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VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER

—— GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1 ——

EMBEDDING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

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FOREWORD

Lib Peck, Director of the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit

We know children and young people are safer in school. It's why we're committed to tackling rising suspensions, exclusions and persistent absenteeism that collectively led to the equivalent of 1,430 children each day having lost learning in 2021-22.

It's what led us to establishing London's Inclusion Charter, a city-wide commitment built on partnership, shaped by and for young people, teachers and schools, parents and carers, local authorities and education leaders.

The Charter draws out four key principles of inclusive practice, underpinned by evidence from nearly 4,000 students, parents and school staff that highlighted the importance of safety and belonging in school or other education settings.

London's Violence Reduction Unit has backed up these principles with more than £12m investment from the Mayor of London through interventions that foster healthy relationships, help for those with speech, communication and language needs, mentoring in pupil referral units and supporting schools to embed children's rights through UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award programme.

The Charter has always been about providing help and support but also, crucially, sharing and celebrating the success of schools who day in and day out put children and young people front and centre.

These strategic guides are the next step in the delivery of the Charter. They are for education leaders, both within schools and in local authorities, to use as part of our shared commitment to support young people in education to feel that they are safe, that they belong, and ultimately that they are in a place where they can thrive.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to the young people, school staff and families who so generously gave up their time to take part in the research that underpins these strategic guides.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to *Maureen McKenna*, whose wealth of knowledge and experience of systems change in education has been instrumental in supporting the development of [London's Inclusion Charter](#) and the resulting resources, projects and partnerships. We are indebted to her tireless drive to improve outcomes for all young people.

We would also like to thank *Ceri Brown, Michael Donnelly, Alison Douthwaite* and *Yusuf Olaniyan* from the University of Bath for driving forward the research that informed London's Inclusion Charter, and contributing heavily to shaping these guides, ensuring that learning from the research can be applied.

A special thanks also to the education leaders who so generously shared their experiences and expertise via the case studies contained in these guides, demonstrating the wealth and breadth of promising practice happening in London to ensure that young people feel a strong sense of belonging and safety in their schools. We would also like to thank the education leaders steering group who helped shape these guides in the hope they will be useful and impactful for strategic decision making in London.

This astute group of experienced leaders have played a pivotal role in enabling an inclusive education system through London's Inclusion Charter:

Chris Roberts, Senior Adviser: Safeguarding and Inclusion, Camden Learning, London Borough of Camden

Dawn Ferdinand, Headteacher, The Willow Primary School, Haringey

Gary Phillips, Director of Secondary Education, The Charter Schools Educational Trust

Gerry Robinson, Headteacher, Haringey Learning Partnership

Jan Shapiro, Headteacher, Addey and Stanhope Secondary School, Lewisham

Joan Deslandes, Headteacher, Kingsford Community School, Newham

Karen Chamberlain, Headteacher, The Lilian Baylis Technology School, Lambeth

Laura McPhee, Director of Education – Primary, University Schools Trust

Lorraine Goll, Headteacher, Holy Trinity and St Silas Primary School, Camden

Lyndsay Harris, Director of Pastoral and Inclusion, Ark Schools

Mark Aspel, Head of Inclusion, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Martin Nicolson, Virtual Headteacher for SEND, and former Headteacher of Grafton Primary School, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

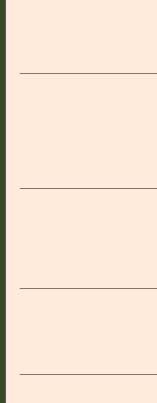*Maureen McKenna*, former Director of Education, Glasgow City Council

Patrick Ward, Headteacher of Lewisham Virtual School, London Borough of Lewisham

Roger Mitchell, Headteacher, Ripple Primary School, Barking

Sarah Bailey, Head of Access to Education and Virtual School Headteacher, London Borough of Croydon

Sharon White, Director, Educating Horizons, London

Suzanne Parrott, Executive Headteacher, Associate Director, Education Standards, Children with a Social Worker, Achieving for Children Virtual School for, Richmond, Windsor & Maidenhead, and Kingston Local Authorities

LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER

This strategic guide provides a starting point for education leaders across London to think about how the principles of London's Inclusion Charter can be applied to education settings. This guide is one of four available strategic guides, each dedicated to one of the principles of London's Inclusion Charter. They have been produced by London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), alongside the University of Bath, to help support leaders in schools, boroughs, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and other education providers, with inclusive practice.

London's Inclusion Charter was launched in February 2024. The VRU led a partnership approach to develop the Charter, built on the voices of young people and informed by schools, parents and carers, local authorities and education specialists. It champions four guiding principles:
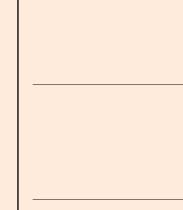
The principles of London's Inclusion Charter were informed by a major London-wide study, carried out by the University of Bath, to understand what is important for belonging, safety and inclusion in London schools (see here).

This study engaged thousands of students from across all 32 London boroughs. Between November 2023 and January 2024, 3,473 students in London were asked about what would help them to feel a greater sense of safety and belonging at school. Students came from 81 schools that were located across all 32 London boroughs, reflecting the diversity of the city.

The research also heard from 87 students directly through a series of focus groups, to enable more in-depth discussion of the things that mattered to them the most. As well as talking to students, the research engaged parents and teachers. The views of 145 parents, and 179 educators were captured through an online survey, alongside interviews and focus groups with a further 19 school leaders and educators.

1. EMBEDDING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

2. STUDENTS AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

3. BEING ADAPTABLE AND REFLECTIVE

4. BEYOND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

THIS STUDY INCLUDED:

32 LONDON BOROUGHS	**3473** STUDENTS
81 SCHOOLS	**145** PARENTS
	179 EDUCATORS

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London's Inclusion Charter advocates for three foundations of support which demonstrate how leaders in education can focus their efforts embedding its four guiding principles.

These are:

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

This is about centering educational strategies in children's rights principles. It is also about empowering children and young people to learn about their rights, and advocate for themselves, their peers, the wider community and global issues.

INVESTING IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

This is about sustainably investing in resources and staff professional development, so that schools and all staff have the necessary resources, capacity and knowledge to embed inclusive practices.

LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

This is about leveraging the wealth of knowledge and promising practice in the sector, bringing communities of practice together, learning from a robust evidence-base, and sharing what works. It is also about recognising that schools cannot do this work in isolation, and partnership with local organisations, businesses, families and communities is essential.

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EMBEDDING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

This focuses on integrating approaches to ensure students from all backgrounds feel welcome and valued in school, considering different abilities, aptitudes, attainment levels, cultures, ethnicities, faiths, gender identifications, neurodiversities, races, and socioeconomic statuses.

Recognising the disproportionate impact of exclusion on certain communities in London, this principle involves creating opportunities to explore and value our differences, challenging racism and discrimination and taking action to ensure that they are tackled. The scale and importance of this issue has been echoed on a national stage such as through the Who is Losing Learning? Coalition and Mission 44's Nothing Happens In Isolation campaign.

One of the key findings from the research that underpins London's

Inclusion Charter is the importance of *representation* - all children need to feel as though their school is a place that represents *them* and is *for them*. A crucial aspect of this is children seeing themselves and *their identity* reflected in the fabric of the school, which must include curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

This complements, and can be facilitated by, a diversity within the school workforce which includes governance. It is another means of enabling the school to reflect the families and children it serves - enhancing their sense of belonging and safety.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Questions to consider when reflecting on practice and policies under this principle:

- What issues of disproportionality does your administrative data show? (Consider a diverse range of data, eg. admissions, attendance, exclusion, suspension, attainment).

- Do you capture students' sense of belonging and safety? How does it vary depending on their demographics and characteristics?

- How do you use data to ensure improved equity in outcomes?

- Do classroom practices engage all students?

- Does the curriculum represent both a mirror and a window for students' experiences and identities?

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DIVERSITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Curriculum and assessment should be representative of all forms of diversity; this includes not only the content of subjects, but also pedagogical practices and the development of assessment processes. For example, assessment formats that enable diverse forms of expression that can demonstrate ability beyond traditional written essays and exams.

The same diversity principle applies to pedagogical practice and subject content. Adaptations can be made to ensure that diversity is embedded into subject content and teaching practices - for example, non-traditional modes of teaching and content that reflects a diversity of identities and ideas.

Decolonising the curriculum has been proven to not only reap benefits in terms of representation and inclusion, but also provides an enriched subject content, as found by Gandolfi (2021) in a recent study of secondary science in England.

HOW CAN IT BE DELIVERED?

There are many resources available to support schools in developing more diverse curricular and assessment, some of which focus on specific subject areas whilst others offer more generalist guidance.

The organisation Diverse Educators has produced a 'Diversity in the Curriculum Toolkit' which brings together a wide range of resources, articles, podcasts and literature.

The Runnymede Trust has produced a range of resources, literature and reports to support the development of a more diverse curriculum, including a focus on specific subjects like History (see here).

The Black Curriculum provides resources and training to support primary and secondary schools as well as workplaces.

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CONSIDERING DIVERSITY IN TACKLING BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION

It was clear from the research that more needed to be done by schools to address the problem of discrimination and bullying to ensure that children feel safe in school. During focus group interviews with children, they often spoke about bullying/discrimination which resulted in some children missing school and feeling unsafe, to the extent that it impacted their engagement in education.

Tackling discrimination and bullying includes not only addressing direct and overt forms of behaviour, but also unconscious behaviour, expectations, practices and processes that are embedded within the fabric of the school. It encompasses behaviour and actions of children but also staff within the school community. The 'hidden curriculum' is a term that describes all the hidden learning that happens within schools outside of formal teaching and learning, including gendered, sexualised, and racialised norms and assumptions (Smith 2014).

Relationships and behaviour policy and practice must therefore actively emphasise the importance of teaching, modelling, expecting and celebrating positive inclusive behaviour.

Teaching about diversity outside of the formal curriculum was recognised as crucial in the research that underpins London's Inclusion Charter. Some of the young people who participated in the research focus groups highlighted the need for schools to teach about diversity issues, as they felt that a lack of awareness and understanding may contribute to discriminatory behaviour.

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HOW CAN IT BE DELIVERED?

This can in part be achieved through a diversified curriculum which seeks to reduce prejudice through enhanced understanding about diverse groups (see above). But there are also many excellent programmes, initiatives and activities that educate children and young people about diversity.

> The charity Just Like Us provides a range of resources for schools to educate about LGBT+ inclusion, including learning resources and the opportunity to book trained volunteers to speak about growing up LGBT+.

There are many other organisations schools can seek support from, such as Equali Teach who provide workshops to schools on diversity topics including race, disability, and faith.

School staff have a role in the day-to-day life of school to model, expect and celebrate positive behaviour, as well as challenge any negative discriminatory behaviour they hear or observe in school. There are highly effective professional development programmes that can provide school staff (not only teachers) with the skills to do this effectively.

> The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) has a free online CPD course (see here) for those working with children and young people, providing evidence-based guidance on how to reduce, prevent and address bullying with specific advice in relation to bullying against minority groups.

Children and young people need to be actively engaged in developing a school's approach to tackling discrimination. For example, through the establishment of staff/student anti-discrimination groups which can monitor school structures, practices and processes to provide constructive feedback to leadership.

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EMBEDDING EQUITY IN SCHOOL CULTURE

Many schools across London and England are working hard to consider the ways in which they can challenge structural racism, and other systems of oppression, within their individual schools and trusts. However, the research showed that there are still issues for some young people and staff.

David Gillborn (2005) has written about the deeply embedded and taken-for-granted aspects of racialised power structures, and the privileging of white interests in education. Other research has demonstrated the heteronormativity that is deeply embedded within primary schools (Atkinson 2020).

Schools and the wider education system do not purposely set out to be exclusive. However, to address these challenges requires systemic institutional change to make schools anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-sexist in the way they operate. This fundamentally involves a recognition of structural racism, homophobia and sexism that exists within society and using education as a platform to enact change by making sure these systemic and structural inequalities are made visible in school.

HOW CAN IT BE DELIVERED?

One approach to beginning the journey is to involve the entire school community in developing and reviewing policy – especially the underlying principles and purpose of policy as well as what initiatives, actions and practices they shape. Policies should be developed with the school community for the school community, which includes families, young people and staff. There are many practical guides and resources that exist which can provide blueprints to help school communities begin this journey, for example:
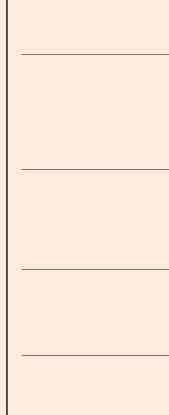
> National Education Union (NEU): Framework for developing an anti-racist approach.

> London Borough of Hackney's Anti Racist Practice Standards for staff working with young people.

> London Councils report 2024: Inclusion in London's Schools identifies a number of recommendations for tackling challenges to boost inclusion with a particular focus on SEND.

> Ecorys research on behalf of London's VRU into practical approaches to improve neurodiversity inclusion in secondary schools to inform its Difference Matters programme.

> The Children's Society's behaviour policy checklist, produced by young people with lived experience of school exclusion in consultation with additional groups of young people, provides resources and recommendations for schools.

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EXPERT INSIGHTS

Karen Chamberlain, headteacher at the Lilian Baylis Technology school, Lambeth, shares promising practice on embedding equity and diversity in the school's structure and culture.

TAKING AN EQUITABLE APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Lilian Baylis serves a largely Black African and Black Caribbean student composition, with a smaller population of students who are from South Asian ethnic backgrounds. The number of students on free school meals is very high at nearly 60% of the school population.

The school employs a 'no grades and no targets' approach for assessments. This aims to tackle any limitations on aspirations in the achievements of global majority students. Previous data around key stage 2 assessments identified that the school's global majority student cohort performed significantly below their white peers. In order to not limit the performance targets of these cohorts, Karen elects not to follow a progress 8 approach. She deliberately chooses not to share prior attainment data with teachers and instead employs a 'now and next' approach. This consists of individual objectives identified through 'low stakes' progress reviews carried out twice every half term, which identifies where students are 'now' and what their next steps are.

Lilian Baylis uses mixed ability teaching groups in the core subjects. Grouping decisions are instead based on the best social and learning dynamics of students. The school provides nurture groups, made up of five to eight students who are working significantly under age-related expectations. These are 'fluid' classes that students can move in and out of depending on need which also ensures they retain a strong sense of belonging with their peers.

To monitor and reflect on impact, the school conduct regular ethnicity performance reviews to identify and address achievement gaps. Reflecting on these identified gaps, the school actively supports staff to address any emerging trends which may involve individual staff training or department training. The school employs a data analysis tool FLAIR impact, which is a survey tool enabling them to identify and then plan actions to address any discriminatory issues.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN SCHOOL POLICIES AND STRUCTURE

Karen advises that the first step in creating an anti-discriminatory school culture is to develop appropriate policies, such as anti-racism, anti-Islamophobia and anti-sexism. The second most important thing is to work intentionally with staff, for example appointing a leadership team who are representative of the communities they serve. The school also includes racial literacy and fluency as a standard appraisal point for staff performance reviews.

TACKLING BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION

When it comes to tackling bullying and discrimination, the focus is on reparation. Students involved are assigned a workbook to complete that tasks them with reflecting upon the implications of their actions. Where appropriate, this will include a day spent working with staff to understand and address the issue on an individual level.

Karen rightly argues that it is essential to have multiple mechanisms of identification and disclosure, including proactive anti-bullying ambassadors, and an anonymous reporting format. This practice demonstrates a promising proactive approach, which was recognised to be important by students in the research for London's Inclusion Charter who identified staff failure to respond to bullying disclosure as a key barrier to their feeling safe in school.

The school also has regular safeguarding assemblies, as well as a termly 'Educate, Empower, Excel day', which is a day dedicated to exploring a protected characteristic, in both celebrating the characteristic but also what discrimination looks like. This often leads to disclosure on discrimination incidences, which can then be actively approached.

HOW COULD OTHERS DEVELOP SIMILAR PRACTICES?

The school used external training support to lead a more dramatic cultural shift.

Anti-discriminatory practice: Lilian Baylis worked alongside Insight Coaching (Tambo Silavwe) to work towards their anti-discriminatory practice.

Curriculum planning: The Black Curriculum helped Lilian Baylis with their curriculum planning.

Karen argues that school culture change should primarily be student voice led with an ethos that is driven by a strengths-based understanding of today's young people.

"Everyone keeps complaining that children are worse behaved. They are not worse behaved. They are just less fearful of authority than they ever have been. And so actually, the cultural change that needs to happen is that we need to better meet children where they are, because we can't just rely on the older system of oppression that keep them in their place"

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INCLUSION STRATEGY AUDIT TOOL

This tool is intended to help you reflect on current policy and practice and decide where to prioritise action.

PRINCIPLE: *Embedding Equity and Diversity*	WHAT PRACTICES AND POLICIES DO YOU ALREADY HAVE TO REFLECT THIS PRINCIPLE?	WHAT IS GOING WELL, AND WHAT COULD YOU SHARE WITH OTHER SETTINGS?	THINKING AHEAD, WHERE COULD YOU FOCUS ACTION?	NOTES
• *What issues of disproportionality does your administrative data show? (Consider a diverse range of data, eg. admissions, attendance, exclusion, suspension, attainment).* • *How do you capture students' sense of belonging and safety? How does it vary depending on their demographics and characteristics?* • *How do you use data to ensure improved equity in outcomes?* • *How do classroom practices engage all students?* • *How does the curriculum represent both a mirror and a window for students' experiences and identities?*				

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Find out more about London's Inclusion Charter