

**Sadiq Khan**

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Dear Sadiq

Preventing school exclusions through early intervention

The number of children being excluded from secondary schools in London is increasing year-on-year. It is important that those at risk of exclusion are provided with the support they need to thrive and get back on track. Only one per cent of excluded pupils get the five 'good' GCSEs they need to access the workforce. There are growing concerns that school exclusions are correlated to later violence or criminal activity.

The rise in exclusions is due, in part, to the rise in support required for an increasing number of children with complex needs and the difficulties that some schools have in meeting them. Mainstream schools are under growing pressure to support more and more children with increasingly complex needs, but too many children are being excluded having been failed by an education system incapable of meeting their needs. Data that show the disproportionate exclusion rates for certain groups suggests that either schools may be failing to adequately support certain learners, or that behaviour management systems inadvertently discriminate against some pupils. There are growing concerns about the possibility that some underachieving pupils and those with complex needs are being officially or unofficially off-rolled to relieve financial pressure or boost school performance measures.

The experts we spoke to called for a shift to more inclusive practices. We were told that there was a need for greater recognition that bad behaviour may be a signifier of unmet need and a move away from simply punishing disruptive behaviour without an attempt to understand and address underlying causes. We heard that barriers to inclusive practice include lack of support available for pupils' social and emotional needs, pressure on resources, some schools' zero tolerance approaches to behaviour management, insufficient teacher training and unconscious bias.

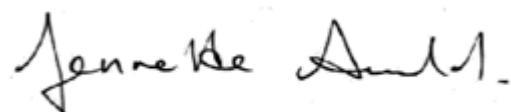
We call upon you to support and encourage the development of a more inclusive education system that responds to the needs of all pupils. Our report, *Preventing secondary school exclusions* has identified a number of interventions where you can make a real difference.

These include:

- Promoting inclusive practice and tolerant values in schools to prevent unnecessary exclusions
- Reviewing the supply of alternative provision that specialises in supporting those at risk of exclusion
- Actively monitoring and challenging hidden exclusions

Leaving children on the path to exclusion without adequate support to get back on track is simply not good enough. We urge you to take action to ensure that all young Londoners get the high-quality education and support they need to meet their full potential. We would appreciate a response to our recommendations by 30 June 2019.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennette Arnold'.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM

Chair of the Education Panel