

Projections of demand for places in state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London

An update

L. Daniel Staetsky / February 2019

Introduction

In 2016, Partnerships for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) commissioned the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) to produce a set of projections of the demand for Jewish secondary school places in London, in response to a growing communal conversation about the adequacy of the provision of secondary school places in state-funded mainstream Jewish schools. The projections relied on a statistical model developed by JPR. The results were shared with PaJeS in a dedicated report, and then with the general public in a JPR publication supported by PaJeS: *Will my child get a place? An assessment of supply and demand of Jewish secondary school places in London and surrounding areas* (March 2017).

The initial projections had a four-year horizon and related to the years 2017/18–2020/21. Late in 2017, again at the request and with the support of PaJeS, the projections were updated, and a new set of projections, this time featuring a five-year horizon (2018/19–2022/23), can be found in this paper. The new projections use the same methodology, with some minor refinements reflecting our better understanding of the data sources and the nature of the observed processes. Historical counts of applications to Jewish secondary schools in London have also been revised slightly to align them with minor modifications in methodology. Neither the level nor the trend in applications is affected by these revisions.

Presenting new projections with a longer projection horizon is just one reason for our decision to publish this update. The other reason is that we have acquired deeper and sharper insights into our previously published projections having observed their accuracy over the passage of time. Comparing these projections with real life developments has enabled us to improve our initial assessments. Today, we are in a position to show the extent to which the initial projections lived up to expectations, to enhance the new projections on the basis of the lessons learned, and to interpret our findings with greater confidence.

Our focus and our method

The five Jewish secondary schools covered by the projections are the Jewish Free School (JFS), the Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS), Yavneh College, Hasmonean High School, and Kantor King Solomon High School. Immanuel College, the only private mainstream Jewish secondary school in London, is excluded from the projections. Including Immanuel College in the projections is not possible because the capacity to isolate unique applications to secondary schools is a prerequisite for their inclusion. Many applicants to Immanuel College are likely to have also applied to one of the state-funded Jewish secondary schools, while others are unique to Immanuel. In the absence of any way to distinguish between these two

groups, the best strategy is to exclude Immanuel from the projections system altogether and examine its past levels and the trends in numbers of applications and admissions separately.

In terms of data input, there are two key elements. The first element is data on **first preference applications** made to these five schools for the years 2011/12 to 2017/18. These are unique applications to each of the Jewish secondary schools mentioned designating a school as ‘first preference’, from the point of view of an applicant. These data were shared with us by the admissions teams in the local authorities of Barnet, Brent, Hertfordshire and Redbridge. The second element is the **counts of Jewish children in the non-haredi population of London and surrounding areas**. These data were derived from: (a) the 2011 Census; and (b) Jewish birth statistics collected by JPR, work that was funded by, and undertaken on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

The report is structured as follows. First, it provides a brief overview of applications and admissions in the five state-funded mainstream Jewish schools for a seven-year period: 2011/12 to 2017/18. Second, it offers projections of future applications to these

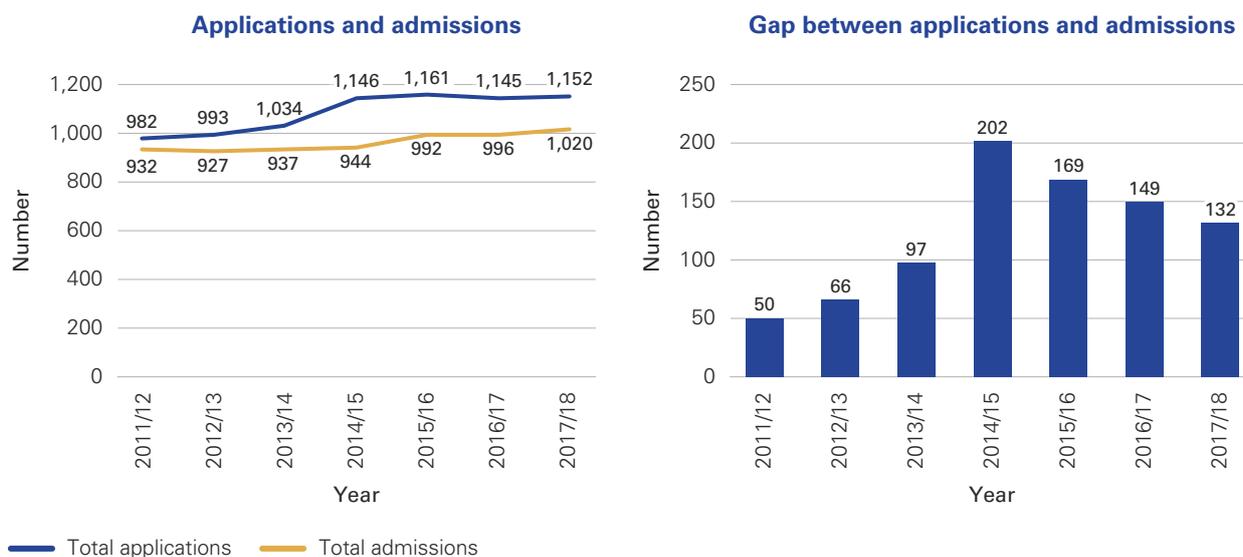
schools for a five-year period (2018/19 to 2022/23). Third, it outlines some sensitivity testing of the projections, assessing the impact of different assumptions made concerning the expected levels of demand. The report concludes with some discussion points relating to the meaning and future uses of the results.

Applications and admissions: an overview

1,152 first preference applications for places were made for the academic year 2017/18 across all five state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London, and 1,020 offers (or admissions) were made against these applications (Figure 1). The overall level of applications was only very slightly higher than in the previous year (up by 0.6%), while the level of admissions went up by 2.4%. Consequently, the gap between applications and admissions declined from 149 (in the year 2016/17) to 132 in 2017/18.

It is worth remembering that the admissions figure for the year 2016/17 took into account 47 additional places made available by Yavneh

Figure 1. First preference applications versus admissions across all five state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London



Note. The admissions figure for 2016/17 includes additional places made available by Yavneh College and Hasmonean High School as a one-off measure, due to the pressure of demand.

College and Hasmonian High on a one-off basis to accommodate the high level of demand at that time. The original gap between applications and admissions in 2016/17, prior to these schools’ interventions, was 196, not 149. Thus, the narrowing of the gap between applications and admissions in 2017/18 is actually greater than first meets the eye.

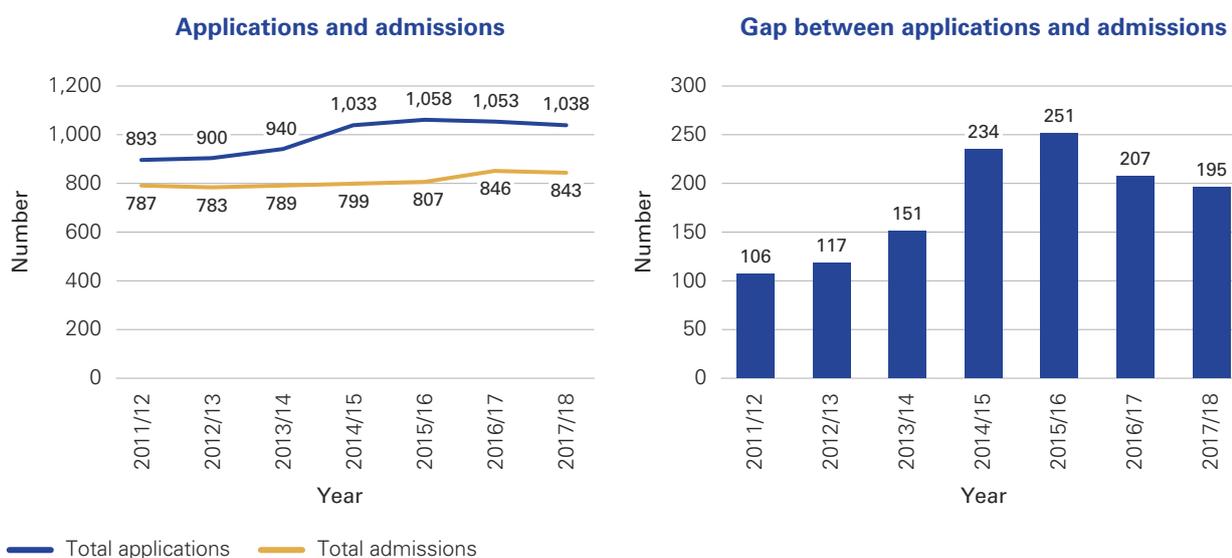
However, there is another important point to be made here. 47 additional places were made available to satisfy the unmet need in 2016/17. This measure reduced the gap between applications and admissions but did not close it completely. Even though the gap was not closed, this measure was considered sufficient by the general consensus involving schools, other policy makers and parents. We will return to this point later in the report. For now, suffice it to say that a gap of about 150 between applications and admissions appears to be a cut-off point: a figure above this level signals the presence of a palpable unmet need in the Jewish community, while a figure below this level signals that the demand is being adequately met. This follows from the simple fact that the anxieties of both parents

and policy makers about an insufficient supply of places seemed to be resolved after the addition of 47 places, when the gap between applications and admissions was reduced to 150.

A more distilled picture of the relationship between the levels of applications and admissions is shown in Figure 2, focusing just on the four state schools in North-West London and Hertfordshire. The Kantor King Solomon School in Redbridge has been undersubscribed in Jewish terms, and it is advisable to remove it from the picture if the dynamics of supply and demand in the historically oversubscribed schools are to be understood.

In the four schools in North London and Hertfordshire, the level of applications for 2017/2018 was, in fact, somewhat lower than in the previous year (down by 1.4%), and the level of admissions declined very slightly by 0.35%. As a result, the gap between applications and admissions in 2017/18 was slightly smaller both in absolute and in relative terms compared to 2016/17. Here too the admissions figure for 2016/17 includes school places made available by Yavneh and Hasmonian

Figure 2. First preference applications versus admissions across the four state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in North-West London and Hertfordshire (Kantor King Solomon excluded)



Note. Admissions figure for 2016/17 includes additional places made available by Yavneh College and Hasmonian High School as a one-off measure, due to the pressure of demand.

on a one-off basis; the gap without such corrective action would have been 254, not 207. Bearing that in mind, the year 2017/18 marked an improvement in the four schools’ capacity to meet the demand for school places: 24% of applications were originally unmet in 2016/17 ($254 \div 1053 \times 100\%$), 20% were unmet after the corrective action of Yavneh and Hasmonean ($207 \div 1053 \times 100\%$), and 19% were ultimately unmet in 2017/18 ($195 \div 1038 \times 100\%$).

The projections

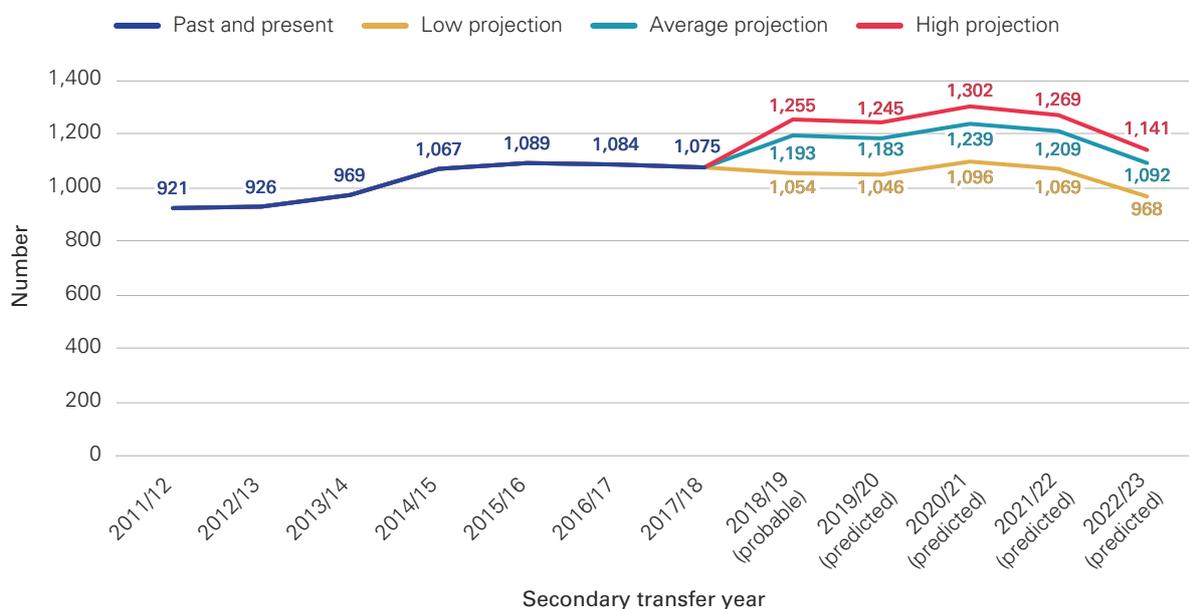
Future projections of applications to the five state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London are presented in Figure 3. The three versions of the projections (high, average and low) reflect different assumptions about the levels of demand for Jewish secondary school places. All assumptions have been made on a strictly empirical basis.¹

The **average projection** uses the average levels of demand in the years 2012/13 to 2017/18: 85% of Jewish pupils in Jewish primary schools in London apply to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools, and 37% of Jewish pupils in non-Jewish primary schools do so.

The **high projection** uses the highest observed levels of demand: 90% of Jewish pupils in Jewish primary schools in London apply to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools, and 41% of Jewish pupils in non-Jewish primary schools do so.

The **low projection** uses the lowest observed levels of demand: 77% of Jewish pupils in Jewish primary schools in London apply to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools, and 32% of Jewish pupils in non-Jewish primary schools do so.

Figure 3. Applications to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London: past and future



Note. The number of applications in the years 2011/12 to 2017/18 in this exhibit is different from the number of applications shown in Figure 1. This is because, for the purpose of projections, only one-third of applications to Kantor King Solomon was taken into account, on the assumption that this provides a better picture of demand, given the fact that Kantor King Solomon is a Jewishly undersubscribed school. A very small number of applications from three *haredi* schools – all to Hasmonean High School – were also removed, as these schools cannot be considered a real source of demand for places. See the section ‘Assumptions and Sensitivity Testing’ for further explanations.

¹ Annual figures for levels of demand, by the type of primary school (Jewish or non-Jewish), can be found in Appendix 1.

Under the average scenario, an 11% increase in applications was expected for Year 7 entrants both in the current academic year (2018/19), and the coming one (2019/20), compared to the most recently observed level of applications (2017/18). (Note that the actual figures for applications for the current academic year, 2018/19, which took place during academic year 2017/18, are not yet available.) A further increase can be expected in years 2020/21 and 2021/22 – a 14% increase compared to the most recently observed levels. In the final year of this projection, a decrease is expected relative to years 2020/21 and 2021/22, although that would still bring the number of applications in that year to levels slightly above those observed in 2017/18.

The low scenario is based on the lowest ever observed levels of demand for Jewish secondary schools. Even this scenario indicates relative stability in the volume of applications in the coming five years. At no point is a decrease expected beyond the levels of applications seen since 2011/12 within the time frame of these projections.

Assumptions and sensitivity testing for the projection above

Dormant Jewish primary schools: have they been taken into account?

At present, there are five Jewish primary schools operating across London that have either not yet 'sent' applicants to secondary schools or have only begun to do so very recently: Alma Primary, Eden Primary, Etz Chaim Jewish Primary, Rimon Jewish Primary and Mosaic Jewish Primary School. We call them '**dormant**' because these schools opened during the past eight years and thus, in most cases, simply have not yet produced a cohort of pupils transferring to the secondary educational stage. They are 'dormant' in the sense that the patterns of demand for places in Jewish secondary schools for pupils of these primary schools have not yet been revealed and had to be assumed. Pupils from Eden and Etz Chaim were in the application system for the first time for entry in the year 2018/19, but those figures are not yet available for analysis; pupils from Rimon will appear for the first time in 2019/20, and pupils from Alma in 2020/21.

In all projections, the existence of currently 'dormant' Jewish primary schools has been taken into account. With the exception of Mosaic, it has been assumed in all projections that these schools will follow the pattern of other Jewish primary schools, meaning that 85% of their pupils would apply to one of the five Jewish secondary schools covered by these projections as their first preference. This is a reasonable assumption, in our view, given what is known about the religious character of these schools (cross-communal or modern Orthodox) and their geographical location (Barnet or Haringey). The proposed 85% average is based on levels of demand across 22 mainstream primary schools in London. In 16 out of 22 primary schools the levels of demand are higher or equal to 85%. In the remaining six schools the levels of demand are in the range of 49–80%. In view of this, and in the absence of any supportive information about the expected levels of demand from the dormant schools, it is advisable to apply the average value of 85%, obtained across all currently active schools, to the dormant schools as well. Due to its location in south London, a considerable distance away from the secondary schools, it has been assumed that Mosaic will follow the pattern of non-Jewish primary schools.



A 7% increase on 2017/18 applications could be expected in the coming two years (2018/19 and 2019/20), and a 9% increase on 2017/18 applications could be expected in 2020/21 and 2021/22

The expected increase in the number of applications shown in the average projection in Figure 3 is only partly due to the 'arrival' of the dormant schools. In the course of preparing these projections we experimentally applied an alternative assumption – that all of the dormant schools will rather behave like non-Jewish primary schools, meaning that only about one-third of their pupils will apply to one of the five mainstream Jewish secondary schools as their first preference. Nevertheless, even under

this alternative scenario, a 7% increase on 2017/18 applications could be expected in the coming two years (2018/19 and 2019/20), and a 9% increase on 2017/18 applications could be expected in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Haredi primary schools: what is their status in the projection above?

All five Jewish secondary schools covered by this projection can be defined as mainstream in Jewish religious terms, with JCoSS (with a cross-communal ethos) and Hasmonian High School (with an Orthodox ethos) representing the two ends of the spectrum. The overwhelming majority of applicants to these schools come from either (1) Jewish primary schools that can be defined as mainstream on the same spectrum as the secondary schools; or (2) non-Jewish primary schools. However, there has been some increase recently in the number of **applicants from the haredi** world. Only nine applications originated from haredi schools in 2011/12, 16 applications were made in 2014/15, and in the latest year available (2017/18), 37 applications were registered. Expressed in proportionate terms, this means that over a period of seven years, the demand for places in Jewish

mainstream secondary schools from the haredi world grew from 8% (2011/12) to 27% (2017/18) of the total number of pupils in the specific haredi primary schools sending applicants to the non-haredi Jewish secondary school system. The total number of pupils in the transferring year of these haredi primary schools also increased over this period.

Given these developments, we considered it only prudent to include certain haredi primary schools in the projections of future demand shown in Figure 3. However, in Figure 4, these schools have been treated as a special component. Here, it is assumed that the most recently seen levels of demand (27%) will *not* persist in the future. How much difference does the exclusion of these haredi applicants make? As Figure 4 demonstrates, the exclusion impacts on the *level* of the demand, decreasing it by about one and a half class sizes of applications (about 42 applicants in absolute terms) in each of the years starting from 2018/19. However, the absence of haredi applicants has *no impact on the trend* in applications; in particular, the projected increase in the volume of applications is expected to take place with or without this haredi factor.

Figure 4. Applications to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London: average projection with and without Haredi applicants

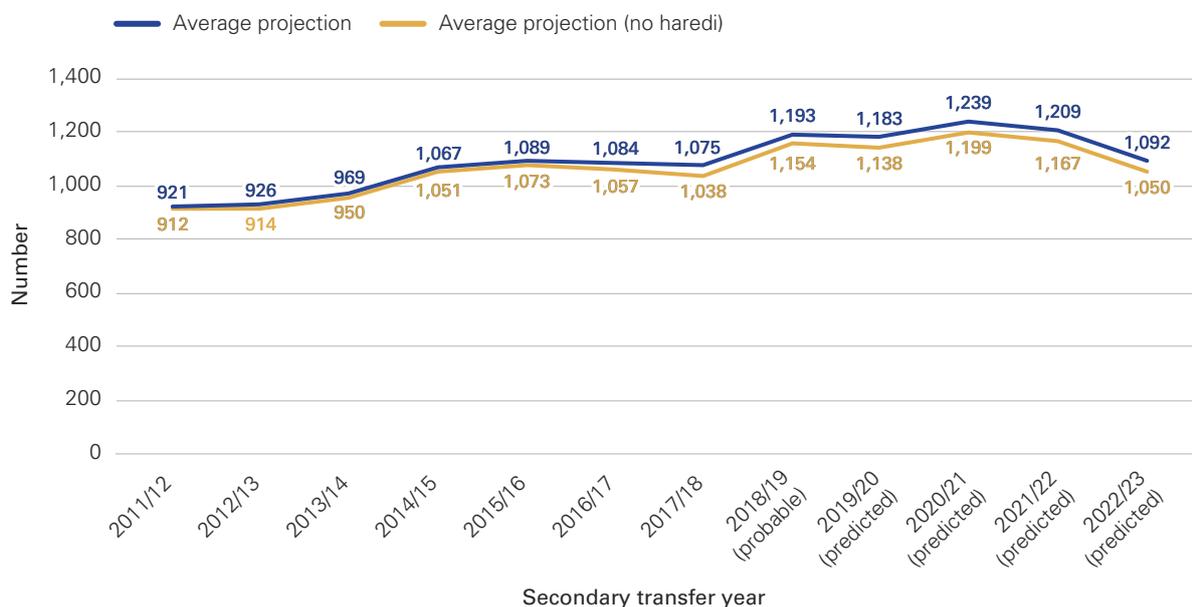
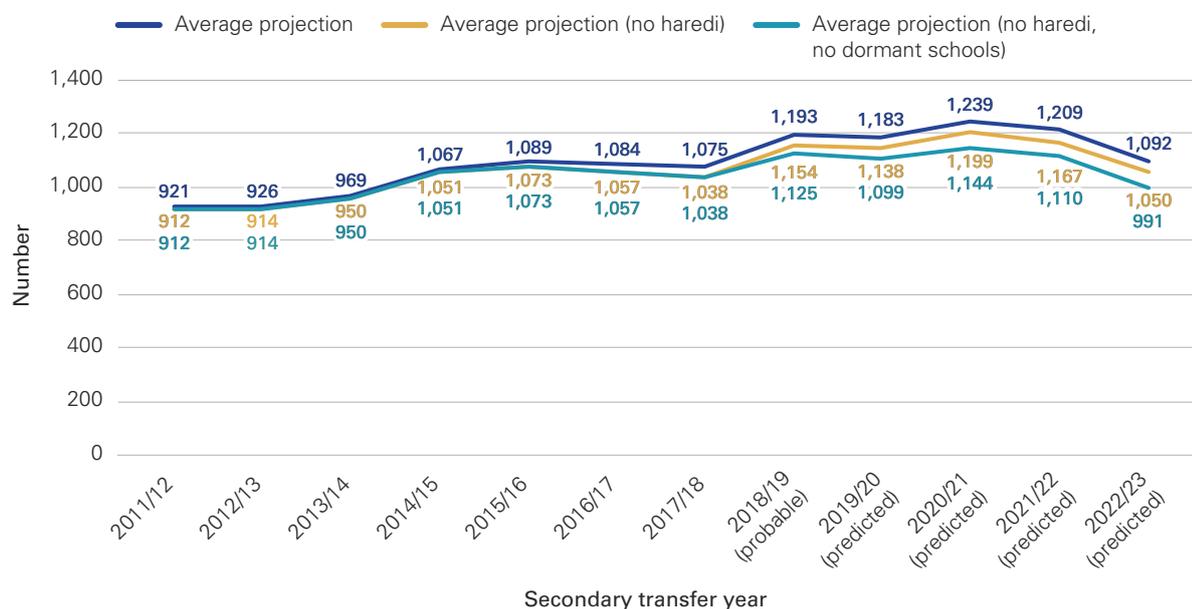


Figure 5. Applications to state-funded Jewish secondary schools in London: the original average projection with some experimental versions



Finally, Figure 5 shows three versions of the average projection: (i) the original version, as shown in Figure 3; (ii) an alternative projection without any haredi applicants; and (iii) another alternative projection without any haredi applicants, and with applicants from all five dormant Jewish primary schools exhibiting the pattern of demand for Jewish secondary schools observed in non-Jewish primary schools. In all cases, one can observe that different assumptions regarding the levels of demand affect the projected *volume* of applications but have no impact on the *trend* of increase.

To sum up, we expect to see some increase in the volume of applications to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London on the basis of two out of three projection scenarios shown in Figure 3: the high and the average. The third (low) projection scenario indicates the general stability of the level, but even under that scenario, some increase, relative to the current levels, is expected to take place in 2020/21 and 2021/2022.

Today, we can confirm with confidence that the trend of the increase in applications (observed and projected) has been produced by two factors: (1) the increase in the number of births in the mainstream Jewish population during the first

decade of the twenty-first century – a well-known phenomenon observed in Census data as well as in communal births statistics; and (2) the increase in the popularity of Jewish schooling that expressed itself first in the growth of the Jewish primary sector, and then in the transferral of that growth into the Jewish secondary sector.

Discussion points

JPR sees its projections of the demand for places in Jewish secondary schools as a significant breakthrough in policy and planning in the British Jewish community. The breakthrough became possible due to the uncompromising application of scientific methodology to the study of communal realities. In contrast to our first attempt at projections, we are now able to evaluate the precision and usefulness of this work.

The level of precision

When the projections were produced for the first time, the possibility of validating or verifying the underlying model did not exist. With the passage of time, that is now possible. In our previous projections we predicted that the number of applications made to the five state-funded

mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London in the year 2017/18 would stand at 1,075, according to an average projection scenario. We set the top and the bottom boundaries of the possible range at 1,137 and 953 applications respectively. In these projections, applications from the four haredi schools discussed above were not taken into account. The actual number of applications received in 2017/18 from a similarly defined universe was 1,038, 3.4% lower than the projected number. Thus, the average projection was 37 cases off the actual number across all five schools – the equivalent of about seven applications per school, on average.



There was a real and steady increase in the volume of applications to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools that was fuelled both by demographic changes and by an increase in preference for Jewish schooling

This level of precision is satisfactory to a statistician, but a statistician is not the best judge of usefulness when it comes to policy. An honest and rigorous discussion about the acceptable degree of proximity of the projected figures to the actual figures should be held among the community of users of these projections to assess the extent to which the projection can be considered useful.

Calibration of the model against the unofficially registered level of anxiety

The first projections were commissioned at a time when communal anxieties about the possibility of an inadequate supply of secondary school places in Jewish schools in London were running high. We found that there was a real and steady increase in the volume of applications to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools that was fuelled both by demographic changes and by an increase in preference for Jewish schooling. However, we also pointed out that, although the gap between applications and admissions has grown over time, the number

of applications has been higher than the number of admissions at all times since our records began. Thus, any anxieties over a perceived deficit in school places must have occurred at a time of a particularly large excess of applications over admissions, because such anxieties were not nearly as acute at lower levels of excess.

This led us to believe that certain levels of excess of applications over admissions can be treated as unproblematic. We suggested that this may be due to the fact that not all first preference applicants to state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London are fully committed to accepting places in these schools, even if places are offered. Some applicants, for example, may simultaneously apply to a private secondary school or schools, and consider that school or schools to be their preferred option, whilst viewing their so-called first preference application/s to a state-funded school as a back-up option. The scope of this and other behaviours operating behind the phenomenon of 'non-committed applicants' could not be quantified.

We are now in a better position to offer some quantification of unproblematic excess. An experience of the provision of additional school places to satisfy the unmet need in 2016/17 indicated that the probable cut-off point for the system as a whole is an excess of 150 applications. After 47 additional school places were offered, the remaining excess of applications over admissions of the scale of about 150 places did not appear to concern various stakeholders.

Further, in the year 2017/18, an excess of 132 applications over admissions was registered across the five secondary schools covered by this report. It is our current assessment that in the year 2017/18, the public mood concerning the adequacy of the supply of school places was more relaxed than in the two previous years, i.e. 2015/16 and 2014/15.

Finally, in the early years of the time span covered by our research, i.e. in the years 2011/12 to 2013/14, the atmosphere around the availability of school places in Jewish schools was also considerably calmer than during the two-year period that

followed, and between 2011/12 and 2013/14 the excess was in the range of 50–97.

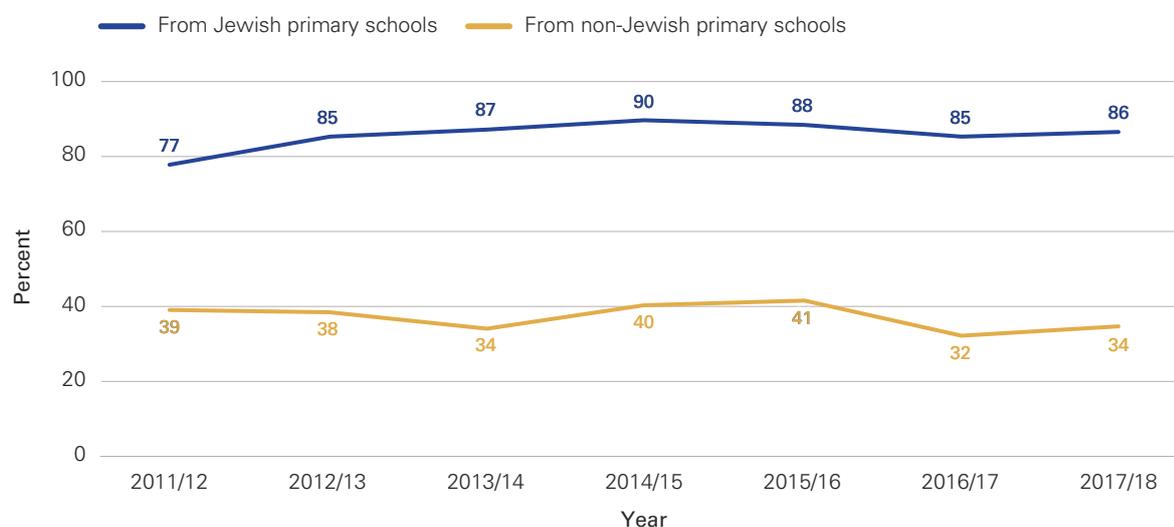
Thus, our own observations regarding the interplay between the (quantifiable) level of excess in applications and the (non-quantifiable) communal mood lead us to believe that an excess in the region of up to 150 applications across all five schools is the experimentally found benchmark of a 'balanced system', where 150 excess applicants are, in fact, non-committed applicants.

Current levels of provision will be sufficient should the level of demand in the next four years remain at today's levels. This is a possibility: our

low projection indicates such stability. However, the average and high projections shown here both suggest an increase in demand. Should such an increase materialise, our assessment is that about 50 additional places will be required across the entire Jewish secondary school system in London. Given the scope of the possible increase in demand and the past experience of satisfying the unmet need, the recommended course of action for schools would be to develop some flexibility in capacity to satisfy the increasing demand. In practical terms, that would mean preparedness to open an extra class, as and when required, rather than to open an entirely new school.

Appendix

Figure 1A. % of pupils applying to five state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London and surrounding areas, by type of primary school



The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** is a London-based research organisation, consultancy and think-tank. It aims to advance the prospects of Jewish communities in the United Kingdom and across Europe by conducting research and informing policy development in dialogue with those best-placed to positively influence Jewish life.

PaJeS (Partnerships for Jewish Schools) is a division of the Jewish Leadership Council and provides services, support and strategy to Jewish schools across the whole UK Jewish community. PaJeS is grateful to the JLC for funding this analysis.

Author

Dr Daniel Staetsky is a Senior Research Fellow at JPR. His expertise spans the disciplines of demography, applied statistics and economics, and he is a former researcher and analyst at the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel and at RAND Europe. He holds a PhD in social statistics from the University of Southampton, and an MA in demography from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he specialised in Jewish and Israeli demography and migration. His work in Jewish demography has been widely published, and includes most recently *Are Jews leaving Europe?* (JPR, 2017); *Will my child get a place? An assessment of supply and demand of Jewish secondary school places in London and surrounding areas* (JPR/PaJeS, 2017); *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: Numbers, trends and policy issues* (JPR, 2016); and *Strictly Orthodox rising: What the demography of British Jews tells us about the future of the community* (JPR, 2015).

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