

# OLD KENT ROAD AAP

## School Places Background Paper

# Old Kent Road Opportunity Area, school places background paper, July 2025

## Contents

1. Purpose
2. Background
3. Schools within and around the OKR AAP area
4. Southwark School Place Planning team
5. Declining demand for primary school places
6. Secondary school demand
7. OKR Policy AAP 15: Great start in life – Child & Youth Provision
8. Summary

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence of current and future demand regarding primary and secondary school places in and around the Old Kent Road area.

### 2. Background

Having gathered information from a number of key documents set out in this document and appendices, we can derive that the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area Action Plan (OKR OAAP or OKR AAP) has considered and planned for additional capacity in school place demand if required.

In February 2025, Southwark's Cabinet received a report entitled Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools - September 2026. Paragraphs 19 and 20 of the report noted that the number of children needing a primary school place is falling across London, and in many other parts of the country. The number of children being born in Southwark has reduced by 36% since 2010, with nearly 1900 fewer children each year – equivalent to 62 classes of children. This is feeding through into increasing vacancies in Southwark schools, and there is no indication that numbers will increase back to their former levels in the foreseeable future<sup>1</sup>.

The report noted that there is currently an oversupply of approximately 4,803 primary school places, 773 of these are in reception year, which equates to 23% of reception capacity currently vacant (para 20).

The following extracts are from Appendix 6 <sup>2</sup> of the same report:

- *Southwark has more than sufficient pupil places to meet existing demand in both primary and secondary phases of education in Southwark (para 2).*

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<sup>1</sup> Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools - September 2026, <https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s124531/Report%20Admissions%20Arrangements%20for%20community%20primary%20schools.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 6 – Pupil Place Planning 2024/25 <https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s124537/Appendix%206%20Pupil%20Place%20Planning%20Annexe.pdf>

*All the indicators for the short to medium term are that primary rolls will continue to fall. From September 2015 to the present time*

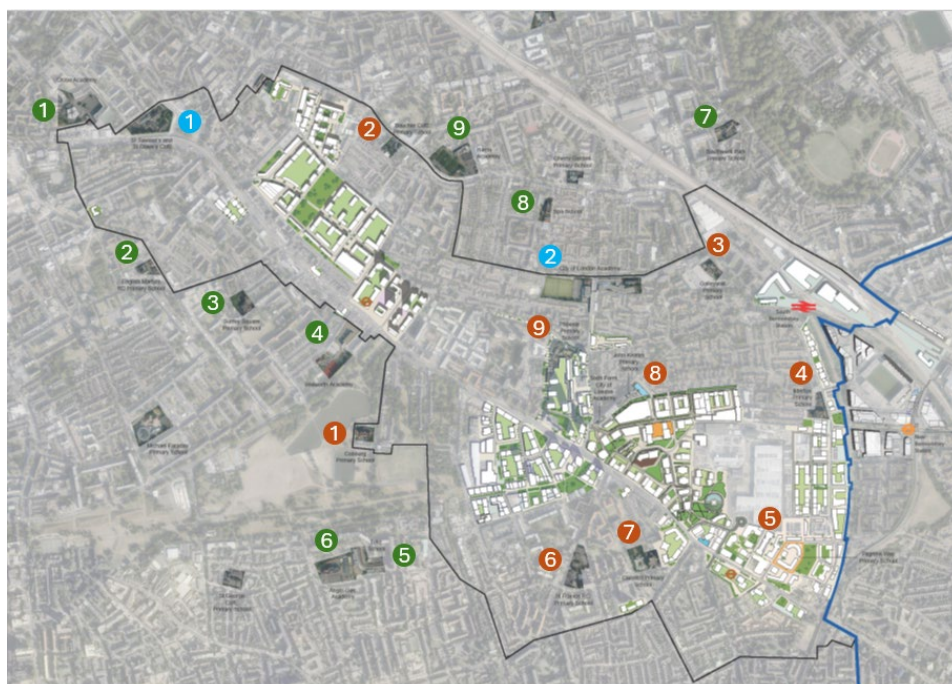
- *The number of primary pupils overall has fallen by 17%*
  - *The number of reception pupils has fallen by 30%*
  - *The number of births has fallen by 29%*
  - *The number of reception applications has fallen by 32%*
- *There are areas of Southwark where a steeper decline in primary demand has been observed - PA1 "Borough & Bankside" and PA3 "Peckham and Nunhead" (which includes a large part of the Old Kent Road opportunity area). These localities have seen a drop in reception intake of 45% and 38% respectively over the same time period (para 27 and 28).*
- *Southwark has been taking decisive action to reduce surplus capacity with a Keeping Education Strong strategy agreed in December 2002. Six schools have closed since 2021 and there have been reductions in the Published Admissions Number at 18 further schools since 2019. This has taken out 720 places but further action is likely to be required as numbers continue to fall (para 2).*
- *In respect of secondary school places there has been an overall increase in demand and provision since 2016, but the reduction in primary numbers is now beginning to feed through to secondary schools (para 2):*
  - *The number of Y7-11 pupils overall has increased by +29% since 2015/6, but has fallen by -1% since 2023-24*
  - *The number of Y7 pupils has increased by +15% since 2015/16, but has actually fallen by -8% since 2019-20*
  - *The number of Y7-11 places meanwhile has also increased by +31% since 2016 (+9% since 2020/20), and the number of Y7 places has increased by +20% (by +9% since 2019/20) over the same time period**Southwark is anticipating that secondary demand overall (Y7-11) has plateaued in the last academic year (2023-24) and will decrease slowly thereafter. Therefore, we do not anticipate that secondary demand will exceed capacity, and additional capacity is unlikely to be required going forward. Although there are no immediate concerns about surplus capacity in the secondary sector overall, less popular schools are being disproportionately affected by falling pupil numbers, with some seeing losses of up to 40% of Y7-11 pupil numbers*
- *Given that almost all (18 out of 20) secondary schools are now Academies or Free Schools, decisions on their future would primarily be a matter for Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), the Regional Schools' Director for London and the Department for Education (DfE) rather than for the council.*

The final bullet in paragraph 2 of the report notes that:

*Despite the downward trend in pupil numbers overall, there are still identified areas of potential growth for both primary and secondary in Southwark linked to long term regeneration programmes in the borough – i.e., at Canada Water, and in the Old Kent Road growth area. The authority will consider appropriate ways to reconfigure existing schools to meet this demand, should this*

*materialise. In the first instance it is anticipated that additional numbers of pupils could be accommodated in existing schools. Only if growth is unable to be contained within existing provision would new schools be considered and commissioned.*

### 3. Schools within and around the OKR AAP area



**Figure 1 – OKR AAP Health and Education strategy map**

Within the OKR AAP area and with reference to the OKR AAP health and education strategy map above, there are:

#### Two secondary schools:

1. St Saviour's & St Olave's CofE
2. City of London Academy (COLA) which includes the Sixth Form, City of London Academy

#### Nine primary schools:

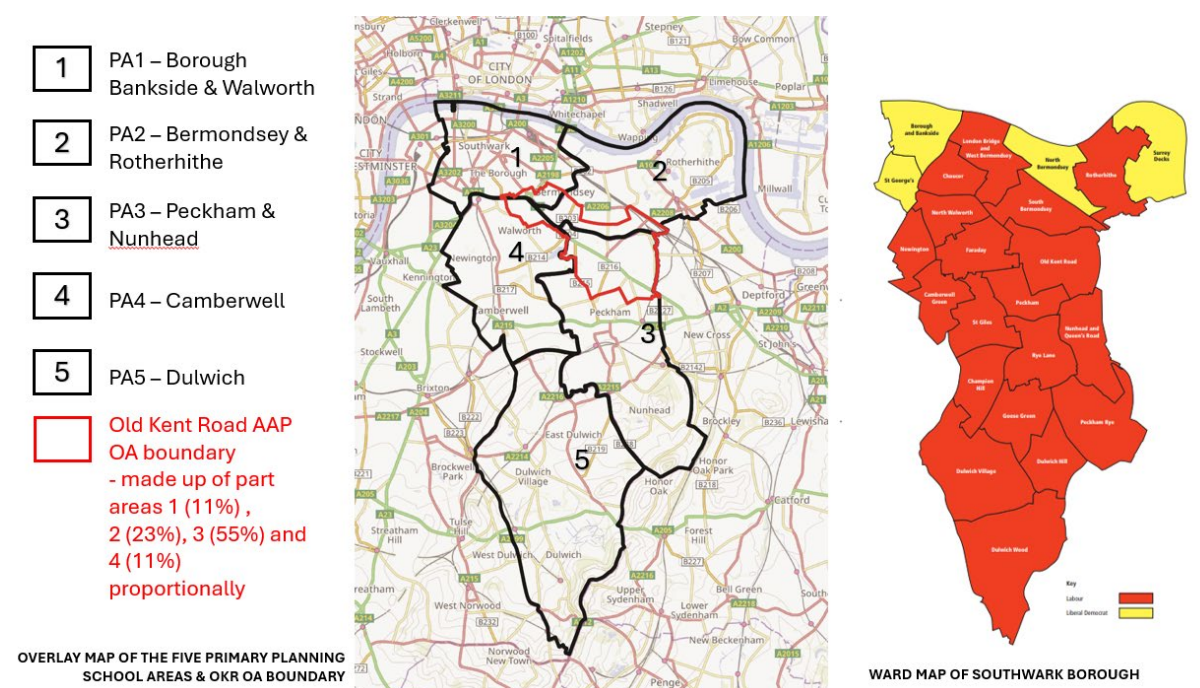
1. Cobourg (this school closed in September 2023)
2. Boucher CE Primary School
3. Galleywall Primary School
4. Ilderton Primary School
5. Pilgrims Way Primary School
6. St Francis RC Primary School
7. Bird in Bush Primary School (was Camelot Primary School)
8. John Keats Primary Free School
9. Phoenix Primary School

There are also a number of **schools very close to the AAP boundary**. These are:

1. ARK Globe Academy (all-through)
2. English Martyrs RC Primary School
3. Surrey Square Primary School
4. Walworth Academy (secondary 11-18)
5. Tuke School (secondary special)
6. Angel Oak Primary Academy
7. Southwark Park Primary School
8. Spa School (secondary special)
9. Harris Peckham Academy (secondary 11-16)

#### 4. Southwark School Place Planning

School place planning for primary schools is undertaken using five “planning areas” (set out in figure 2 below). For secondary schools the planning is undertaken as a single planning area, reflecting the distance people travel to attend secondary schools and the numerous out of borough pupils that attend our schools.



**Figure 2 – Primary School PA planning areas overlay with AAP OA boundary area**

It should be noted that the red line on Figure 2 is the Old Kent Road AAP OA boundary which doesn't align with the school primary planning areas (or the ward boundaries). It is roughly made up of:

- PA3 – Peckham and Nunhead (approx. 55% of the OKR OA is in this planning area)
- PA2 – Bermondsey and Rotherhithe (approx. 23% of the OKR OA is in this planning area)

- PA1 – Borough, Bankside and Walworth (approx. 11% of the OKR OA is in this planning area)
- PA4 – Camberwell (approx. 11% of the OKR OA is in this planning area)
- PA5 – Dulwich (approx. 0% of the OKR OA is in this planning area)

## 5. Declining demand for primary school places

With reference to Appendix B, the following table 1 below, sets out the primary schools in and close to the OKR AAP boundary that are affected by either a reduction in pupil entry or closure of the whole school. It demonstrates that between Sept 2019 and September 2025 there has been a total reduction of 195 primary school places in and within the OKR AAP area. It should also be noted that the numbers set out in the table below are for the reception year. The reduction in numbers will move up the school classes as the demand decreases.

Note the abbreviation of PANs – published admissions numbers.

Primary School	Change	Date	Reduction
Camelot (now Bird-in-Bush)	PAN reduction	Sep-19	-15
Phoenix	PAN reduction	Sep-20	-30
Cobourg	PAN reduction	Sep-22	-30
Cobourg	Closure	Sep-23	-30
Ilderton	PAN reduction	Sep-23	-30
St Francis RC	PAN reduction	Sep-25	-30
English Martyrs RC*	PAN reduction	Sep-23	-30
TOTAL			-195

\*Located just outside OA

**Table 1 – reduction in primary school places in and close to the OKR AAP boundary**

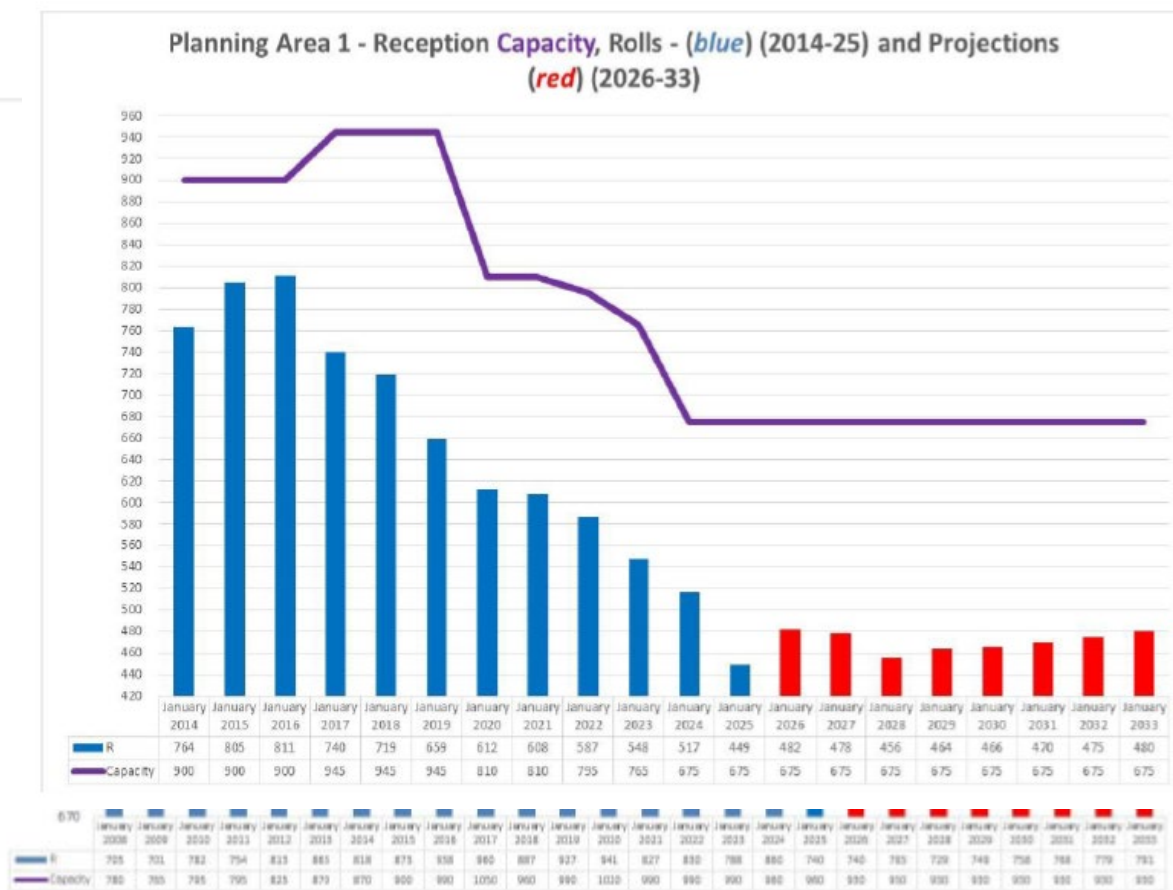
## Summary of each of the four planning areas within the OKR OA

### Planning Area 1 – Borough, Bankside & Walworth

With reference to section 8 of the February 2025 report, there were 226 spare reception places in Sept 2024 which equates to 34% of all reception year places vacant. The numbers of pupils are projected to continue to fall until 2025 and then stabilise due to the Southwark interventions which include the closure of schools and the reduction of published admissions numbers to reception and primary places (PAN) in some schools in the area.

By 2033 there will be 195 vacant reception year spaces if no further action to reduce capacity is taken.





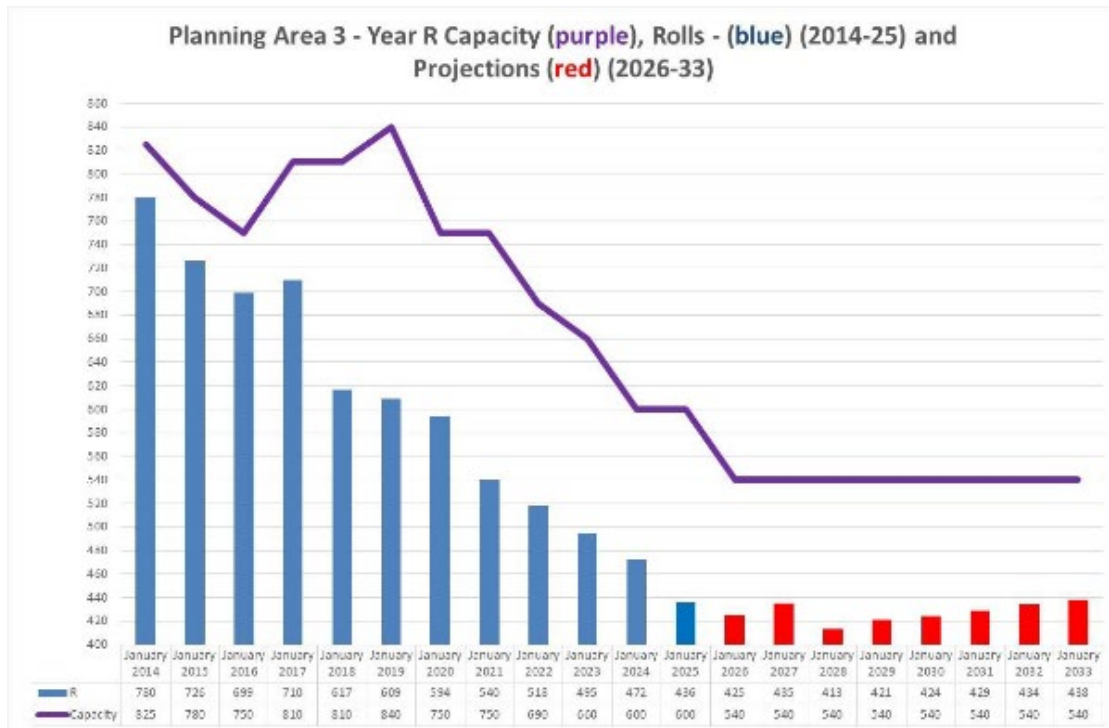
## Planning Area 2 – Bermondsey & Rotherhithe

With reference to the report, there were 221 spare reception places across the area in Sept 2024, which equates to 23% of all reception year places vacant. This is projected to fall to 139 spare reception year places by 2033. With reference to the graph below the numbers of pupils are projected to continue to fall until 2026 and then stabilise due to the Southwark interventions which include the closure of schools and the reduction of published admissions numbers to reception and primary places (PAN) in some schools in the area.

## Planning Area 3 – Peckham and Nunhead

With reference to the report, there were 164 spare reception places in Sept 2024 which equates to 27% of all reception year places vacant. This is projected to fall to 115 spare reception year places in 2026 because of capacity reduction in PAN and to 102 vacant reception year spaces in 2033.

With reference to the graph below the numbers of pupils are projected to continue to fall until 2026 and then stabilise due to the Southwark interventions which include the closure of schools and the reduction of published admissions numbers to reception and primary places (PAN) in some schools in the area.

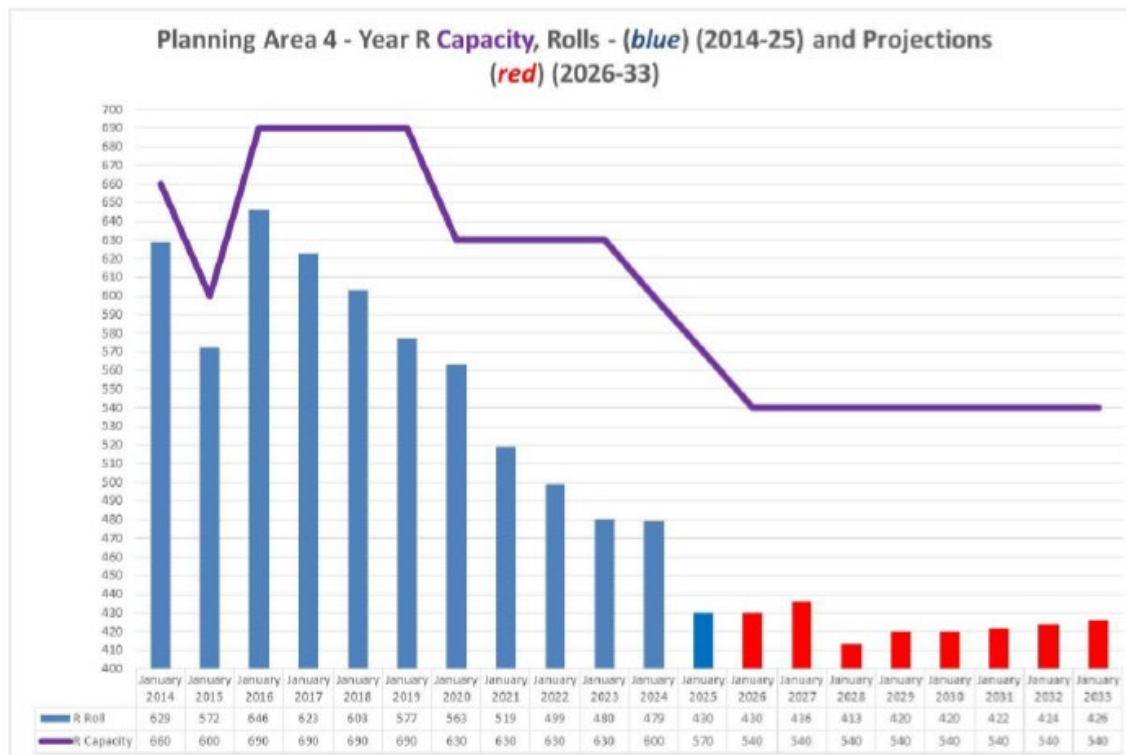


#### Planning Area 4 – Camberwell

With reference to the report, there were 140 spare reception places in Sept 2024 which equates to 25% of all reception year places vacant. This is projected to fall to 110 spare reception year places in 2026 because of capacity reduction in PAN and to 114 vacant reception year spaces in 2033 if no further action is taken.

With reference to the graph below the numbers of pupils are projected to continue to fall until 2026 and then stabilise. This is due to Southwark interventions which include the closure of schools and the reduction of published admissions numbers to reception and primary places (PAN) in some schools in the area.





The above evidence shows that even in 2033, each of the pupil plan planning areas has several form entry (FE) of vacant places.

## 6. Secondary school demand

With reference to Appendix 6 of the February 2025 cabinet report (para 50-59), there has been an overall increase in demand and provision since 2016, but the reduction in primary school numbers is now beginning to feed through to secondary schools.

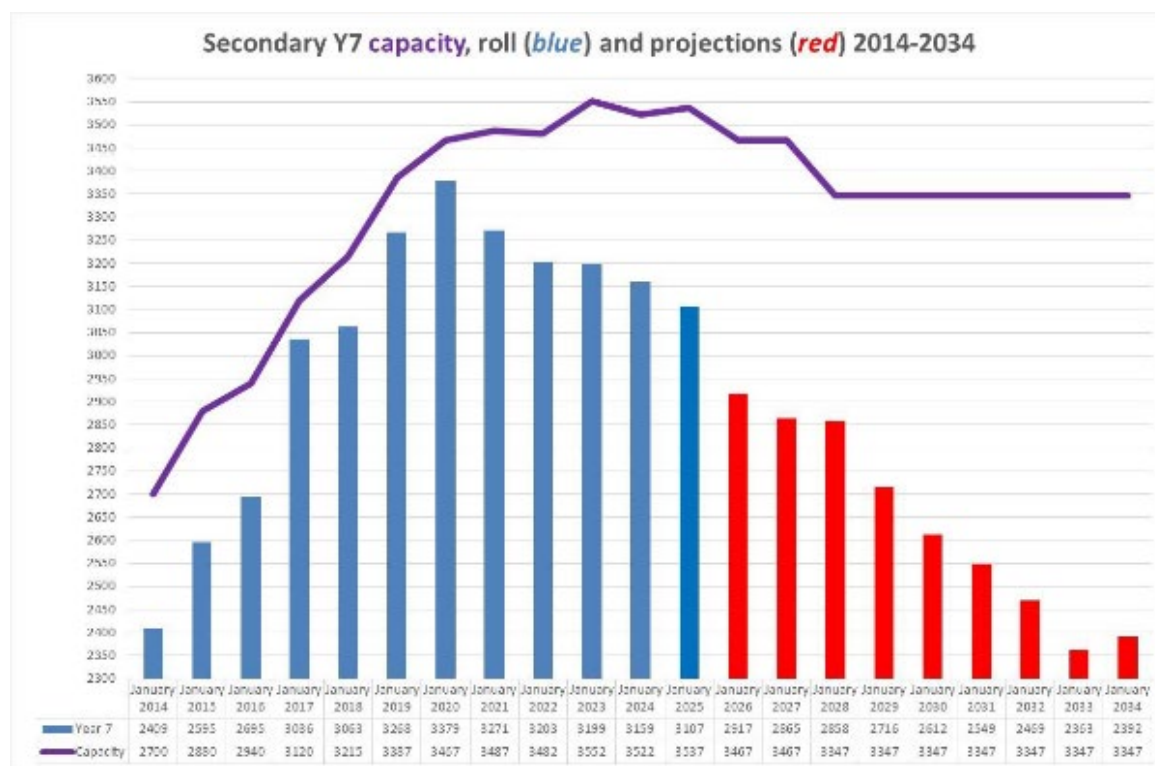
Southwark is anticipating that secondary demand overall (Y7-11) has plateaued in the last academic year (2023-24) and will decrease slowly thereafter.

Southwark Council does not anticipate that secondary demand will exceed capacity, and additional capacity is unlikely to be required going forward. Although there are no immediate concerns about surplus capacity in the secondary sector overall, less popular schools are being disproportionately affected by falling pupil numbers, with some seeing losses of up to 40% of Y7-11 pupil numbers.

Given that almost all (18 out of 20) secondary schools are now Academies or Free Schools, decisions on their future are primarily a matter for Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), the Regional Schools' Director for London and the Department for Education (DfE) rather than for Southwark council.

With reference to the graph below, the year seven entry in Jan 2025 currently has 430 vacant places. It is predicted that the numbers will continue to fall until 2033, with predictions of 955 vacant places in 2034.

The planning of secondary school pupils is carried out on a borough wide basis as children often travel further to school when compared to primary school.



## 7. OKR Policy AAP 15: Great start in life – Child & Youth Provision

The OKR AAP strategy for school places is set out APPENDIX C - Policy AAP 15: Great start in life – Child & Youth Provision strategy, para 5:

*Pupil numbers at both primary and secondary schools are currently falling in and around the Old Kent Road area. Two primary schools in the Opportunity Area, Camelot and Cobourg, will be amalgamated and the latter used for an alternative educational or meanwhile use. Over time, pupil numbers will increase as more development comes forward, and the existing school estate has the capacity to accommodate an additional 4 forms of entry. To provide additional flexibility, the Council has acquired land around Sandgate Street which could be used for new schools, secondary or primary, should the need arise.*

To summarise, even in 2033 each of the planning area are projected to have vacant capacity in the reception year. The council monitors pupil place planning on a regular basis and will continue to do so over the plan period. Beyond 2033, if a situation occurs where schools are predicted to become full again there are a number of options available to the council including:

- Reinstating the PANs at schools that reduced theirs prior to 2026
- Undertaking further expansions. The council has identified a further 4 FE that could be provided in primary schools in the OKR opportunity area

- Identifying land for a new primary school on council owned land. The council acquired a substantial landholding in OKR13 originally with the intention of providing a new school. Although it is not currently anticipated that such a school would be required, it could be reconsidered if numbers change substantially.

With regard to secondary schools, given current projections of vacancy in 2034, the council is not anticipating the need for a new secondary school in the Old Kent Road OA. This will be monitored and would be reviewed should the situation change.

## **8. Summary**

The demand for school places is falling across London, resulting in adequate capacity in existing primary and secondary schools in and around the Old Kent Road area to accommodate growth. If the situation changes and demand increases the following options can be considered:

- Reopen the PAN that have closed prior to 2026.
- Undertake further school expansions. The council identified a further 4 FE that could be provided in primary schools in the OKR opportunity area.
- Identify land for a new school in OKR13 AAP.