

Will my child get a place?

An assessment of supply and demand of Jewish secondary school places in London and surrounding areas

L. Daniel Staetsky and Jonathan Boyd



The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR)** 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.

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); *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).

Dr Jonathan Boyd is Executive Director of JPR. A specialist in the study of contemporary Jewry, he is a former Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Institute in Israel, and has held professional positions in research and policy at the JDC International Centre for Community Development, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the United Jewish Israel Appeal and the Holocaust Educational Trust. He holds a doctorate in education from the University of Nottingham, and an MA and BA in modern Jewish history from University College London. He is the author of numerous reports on British and European Jewish life, including most recently *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: Numbers, trends and policy issues* (JPR, 2016); *Searching for community: A portrait of undergraduate Jewish students in five UK cities* (JPR, 2016); *Charitable giving among Britain's Jews* (JPR, 2016); and *Could it happen here? What existing data tell us about contemporary antisemitism in the UK* (JPR, 2015). He is a Board member of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry, and columnist for the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Reflections on the findings

Rabbi David Meyer is the Executive Director of PaJeS. He was previously the Executive Headteacher of Hasmonean High School, after having been Head of the Boys' School. Under his leadership the school was assessed as outstanding in all categories by both Ofsted and Pikuach. He has qualifications in Jewish Studies and Education and an MBA in Marketing. At Hasmonean, he founded the Department for Informal Jewish Education and devised and implemented the Sixth Form Jewish Studies programme. He was formerly the Director of the Jewish Association for Business Ethics where he co-authored the Money & Morals curriculum, and a senior lecturer on the Aish Hatorah Discovery seminar. He has developed curricula for Yad Vashem and directed the Israel Fellowships programme.

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The project that led to the creation of this report examined administrative data on applications and admissions to Jewish secondary schools in London. The applications process and the allocation of places in state schools are handled by specialist teams in local authorities. In the case of Immanuel College, a private Jewish school, the process is handled by the senior administrators at the school itself. Over the course of this project, JPR approached all of the teams in the relevant local authorities and Immanuel College with a request for data according to particular specifications. Everyone we approached showed a remarkable degree of readiness to cooperate with us, and extended their expertise and resources for the benefit of this project.

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Introduction

This report is a summary of an investigation into the characteristics and determinants of the demand for, and supply of places in mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London. The Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJeS), a division of the Jewish Leadership Council, commissioned and funded the project, and the investigation was carried out exclusively by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). The project was motivated by growing concern within the Jewish community about a perceived shortage of places in Jewish secondary schools in London, an issue that has been regularly reported in the British Jewish press.¹ A situation where an application for a place at a Jewish school is rejected is concerning purely on a human level first and foremost, not least because it causes uncertainty, distress and frustration for the family involved, irrespective of whether their desire for Jewish schooling stems from a wish to have greater access to Jewish education, or to academic excellence, or simply to learn in a Jewish environment. However, it is also concerning at a different level. Jewish schools are seen by many in the Jewish community as vehicles of Jewish continuity – i.e. as a key way to transfer Jewishness to the next generation. Thus the idea that a Jewish child who desires Jewish schooling may be unable to access it, strikes at the very heart of one of the foundational principles of Judaism itself – the responsibility of parents to educate their children in the Jewish way of life.

What should be done when there is a suspicion of a systemic shortage of places in Jewish schools? Before any policy is put in place and any action is taken, it is sensible to develop a full understanding of the current situation and to explore its root causes. Is there indeed a shortage of secondary school places in the mainstream Jewish community, in objective terms? What is the scope of this shortage, if it exists? What drives the demand for secondary school places? And what does the future hold? How long is the current situation expected to persist? All of these questions ought to be answered, and any lack of clarity on any of them is likely to significantly compromise the quality of solutions offered. A shortage of places will obviously breed discontent, but likewise, an oversupply of places may equally lead to a lack of satisfaction. Under conditions of oversupply, the Jewish character of Jewish schools may become somewhat diluted – for example, through the reduced presence of Jewish pupils, in proportionate terms. That, in turn, may reduce the appeal of the school to prospective Jewish parents, especially those who prioritise the immersion of their children in a uniquely Jewish environment. In response to these developments, Jewish schools may disappear or decline, either through closure or via shifts in the nature of the student body and the intensity of the Jewish curriculum. Thus, striking the right balance between the demand and supply of school places is vital for the existence of the Jewish secondary school system in the long run.

1 See articles by Simon Rocker in the *Jewish Chronicle*: ‘Hasmonean asks parents to fund additional places’, 8 July 2016, <http://www.thejc.com/community/community-life/160150/hasmonean-asks-parents-fund-additional-places>; ‘The politics and number lying behind the bid for a new school’, 14 July 2016, <http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/160274/the-politics-and-numbers-lying-behind-bid-a-new-school>; ‘New initiative considered to help children with no Jewish secondary school place’, 10 August 2016, <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/161727/new-initiative-considered-help-children-no-jewish-second>; and ‘Effort to unify rival Orthodox free school bids’, 29 September 2016, <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/164020/effort-unify-rival-orthodox-free-school-bids>.

Before discussing the findings of the investigation, it is important to provide a few contextual details. At the time of writing, nine Jewish secondary schools were in operation in the mainstream Jewish school sector, of which six were in London, and 44% of all mainstream Jewish children aged 11-17 years attended a Jewish secondary school.² Both the number of Jewish schools and the uptake of places at Jewish schools at the secondary level were higher than at any previous point over the previous sixty years.³ Two out of the six mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London opened over the course of the past decade – i.e. since 2005/06 – and this growth was simply the latest chapter in the dramatic expansion of the British Jewish school sector as a whole: the number of Jewish schools in the UK and of Jewish children enrolled in them has increased by 400% since the 1950s. Although this expansion is partly related to the increase in the proportion of strictly Orthodox Jews in the UK Jewish population as a whole, among whom attendance at Jewish schools is universal, it also reflects the increase in preference for Jewish schools among the non-strictly Orthodox. The six mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London today cover all types of religious orientations among mainstream British Jews, with the Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS) and Hasmonean High School representing, respectively, the cross-denominational and the most Orthodox orientations, and Immanuel College, the Jewish Free School (JFS), Kantor King Solomon High School and Yavneh College fitting in between these.

The growth of the Jewish secondary school sector was driven by enthusiasts, sponsors of Jewish education, parents and Jewish educators. The process lacked a single central authority; at no time were the pace and character of the sector's expansion driven by centralised planning. On the contrary, the current dimensions of the sector and its character have been shaped by parental demand, on the one hand, and by the capacity and willingness of Jewish educators and sponsors to meet that demand, on the other. It is not unreasonable to describe the way the sector functions as a 'market,' in which particular commodities (Jewish education and a Jewish environment) are offered to customers (pupils and families) in exchange for a fee. That said, for most families the fee is relatively modest. Five out of the six mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London and the surrounding areas are state-funded, and only one (Immanuel College) is a private, fee-paying school. The British educational system extends sponsorship to faith schools, and most of the establishment and running costs of Jewish faith schools are covered by the state, although parents are encouraged to make voluntary donations towards the costs associated with the provision of Jewish studies and security.

The policy objective of this report is to provide information to all parties interested in how to consolidate and enhance the success of Jewish schools. The report is meant to equip all those operating in the field of Jewish schooling, be they sponsors, parents or educators, with detailed, precise and unbiased information that can help facilitate their work. We make no comment here on how any of these agents should use the information to cooperate with one another going forward; any decisions about this are left to the individuals themselves.

2 Ages at the beginning of the academic year – i.e. all children in school years 7 to 13.

3 See: Staetsky, L. Daniel. and Boyd, J. (2016). *The rise and rise of Jewish schools in the United Kingdom: Numbers, trends and policy issues*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research and Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Why the investigation then, one might ask? The existence of an entire sector of Jewish secondary schools, compared to a situation where only one such school exists, brings complexity to the subject. When a successful enterprise reaches a certain degree of maturity, it invites new thinking. The proverbial approach – ‘build them and they will come’ – which guided the initial development of mainstream Jewish secondary schools, reflects the daring vision of an enthusiastic social entrepreneur. That is a natural, even necessary, factor of social innovation. Such attitudes, coupled with the belief in one’s capacity to induce change, create new goods and services. However, the long-term functioning of successful enterprises requires a more calculating approach, both metaphorically and literally. An established system of Jewish secondary schools operates according to certain rules and regularities. This is not to say that at the very early stages of the development of this system those rules and regularities were non-existent; on the contrary, they were fully present. It is rather that having a full picture of them was somewhat less critical. When a first Jewish secondary school opens, its volume of admissions will be determined by the degree of popularity of the idea of a Jewish secondary school at that point, as well as the numerical strength of the Jewish community. However, one cannot step into the same river twice. When the second school opens, it inevitably starts interacting with the first school, and its pool of candidate pupils is smaller as a matter of arithmetical necessity, simply because some of the pupils have already been catered for by the first school, and the number of Jewish children is finite. A third school then interacts with two pre-existing schools and draws from a still smaller pool of pupils. With the opening of each subsequent school, it becomes more difficult to predict what is likely to happen to each individual school as well as to the system as a whole. At an advanced stage of system functioning, a description of its laws becomes an imperative.

Bearing all of this in mind, we carried out this project focusing our investigation on three questions:

- 1 What has happened to the dynamics of supply and demand of places in mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London?
- 2 Why did these dynamics happen? What are the root causes of the observed numerical developments?
- 3 What can be expected in the future?

Using these questions as our guide, this report is structured as follows. In the first section, we outline the methods we employed in generating the figures, and explain the sources of data that we used. This is particularly important because, at the time the project was commissioned, no established methodology had ever been developed to allow for the questions presented above to be comprehensively tackled. Thus JPR developed the method, based on a battery of demographic and economic concepts and tools, and due to the innovative nature of this work, we take time to present our approach in detail, both in the interests of transparency, and to enable the replication of the results in the future. This methodological section is then followed by the second part of the report which presents our findings. The third and concluding section discusses the meaning of the findings and their policy uses.

Approach

How does one measure demand within the context of secondary school places? And how does one measure supply and, in particular, the adequacy of supply? What is the meaning of these terms beyond the world of market operations? In reality, many aspects of life can be captured in economic terms, as an interplay between supply and demand, with good analytical results. This investigation follows this approach, relating to Jewish pupils and families as consumers, and to school places as a commodity. Submitting an application for a school place is an expression of demand, and the existing admissions capacity of schools constitutes supply.

In this investigation the dynamic of demand (applications) and supply (admissions capacity) of places in Jewish secondary schools in London has been assessed using the data on applications and admissions from four local authorities and one secondary school. Application processes to all state-funded schools are handled by local authorities, and the four local authorities involved in this study are Barnet Council, Brent Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Redbridge Council. The admissions teams in these local authorities (Barnet Council for JCoSS and Hasmond; Brent Council for JFS; Hertfordshire County Council for Yavneh College; and Redbridge Council for King Solomon) allocate places on the basis of certain criteria. The admissions teams are in a position to extract annual data on the number of applications made to any state-funded secondary school in their council's geography by the type of the origin primary school, as well as on the number of admissions to each school (variously also known as acceptances, allocations and offers), also by the type of origin school.

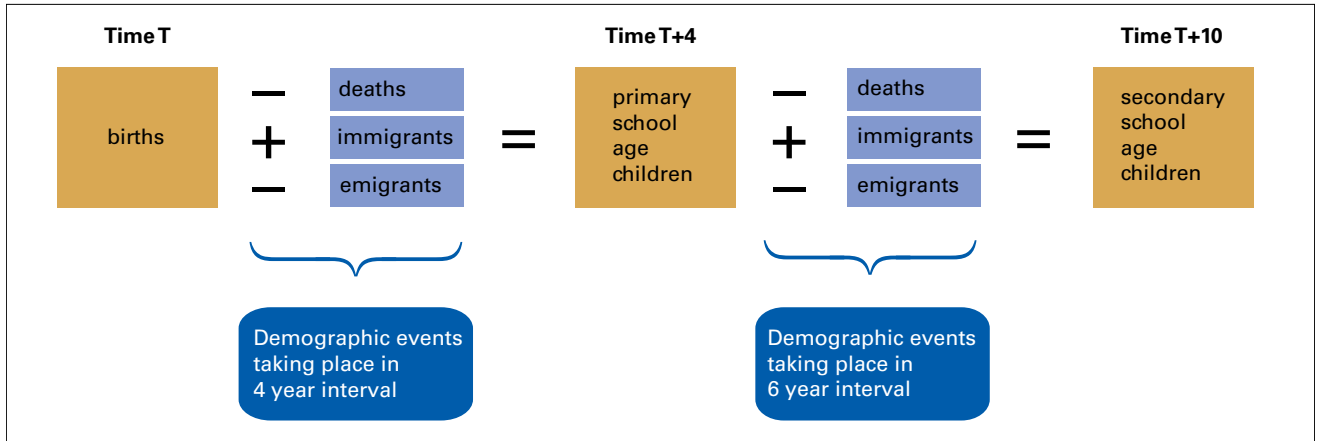
JPR contacted all four local authorities with a standard template for the requested data and detailed instructions pertaining to data production. For all schools the data returned covered six academic years, 2011/12 - 2016/17, resulting in a perfect history of admissions for the entire 'universe' of mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London. For Immanuel College, the one mainstream Jewish secondary school in the area that manages its own admissions (as it is a private school), all data were received directly

from the school. On the basis of the data supplied, a comparison could be made between the number of applications to each secondary school and the number of admissions, so that the extent of unmet need – i.e. the gap between the applications (demand) and admissions (supply) – could be assessed. That comparison alone produced a significant analytical gain: it clarified the dimensions and the historical roots of the current relationship between the demand for, and supply of places. It enabled us to see what has happened over time, allowing, for example, to ascertain whether or not the rumoured increase in the unmet need for secondary school places in Jewish schools in London did indeed take place.

However, one needs to go one step further if one is interested not only in the past and present, but also in predicting the future. In order to build a projection of future demand, one needs to clarify the drivers and causal paths behind the volume of applications. The key question here is: what determines the volume of applications to Jewish secondary schools in London?

At first glance, this should be a relatively simple question to address. After all, forecasting school places is a routine task for national and local educational authorities in the UK. Could one borrow an existing methodology for projections and usefully apply it to Jewish schools? The answer is positive in principle, but ultimately somewhat inadequate. While certain components of existing approaches can be adopted, a degree of adjustment is required. Outside of the Jewish context, forecasting school places amounts to solving a demographic equation. The number of children in any given school year is determined by the number of births in the past. Processes such as migration (in and out of a given population) and deaths then impact the size of the birth cohort. In a population growing mainly as a result of births, such as the British population, with moderate migration and very low mortality, birth cohorts closely resemble school entrants' cohorts. Knowing how many children were born and still exist in a particular area is key to predicting the scope of primary and secondary school provision. Thus, in general terms, the number of births is carried forward from time T to $T+4$ years (for primary education) or $T+10$ years (for secondary

Figure 1. Demographic equation for forecasting school places



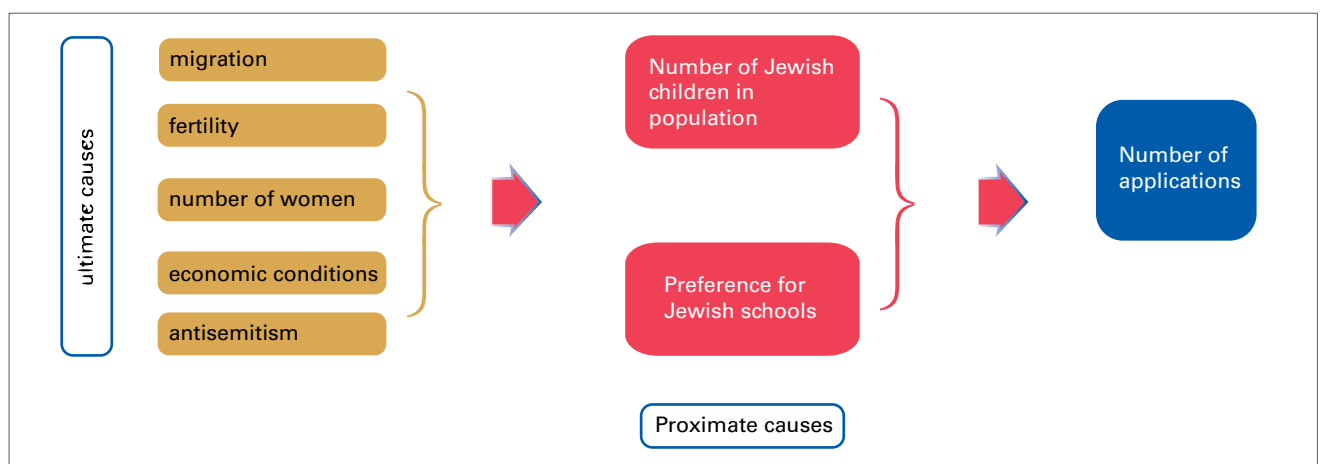
education), and adjusted, at regular intervals, by the deduction of deaths and emigrants, and the addition of immigrants. This is the principle of projections of school places at a national level, outside of the Jewish context, and this principle (illustrated schematically by Figure 1) can also be used in part for the purposes of our specific investigation into mainstream Jewish schools in London.

However, within the Jewish context, the equation is rather more complex. The system of demographic accounting described above is a necessary, but insufficient, factor for predicting the required scope of school provision in the mainstream Jewish community because applying for a Jewish school is optional rather than compulsory. Therefore, in the mainstream Jewish sector, the extent of people’s preference for Jewish schooling will necessarily adjust the birth

cohort size downwards. This factor of preference is in addition to mortality and migration, and it also needs to be quantified and applied to the initial Jewish birth cohort sizes. In essence then, two key factors need to be accounted for in relation to mainstream Jewish schools: (i) the number of Jewish children in the population; and (ii) the propensity of these children to choose a Jewish school, a feature, in itself, that depends upon preference for Jewish schools. The former is obtained using the demographic equation, as above. The latter is not, and the method of its derivation will be explained below, and the overall model of thinking is captured by Figure 2.

The number of Jewish children and the preference for Jewish schools are both direct, or ‘proximate’ factors determining the volume of applications. Other factors, commonly perceived as influential

Figure 2. Determinants of the volume of application for school places: the model



by the public and Jewish communal organisations (for example, the number of recent Jewish migrants from Israel or France; the state of the economy; the level of antisemitic sentiment, or the number of antisemitic incidents in Britain), impact on the proximate factors in various ways. However, for the specific purpose of projecting future demand, they are of little interest. Any effect that they may have is mediated by the proximate causes, so the art of making projections requires robust quantification of the two proximate factors only.⁴

In the course of this project the task of projecting future applications to mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London was approached using the model of determinants outlined above. The data on the number of Jewish children aged 10 in the population (the candidate group for secondary school stage) was sourced from the 2011

Census of England and Wales. The geographical boundaries were those of Greater London and the adjacent areas of Hertfordshire and Essex, i.e. areas from which applications to the mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London were received in the academic years 2011/12-2016/17.

Consequently, preference for Jewish secondary schools was calculated as a proportion of applications to these schools (sourced from the admissions teams in local authorities, as previously explained) out of the total number of Jewish children in London in the year preceding secondary school transfer. The projection of future applications to Jewish secondary schools was then generated on the basis of the known number of Jewish children in London (Census-based estimate), alongside some empirically-grounded assumptions about future trends in preference for Jewish secondary schools.

4 The conceptual framework proposed here, and especially the separation of causes into proximate and ultimate, draws inspiration from the demographic work on determinants of fertility. Readers wishing to familiarise themselves with this work are advised to consult the following publication: Bongaarts, J. (1978). 'A framework for analysing the proximate determinants of fertility,' *Population and Development Review* 4 (1): 105-132.

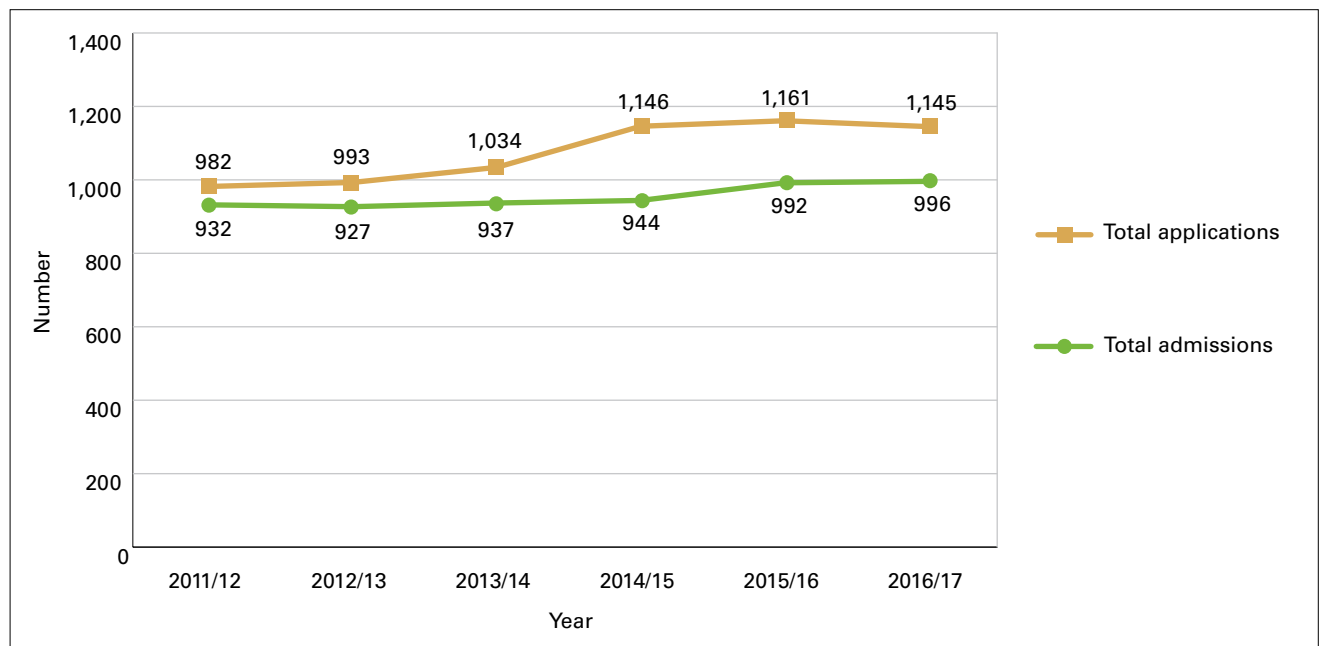
Findings

Applications versus admissions: the widening gap

In all six years covered by this study, state-funded mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London received more applications than the total number of places available in these schools. Figure 3 shows the number of *first preference* applications to the five secondary Jewish state schools in London – Hasmonean, JCoSS, JFS, King Solomon and Yavneh College – for reasons outlined in footnote five.⁵ The sixth Jewish secondary school in the area – Immanuel College – is not shown, as it is a private (fee-paying) school that manages its own

admissions process. The number of places these five schools were able to offer each year based on their existing capacity at that time is also shown. It is clear that the gap between the number of people wanting places at these schools and the number of places these schools can provide has grown over that time. It is important to note that some adjustments were made to intake levels at Hasmonean and Yavneh College in the 2016/17 academic year, due to the pressure of demand. Both schools indicated their readiness to offer some additional places as a one-off measure, and carried through on this, thereby helping to

Figure 3. First preference applications versus admissions across all five schools (Immanuel excluded)



Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities.

5 When applying to state secondary schools, applicants are able to list a number of named schools in order of their preference. In thinking about their preferences, parents will typically take into consideration the ethos of a school, its religious character, its geographical proximity to their home and its academic quality, as well as a number of other factors. The result of this process is that whilst some schools may receive applications from a much larger number of applicants than they have space for, a significant number of these applications will come from people who did not put that school down as their first choice – i.e. their chief preference is actually for a different school. JCoSS, for example, has typically received in excess of 600 applications each year since it was established and

is only able to offer 180 places. Yet, in most of these cases, the applicants did not list JCoSS as their first choice, indicating that whilst they might be content with a place there, their real preference lay elsewhere. Looking at the total number of applications across all schools in question, irrespective of their order of preference, will lead to double-counting – the same individual applicant will likely be found among at least two or three Jewish secondary schools. A much more accurate approach – albeit an imperfect one too – is to look at first preference applications only. It ensures no double-counting – each first preference applicant is a unique individual, and the total number of applicants obtained using this definition is a straightforward quantification of the level of demand.

push up the total admissions figure for 2016/17 by 47 places from 949 to 996. However, as these were one-time changes, it could be argued that the 949 figure is a more accurate indicator of actual capacity.

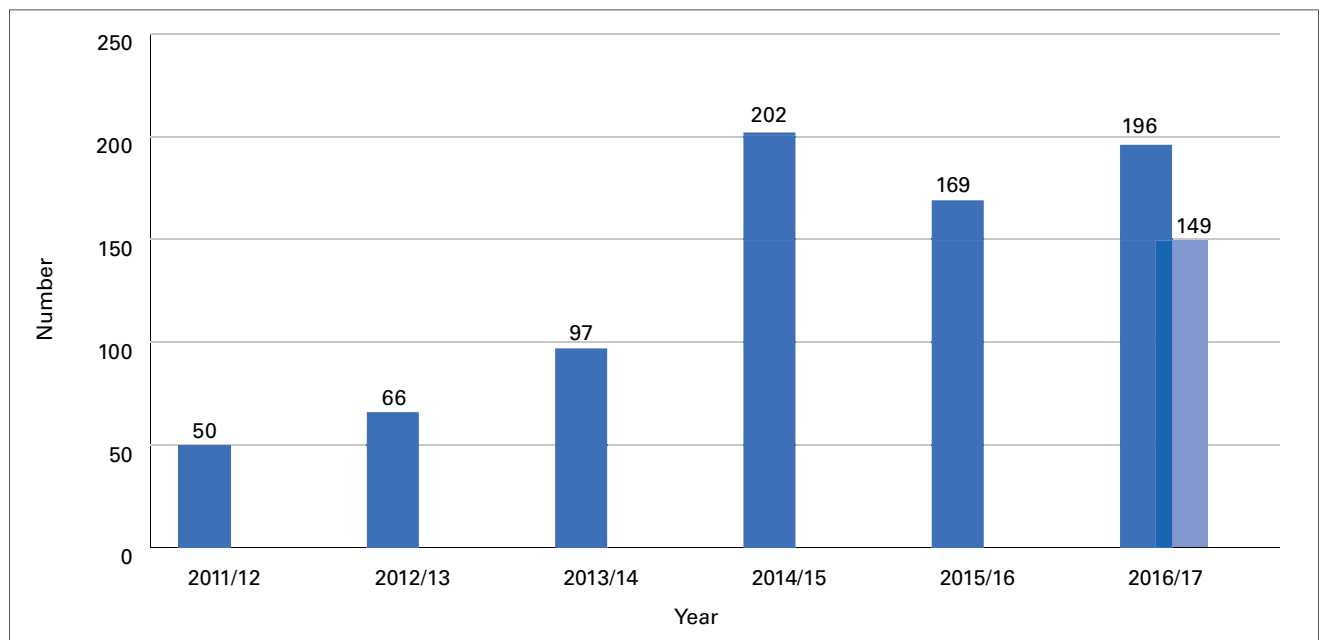
Figure 4 shows the gap more clearly. The numbers shown reflect the quantity of first preference applications (henceforth referred to simply as ‘applications’) to the five state schools in each of the last six years that were *unsuccessful* in gaining their first choice. Again, it is worth noting that the figure for 2016/17 may downplay the size of the gap, as it includes the additional 47 places that Hasmonean and Yavneh College were able to offer on a one-off basis in that year (see note below the figure for more details).

It is important to note that the pictures presented in Figures 3 and 4 should be examined in light of at least two important caveats. First, there is a sixth Jewish secondary school to consider – Immanuel College – which is also able to offer Jewish children places, albeit at a

price. How does including this school alter the picture? Data do not exist to allow us to cross-refer applications to Immanuel with applications to any of the state secondary Jewish schools, but it is reasonable to assume that most, if not all, are included in the total application counts shown in Figure 3.⁶ This is because applicants willing to pay for Jewish secondary education in a private Jewish school in Hertfordshire are highly likely to also apply to a secondary Jewish state school in case they fail to get a place at Immanuel. Thus, it is likely that the number of total applications shown in Figure 3 includes the applicants to Immanuel College.

However, the number of admissions does not include the capacity offered by Immanuel College. Thus, including the places at Immanuel College (see Figure 5) inevitably reduces the gap somewhat between applications and admissions, although it does not close it completely. Depending on the year, Immanuel College adds 52-88 places per year to the total number of places available in mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London.

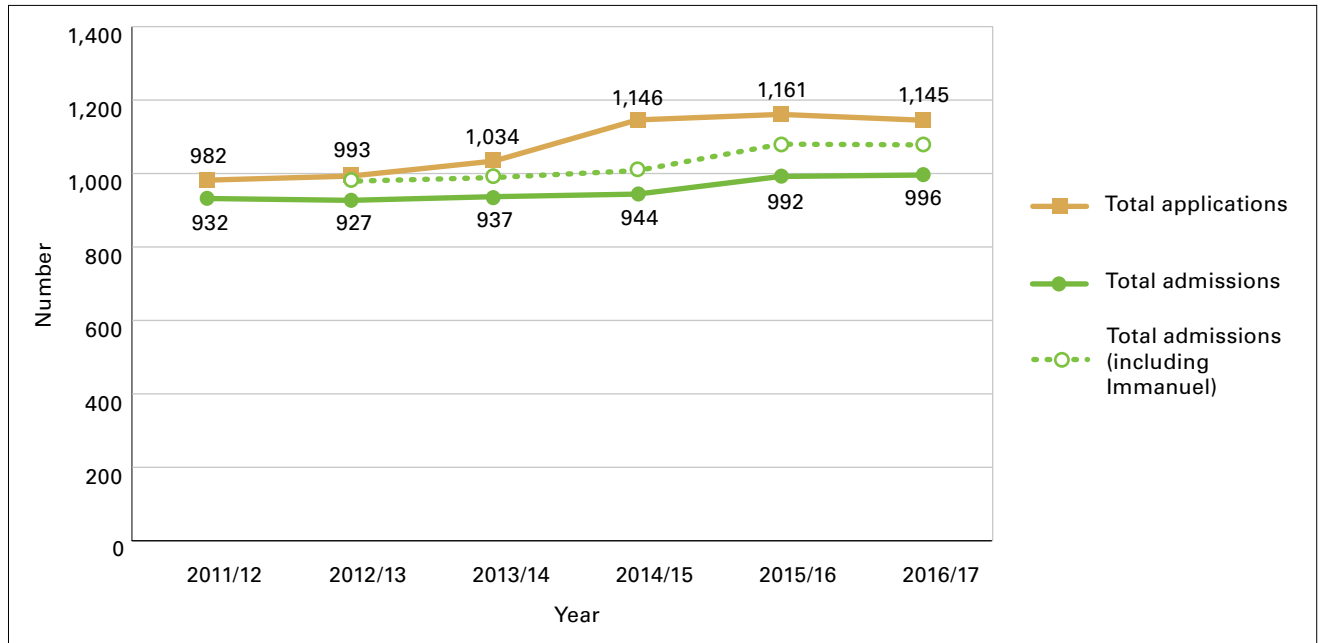
Figure 4. Number of unmet applications by academic year, 2011/12–2016/17



Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities.
 Note: Unmet applications in 2016/17 were reduced by Hasmonean and Yavneh College, who, together, managed to accommodate 47 additional pupils on a one-time basis only. Had this not happened – and it is not expected to be repeated in 2017/18 – the number of unmet applications for that year would have been 196. The two figures – with and without the effect of this accommodation – are shown in the diagram, although the larger figure (196) is regarded as a more reliable measure to capture the trend over time.

6 Note that this hypothesis has not been tested empirically.

Figure 5. First preference applications versus admissions across all five state schools (Immanuel added)



Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities and Immanuel College.
 Note: Admission counts for Immanuel College in 2011/12 were not available. The admission counts for 2016/17 include the additional 47 places made available by Hasmonean and Yavneh on a one-off basis; a more accurate reflection of the trend might be seen by removing them.

If we re-examine the gap shown in Figure 4 to include the contribution of places by Immanuel College, we see a decrease in the size of the gap between the applications and admissions at all points in time. However, the general trend of a widening of the gap over time is still present (Figure 6).

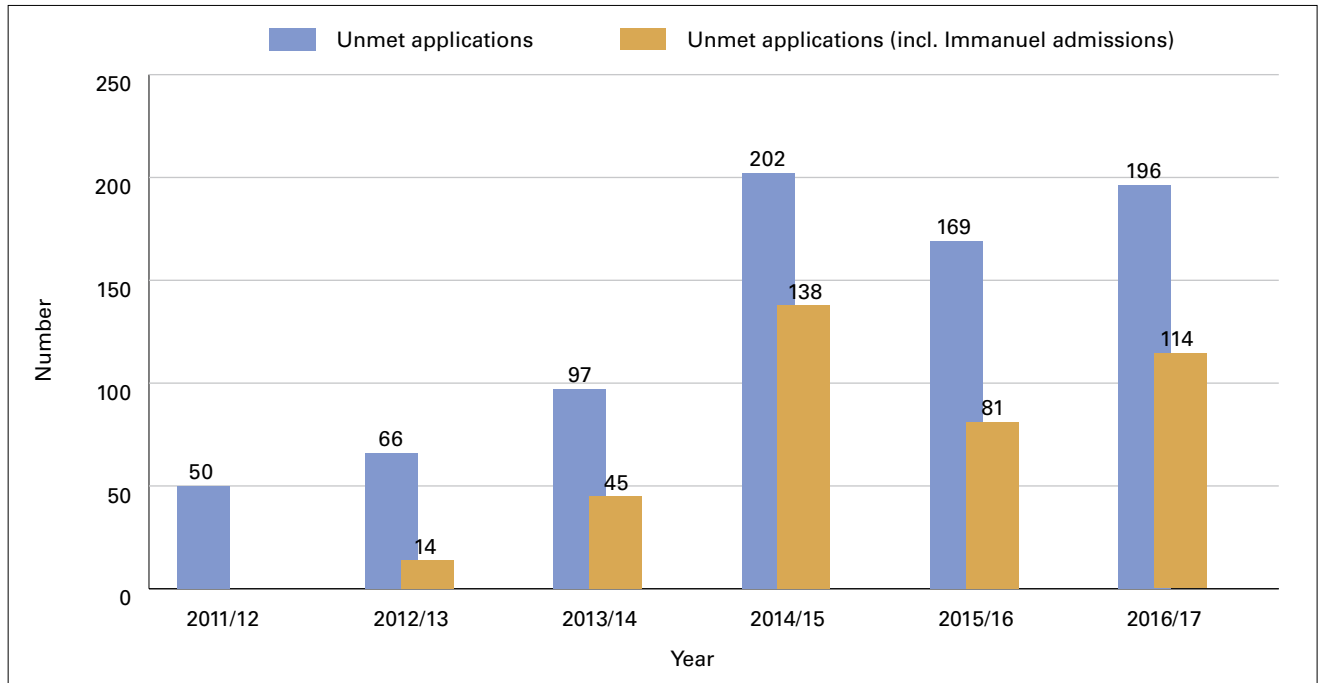
Second, it is important to bear in mind at least one significant geographical factor. Five of the six schools are located in North West London or South Hertfordshire. They are clustered within a small area – as the crow flies, the greatest distance between any two of them is just seven miles. By contrast, King Solomon is a geographical outlier. Based in Redbridge, it is twelve miles away from JCoSS (again as the crow flies), which is closest to it, and about eighteen miles from JFS, which is furthest away. Moreover, demographically, the Jewish populations of Barnet and South Hertfordshire are growing, whereas the Jewish population of Redbridge is ageing and declining, factors which will inevitably affect demand for school places over time. Indeed, King Solomon is the only school among the six that is Jewishly undersubscribed – i.e. there is an excess of places available relative to the number of Jewish students who apply – not least because significant numbers

of Year 6 Jewish children living in the Redbridge area show a preference for other Jewish secondary schools. Thus it is worth looking at how the removal of King Solomon’s applications and admissions figures from the other state Jewish secondary schools’ counts alters the picture.

When we examine the unmet applications gap (see Figure 8), we can see that, within this geographical area, it is noticeably larger than that shown in Figures 4 and 6, even taking into consideration the contribution made by admissions to Immanuel College and the additional places offered by Hasmonean and Yavneh in 2016/17.

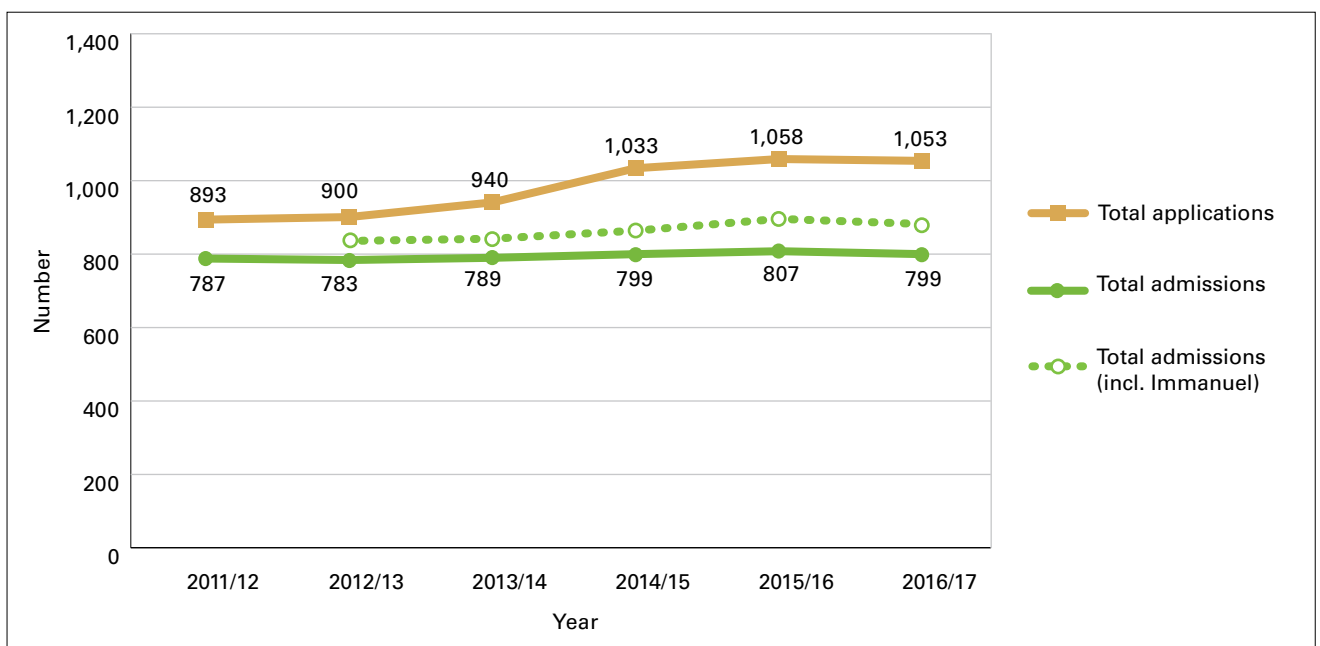
What might we conclude from these data? Two findings should be apparent. First, however we examine the data, there is an excess of applications over admissions – more people appear to want places at Jewish secondary schools than are being accommodated by them. The situation is particularly acute in North West London and South Hertfordshire, even taking into account the contribution to admissions made by Immanuel College, a private, fee-paying school. Furthermore, the gap between applications and admissions has been noticeably greater in the past three years than it was in the

Figure 6. Number of unmet applications, taking into account Immanuel admissions



Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities and Immanuel College
 Note: Admission counts for Immanuel College in 2011/12 were not available. The admission counts for 2016/17 do not include the additional 47 places made available by Hasmonean and Yavneh on a one-off basis.

Figure 7. The picture in North West London and South Hertfordshire: First preference applications versus admissions across the four state schools (with Immanuel College shown)

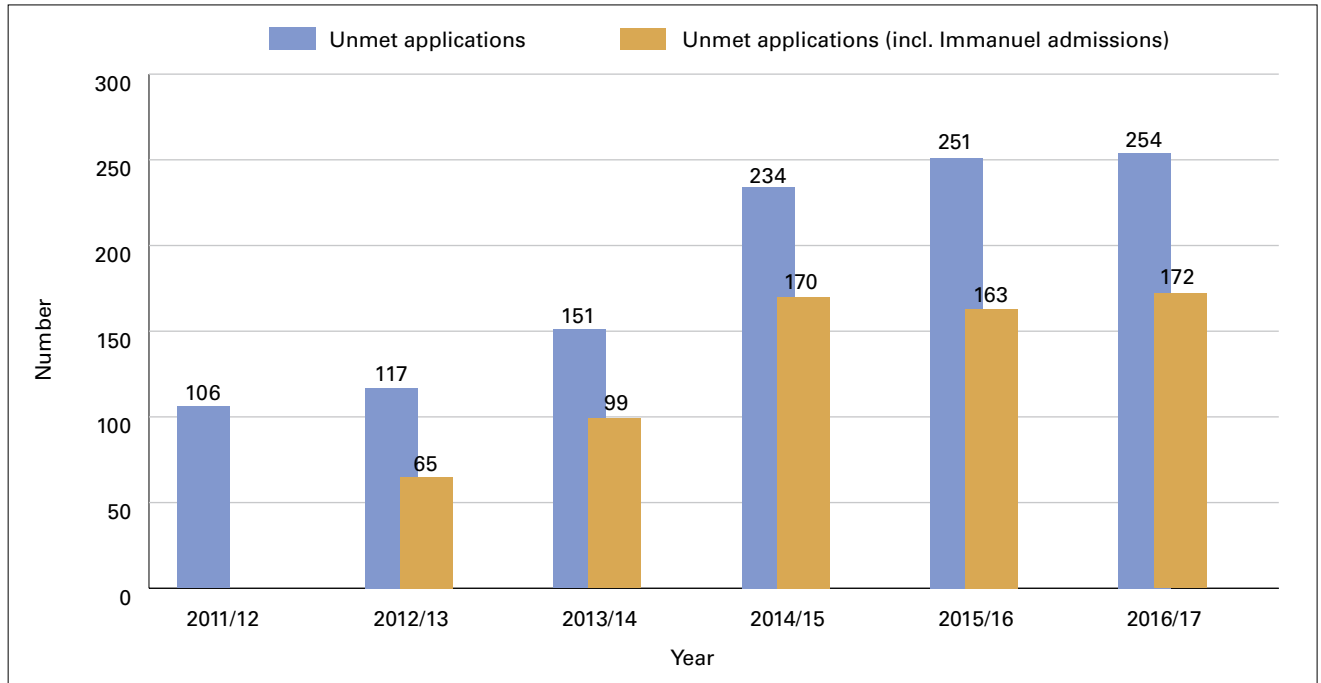


Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities and Immanuel College
 Note: Admission counts for Immanuel College in 2011/12 were not available.

three years prior to that, suggesting that the deficit of places in Jewish secondary schools

in and around London may be becoming more acute over time.

Figure 8. Number of unmet applications in North West London and South Hertfordshire (Immanuel included)



Source: Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities and Immanuel College

Note: Admission counts for Immanuel College in 2011/12 were not available. The figures shown for 2016/17 do not include the 47 one-off additional places offered by Hasmonean and Yavneh College.

Understanding the drivers of change over time

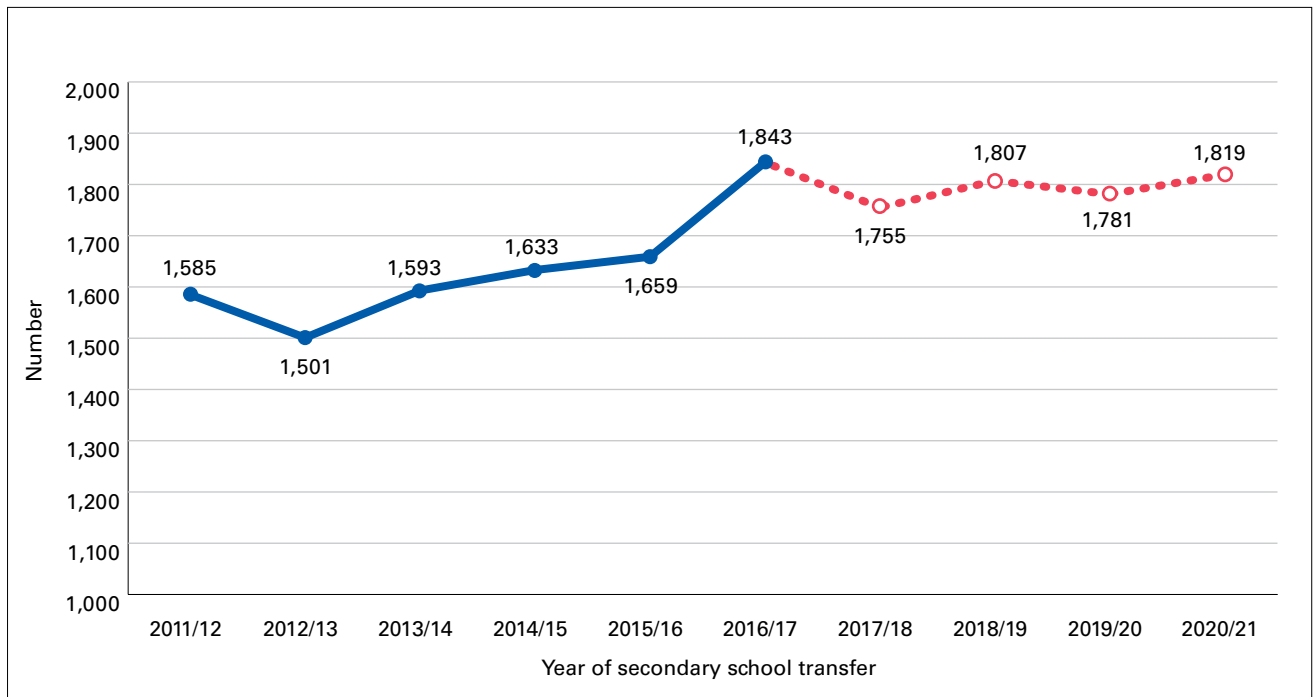
It is important to understand the factors involved in driving any changes observed. What determines the number of applications to Jewish secondary schools? There are two immediate factors affecting how many applicants there will be to Jewish secondary schools in any given year. The first of these is the number of Jewish children in the relevant age group who exist in the population as a whole. This is a finite number – in any given year, there will be a specific number of Jewish children in the Year 6 age group (i.e. aged 10/11), who are eligible to apply for places at secondary schools for the following academic year. If this number increases, one might expect the number of applicants to Jewish schools to similarly increase; if it decreases, one might expect the number to drop. However, this simple rule is complicated by the existence of a second factor – this population's *preference* for Jewish schooling. In the haredi (strictly Orthodox) part of the community, this is not a factor – 100% of haredi children choose to go to Jewish schools. However, outside the haredi sector, it is highly significant – in any given year, a certain proportion of the whole will apply to Jewish schools, whilst the

remainder will not. These proportions typically fluctuate over time – certainly, the proportion of Jewish children who apply to Jewish schools today is dramatically higher than it was a generation or two ago.⁷ So it is these two factors – the total size of the Year 6 Jewish population in any given year, and the proportion that prefers Jewish schooling – that will affect the overall demand for places in our key secondary schools.

Behind these two immediate factors are what might be termed 'ultimate factors' – other forces that influence the size of the Jewish population and the desirability of Jewish schooling. These are a host of demographic, social and political causes. They include the number of women of reproductive age in the population and their fertility rates, both of which inform how many Jewish children will exist in the population; migration – the number of Jewish children moving to Britain, or from Britain, which will likewise influence the overall size of the Jewish school pupil 'market'; and economic factors – the overall state of the economy, unemployment rates, etc., which may influence parents' choices

7 Staetsky and Boyd (2016), op. cit.

Figure 9. Number of mainstream Jewish candidate children in Year 6 in preceding year, with projection to 2020/21 (Greater London with adjacent areas of Hertfordshire and Essex)



Source: 2011 Census, table DC2107EW (religion by age by sex by geographical location), and commissioned data table CT0291 (religion by single age).

about the type of schooling they want for their children, or can afford. Yet these factors are secondary to the two fundamental measures that need to be monitored – population size and preference – as they feed into these, rather than exist as separate independent factors influencing the overarching picture.

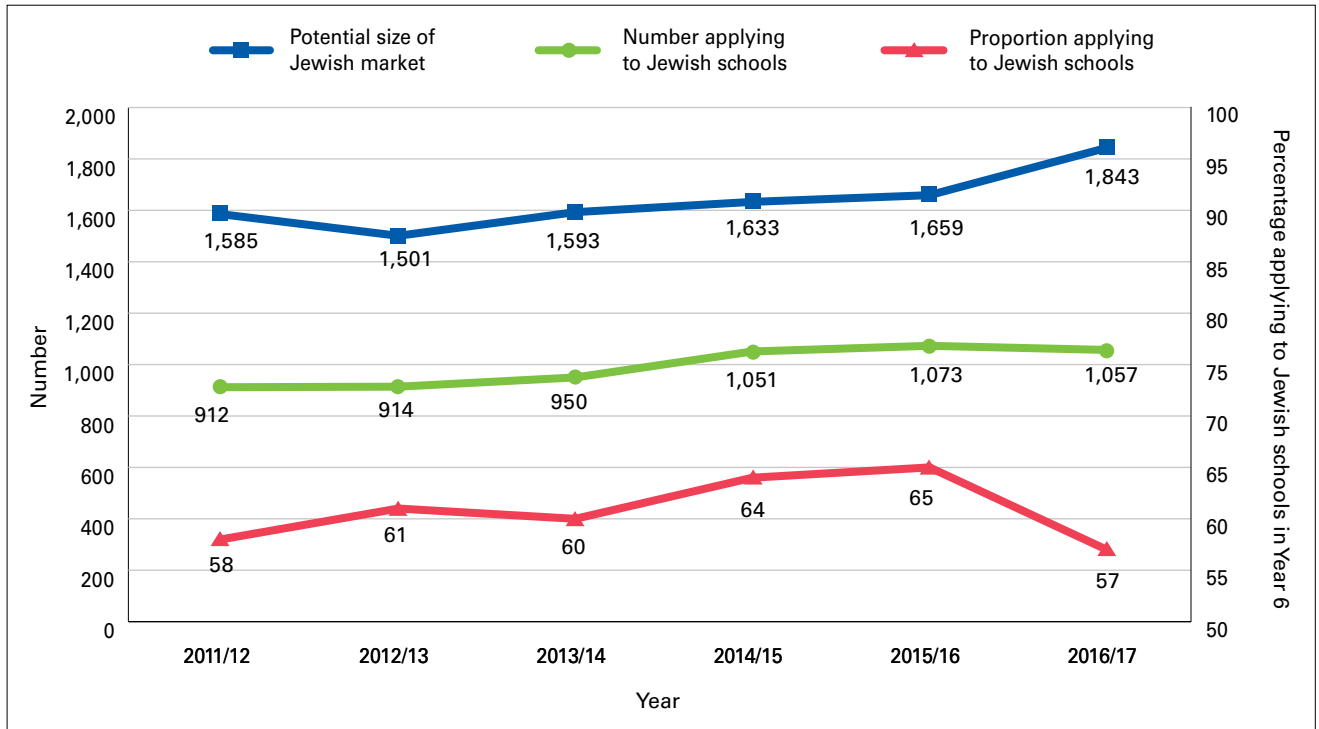
Turning first to the size of the Jewish population, it is possible to quantify how many Jewish children exist in the population as a whole – by year group – by examining UK Census data. Figure 9 shows the number of Jewish children who existed in Year 6 in Greater London and the adjacent areas of Hertfordshire and Essex in each year from 2011/12 to 2016/17, and, furthermore, the number that *will* exist in all Year 6 cohorts for every year up to 2020/21.⁸

⁸ The geographical detail of publicly available 2011 Census data allows us to reliably approximate the size of the Jewish secondary school candidate pool not only in the country as a whole, but also within particular geographical areas – in this case, those locations that feed the secondary Jewish schools in question in this report. Strictly Orthodox children were removed from the counts as they, as a rule, do not apply to the mainstream Jewish secondary schools.

This analysis reveals that part of what explains the growing gap between supply and demand, not to mention the anxiety felt within the Jewish community about whether there is an adequate supply of places in Jewish secondary schools, has been a more-or-less continual increase in the size of the Jewish population in Year 6, year-on-year. With the exception of the anomalous drop in 2012/13, the total number of children who might have been candidates for the Jewish schools in question climbed from just below 1,600 in the academic year 2011/12 to over 1,800 by 2016/17. Importantly, Census data indicate that the number has now peaked, and we expect to see a largely stable picture in this regard – at this high level – over the coming years.

But what about the level of preference for Jewish secondary schools? How does the addition of that factor alter the picture, if at all? Preference is calculated as a proportion of applications to these schools in each year out of the total number of Jewish children in Greater London and adjacent areas in the year *preceding* secondary transfer. These proportions are shown in Figure 10 (red line). The numbers of Jewish children in the population (blue line) and the numbers of applications (green

Figure 10. The effects of numbers versus preferences, 2011/12 to 2016/17



Source: 2011 Census, table DC2107EW (religion by age by sex by geographical location), and commissioned data table CT0291 (religion by single age); data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities.

Note: (1) The number of applicants in this exhibit is slightly different from the numbers appearing in the previous exhibits: only one third of applications to King Solomon is included, in an attempt to better reflect the Jewish student composition of this Jewishly undersubscribed school; (2) percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

line) are also plotted. For example, of the 1,585 Jewish children living in areas that are served by London’s six Jewish secondary schools who could have applied for a place in 2011/12, 58% of them actually did – i.e. 912 children.

Importantly, the proportion of Jewish children who have applied to Jewish schools has essentially grown year-on-year, with the exception of 2016/17, when it dropped. Generalising about the period as a whole, therefore, *both* the total number of Jewish children in the population *and* their preference for Jewish schooling increased, causing the actual number of applicants to climb from about 900 for the academic year 2011/12 to about 1,050 in the past three years. Interestingly, even the decline in preference for Jewish schooling for the entry year 2016/17 – which may or may not be anomalous (only time will tell) – did not affect this, due to the significantly higher number of candidate children in the overall pool.

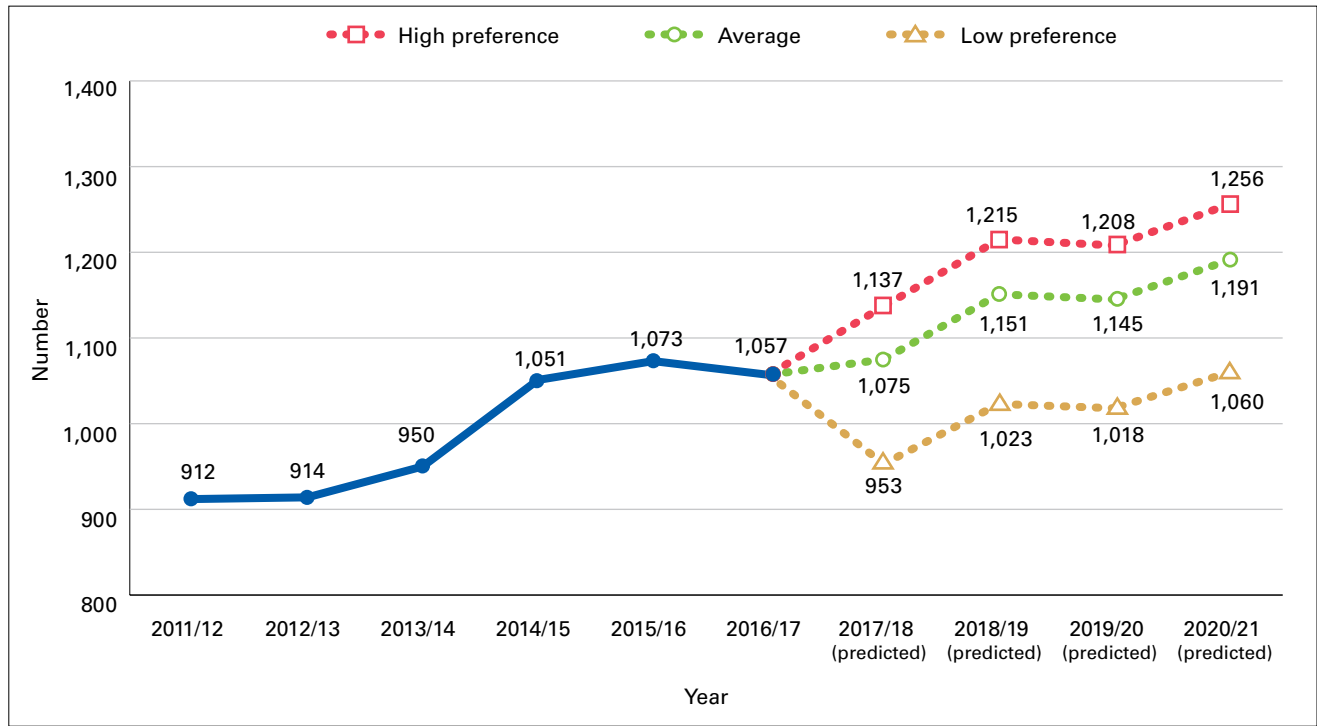
The projection

What might this mean going forward? The total number of Jewish children in each school year

cohort for the next few years is known from the 2011 Census. However, the proportion of them that will choose to apply to Jewish schools is not known. Yet, if the past is an indicator of the future, we can use the preference levels seen in recent years – which have fluctuated between 57% and 65% – to make a range of projections (Figure 11). The highest and the lowest projected numbers of applications to mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London can be obtained by applying the highest and the lowest observed levels of preference, respectively, to the number of mainstream Jewish children in London. The average projected number can be obtained by using the average preference level across the past six years.⁹

9 All projections shown take into consideration a further factor which is likely to play a part in the numbers of applicants to Jewish schools in the coming years. In each of the future years shown, new Jewish primary schools in the area will reach a point in time when they have Year 6 cohorts for the first time who will be applying for secondary school places: Immanuel Primary in 2017/18; Eden and Etz Chaim in 2018/19; Rimón in 2019/20; and Alma in 2020/21. The presence

Figure 11. Projection of future number of applications for mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London



Source: 2011 Census, table DC2107EW (religion by age by sex by geographical location), and commissioned data table CT0291 (religion by single age). Data on applications and admissions received from the local authorities. Note: See note 1 in the previous figure.

Whilst the range of possibilities shown in each year is quite large (e.g. the projected counts for the secondary school entry year 2017/18 range from 953 to 1,137), the pattern from that year onwards is identical in all three scenarios – rising in 2018/19, stabilising in 2019/20, before rising again in 2020/21. Thus the actual counts for 2017/18 in particular (which should be available in the second quarter of 2017) are expected to be an important predictor for the following three years. Furthermore, as new data become available, particularly those that incorporate demand levels from new Jewish primary schools, it will become increasingly possible to fine-tune the projections, thereby increasing their reliability. The most important conclusion, however, is this: even if the lowest ever observed preference for Jewish secondary schools is assumed to hold in future years, the future volume of applications will be close to the current volume. As that volume has been experienced both by schools and parents as challenging – so much so that it provided the motivation for this study – it is reasonable to

assume that that level of concern is likely to persist into the foreseeable future.

Mind the gap: Exploring how to manage the difference between applications and admissions

Previously, in Figure 8, we showed the scale of the gap between first preference applications to the North West London and South Hertfordshire schools, and the numbers of places available in them. We demonstrated that the size of the gap over the past three years has been in the range of 234 to 254 people, albeit offset slightly in 2016/17 by the additional 47 places offered by Hasmonean and Yavneh College. We also demonstrated that the gap in those three years was noticeably higher than in the previous three years, where it ranged between 106 and 151. But what does this gap mean? Do all of these applicants *really* want a place in the school they registered as their first choice? And if they did not get their first choice, to what extent – if at all – are they unhappy with where they ended up? We investigated what happened to the 254 applicants to the four secondary Jewish state schools who did not get their first choice for the academic year 2016/17, to try to understand this in more detail.

of these schools has no bearing on the total number of Jewish children who exist in each of the annual cohorts, but they may well affect preference levels.

From the outset, it is important to understand that all 254 people did end up attending a school, albeit not the one they registered as their first choice. These schools can be divided into four categories discussed below: (i) a non-Jewish private school; (ii) a different Jewish state school; (iii) a Jewish private school (i.e. Immanuel College); or (iv) a non-Jewish state school. Where these people ended up is important, as the decisions they made reveal the extent of dissatisfaction the students and their parents felt with the outcome and, consequently, the extent to which the unmet applications constitute a policy problem.

A number of applicants ended up at a non-Jewish private school. They applied for that private school under its own admissions criteria (as its admissions are not managed by the local authority), but also submitted a local authority application form, presumably as a back-up in case they were unsuccessful, or simply to keep their options open. In these instances, the school they registered as their first choice on the local authority form may not have actually been their top preference. Thus, one might take the view that a certain number of people included among those 254 applicants could be excluded from the gap, because even if they were offered their first preference of state school, they may have turned it down in favour of a place at a non-Jewish private school. The same is true of the applicants to Immanuel College, a private Jewish school. The state funded Jewish secondary school listed as their first preference on the form may not have been their actual first choice; rather, Immanuel College could have held that position. And, in the case of Immanuel College, even though these children did not receive a place at the Jewish state school they listed as their first choice, it is worth bearing in mind that they did end up in a school with a Jewish ethos. So again, one might believe that these children could be removed from the gap, as they were accommodated by the Jewish secondary school system.

An additional number of applicants ended up in state schools. Some of them ended up in a state Jewish secondary school that was not their first preference. For example, their preferred option might have been Hasmonian, but they ended up at their second choice, JFS. In this instance, they were accommodated by the Jewish school system, just not in their ideally preferred manner. One might argue that these children should be

removed from the gap too – whilst they did not get their first preference Jewish state school, they were, nonetheless, offered a place in a Jewish state school which they accepted. A final group of applicants ended up in non-Jewish state schools. They failed to gain a place in the Jewish school they listed as their first preference, and possibly in any other Jewish schools they named on the form as well. Ultimately, they were offered a place in a non-Jewish state school that they had listed on their form in second place or below, and they accepted it.

How one views each of these groups has a direct bearing on how one relates to these 254 cases in 2016/17. For example, some might argue categorically that all 254 children should be in Jewish schools, and the Jewish community should work to ensure that the capacity exists to accommodate every one of them, irrespective of whether or not their actual first choice was a non-Jewish private school. Others might maintain that all applicants to Jewish schools should be accommodated by their first choice school, and efforts should be made to achieve this. Others might claim that it is sufficient to provide all those who desire Jewish schooling with a place in a Jewish school, even if it is not their top preference. And yet others may argue that some (or perhaps even all) Jewish children ought to be educated in the general state system, so there is no necessity to build more capacity within the Jewish school system at all. Whichever of these positions one adopts, it is important to bear in mind that there are costs associated with each of them. Attempts to accommodate all applicants to Jewish schools are likely to create a situation where supply outstrips demand, and non-Jewish students make up the difference. On the other hand, failure to accommodate at least some of them in Jewish schools, or in the Jewish schools of their preference, is likely to maintain the current situation where demand outstrips supply, and individuals who want Jewish schooling are unable to access it.

What do we know about the particular cases of the 254 unsuccessful – or unwilling – applicants for 2016/17 places? With the support of Barnet Local Authority, we have been able to gain further information about a subset of children who applied to the schools under their administrative management (i.e. Hasmonian and JCoSS) as their

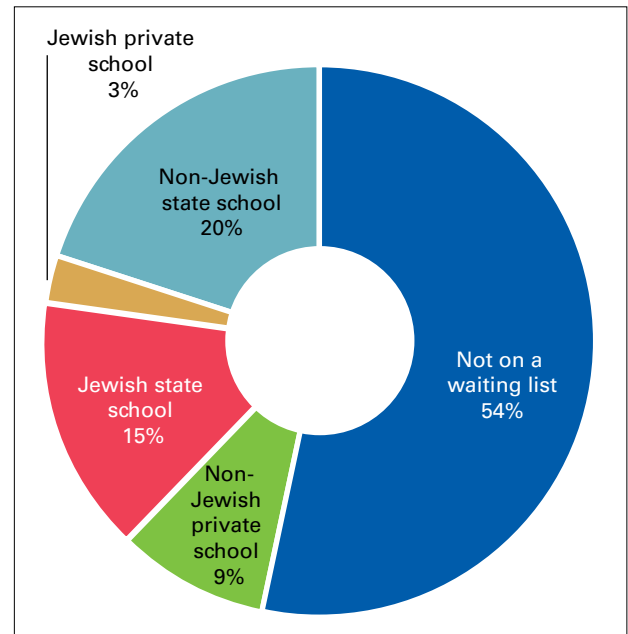
first preference, but did not get into these schools. The subset was defined as those children who were resident in Barnet, as their educational careers are tracked by the local authority in sufficient detail. What decisions did they take?

Figure 12 provides us with some information. When given an offer of a place at a school that is not their preferred option, applicants have a choice. They can either accept it fully and give up any possibility of a place at their first choice school, or they can accept it provisionally but remain on the waiting list for their preferred school in the hope that a place opens up. Thus the waiting list is a good indicator of applicant contentment – those who take themselves off it are presumably content with the offer they have received or at least comfortable accepting it; those who remain on it are rather less so. Of the subset examined, over half of them (54%) took themselves off the waiting list – the equivalent of 137 people when applied to the full group of 254.

We do not have the data to show to which type of school they were ultimately admitted, but it is reasonable to assume that whichever type it was, these applicants were content with it. By taking themselves off the waiting list for the school they listed in top position on their local authority form, many were effectively saying they no longer hankered after a place there, if indeed they ever did.

A further 9% of them – equivalent to 23 people when applied to the group of 254 – ended up in a non-Jewish private school, whilst keeping their names on the waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school. This possibly indicates some degree of ambivalence about that private school, perhaps due to its cost, or its non-Jewish character, or some other factor. Nevertheless, the decision was taken to proceed with that option, indicating a degree of contentment with it, certainly when contrasted with either a second preference Jewish state school or a non-Jewish state school. 3% (equivalent to 8 people) chose Immanuel College, but kept their names on the waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school. In this instance, the most likely explanation is economic – clearly, there is a strong partiality for Orthodox Jewish schooling, but a preference for a non-fee paying option if possible. A further 15% (equivalent to 38 people) ended up in a Jewish state school that was not their first

Figure 12. Destinations of the applicants who did not get their first preference applications met, circa 2015/16



Note: (1) Calculations of percentages for each destination category were carried out on the basis of 47 cases of Barnet residents remaining on the waiting lists of JCoSS and Hasmonean at the time of data extraction; (2) Figures do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

choice. So, in these cases, they are being catered for by the state Jewish school system, yet they still hanker after a place at their preferred Jewish state school.

The final 20% (the equivalent of around 50 people when applied to the 254) ended up in a non-Jewish state school, yet remained on the waiting list for the Jewish school they listed as their top preference on the form. This group arguably comprises the most significant one in Jewish communal terms – people who said they wanted a place at a Jewish state school as their top preferred option, but could not be accommodated to their satisfaction. In some instances, these are individuals who listed more than one Jewish school on their form and could not be accommodated by any of them; in others, they are individuals who only listed one Jewish school on the form – in top place – because they were clear about the type of Jewish school they wanted, and were unwilling to countenance any other. Either way, these are all people who clearly stated that they wanted Jewish schooling and did not get it.

Bearing all of this in mind, how should one relate to the gap between applications and admissions?

Table 1. Number of pupils who are candidates for intervention under different assumptions about its appropriateness

Assumption	Result (A)	Result (B)
Everyone who put a Jewish school down as their first preference genuinely wants to go to a Jewish school above all other options	254	207
People who are no longer on a waiting list are content where they are	117	95
People who remain on a waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school, but ended up in a different Jewish state school are happy where they are	79	64
People who remain on a waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school, but ended up in a non-Jewish private school are happy where they are	56	45
People who remain on a waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school, but ended up in a Jewish private school are happy where they are	48	39
People who remain on a waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school, but ended up in a non-Jewish state school are happy where they are	0	0

Table 1 offers a number of different ways policy makers might relate to it, depending on the assumptions they make about Jewish schooling in the North West London/South Hertfordshire area. Two sets of figures are offered (Results A and B): A takes as its base all 254 applicants; B uses the reduced number of 207 following the opening up of the 47 extra places at Hasmonean and Yavneh College.

Certainly, different people will approach the question of how to address the gap with different assumptions. Our view is as follows. First, it is more appropriate to use the figures shown in Result A than B both because the size of the gap has remained at that approximate level for the past three years, and because the efforts made by Hasmonean and Yavneh for the 2016/17 intake cannot be repeated in 2017/18. Second, it is entirely reasonable to assume that the needs of the 54% of applicants who took themselves off the waiting list for their preferred Jewish state school do not need to be actively met. We do not know where they ended up, but many will have been accommodated in Jewish or non-Jewish private schools or other Jewish state schools. Most importantly, by removing themselves from the waiting list, they are, in effect, saying that they are largely content with their offer – they have fully accepted it. Third, the preferences of the next group on the list – i.e. those who remain on the waiting list for their preferred state Jewish school, but have nonetheless accepted a place in a different state Jewish school – do not need to be more actively met. Not only are they being provided with government funded Jewish

schooling, any attempt to meet their preferences more actively is likely to lead to a situation in which supply outstrips demand. This would create a new set of challenges whereby Jewish schools either have to accommodate Jewish pupils whose Jewishness is not aligned with the Jewish ethos of the school, or non-Jewish pupils, or both. This leaves 79 individuals who appear to be saying that they still want a place at their preferred Jewish state school, but failing that, have accepted one either at a private school (Jewish or non-Jewish) or at a non-Jewish state school. Thus, based on the data available to us (which, we stress, relates to information pertaining to a subset of the 254 applicants, rather than all of them), it is reasonable to assume that, for the academic year 2016/17, there were approximately eighty additional Jewish children who genuinely appeared to desire a place in a state secondary Jewish school in the North West London/South Hertfordshire area, and were unable to find one. This situation is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, and potentially even become somewhat more acute, although putting definitive numbers on it at this stage would be premature.

However, looking further into the future – ten to twenty years ahead – it is important to be aware that we expect to see a drop in the number of *mainstream* (non-strictly Orthodox) Jewish parents of secondary school children in the UK Jewish population as a whole, and indeed, in the Jewish population of London specifically. Jewish population data from the UK Census show this very clearly, and a reduction in the number of Jewish parents

could correspond directly to a reduction in the number of Jewish children, which could then affect levels of demand not only for secondary schools, but for primary ones too. This is not a demographic certainty, but it is possible, unless we see clear evidence of one or more of the following: an increase in fertility levels among British Jewish women; an increase in preference levels for Jewish schooling; a significant increase in Jewish immigration to the UK from abroad; a

significant increase in internal Jewish migration into London; or a significant movement among haredi Jews into the more mainstream Jewish sector. To determine the demand for Jewish schooling in the long-term, all of these factors should be carefully monitored and taken into consideration. The only way to do this is to continually collect the appropriate data, year-on-year, and adjust projections for demand over a five-year horizon accordingly.

Summary and recommendations for further research

About the investigation

This investigation arose in response to concerns expressed by parents, sponsors of Jewish schools and Jewish community leaders about an inadequate supply of places in mainstream Jewish secondary schools in and around London. It aimed to understand the dynamics of supply and demand in this context, and, in particular, to assess whether or not there are enough spaces available to meet current and projected future levels of demand.

In examining this question, it broke new ground in two specific ways. First, it identified the two key determinants that need to be measured to make an assessment: (i) the total number of Jewish children who, together, form the pool of *potential* applicants to these schools; and (ii) the number of these children who indicate that they want a place at one of these schools. Second, it identified and accessed applications data as a proxy for measuring demand, an approach never previously used.

Attempts have been made in the past to measure and project demand for Jewish schools, not least by researchers working to advise the Commission on Jewish Schools in 2008.¹⁰ However, the measures employed by those researchers at that time, whilst based on the only data available to them, were imprecise because they focused on the *uptake* by Jewish schools rather than the demand for them – they measured preference for Jewish schooling by dividing the number of Jewish children attending Jewish schools by the total number of Jewish children in the population. For future reference, it is important for researchers to be aware that this is an inadequate way to understand preference as it captures the actual level of attendance at a Jewish school rather than the desire to attend one.

This is particularly problematic because the actual capacity of Jewish schools (the numerator of

the uptake figure) cannot be expected to change immediately (e.g. to increase) in response to a change (e.g. increase) in preference. The expansion of school facilities is a process that takes time. So, an increase in preference for Jewish schools can only be expected to be accommodated with some time lag, not immediately, and any lack of increase in uptake should not be interpreted as a straightforward indication of stalling preferences. Furthermore, a decrease in uptake could take place alongside high and rising levels of preference when the number of Jewish children in the population increases, simply because the schools cannot necessarily accommodate sudden and sharp increases in numbers. Thus, uptake is a measure of the existing status quo, rather than a measure of preference as such. The uptake of places is informative as an overarching measure of schools' popularity, and we recommend that it is used in this way in the future. It should be abandoned, however, when projections of future demand are required, in favour of a measure based on applications. Relating the number of applications to the number of Jewish children in each year will produce a better measure of preference for planning purposes.

Summary of findings

In presenting its findings, this study first provided a picture of the trend in supply and demand seen over the past six years, and demonstrated that the scope of unmet demand for places has increased over time. Indeed, in 2016/17, the volume of unmet applications was the highest in the known history of the Jewish secondary school sector. Second, it showed that the roots of this situation lie in two technically independent but concurrent trends: (i) an increase in the number of children of secondary school age in the Jewish population of London; and (ii) an increase in the proportion of these children who apply to Jewish secondary schools, i.e. an increase in preference for Jewish secondary schooling. Third, it presented three future scenarios for the volume of applications to mainstream Jewish secondary schools in London. In two of these three scenarios, the volume of applications to these schools is projected to rise; in

10 The Commission on Jewish Schools. 2008. *The Future of Jewish Schools*. Jewish Leadership Council.

the third scenario, it is projected to remain at the current level (itself, the highest in history).

Given these broad findings, one should not be surprised at the recent attempts by educational activists to establish new mainstream state Jewish secondary schools in London.¹¹ They sensed what this study has revealed: there is, indeed, a shortage of places, and an excess of demand over supply, and this is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, the precise scale of the gap, whilst clearer now than previously, remains at least somewhat opaque, not least because applicants' genuine desires, if indeed they are clear to the applicants themselves, can only be inferred from the available data.

Shortcomings in this methodological approach and how to improve it

So, is there a need for further provision of places at Jewish secondary schools in or around London? If so, can that demand be met simply by expanding capacity in one or more of the existing schools? Or is the demand sufficiently great to require the establishment of a new school, or even two, in the area? If so, how large should it/they be? Based on what is known about the gap between supply and demand, should they subscribe to a particular denominational position? And, if indeed further provision should be created, where should it be located?

To answer these questions, additional steps are required to translate the insights obtained so far, and to recast them in practical terms. However, in order to achieve this, three obstacles found within this study need to be overcome: (i) the imperfect definition of demand; (ii) the inherent uncertainty that exists in human intention; and (iii) the inadequate understanding of the determinants of Jewish school choice. Can anything be done to address these?

Improving the definition of demand

In this study, demand for secondary school places was measured by quantifying the volume of first preference applications for school

places across all mainstream Jewish secondary school places in London. This is the best available option at present, although it could be improved, albeit at a price, and only with the cooperation of the admissions teams at the relevant local authorities. The key missing link is data on *eligibility*, as one cannot assume that all applicants are necessarily eligible for a place at a given school. Whilst individuals' preferences are taken into account during the allocations process, eligibility criteria, which are formulated by schools and implemented by local authorities in order to address the challenges of oversubscription, are the most central component in determining who is, and who is not, ultimately allocated a place.

Not taking into account eligibility criteria is limiting for the following reason. Pupils whose first preference was not met may not have been eligible for a place anyway. In the event that they were aware of their own ineligibility, they may have been applying opportunistically, 'just in case' a place became available for them. The extent to which not having a place in a Jewish secondary school is a source of significant frustration for them is unclear. Eligibility criteria for Jewish secondary schools may include attendance at a Jewish primary school and/or regular attendance at Jewish religious services. Pupils not fulfilling these criteria may be less determined to be accepted into a Jewish secondary school, compared to children who do fulfil these criteria. Thus, knowing more about the extent to which each applicant meets the established eligibility criteria for each school would provide far greater insight into the likely degree of frustration felt by not being allocated a place.

The way to improve the definition of demand is to incorporate the eligibility criteria in the data provided by the admissions teams of the local authorities, i.e. to count first preference applications to school x which fulfil the minimal eligibility criteria of that school. If such an application is refused, there is a higher probability that this application originated from the serious and committed applicant than under a definition that does not take into account the schools' eligibility criteria. The information on eligibility criteria is held by local authorities, and could, in theory, be extracted for the purposes

11 Simon Rucker in Jewish Chronicle, 29 September 2016, 'Effort to unify rival Orthodox free school bids', <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/164020/effort-unify-rival-orthodox-free-school-bids>.

of investigation. However, this has never been tried before. It remains unclear whether or not the admissions teams can share these data, given the confidentiality constraints, and even if they can, the effort required and the costs involved are unclear. Yet implementing an effort to supply this new information could be expected to result in a better approximation of the seriousness of the shortage of school places.

However, it would not solve the problem completely. Additional measures are also necessary to achieve that, and in particular, finding a way to reduce the uncertainty behind the intentions of the applicants.

Reducing the uncertainty behind applicants' intentions

First preference applications may include pupils who applied to one or more private secondary schools, and for whom a private school is their real first preference, as we made clear earlier in this report. Their listing of a state-funded Jewish secondary school as their first preference on the local authority form is, in reality, a back-up option in the eventuality that they fail to secure a place at their preferred private school or schools. Because the system of applications to private schools is completely independent from that for state-funded schools, it is impossible to identify these children during the application stage. The uncertainty created by their presence in the first preference data investigated in this report expresses itself in our inability to relate to shortage – i.e. the gap between the number of available places in all Jewish secondary schools and the number of first preference applications – as a straightforward measure of the extent to which provision needs to be expanded.

Furthermore, the designation of a particular Jewish secondary school as a 'first preference' school is administratively imposed. Pupils/families have to choose one school as their first preference and another as their second preference, even if, in reality, they are equally predisposed to both schools (e.g. JCoSS and JFS). Thus, in cases such as this, being refused a 'first preference' school may not result in significant frustration.

At present, there is no way to address these obstacles. However, we are in a position to

outline a general direction for thinking about how to translate the currently imperfect measure of shortage into a more direct indicator of the number of secondary school places that should be added to accommodate all applicants, without creating the opposite challenge of oversupply. First, in addition to continuing to monitor the types of data explored in this report, we recommend systematically monitoring the level of discontent with the current level of secondary school places, at a school level. A shortage of places would be expected to generate discontent among pupils and parents. Discontent will be felt at different levels by people involved in the process of allocating places. Each level of shortage is expected to correspond to a certain level of discontent, expressing itself in different volumes of informal inquiries, complaints, Freedom of Information requests and other means to challenge the outcome, which may come from parents of disappointed applicants. To put it differently, each level of parental dissatisfaction will leave administrative traces. In theory at least, all such inquiries, formal complaints and requests could be counted on an annual basis. Thinking along these lines would help to match the objective measurements of shortage presented in this report onto the levels of discontent felt, thereby strengthening the assessment of the real need to expand school places. This quantitative indicator of the level of discontent could serve as an assessment of the minimal number of serious and committed applicants, whilst the measure of shortage presented in this paper could be treated as an indicator of maximal preference for Jewish secondary schools.

Second, all Jewish secondary schools possess waiting lists. In this project we benefited from access to counts of pupils on the waiting lists of two schools only (JCoSS and Hasmonean). It is our understanding that the waiting lists in these two instances at least are updated regularly, with the admissions teams approaching the families annually to confirm their desire to remain on the list or to remove themselves from it. The numerical trends in the behaviour of the waiting lists should be investigated. All waiting lists should be monitored annually. If the annual volume of new entrants to the schools' waiting lists was known, a ratio of this number to the shortage (the gap between the number of

available places in all Jewish secondary schools and the number of first preference applications) could be calculated. In this way yet another indicator of minimal preference (waiting list) and maximal preference (shortage as calculated here) could be obtained.

Which Jewish school?

This study focused exclusively on the quantification of the shortage, examining trends in supply and demand of places and projecting their future levels. However, for practical purposes, the question of ‘which Jewish school?’ is no less important than ‘whether a Jewish school?’ Irrespective of whether or not provision of Jewish secondary education is going to be expanded, kept at current levels or reduced, policy makers ought to have clarity about what drives the choice of a particular Jewish secondary school. There are two main types of candidate factors. The first is the Jewish denominational affiliation or affinity of the prospective pupils and their families. The second is their place of residence and its distance from the various Jewish secondary schools.

Do families seek a Jewish school that is closely aligned with their denominational background and worldview, and are they willing to travel significant distances when this requirement is met? Or are families primarily driven by practicalities, put off by long travel distances and prepared to compromise on the denominational position of the school? Are there other factors that attract or deter families? The current state of resources in this area, namely, the existence of a dataset linking Jewish secondary schools in London and

all primary schools that send pupils to a Jewish secondary school, is conducive to carrying out an investigation into the drivers of choice.

Specifically, a statistical model can be developed that quantifies the probability of applying to a given Jewish secondary school, simultaneously as a function of the religious character/denomination of the pupils who apply, on the one hand, and of the distance between the school and place of residence of the applicants, on the other. Preliminary experimentation with the data has produced promising results and, in view of that, we urge policy makers in this area to invest in this work.

Conclusion

This report has clearly demonstrated the existence of a sizeable gap between the demand for places at Jewish secondary schools in and around London, and those schools’ capacity to meet that demand. It has shown that this situation is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, if not become more acute. At the same time, it has revealed some of the weaknesses that exist in the data analysed, which complicate our ability to address fully how best to respond to the gap in policy terms. Whilst no previous research has managed to go this far in revealing the nature of the problem, further insights are required if the most appropriate policy solutions are to be pursued. We have outlined how to achieve those insights empirically, and we strongly recommend that Jewish community leaders who are concerned with striking the best balance between supply and demand in the coming years invest appropriately in that work.

Reflections

Rabbi David Meyer

Executive Director

Partnerships for Jewish Schools

The development of Jewish schools is perhaps one of the greatest success stories in the Anglo-Jewish community. The schools have not just grown in number, but have progressed significantly in the quality of provision and the outcomes in both Jewish and secular studies. Indeed, at both primary and secondary level, the community's schools are recognised as among the top performing schools in the country.

Partially as a result of this success, over the past few years there appears to have been an ever-increasing pressure on Jewish secondary school places and there have been ongoing discussions about a shortage of places. Partnerships for Jewish Schools (PaJeS) carried out some initial research which indicated that there had been a significant increase in applications and that the numbers in Jewish primary schools were indeed increasing.

It is clear that there has to be a strategy to address the potential increase. However, any future planning requires information about future levels of demand. Knowing the numbers of children at Jewish primary schools was not enough, especially as parental preferences vary considerably between schools.

It is essential that we have accurate data as creating increased provision without sufficient demand would result in unnecessary oversupply. Conversely, not providing enough places would cause anguish and uncertainty for families across the community.

We therefore commissioned JPR, and asked the impossible: to take into consideration all the potential variables and to project what the likely numbers of applications would be over the next five years. This report is a reflection of their tenacity, expertise and professionalism.

Perhaps the most exciting element of this research is its relevance and practical impact. It is rare that this kind of research would have such an important and immediate impact on the plans of

the community. It leaves the community with three key challenges.

1. The importance of ongoing monitoring to inform future planning

As this report indicates, it is important that the community continues to monitor the demand for places, not just to ensure that the level of provision is sufficient, but as an indicator of the attitudes of parents and the value placed by the community on Jewish education.

2. The need for a strategy to meet the increase in demand

This report demonstrates that there is currently a significant shortage of places at Jewish schools, and that, depending on the model, this number is likely to either remain at its current level or increase quite significantly. The community needs to assess how to meet this need, and whether it can best be met through the expansion of current provision or the building of a new school.

3. The importance of maintaining educational standards

A determining factor in future projections is parental preference and it is almost certainly due to the quality of education that parents are selecting Jewish schooling above other state provision and even alternative private education. This is a testament to the tireless efforts of the governors, leaders and teachers of the schools. However, it also implies an ongoing challenge if they are to be able to maintain the current level of demand. Schools must consider how to build on their reputation and ensure an outstanding Jewish and secular provision.

The UK Jewish community has one of the highest proportions of children attending Jewish schools in the diaspora. However, this is as much of a challenge as it is an accolade. With over 35,000 children in Jewish schools, it is incumbent on the

community to ensure the best possible provision. This can only be achieved through investment and support, enabling schools to develop and deliver a curriculum that prepares our children for the challenges of the future.

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It has been a privilege for PaJeS to have taken a lead in this important work. We are determined to continue to support schools in their strategic planning and ongoing development and to help ensure the excellence of Jewish education across the UK.

jpr / report

Institute for Jewish Policy Research

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ORT House, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NE

tel +44 (0)20 7424 9265

e-mail jpr@jpr.org.uk

website www.jpr.org.uk

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