

The Education Panel Legacy Report

Report to: Education Panel

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 4 February 2016

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 Since 2013, the London Assembly Education Panel has worked to review and investigate the development and delivery of the Mayor's Education Programme, as well as examine key strategic issues in the capital on behalf of Londoners. It has published a report, *London Learners, London Lives*, which outlined how well London's schools are performing, and the challenges they face in maintaining this performance in the future.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Panel notes the report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 A high quality education system is of central importance to London's continuing economic growth and social cohesion. In recognition of this, the Mayor established his Education Inquiry in December 2011, to explore the critical challenges facing London's primary and secondary schools and establish a more proactive role for the Mayor and the GLA to help drive up standards and performance. To provide oversight of this expanded Mayoral role, the GLA Oversight Committee set up the cross-party Education Panel, to review and investigate the development and delivery of the Mayor's Education Programme, as well as examine key strategic issues in the capital on behalf of Londoners.
- 3.2 This legacy report provides an overview of the Panel's work and impact over the Mayoral term 2012 – 2016. The Panel has held nine meetings exploring key areas of the education sector, produced one major report examining the performance of London's schools and exchanged a series of letters with the Mayor and central Government suggesting changes to, and seeking clarification of, policies relating to free school funding, alternative education provision and improving school performance.

Future Priorities

- 3.3 Despite the admirable improvement in London's schools over the past decade, there remain challenges. These include ensuring that all children benefit from an innovative and high quality

education across the capital, and how best to maintain and develop this improved performance in light of major population growth over the next twenty years.

- 3.4 It will be up to the next Mayor to determine what role the GLA will play in education in the future. The last four years has shown that a Mayor can have a positive impact on schools and teaching, and can help to maintain a pan-London perspective in an increasingly fragmented education sector. With the devolution of the adult skills budget to the Mayor in 2019, and the ongoing challenges of maintaining performance in a complex sector, there is arguably a need to retain a robust role in supporting the education sector.

4. The school places crisis

- 4.1 The school places crisis has been an issue that the Panel maintained a consistent focus on since it was established. In October 2014, the Education Panel published its report *London Learners, London Lives: Tackling the school places crisis and supporting children to achieve the best they can* which outlined the capacity crisis facing London's schools as a result of the sudden population growth over the past decade. According to the 2011 Census, London's population stood at 8.2 million, an increase of close to a million people over the previous decade. By 2021, London's population is expected to reach 9.2 million. By 2018, London will have approximately 1.3 million children in its maintained education system. The report identifies challenges around needs assessment, planning and funding, and recommends that:
- The Mayor set out a strategic pupil places needs assessment, in consultation with key stakeholders;
 - The Mayor, in partnership with London Councils, should establish a land and asset availability assessment; and
 - The Mayor should continue lobbying for increased capital funding from central Government to properly fund new schools.
- 4.2 In addition to the report, the Panel has also held annual updates in 2013, 2014 and 2015, which showed the capacity crisis moving from primary to secondary schools. In October 2015, the GLA Intelligence Unit published the first pan-London assessment of future school place need, as a result of the Panel's recommendation from its report. This will continue to be developed and refreshed annually.

5. Raising Standards in London's Schools

- 5.1 In November 2013, the Education Panel looked at progress made on the Mayor's Education Inquiry, one year after it had reported its findings. The purpose of the Inquiry was to examine the most pressing issues for primary and secondary school education in London and develop recommendations for practical action. The Panel examined the newly established Gold Club and London Schools Excellence Fund (LSEF), to determine how they intend to improve pupil and teacher performance, and whether they add value to initiatives already underway in London. It called for more transparency about how decisions were taken, particularly for the LSEF. The Panel returned to this issue in November 2015 as the GLA began to evaluate the programme and determine how the lessons learned would be used in a future Mayoralty.

- 5.2 The Education Panel has also explored the performance of London's schools relative to other UK regions and other relevant nations with guests from OFSTED, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture. As a result of this meeting, the Chair of the Education Panel, Jennette Arnold OBE AM wrote to the Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture to urge the GLA to revisit the feasibility of compiling London specific data from OECD and PISA rankings. The GLA has since commissioned external research based on PISA data to better understand London's global standing in education performance.
- 5.3 Finally, the Panel will use its final meeting in February 2016 to examine the current state of the Further Education sector in London. This will examine the pressure on the FE sector in light of reduced Government finances, its effect on the quality of its provision and the London-wide AREA Review which will help determine its future development.

6. Accountability and tackling poorly performing schools

- 6.1 Academies and Free Schools are seen by the Mayor as key to stimulating innovative thinking to improve performance, as well as making schools more accountable to parents. In 2014, London had over a third of all free schools in England, and there are now more free schools and academies in London than maintained schools. In February 2014, the Education Panel met with representatives from free schools, the National Union of Teachers and the Mayor to discuss the Mayor's support for free schools and academies. The Panel explored the type of support offered by the Mayor through the London Academies Enterprise Trust, and the New Schools Unit at the GLA.
- 6.2 As part of its examination of the Mayor's Academies Programme, the Education Panel visited Bexleyheath Academy to better understand the type of programmes that Mayoral funding was supporting. The Academy seeks to identify those at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at Year 9 and then to use GLA funding to design a bespoke curriculum to engage with those students and support them in enrichment activities they might not ordinarily have access to. Panel Members determined that this model is one that the Mayor should build on to provide a mechanism by which underachievement can be effectively challenged and the students offered rapid support.
- 6.3 Following the meeting, the Chair wrote to the Mayor seeking clarification on several issues including where the Mayor has used any powers to help establish a Free School and how his planning guidance prioritises the provision of Free Schools. A letter was also sent to the Education Funding Agency asking for further details on how it notifies people when viable sites for Free Schools appear.

7. Alternative provision and children with complex needs

- 7.1 Alternative provision (AP), including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), provides an alternative to mainstream education for a range of students, including: excluded pupils; those with mental health, medical needs or behavioural issues; pregnant pupils and young mothers; and others who might be identified as vulnerable due to health or social difficulties. In November 2014, the Education Panel questioned stakeholders in the AP sector on the issues they face in delivering quality education to this vulnerable group. These include the challenging relationship with mainstream schools and the

lack of information on pupils' previous record, the ongoing poor academic performance of most of their students, and the poor planning at local level for this provision.

- 7.2 In September 2014, the Education Panel examined the likely impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 on the education offer to young people with complex needs. One in every five pupils has a special education need in London, and the Panel heard that the challenge to education professionals is intensifying as the complexity of need amongst pupils increases. In a letter to the Mayor following the meeting, the Chair of the Education Panel noted that these children were increasingly becoming separated from mainstream education, which may be due to schools, and particularly academies, refusing their admission. It asked that they Mayor be more vocal in his advocacy for inclusive academies, and to be mindful ensuring that proper provision is made in new school buildings in any planning decisions the Mayor calls-in.

8. A Regional Identity

- 8.1 In 2014, the Government established Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) to intervene where academies are underperforming, and to approve new academies and new academy sponsors. The Education Panel first examined this development in its report *London Learners, London Lives*, where it criticised the Government's decision to split London into three separate regions on the basis that much of the work to improve London's schools was done through a pan-London framework. It recommended that the decision be revised and London treated as a single region under one Commissioner. In March 2014, the Chair wrote to the Secretary of State for Education to raise concerns about the division of London, and about the manner in which RSCs had been appointed by the Secretary.
- 8.2 The Education Panel returned to this issue in November 2015, when it questioned the RSC for the East of England and North East of London about his first year in post, and the challenges he faces in monitoring and intervening across such a large and diverse region. Members of the Panel expressed concern that London's gains over the last decade could be halted by the new governance structure and reiterated support for a single London region.
- 8.3 Subsequently, the Mayor and the Education Parliamentary Select Committee have also echoed this call for a single London region.

9. Media Review

- 9.1 The Education Panel has successfully highlighted London's school places shortage. The Panel's report, *London Learners, London Lives*, achieved TV coverage on ITV London as well as national coverage on ITV.com. The report also featured in London media including the *Evening Standard* – with a readership of over 900,000 – and South London Press.
- 9.2 The investigation itself – which called for parents and teachers to have their voices heard on the issue – featured widely in regional media including the *Evening Standard*, *The Wharf*, *London 24* and *Barking & Dagenham Now* in addition to the trade publication, *Children and Young People Now*.

- 9.3 The Panel has also gained media coverage through addressing topical issues such as the effectiveness of Pupil Referral Units and more recently, if London schools can compete with schools in other global cities.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 Under Section 31 of the GLA Act, the Mayor is not permitted to incur expenditure in providing, among other things, 'any education services' for which provision might be made by any other public body. However, the Mayor has the power, under Section 30 of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Act 1999, to promote, among other things, social development in London and Section 186 of the Localism Act 2011 permits the Mayor to sponsor academies or facilitate their sponsorship.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report: None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None
Contact Officer: Ian O' Sullivan, Project Officer Telephone: 020 7983 6540 E-mail: ian.osullivan@london.gov.uk