

MAYOR OF LONDON

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Chair of the Education Panel
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Thank you for your letter of 7 January about the London Assembly Education Panel's findings from your investigation into school places and the impact of inequality and disadvantage on educational attainment.

I share your desire to see a more inclusive education system that is responsive to the changing demands for school places and that addresses the inequality in outcomes and attainment for all pupils. I have addressed, in turn, each of your five recommendations.

Recommendation one: The Mayor should lobby the Department for Education (DfE) to enable local authorities to better plan for school demand, by March 2020.

London has seen rapid growth in the number of children living in the city over the last decade, which has led to a significant increase in school pupil numbers. There is also considerable variation across London in terms of demand for school places.

My City Intelligence Unit provides a valued Londonwide lens to aid school place planners in local authorities, including publishing pan-London demand projections for school places in 2018. This showed projected demand for primary and secondary places for each school year to 2027/28. The Unit's ongoing contractual role for subscribing local authorities includes data and analysis of cross-border pupil mobility, tools showing trends in migration of school age children, and birth and fertility data and analysis.

In January, London Councils published 'Do the Maths 2020' which details the pressures facing the school places planning system in London and their forecast of shortfall and surplus places by 2022-23. Their analysis shows that between 2010-11 and 2018-19, London saw an increase in pupils of 13.8% across the capital, compared to 8.8% nationally. Boroughs are collectively forecasting that between 2019-20 and 2022-23, the number of new school places needed to meet demand across the capital will increase by 7,553, mostly at secondary level. As the Panel identified, there has been a drop in demand for primary school places driven by declining birth rates across the capital. London Councils' report shows that the number of surplus places at primary level across London has become a pressing issue in many local authority areas.

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I agree with the Education Panel that the Department for Education (DfE) should provide the support that enables local authorities to better plan for school demand. Accordingly, at the next meeting of the London Education Officers Group on 9 March, a main agenda item will be from the Greater London Authority (GLA) Demography team on the changes in demand for school places in London and London Councils on their 'Do the Maths' report. The group includes the three Department for Education's Regional Schools Commissioners who cover London.

I will also continue to take opportunities to raise school place issues with the Government, whilst ensuring that City Hall continues to support local authorities to better plan for ensuring that the right number of school places are provided.

Recommendation two: The Mayor should lobby the DfE for further funding to meet London's unique education needs, by March 2020.

I share the concerns of the Panel regarding the funding pressures on London schools. Our hard-working teachers are doing everything they can to keep young people in schools and engaged with their education, but they are struggling because of a lack of funding and support from the Government.

I have made and will continue to make the case to the Government to fund early years, schools and colleges in London appropriately. Last March, with the other Police and Crime Commissioners, I called on the former Prime Minister to reverse the damaging funding cuts, including giving schools the resources they need to deliver effective interventions and to support London's most vulnerable children and young people. In August, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP, to urge him to make schools and further education funding a priority.

In February, I met with the former Chancellor of the Exchequer to discuss London's priorities in the budget and spending review. In our meeting we discussed education standards, and that whilst the overall performance of London's schools is strong – particularly at Key Stage 4 – students from disadvantaged backgrounds do less well than their peers at Key Stages 4 and 5, and access to Higher Education. The gap in attainment is further amplified in London because a higher proportion of the capital's students are disadvantaged.

I agree with the Panel that there is increasing pressure on funding to deliver support for students with special educational needs (SEND). Research by London Councils in 2018 showed that the number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans has risen by 29% since 2010.

I stated in my formal representation to the Chancellor on the Budget 2020 (Priority asks for Budget 2020 – Succeeding Together), that it is essential that the Government provides adequate funding to local authorities to support young people with SEND – some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

In order to ensure that all pupils, especially those with SEND, are fully supported, it is crucial that London gets a fair share of the Government's recently announced schools funding. Just last month the Association of School and College Leaders reported that schools could be forced to make job cuts to both teachers and teaching assistants because they are unable to afford next year's teacher pay rise. Rather than being fully funded by the Government, school leaders are "extremely concerned" that the Government expects this money to come from the extra £7.1 billion that it has promised will reverse the cuts to school budgets.

In addition to making the funding case to the Government as I have done, there is much work to be done in London across agencies to better support children and young people with SEND, as you acknowledge in your letter and in the findings of your SEND report in 2018.

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Our schools are facing significant funding pressures, and many interventions for our most vulnerable children are being cut. This cannot be right. Schools must have the necessary resources to deliver good interventions and support to those at risk. For my part, London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is currently investing £4.7 million in a series of programmes to tackle school exclusions and support vulnerable young Londoners through education. I have announced £25 million more funding to build on the £45 million Young Londoners Fund, providing new funding for projects and programmes that provide positive opportunities for disadvantaged young people and help steer them away from crime.

Recommendation three: The Mayor should provide emerging findings on the Early Years Hubs pilots, as well as plans for an impact evaluation after the pilot finishes in December 2020.

My Early Years Hubs were launched in January 2018 to bring together local partners to improve access to quality early education for the capital's most disadvantaged children. I was pleased that you were able to join my Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare, Joanne McCartney AM, to see first-hand the work of the Wandle Early Years Hub in December 2018. There you could see this Hub's focus on supporting children with SEND and children enjoying high quality early education. Since their launch in 2018, my three Early Years Hubs in Barnet, Wandsworth and Merton, and Newham, have worked with over 390 early years providers to improve the take-up and quality of early education. The Hubs and their members have provided places for over 2,000 two-year-olds eligible for the free early education offer.

The Hubs have developed a number of successful activities to improve access to and quality of early education, for example encouraging schools, nurseries and childminders to create new places for two-year-olds; encouraging parents to take-up their child's entitlement across the different early years education sectors; and improving support for children with SEND. The accredited cross-borough SEND training programme in Wandle has strong early indications of positive impact.

The GLA has appointed an external evaluator, Diane Dixon Associates, to evaluate this work more fully. Diane Dixon Associates has been working closely with the Hubs to assess their impact and the overall success of the hub model. They will publish a final report of their findings in spring 2021. They will also work with the Hubs and the GLA to produce an online toolkit to share learning from the programme across London.

Recommendation four: The Mayor should work with schools, local councils and other education stakeholders to ensure there is sufficient robust information and intelligence available to identify pupils with low academic attainment, and to share this information between institutions. The Mayor should give a commitment to doing so by March 2020, in order to support students making the transition from primary to secondary school, and from secondary school to post-16 pathways.

I am pleased that the Panel recognises the positive impact of my Stepping Stones programme in terms of bridging the gap for pupils between primary and secondary schools. Stepping Stones was piloted in 2016/17 by three London secondary schools. I am now supporting a further 15 secondary schools to run the programme through the Young Londoners Fund. Participating schools are working with an external evaluator to assess the impact of the programme on vulnerable pupils, focusing on measuring changes in attendance, attainment and behaviour at school. The evaluation report will be completed in late 2020.

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A key aim of Stepping Stones is to help secondary schools improve relationships with their feeder primary schools. It allows them to use information shared by these primary schools to help identify vulnerable pupils who would benefit from additional support as they move on to year seven. I would encourage, as the Panel endorses, better sharing of information where it can help support pupils in making the often-difficult transition from primary to secondary school. I have published a free Stepping Stones online toolkit to share our approach with all London schools. It enables them to access resources to help them run the programme themselves. The toolkit will be refreshed later this year.

Stepping Stones is set to expand again as part of my 'Supporting Inclusive Schools programme', with funding through London's VRU. This will allow more schools to run the programme over two academic years, beginning in the summer of 2020.

In partnership with London Councils, I commissioned Mime and the UCL Institute of Education to conduct analysis to provide a clearer understanding of the pathways of young people in London from GCSE through further study. This research has explored the trajectories of 355,000 London pupils. It will provide a clearer understanding of what is driving post-16 education choices and pupil performance in London. The research is planned to be released soon, and its findings will offer rich intelligence and analysis to schools, colleges and others, including in relation to closing the attainment gap.

In September 2019, the Call for Action, developed by the GLA and London Councils, clearly made the case for devolution of funding and powers to enable London to have its own All Age Careers offer that can better support post-16 pathways. I believe that a fully devolved and properly funded London Careers Service would ensure all Londoners are able to access high quality, relevant, properly-resourced careers support. This, in turn, will equip them with information, advice and guidance that empowers them to make more informed decisions and access the great opportunities in London's economy.

Recommendation five: The Mayor should encourage the recruitment and retention of teachers in London by providing more specific avenues to access affordable housing as part of Teach London. The Panel asks for an update on next actions and timelines for this by March 2020.

London has some of the best training opportunities for new teachers in the country. However, high housing costs contribute to difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers. I am pleased that the Panel has recognised the positive contribution of my Teach London and Getting Ahead London programmes. I am continuing to work with Teach London partners and schools to highlight the benefits of training and developing teachers. In 2020, I am funding a new project to support the retention of teachers with a BAME background to help address the low number of BAME teachers compared to the pupil population.

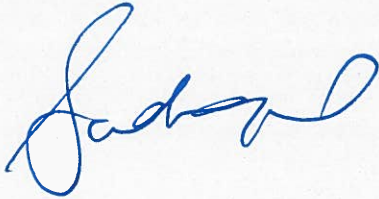
The Teach London website provides a direct link to my Homes for Londoners Portal. Through this portal, prospective teacher trainees and teachers can access affordable homes including shared ownership and London Living Rent. While being in the teaching profession is not currently one of the eligibility criteria for these homes, my planning policies, as outlined in the London Plan, do allow local authorities to prioritise certain groups for the first three months of marketing. For some boroughs, this includes the teaching profession.

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In responding to the Panel's overview of schools in London and inequality of outcomes for children in London, I wholeheartedly join with you in your vision for London where all young Londoners get the high-quality education and support they need to reach their full potential.

I thank you for sharing your recommendations and wish to thank you and other Members for your contributions to Londoners through the considerable work undertaken by the Education Panel during my mayoralty.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London