

MAYOR OF LONDON

Jennette Arnold OBE AM

Chair of the London Assembly Education Panel

C/o Daniel.Tattersall@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA151020-7407

Date: 30 October 2020

Dear Jennette,

Thank you for your letter of 15 October regarding data collection to understand the effect of the COVID-19 school closures on educational inequality in London.

I share your concerns over the negative impact of school closures on young people. Teachers and leaders have done an incredible job in far from ideal circumstances this year. Children and young people continue to face instability due to COVID-19, and supporting their opportunities, mental health and wellbeing is a key outcome for the London Recovery Board, which I co-chair. We need to work together to reduce educational attainment gaps and ensure that London's progress in this area is not lost.

Individual and school-level data on pupil attainment and characteristics, including ethnicity, are reported by schools and collated by the Department for Education (DfE). My team will analyse DfE statistical publications and present London-level comparisons of specific groups. This analysis includes a range of characteristics, including differences in attainment and progress by ethnicity, free school meal eligibility and special educational need status. The Education Panel should be aware that public data is reliant on SATs (at key stage 2) and GCSEs (key stage 4). SATs did not take place in the 2019-20 academic year and there are questions over how the GCSE data from the summer will be published. Our Greater London Authority analysis will, therefore, be dependent on the DfE producing a reliable and consistent set of these outcomes data (SATs, GCSEs) from which to make comparisons, including around ethnicity.

I can confirm that we will continue to monitor publications of key educational studies, including the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) forthcoming study of COVID-19 disruptions in primary schools, which is due for publication in March 2021. Such national research that examines the attainment gap between more advantaged and disadvantaged pupils will be hugely beneficial to our understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 school closures on educational inequality. Wherever such data is available, we will seek to examine the effects at the London level.

I continue to hear qualitative evidence from London headteachers and local authorities on the impact of school closures and continued lost learning days. Schools and colleges have shared how they have been undertaking start of term assessments to help shape their recovery curricula, and the many actions they have put in place to support learning catch-up.

MAYOR OF LONDON


I would like to invite members of the Education Panel to join my Schools for Success webinars series where we will hear from London schools how COVID-19 has impacted on their pupils, and how they are tackling educational inequalities and mitigating the effects of the pandemic on pupil attainment. Schools for Success recognises exceptional schools across London and provides an opportunity for others to learn from the progress they have made, especially with students who previously had not performed as well as their peers.

The panel will also be interested in the findings from our recently commissioned rapid evidence review – *Inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London* – which helps document and understand the impact of the pandemic. This review focused on both health and the broader impacts on existing social and economic inequalities experienced by those with protected characteristics, as well as those living in poorer, or more precarious, socioeconomic circumstances. The review demonstrates how inequalities have been exacerbated during the coronavirus pandemic. One of the recommendations of the rapid evidence review is to “prioritise education for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, including taking measures to limit digital exclusion.” Similarly, the EEF’s assessment was that there is a need to support effective remote learning to prevent the widening of educational gaps.

My officers will keep the education panel updated on the London Recovery Board’s Digital Access for All mission which is being co-designed with London Councils and business, to combat digital exclusion and ensure that all Londoners have access to the devices, connectivity and the skills they need to get and thrive online.

Thank you again for writing to me and I will ensure that the Educational Panel is kept informed of our work to understand the effect of the COVID-19 school closures on educational inequality in London, through data, analysis and programmes we run or support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London