CEC schools but do not have any detailed information on pupils living in Edinburgh going to schools elsewhere.
- 4.21 A cross-authority information sharing agreement would help all authorities to access these figures and improve planning. This is something that the School Estate Planning Team intends to take forward.

Non-Attendance of Schools

- 4.22 As with home schooled pupils who have not entered the Council's systems there is no way of knowing how many unrecorded children may be missing education entirely. The Scottish Government has guidelines on children missing school but has produced no statistics; there is also no UK database on children missing school. In 2017 there were 49,187 children reported as missing from education in England, according to data obtained by the National Children's Bureau, which equated to around 0.7% of all school aged children. Unfortunately this figure included children who had attended school at some point and without a comprehensive breakdown we would need to speculate as to a figure for pupils who have never attended a local authority school. The research also found that children missing education are more likely to be living in poverty and that there was enormous variation across authorities. The assumption would be that a reasonably affluent authority such as City of Edinburgh would have a lower percentage of children missing education and given that the majority of these children will have been on our systems we could expect the unrecorded total to be negligible.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The current methodology used by the Council to form School Roll projections has only been in place for 3 years. However, early analysis shows a good degree of accuracy. There is a need for continual review of the methodology and its underlying data to ensure that it makes use of the best data and processes available whilst maintaining full transparency for those wishing to understand it.
- 5.2 The Council is currently in discussions with the University of Edinburgh's School of Statistics and Mathematics about a joint project which will assess the validity of the current process and its underlying data and make recommendations on how it might be improved.
- 5.3 Furthermore, the School Estate Planning Team are investigating the availability and value of other data sources although the introduction of GDPR has made the sharing and testing of data between the Council and partners such as the NHS more difficult to progress.
- 5.4 The School Estate Planning Team have also approached neighbouring authorities to establish a regular exchange of statistics to capture pupils attending schools outside of their authority boundaries.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, school roll projections are a significant factor in directing investment in the Council's school estate and in directing the Council's school estate strategy. Any costs arising as a result of recommendations for change in the methodology or underlying data required to improve the existing process will be reported to future committees.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Direct community engagement is not required for this report as it is primarily a fact finding exercise.
- 7.2 There are no health and safety or governance issues for elected members to consider in this report.
- 7.3 There are no sustainability issues to consider in this report.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 No background reading is required for this report.

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Schooling Options for Edinburgh Children at P1 and S1

APPENDIX 1: Schooling Options for Edinburgh Children at P1 and S1

Using a base birth figure of 5531 (5 year average of 2013-2018) data has been progressed forward to P1 & S1 stages to show the average drop-off figures and percentages for each schooling option.

