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Title: The impact of COVID-19 School Closures on Education Inequality in London

Executive Summary

At the Education Panel meeting on 30 September 2020, the Panel resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the discussion.

Following consultation with party Group Lead members, Jennette Arnold OBE AM, the Chair of the Education Panel, agreed the Panel's letters to the Mayor and the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP, as an output to the Q&A on 'The Impact of COVID-19 School Closures on Education Inequality in London'. The letters are attached as **Appendices 1 and 2.**

Decision

That the letters to the Mayor of London and the Secretary of Education be agreed, as attached at Appendices 1 and 2.

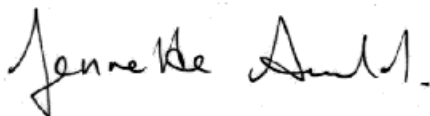
Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature

Date 19/10/2020



Printed Name

Jennette Arnold OBE AM

Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Notes:

1. The Lead Officer should prepare this form for signature by relevant Members of the Assembly to record any instance where the Member proposes to take action under a specific delegated authority. The purpose of the form is to record the advice received from officers, and the decision made.
2. **The 'background' section (below) should be used to include an indication as to whether the information contained in / referred to in this Form should be considered as exempt under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA), or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). If so, the specimen Annex (attached below) should be used. If this form does deal with exempt information, you must submit both parts of this form for approval together.**

Background and proposed next steps:

At the Education Panel meeting on 30 September 2020, the Panel resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the discussion.

Following consultation with party Group Lead members, Jennette Arnold OBE AM, the Chair of the Education Panel, agreed the Panel's letters to the Mayor and the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, as an output to the Q&A on 'The Impact of COVID-19 School Closures on Education Inequality in London'. **Attached at Appendix 1 and 2.**

Copies of the letters will be reported back to the Education Panel at its next formal meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision

Signed by Committee Services



Date 16/10/20

Print Name: Lamide Odanye

Tel: x1307

Financial implications NOT REQUIRED

NOTE: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signed by Finance

N/A

Date

Print Name

N/A

Tel:

Legal implications

The Chair of the Education Panel has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signed by Legal



Date 16/10/2020

Print Name

Emma Strain, Monitoring Officer

Tel: X 4399

Supporting detail/List of Consultees:

Tony Arbour AM and David Kurten AM

Public Access to Information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? No

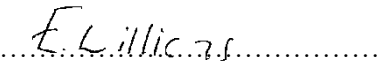
Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form - NO

Lead Officer/Author

Signed	Daniel Tattersall	Date 20/10/20
Print Name	Daniel Tattersall	Tel: 07783 05825
Job Title	Senior Policy Advisor	
Countersigned by Executive Director		Date 21/10/20
Print Name	Ed Williams	Tel: X4399



Appendix 1

Jennette Arnold OBE AM Chair of the Education Panel

Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

cc: Joanne McCartney, Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare

15 October 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Data collection to understand the impact of the COVID-19 school closures in London.

On 30 September 2020, the London Assembly Education Panel held a formal meeting to explore the effect that the COVID-19 school closures have had on education inequality in London.

The Panel heard from expert witnesses Stuart Darke (Regional Organiser, Greater London Regional Centre, NASUWT), Rebecca Montacute (Research and Policy Manager, Sutton Trust), Rob Coe (Senior Associate, Education Endowment Foundation), as well as your Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare, Joanne McCartney. We also received written testimony from Steve Chalke (Founder, Oasis Academies) and London Councils.

During the meeting, it became apparent that there currently is not any robust London-specific data that measures the effect of the COVID-19 school closures on education inequality in London. Although there have been a number of national studies by respected bodies such as University College London's Institute of Education,¹ as Rob Coe put it in our meeting:

¹ Green, [Schoolwork in lockdown: new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty](#), 2020

“London is quite different from the rest of England. I do think that when policymakers are making decisions about how they address these kinds of issues, it probably is quite important to have local information.”

The COVID-19 school closures are relatively recent developments, and the Panel is aware that collecting robust, local and granular data takes time. However, we would like to be reassured that data collection is ongoing, or that firm plans are in place to collect data, so that the full impact of the school closures on London’s young people is known. Only then, we believe, can Mayoral policies to help redress any widening of education inequalities, alongside effective and informed advocacy to national government on behalf of London’s young people, take place.

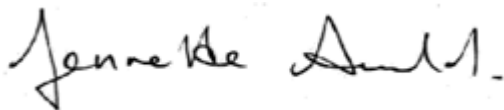
Furthermore, in the meeting the Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare agreed with our guests that producing granular data, to understand whether school closures have had a differential impact on young people from different ethnic backgrounds, “going forward is certainly something that we should be doing”. Currently, as the Panel were informed by the Deputy Mayor, this is not taking place.

The Education Panel therefore recommends that:

- **The Mayor should inform the Education Panel about ongoing or planned data collection to understand the effect of the COVID-19 school closures on education inequality in London, including the collection of ethnicity data.**

I would be grateful to receive this information by 30 October. Please copy your response to the Panel’s Committee Assistant, Lamide Odanye, lamide.odanye@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennette Arnold". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'A'.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the Education Panel



Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the Education Panel

Appendix 2

Gavin Williamson

Secretary of State for Education

(Sent by email)

15 October 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

On 30 September 2020, the London Assembly Education Panel held a formal meeting to explore the effect that the COVID-19 school closures have had on education inequality in London.

The Panel heard from expert witnesses: Stuart Darke (Regional Organiser, Greater London Regional Centre, NASUWT), Rebecca Montacute (Research and Policy Manager, Sutton Trust), Rob Coe (Senior Associate, Education Endowment Foundation) and Joanne McCartney (Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare). We also received written testimony from Steve Chalke (Founder, Oasis Academies) and London Councils. The meeting brought into focus a real concern about the decision-making processes around, and communications of, the examinations system being applied for the 2020/21 academic year.

We note that you announced on 12 October that most exams will be going ahead next year, but three weeks later than originally scheduled, and that you will be working with Ofqual and other stakeholders over the coming weeks to develop contingency plans to account for various possible pandemic scenarios and the subsequent effect on education.

The Panel is concerned that this delay to the exam programme may not be sufficient to ensure exams will not unfairly impact students who, through a variety of circumstances, have been most affected by the school closures, and were least able to continue with their studies as normal from home. At our meeting, the Panel's witnesses agreed (prior to your announcement) that a delay of a

few weeks would be unlikely to constitute a significant enough amendment to the 2020/21 assessment programme to counter the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown school closures. As Rob Coe told the Panel, although exams are often seen as a fair method of assessment, “if you come from a housing situation and a school situation that is more challenging and more disadvantaged, having to sit the same exam does not address that.” Research confirms that those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds have seen the greatest impact on their learning. Teachers in the most deprived schools were more than twice as likely as those in advantaged schools to report that their students’ work submissions were of a lower quality than before lockdown.¹

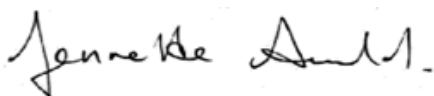
Disadvantaged students, for example those in digital poverty, that have experienced learning gaps as a result of setbacks from access to education will require more time to become equal to their more advantaged peers. National research by the Sutton Trust has laid bare this inequality. It found that in the most deprived schools, 15 per cent of teachers reported that more than a third of their students would not have adequate access to an electronic device for learning from home, compared to only 2 per cent in the most affluent state schools. In the most deprived schools, 12 per cent of teachers felt that more than a third of their students would not have adequate internet access.² In disadvantaged areas of London, the reality of this exclusion can be stark: earlier this year a school in South London reported that 24 per cent of its pupils are “effectively offline”.³

The Panel also found that there is urgent need for clear ongoing communication from the Department for Education to schools about examinations and potential future disruption. We note that your Department will be working with Ofqual and other stakeholders to develop contingency planning for various pandemic scenarios, and we urge you to ensure that this planning results in strong and clear guidance for schools, so that they can better plan provision for their students with differing needs, as well as their staff.

We would like to understand the analysis behind the decision to delay the exams by three weeks, so that the Panel can understand if this is sufficient time to level up education outcomes. Please could you report to the Panel the data and research used to inform this decision, explain if the decision incorporates the needs of children most affected by the COVID-19 school closures, and provide a list of the stakeholders that were consulted. Further, we ask for assurance that your scenario planning process is informed by this same data and will incorporate fair communications and guidance plans for schools.

I would be grateful to receive this information by 30 October. Please copy your response to the Panel’s Committee Assistant, Lamide Odanye, lamide.odanye@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the Education Panel

¹ Sutton Trust, [COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown](#), April 2020

² Sutton Trust, [COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown](#), April 2020

³ BBC, [‘Digital poverty’ in schools where few have laptops](#), April 2020