



**ISLINGTON**

# **Equalities in Educational Outcomes**

## **FINAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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**London Borough of Islington  
June 2020**

## **Foreword:**

As the Fair Futures Programme Strategy states, Islington Council is committed to making Islington a fairer place for all. At the heart of this mission is ensuring that everyone has the best start in life and is supported to achieve their dreams, regardless of their background.

Both nationally and locally, Black Caribbean and White British pupils eligible for pupil premium funding lag behind their peers in educational outcomes at every key stage, from Early Years to GCSE and beyond to participation in Higher Education.

The Committee formed the view that, despite the fact that this has been a seemingly intractable country-wide as well as local problem over many decades, Islington Council has a moral imperative to try to redress this imbalance in pursuit of its commitment to equality and fairness.

Building on the existing Equalities developments led by officers, the Committee undertook a wide-ranging scrutiny review of the educational outcomes of Black Caribbean and White British pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and the possible causes of underachievement.

In addition to interrogating extensive performance data and a number of research papers, we heard from officers, academics and other experts; talked to headteachers, staff and pupils in schools and a children's centre and visited the Upward Bound project at London Metropolitan University for discussions with groups of school and college students, tutors and some parents.

The evidence gathered in the review pointed to the adverse effects of many Central Government policies on pupils' enjoyment of school life; the impact of austerity more generally, and of racism.

We have made a total of fourteen recommendations, grouped into four themes that cover areas such as values, aspirations and relationships; underpinning children's and young people's wellbeing through the curriculum and developing school processes and council services to offer the best support to pupils. These reflect current research findings as well as some welcome changes of direction in the most recent Ofsted Framework.

To conclude, this has been an intensive review and the Committee would like to express its thanks to all the institutions, officers and other witnesses who have given evidence to us for their time and the quality of reflection on what are such challenging and complex issues.

**Cllr Vivien Cutler**  
**Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Equalities in Educational Outcomes**

#### **Aim:**

To assess equalities in educational outcomes for Black Caribbean and White British pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, and to make recommendations to:

- Improve pupils' engagement in school and the wider community
- Improve pupils' progress and attainment across the key stages and into the world of work
- Raise awareness and commitment to action in educational settings and across service providers in Islington

#### **Evidence:**

The Committee commenced the review in July 2019. Evidence was received from a variety of sources:

##### Visits to schools and other settings

- Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School (6 November 2019)
- Upward Bound Project (9 November 2019)
- Ambler School (13 November 2019)
- St Mark's CE School (20 November 2019)
- Willow Children's Centre (21 November 2019)
- St Aloysius' College (5 December 2019)

##### Evidence from Headteachers

- Martha Braithwaite (St Mark's CE Primary School)
- Juliet Benis (Ambler Primary School)
- Damian Parrott (Drayton Park & Montem Primary Schools)
- Sarah Beagley (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Secondary School)
- Mita Pandya (Archway and Willow Children's Centres)
- Jane Heffernan (St Aloysius' College Secondary School)

##### Evidence from council officers:

- Mark Taylor, Director of Learning and Schools
- Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary)
- Jeff Cole, Head of School Improvement (Secondary)
- Harry Donnison, QPMU Service Manager
- Emma Simpson, Secondary English Consultant
- Penny Kenway, Head of Early Years and Childcare
- Tracy Smith, EY Lead for Teaching and Learning
- Helen Cameron, Health and Wellbeing Manager
- Hamish Mackay, Head of iWork

### Academic and other evidence:

- Dr Antonina Tereshchenko, UCL Institute of Education
- Maxine Bunting-Thomas, London Metropolitan University, Upward Bound project
- Katrina Ffrench, CEO, StopWatch

### Documentary evidence:

- Outcomes data
- Islington Council: Equalities Plan on a Page 2019
- Department for Education: Multiple disadvantage and KS4 attainment: evidence from LSYPE2 (2019)
- Extract from Children's Services Performance Report: Q3 2018/19
- RSA: The social class gap for educational achievement: a review of the literature (2010)
- 'You can't say that! Stories have to be about white people' by Darren Chetty (extract from 'The Good Immigrant' ed: Nikesh Shukla)
- Best Practice Charter for engaging parents/carers, children and communities

## **Recommendations:**

### **Values, Aspirations and Relationships**

1. Islington Council should continue to support schools in developing their relationships with parents/carers to ensure school staff understand the communities they serve. School leaders may wish to explore the make-up of their communities and raise awareness of unconscious bias through cultural competency training in staff induction materials and staff and governor training sessions.
2. Islington schools should revisit the aspirational values embedded in their work. Schools should be encouraged to reflect on whether their values and aspirations are meaningful for all of their communities, particularly those from underachieving groups.
3. Islington schools should consider the identification of suitable role models and mentors to work with children and young people. It is important that role models and mentors are relatable to the borough's different communities.

### **Supporting children and young people's wellbeing through the curriculum**

4. The Committee considers that the wellbeing of children and young people should be supported through the school curriculum. From September 2020 the new statutory health education curriculum will provide an opportunity for schools to reflect on how well they address pupil wellbeing through personal, social and health education (PSHE), including strategies for dealing with stress, sleeping and eating well. They should also aim to provide age-appropriate life skills lessons to support their personal development journey to adulthood. If possible, and within school budgets, schools could consider appointing dedicated and specialist staff to support children and young people who would benefit most from such approaches.
5. Islington Council should encourage schools to offer a broad, inclusive curriculum for all pupils up to Year 11, including the arts and digital and other technologies, to ensure that everyone can enjoy their learning and optimise their skills in order to progress to a successful adult life. A broad curriculum would reflect the new Ofsted Framework for inspection and support Islington Council initiatives such as 11 by 11 and the 100 hours of the World of Work.
6. As teachers are increasingly aware, and research studies confirm, setting pupils can contribute to feelings of segregation and lower aspirations for young people. We encourage Islington schools to further explore flexibility in groupings and consider minimising or removing setting where appropriate. Issues for consideration should include opportunities for movement between sets and/or how teachers are allocated to sets and year groups to ensure the most effective use of teaching experience and expertise. Islington Council should help to raise awareness of the impact of setting through the Community of Schools and governor briefings.

## **Developing school processes to offer the best support to children and young people**

7. Islington Council should support schools in developing clear strategies for raising the achievements of any underachieving group within their school, taking into account approaches identified as best practice within the Islington Community of Schools. Islington Council should also support governing bodies in their oversight of underachievement and equality issues. The Committee welcomes the work already underway to achieve this.
8. Islington Council should continue to encourage schools to make best use of iTIPs and adopt other supportive approaches to understanding the behaviour of children and young people. As far as possible, all school staff are encouraged to be trained on how to recognise and respond to symptoms of trauma in children, young people and their parents/carers.
9. Islington Council should encourage schools to adopt behaviour policies that are underpinned by fairness, kindness, consistency and positivity. Behaviour policies should provide clear and succinct guidance to pupils, parents/carers and staff on what is and is not acceptable.
10. Islington schools should review their staff appointments to ensure that, wherever possible and in all kinds of posts, these reflect local communities. Schools and the local authority should also review appointments to governing bodies to ensure that they reflect the borough's communities.
11. Best practice in supporting young people and their parents/carers across transitions should be shared throughout Islington's Community of Schools. This should focus on all transitions from early years to post-16. This could include enabling staff to liaise with other education settings about the needs of pupils prior to transition, developing pupil resilience prior to transition and providing support for lower achieving and vulnerable pupils throughout and beyond the process.

## **Developing Council services**

12. Islington Council should continue to raise awareness of equalities issues among all staff through historical and local contextual information regarding specific communities and should provide unconscious bias and other relevant training to encourage fairness.
13. Islington Council should review how it supports schools to use data related to Black Dual/Mixed Heritage groups of children and young people. This may include using the data to plan a series of assemblies and school topics/educational experiences that reflect differences in self-definition and personal identity among this group; e.g. post-Windrush 'Black Londoner' or 'Black British' as opposed to the diaspora-related 'Black Caribbean'.

14. To improve outcomes to children and their families, Islington Council's social care and early help services should further develop their interactions and work with schools. This could include engaging with schools to review systems and processes jointly with the aim of ensuring that they are as effective as possible for all parties. Islington Council should also consider if it can help to enhance the relationships between schools and key partner organisations, such as the Police and voluntary sector.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MEMBERSHIP – 2019/20**

#### **Councillors:**

Councillor Vivien Cutler (Chair)  
Councillor John Woolf (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Santiago Bell-Bradford  
Councillor Phil Graham  
Councillor Clare Jeapes  
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo  
Councillor Flora Williamson  
Councillor Alice Clarke-Perry (to December 2019)  
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir (from February 2020)

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Claire Ballak, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)  
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative  
Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

#### ***Acknowledgements:***

*The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.*

#### ***Officer Support:***

*Anthony Doudle – Head of School Improvement (Primary)*  
*Jonathan Moore – Deputy Manager Committee Services*



## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The review was held between July 2019 and February 2020. The overall aim of the review was to assess equalities in educational outcomes for Black Caribbean pupils and disadvantaged White British pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. The Committee has monitored the attainment gap between these groups and the overall cohort for several years and wished to review the reasons for this gap and how these issues are being addressed.
- 1.2 The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:
- To analyse and clarify underperformance intersectionally in these key groups over the past 5 years both locally and nationally;
  - To use existing national research and literature to identify the barriers to improving educational attainment for these key groups in Islington schools;
  - To explore the ways in which school leaders drive up the progress and attainment of identified groups informed by best practice from schools that buck the trend;
  - To secure agreement and commitment on the strategies that will improve outcomes for these groups at each key stage and on into further education, employment and training;
  - To identify the causes of underperformance including the impact of factors such as attendance and exclusion;
  - Engage parents, pupils, communities and stakeholders in dialogue to find productive ways forward and guide future action;
  - To better understand the views of children and young people, parents and community groups on how performance for key groups can be improved;
  - To produce workable recommendations for the Council and schools to deliver sustainable improvements in educational outcomes across schools and beyond in Islington;
  - To call to action all the Council's services and functions to improve outcomes for identified groups;
  - To evaluate the work already underway to reduce the attainment gap and to identify how this could be developed further.
- 1.3 In carrying out the review the Committee met with young people, Headteachers and school staff, council officers, independent experts and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee also considered local and national data and a variety of documentary evidence.

## **2. Summary of Main Findings**

### **Local and National Context**

- 2.1 Throughout the review the Committee considered a range of local and national data on the attainment gaps and educational inequalities between Black Caribbean pupils, White British pupils eligible for free school meals and the overall cohort.

- 2.2 Nationally, 15% of White UK early years pupils are eligible for free school meals. In Islington the figure is double the national average at around 30%. This gap widens at Key Stage 4, with around 35% White UK pupils eligible for free school meals, slightly more than double the national average. Nationally, 28% of Black Caribbean early years pupils are eligible for free school meals. In Islington, this figure is 45%. Islington has an above average proportion of Black Caribbean pupils eligible for free school meals at every key stage.
- 2.3 National data indicates that, on average, pupils from Black Caribbean and White British groups eligible for free school meals do not make the same level of progress as their peers. This is also the case in Islington.
- 2.4 The Committee reviewed data on the particular academic challenges faced by different demographic groups in Islington. There were gaps in attainment at every key stage. At Key Stage 1 White UK pupils eligible for free school meals were more likely to struggle with reading and writing, whereas Black Caribbean pupils were more likely to struggle with mathematics.
- 2.5 The number of Black Caribbean pupils achieving the Good Level of Development at Early Years Foundation Stage has increased in recent years and the gap between Black Caribbean pupils and the Islington average is closing; however, White British pupils eligible for free school meals still experience an attainment gap in Early Years.
- 2.6 Performance data for Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 1 indicates that the attainment gap for Black Caribbean pupils and White British pupils eligible for pupil premium begins to widen from a young age. This attainment gap is more pronounced in Islington than at national level.
- 2.7 The attainment gap widens further at Key Stage 4. Progress 8 data indicates that, on average, White British pupils eligible for pupil premium achieve half a grade lower at GCSE than their peers. The gap is particularly wide in the key subjects of English and maths.
- 2.8 At Key Stage 4, both Black Caribbean and White UK pupils eligible for free school meals tend to underperform across all subjects. However, for English and maths, the attainment gap between these groups and the borough average decreased between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. It was thought that this was due to schools prioritising English and maths GCSEs.
- 2.9 Officers advised that there was a correlation between low attainment and high levels of absence, caused by either attendance issues or exclusion. The Committee considered how exclusion from school disproportionately affects certain groups in the previous year's scrutiny review.
- 2.10 The Committee asked if one or two schools had particular issues with attainment and progress that would impact on the overall figures. In response, it was noted that Islington's schools did have differing levels of attainment, however pupils at lower-attaining schools tended to attain lower grades overall. Attainment issues at those schools were not limited to specific groups.

## **Evidence from Panel of Headteachers**

- 2.11 The Committee received evidence from a panel of Headteachers and discussed equalities issues and their approaches to supporting pupils.
- 2.12 Headteachers commented that comparing the academic attainment of different demographic groups had to be handled in a sensitive way. In general, schools focused on pupils as individuals and targeted interventions to their particular needs, rather than seeing them as part of a wider demographic trend. For example, some schools have fewer than five Black Caribbean pupils across all age groups. As a result it is not always possible, or appropriate, to target school-level interventions at particular groups.
- 2.13 The Committee asked whether Headteachers believed that it was helpful to analyse pupil attainment and progress alongside demographic factors such as ethnicity. Although Headteachers recognised the attainment gap, they thought that the personal circumstances of pupils had a greater impact on the targeting of interventions than wider demographic factors. Resources for support services are scarce and schools are more likely to target specific interventions at children with known issues, rather than at demographic groups. However, it was recognised that having honest and straightforward conversations about the attainment of different groups was important. It was suggested that passing on pupil and demographic data to parents could be useful in highlighting these issues and addressing the attainment gap. Although this may be helpful, the Committee considers that developing strategies for raising the achievement of underachieving groups would help schools to target support at those who need it.
- 2.14 Headteachers highlighted the importance of young people having positive role models. Some schools made use of mentors to work closely with underachieving groups, however such interventions were often reserved for those most in need of support. The Committee suggests that a broader approach to mentoring may help to support young people and to raise aspirations, particularly if the mentors reflect the borough's diverse communities and young people can relate to their experiences.
- 2.15 Headteachers emphasised the importance of building effective working relationships with families, although it was recognised that this could be challenging if parents did not have a positive experience of school. The Committee was encouraged by the holistic approaches to engaging parents used by some Early Years settings, such as hosting family activities including gardening and healthy eating projects. Such activities were beneficial both to children and their families and provided an opportunity for settings to develop positive relationships with parents in a structured way.
- 2.16 Headteachers spoke of the importance of regularly inviting parents into school to meet with teaching staff to discuss the progress of their children. The Committee queried if families with working parents, particularly those in challenging financial circumstances and working multiple jobs, were missing out on such opportunities because they did not have the time to attend school meetings. In response, it was advised that best practice was to plan events and activities at different times of day

to ensure parents were able to attend. Headteachers commented that they maintained records of which parents attended such events to assist with targeting future events.

- 2.17 The Committee queried the demographic make-up of teachers in the borough and whether the backgrounds of teachers reflected the young people they teach. It was advised that teachers came from a range of backgrounds but these did not necessarily reflect the demography of the borough. Teachers were also university educated and therefore had experiences and backgrounds that some young people found difficult to relate to. The Committee considers that it is important for school staff to reflect the make-up of their local community. It is suggested that schools may wish to consider this in their approach to recruitment.

### **Evidence from visits to schools and other settings**

- 2.18 The evidence gathering was undertaken by five members of the Committee through visits to two secondary and two primary schools and a children's centre, all of whose Headteachers had participated in the evidence session at the 17<sup>th</sup> September Committee meeting.
- 2.19 Committee members also visited the Upward Bound project, an education project aimed at raising attainment and aspirations for young people attending Islington secondary schools. The project is a partnership between Islington Council and London Metropolitan University. Sessions take place every Saturday throughout most of the academic year.
- 2.20 There were many common features among the settings. For example, all were totally committed to giving their children and young people the widest possible range of experiences. They recognised the importance of knowing their communities well and prioritising good relationships with parents and carers. All had high attendance rates, a function of the trust that they had built up with harder to reach groups, particularly White British families with free school meals eligibility. They all recognised the challenges of raising attainment with the target groups, although only one school, St Aloysius College, had a statistically significant number of Black Caribbean students and a strategic approach to them as a group as well as individuals.
- 2.21 The Upward Bound project had a large majority of BAME students and staff. The Programme Director commented that it had been challenging to recruit White British students, despite considerable efforts to establish good relations with families.

### **Values**

- 2.22 All the schools have values that are clearly expressed in strap lines and mottoes displayed throughout the buildings and in school documentation. The values could be grouped by those related to achieving social justice; the importance of high quality teaching and learning; having high aspirations and positivity; the centrality of community and mutual respect. Ambler has the strap line 'Achieve more' that is realised by six core values expressed through the acronym DREAMS: determination,

resilience, enthusiasm, ambition, motivation and self-belief. The Willow Children's Centre was noted by Ofsted inspectors in their 2019 inspection report as having '...a highly focused ethos, which is reflected in the positive attitudes of staff, parents and children. Meeting children's care, well-being and learning needs is central to all that they do'.

- 2.23 For the Upward Bound students, the majority of whom are BAME, the values of social justice and equal opportunities are paramount: understanding, kindness and nurture by teaching staff are identified as equally crucial for students to thrive. The students commented on the importance of reducing stress and felt it was important for teachers to support rather than segregate, and to celebrate unique identities rather than to stigmatise. Students commented that relationships should be based on equality with staff; they should be inclusive and joyful.
- 2.24 The Committee considers that it is very important for schools to have aspirational values embedded in their work. It is essential that those values and aspirations are meaningful for all of the school's communities, particularly those from underachieving groups.

#### Curriculum and achievement

- 2.25 Both secondary schools have ambitious approaches to meeting the needs of their students through the curriculum. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson opts for a very wide choice of options from Year 9 onwards to optimise achievement, whatever level the student starts from, and provides enrichment beyond the cohort's experiences. A group of Year 10 students expressed their pride in the range of experiences they had been given by the school, including careers lessons from Year 7 and visits to universities. The school attempts to meet everyone's needs and, in line with the latest Ofsted Framework, the key focus is on the quality of teaching and learning. Staff commented that they were aware of the negative impacts of setting and were working implement mixed ability classes.
- 2.26 The route that St Aloysius College is taking is slightly different; that of an aspirational journey with a bespoke curriculum; for example, some programmes leading to more vocational college courses or apprenticeships where appropriate. There is a strong focus on the tracking of progress to identify target groups with support from dedicated Raising Achievement Groups of staff. Mentoring, often using community role models, and work experience opportunities from Year 10 all help students on the transition to adult life. As with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School, there is a relentless focus on teaching and learning and a move towards reducing setting, with most classes now mixed ability.
- 2.27 The primary schools celebrate the diversity of their communities in their curriculum and, in the case of Ambler, emphasise the promotion of self-belief and positivity, especially in Early Years, to try to close possible attainment gaps as early as is feasible. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities for children and parents. At St Mark's, there is an ambition to make the curriculum less teacher-led. There is considerable additional support for literacy and a focus on the arts and a wraparound curriculum of after-school clubs run by teaching staff.

- 2.28 The Willow curriculum is largely child-led. There is encouragement for the children to socialise and explore the outdoor environment through play. There is also extensive exposure to the arts through gallery visits, including by some of the youngest children.
- 2.29 The Upward Bound students had clear ideas about the need for breadth in the curriculum. They wanted to see every student able to take arts and practical courses to maintain their interests and develop their talents, and the retention of a full complement of PE lessons to enable them – especially boys - to use exercise to de-stress. They felt strongly that wellbeing and life skills lessons should be compulsory (both are offered at the project) and encouragement for the development of leadership skills, as per the Peer Mentor group in the project. One student commented that too many schools had become “marketised”, only focusing on the best outcomes for a small group of students.
- 2.30 Some students wanted to ensure that bottom sets had as wide and enjoyable an experience of the curriculum as others, not just given an even greater focus on English and maths. They commented that schools should also include more opportunities for discussion and debate, especially on global issues such as the climate crisis. There was an almost unanimous dislike of setting among students; this was felt to depress aspiration and separate off already-underachieving students, leaving them to fall even further behind.
- 2.31 The Committee considers that schools should offer a broad and inclusive curriculum for all pupils up to Year 11 as this will ensure that all young people can enjoy their learning and optimise their skills. A broad curriculum would also reflect the new Ofsted Framework for inspection and support Islington Council fairness initiatives such as 11 by 11 and the 100 hours of the World of Work.

#### Factors determining achievement

- 2.32 All of those interviewed on the scrutiny visits recognised a range of external factors as playing a significant role in the attainment of young people; including poor and overcrowded housing, domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse, poverty and the impact of austerity, low educational achievement of some families and lack of aspiration.
- 2.33 Upward Bound students commented on unequal access to the widest curriculum and the overly excessive enforcement of rules as factors impacting on achievement. Some also cited more overt discrimination and a lack of interest in and knowledge of their backgrounds by school staff. They felt that there should be greater staff diversity in their schools.
- 2.34 Both schools and students recognised the negative impacts of setting. Upward Bound students also appealed for a less formal atmosphere and improved relationships with their teachers, with more optimism and less perceived hostility towards them. They expressed the view that students should be allowed to work more at their own pace and set their own goals. Some felt that teachers failed to

understand the psychology that underpinned support to raise achievement, and that they should recognise and celebrate improvement in progress from whatever stage.

### Pastoral support

- 2.35 All of the schools visited offered a wide range of support services but wished that they could offer even more given the diversity of needs and levels of complexity presented.
- 2.36 The secondary schools have developed teams to bridge the gaps between the home and school environment. Staff are made aware of problems that have arisen with students and/or their families the previous day. At Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA), there is a daily circular giving staff the names of those vulnerable students needing the most support at the time. EGA also carries out a fortnightly review of the most challenging students and case studies are used extensively.
- 2.37 Primary schools have a focus on kindness and empathy, rewarding instances of both in the children. Some spoke of the need to be pro-active in interventions, and had created specialist intervention rooms. They commented that the adoption of trauma informed practices has led to increased consistency in dealing with behaviour issues. The primary schools visited had also employed additional therapists and other workers to supplement local authority provision.
- 2.38 Both secondary schools made extensive use of mentors and role models and tried to match these to the different groups in the school communities, though there was some debate about what constitutes an appropriate role model.
- 2.39 St Aloysius has an inclusion unit that focuses on enabling students to return to class or to undertake bespoke programmes for students at risk of permanent exclusion. The Head of Unit is a long-serving member of staff and is well-known to parents across the generations. There is also a trained teacher who operates as a mentor and fulfils some of the roles undertaken by the pastoral staff at Upward Bound.
- 2.40 All the schools state that they hesitate to resort to exclusion unless there are the most compelling reasons. The schools visited favoured a more nuanced, inclusive approach to isolation units, a feature of school life particularly disliked by Upward Bound students.
- 2.41 For Willow, the support is as much for the parents and carers as for the children. The Centre works very closely with social workers and health visitors. High quality staff training enables Willow staff to intervene effectively both with children and their parents.
- 2.42 Although Upward Bound operates for only half a day per week, there is pastoral support provided for students. Two members of Islington's CAMHS team are employed and the fact that they are BAME is welcomed by students who feel their needs are better understood than their counterparts at school. The project also provides life skills sessions that are well received by the students; committee members observed one session on dealing with stress.

## Transitions

- 2.43 The importance of support during transitions was emphasised. The most vulnerable children and young people find the transition from one phase or setting to another the most challenging and there is far less resource available to schools to devote to this than used to be the case. Both primary schools are fortunate in being able to provide internal transition for children who attend their early years provision so that consistency of approach is maintained. Good parental engagement and the use of a home-school liaison officer were factors that could help to support transitions, however it was accepted that this was less straightforward for children residing out of borough.
- 2.44 Both the secondary schools have well-established processes for transition. St Aloysius starts the aspirational journey through engagement with Year 6 children. EGA offers very detailed primary-secondary transition arrangements including visits to feeder primaries and days to introduce students to the school. This incorporates events held in the summer holidays to make friends and build alliances.
- 2.45 Even the most modest moves for children in Willow, from one age group to another, are accompanied by processes to give confidence and security to the children. These include visits to the new room and opportunities to meet their older peers. There is also significant support from social workers and health visitors, working in partnership with Willow staff, when children and their parents/carers join Willow.
- 2.46 Upward Bound students commented on the difficulty of moving from KS3 mixed ability groups to extensive setting in KS4. They also commented on the need to prepare better for adult, independent life when they left school or college.
- 2.47 The Committee welcomes the work of the schools in supporting transitions and considers that best practice for transitions should be shared throughout the Community of Schools. Following the feedback from young people, it is suggested that a renewed focus on preparing young people for adult life and independence would also be beneficial.

## Support for staff

- 2.48 There is clear recognition amongst all the settings that staff wellbeing and support are crucial. These can be manifested in a number of ways ranging from extensive CPD opportunities to more direct rewards and recognition such as in Ambler's peer rewards scheme that enables staff to express thanks and appreciation of colleagues.
- 2.49 St Aloysius, which has the largest proportion of Black Caribbean students, has a proactive approach to creating and supporting a more diverse staff cohort, including members of the senior leadership team, and in identifying role models for students.



## Council services

- 2.50 There was a consistent response from the schools in relation to the support currently available from Islington Council. All were positive about the quality of CAMHS and the SEND team, though they commented that they would like to access additional support for the most challenging pupils, subject to the funding being available. Those who have adopted iTIPs spoke warmly of its impact and others were considering doing so.
- 2.51 Another area that was mentioned was the need to see better relationships and joined up working between services that care for children and young people, including the police, and better sharing of information. It was noted that it is possible to predict the trajectory of a child's actions, but sometimes interventions are not able to be implemented early enough. It was thought that further joint working would help to address this.
- 2.52 While there were examples of effective partnership working between schools and social services, it was also felt that interactions between social workers and schools could be developed further. Systems and processes could be jointly reviewed to ensure that they are as effective as possible for all parties. Of all the providers, Willow staff spoke most positively about partnership working. As a result of the policy of co-visiting new parents/carers in order to register each new child, they worked closely with social workers.

## **Evidence on the impact of setting on social inequality**

- 2.53 The Committee received evidence from Dr Antonina Tereshchenko, UCL Institute of Education, on the impact of setting and attainment grouping on social inequality.
- 2.54 Research indicates that attainment grouping in schools entrenches social inequalities. There is a spectrum of different attainment grouping methods used across primary and secondary schools and these result in differing levels of segregation between higher and lower attaining pupils. Although not all schools use setting for all subjects, all secondary schools in England use setting for mathematics and half of all primary schools have introduced setting for Year 5 and 6 pupils.
- 2.55 Dr Tereshchenko highlighted that the socio-economic background of pupils is closely linked to levels of attainment. Research had found that pupils were mis-allocated to sets, with working-class and BAME pupils disproportionately allocated to lower sets, and White students most likely to be allocated to top sets, regardless of their academic ability. This exacerbates social inequalities and contributes to social segregation within schools.
- 2.56 Lower sets are more likely to be placed with less qualified teachers, which can result in a poorer quality education. Schools have lower expectations for pupils in lower sets; pupils are not challenged to attain higher grades and may be entered for foundation tier qualifications where it is not possible to attain the highest grades. Pupils in the lowest sets also report lower levels of self-confidence than their peers

in higher sets. Dr Tereshchenko suggested that placement in a lower set could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, rather than an accurate reflection of academic ability.

- 2.57 Dr Tereshchenko explained how pupils could be mis-allocated to sets. Classroom sizes were limited and therefore when pupils of a similar ability were not able to be contained within a single class, or when pupil attainment was borderline between a higher and lower set, schools had to make a decision on which pupils should be in each set. This process could lead to the mis-allocation of pupils to sets. Dr Tereshchenko's study had evaluated the setting of pupils in KS3 against their Year 6 SATs scores. This found that Black students were 2.5 times more likely to be mis-allocated to a lower set, and girls were more likely than boys to be mis-allocated to a lower set in mathematics.
- 2.58 UCL researchers had asked pupils about their experiences of setting and their views on their teachers. Young people perceived differences between the teaching styles of different sets, commenting that higher sets had higher behavioural standards and there was respect between pupils and teachers, whereas lower sets were taught at a slower pace, rules were relaxed, and there was an element of "spoon feeding" pupils information. Some pupils also expressed frustration with the lack of flexibility in setting. Some had been promised that they could move up a set if they achieved high levels of attainment, however, in reality this did not happen often.
- 2.59 Researchers had evaluated the reported self-confidence of pupils at the start of Year 7 and how this developed over time. It was found that pupils in higher sets increased in self-confidence by the end of Year 8, whereas the self-confidence of pupils in lower sets decreased. Pupils in lower sets were more likely to be nervous, anxious and disengaged from education. There was evidence that the attainment of pupils decreases after they are placed in a lower set.
- 2.60 It was suggested that some teachers were resistant to ending or minimising setting, commenting that it would result in additional work at a time when they are already significantly overworked. There was also a concern at the reaction of parents, who were thought to strongly support setting, seeing it as a "common sense" approach, and something they would recognise from their own school days.
- 2.61 UCL did not advocate ending setting and moving to entirely mixed-attainment grouping as there was a lack of evidence on the impact of this. However, it was important for teachers to be aware of the impact of setting, and work to minimise or mitigate this. Flexibility in setting practices partially helped to address these concerns.
- 2.62 The Committee would welcome the introduction of further flexibility in setting, and for this to be minimised or even removed where appropriate. It is also suggested that Islington Council could help to raise awareness of the impact of setting on social inequalities through the Community of Schools and governor briefings.

## **Evidence from council services**

- 2.63 The Committee received a range of evidence on projects and approaches being used in the local authority and across schools and other settings to promote equality and fairness.
- 2.64 The Council has established an Equalities Reference Group with representation from the local community. The group developed a Charter for Best Practice in engaging with parents/carers, pupils and communities, launched in January 2020. Best practice has been established by visiting several schools that buck the trend on outcomes, and the document is accompanied by a self-evaluation tool for school leaders. The Charter emphasises the importance of listening to feedback from parents/carers and children; providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum; and championing the diversity of staff. The Committee welcomes and supports this important work.
- 2.65 School leaders have been provided with unconscious bias training that was very well received. The Committee suggests that this could be rolled out to council staff, alongside contextual information about the boroughs communities.
- 2.66 The Committee considered the importance of Early Years education. Evidence indicates that attending an Early Years setting can help to minimise the impact of economic disadvantage, increase social mobility, and prevent risks to young people. The Council's Bright Start early years services focus on prevention as well as early intervention. However, there was a concern that only 61% of children who have access to early education take up the offer, rising to 84% take up of early learning for those aged 3 and 4. This means that some children go into reception with no pre-school experience. Officers advised that these children, or those that entered reception at an unusual time of year, were more likely to struggle with attainment. The Committee considered that communicating the benefits of early learning was the best way to persuade parents to access these services.
- 2.67 The 11 by 11 programme was an important aspect of the council's fairness agenda. This was a commitment to make 11 cultural experiences available to all children by Year 11. Partners included theatres, museums, music venues and sports clubs. Since March 2019 over 7,500 pupil experiences had been brokered through the programme and positive feedback had been received.
- 2.68 The Council had also committed to ensuring that all young people in Islington benefited from 100 hours' experience of the world of work by age 16. This programme of activity began in March 2019 and the Committee noted several positive examples of the activities for young people.
- 2.69 The Committee considered the progress of iTIPS (Islington Trauma Informed Practices in School). iTIPS recognised that young people could experience many different forms of trauma; more overt forms of trauma included violence, abuse and neglect, however the impacts of poverty, austerity and racism could also be traumatic for young people. Trauma could have an impact on young people's cognition and learning, however the iTIPS programme sought to equip teachers with

the skills to identify and support trauma-experienced young people. As a result, children should see their school as being a sensitive and caring environment and schools should experience improvements in behaviour and attendance in return. Over time, this should have a positive impact on educational outcomes. The Committee considers that schools should be encouraged to make best use of iTIPS and training on trauma informed practices should be available to all school staff, as far as possible.

- 2.70 Officers suggested that the changes to the national curriculum in recent years has disproportionately affected certain demographic groups. The new curriculum has more content than in the past and therefore absence from school has an even more significant impact. The new curriculum is also considered to be less diverse and less inclusive than the previous curriculum. For example, all texts not written by British authors have been removed from the GCSE English curriculum. This strong focus on an historic White British literary canon is not engaging for all pupils. Furthermore, GCSEs are now carried out entirely through terminal assessment and there was no coursework element. This requires pupils to have strong organisational and revision skills; pupils with appropriate study space and few disruptions at home are more likely to embed effective study habits. This is more challenging for pupils in adverse socio-economic circumstances.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 This review has focused on the inequalities faced by young people from disadvantaged White British and Black Caribbean backgrounds throughout their education. This is a national issue, but we cannot wait for a national solution. As part of its commitment to fairness and equality, Islington Council must seek to address these inequalities at a local level.
- 3.2 The causes of these inequalities are complex. There is no simple solution and progress may be incremental. However, the Council must be proactive in promoting equality and the Committee must continue to monitor these issues and the impact on young people in the borough. The Committee notes the progress made over recent years on this issue; the work of the Equalities Reference Group is welcomed, and efforts have been made to close the attainment gap. It is hoped that the Committee's review will further support this agenda by highlighting the inequalities in educational outcomes and by proposing practical changes to address these.
- 3.3 Fourteen recommendations have been made in response to the evidence received. These are related to values, aspirations and relationships; supporting children and young people's wellbeing through the curriculum; developing school processes to offer the best support to children and young people; and developing council services. The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the review. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

## **Afterword:**

This Scrutiny Review was completed just before lockdown but has proved prescient in highlighting two of our school communities whose historic patterns of underachievement appear to be systemic. Over the past few months, the impact of Covid-19 on both these communities in the world beyond schools, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, have coincided all too uncomfortably with the evidence that underpins the recommendations.

But we have been aware of these inequalities for a very long time; in the publication of Bernard Coard's seminal pamphlet 'How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System' in 1971 and in David Hargreaves 'Improving Secondary Schools', a three-part report commissioned by the Inner London Education Authority and published in 1984, one of the first widely-read reports to link the issue of social class and educational underachievement.

The need to implement the Scrutiny Review's recommendations, and to develop them further in light of recent events, has never been more pressing.

**Cllr Vivien Cutler**  
**Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

<b>SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)</b>
<b>Review:</b> Equalities in Educational Outcomes
<b>Scrutiny Review Committee:</b> Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>Director leading the Review:</b> Mark Taylor, Director of Schools and Learning
<b>Lead Officers:</b> Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary)
<p><b>Overall aims:</b> To assess equalities in educational outcomes for Black Caribbean and White British pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, and to make recommendations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pupils’ engagement in school and the wider community</li> <li>• Improve pupils’ progress and attainment across the key stages and into the world of work</li> <li>• Raise awareness and commitment to action in educational settings and across service providers in Islington</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectives of the Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To analyse and clarify underperformance intersectionally in these key groups over the past 5 years both locally and nationally. This will allow the Committee to consider performance across all variables as well as individually and over a reasonable time-period.</li> <li>• To use existing national research and literature to identify the barriers to improving educational attainment for these key groups in Islington schools</li> <li>• To explore the ways in which school leaders drive up the progress and attainment of identified groups informed by best practice from schools that buck the trend</li> <li>• To secure agreement and commitment on the strategies that will improve outcomes for these groups at each key stage and on into further education, employment and training</li> <li>• To identify the causes of underperformance including the impact of factors such as attendance and exclusion</li> <li>• Engage parents, pupils, communities and stakeholders in dialogue to find productive ways forward and guide future action</li> <li>• To better understand the views of children and young people, parents and community groups on how performance for key groups can be improved</li> <li>• To produce workable recommendations for the Council and schools to deliver sustainable improvements in educational outcomes across schools and beyond in Islington</li> <li>• To call to action all the Council’s services and functions to improve outcomes for identified groups</li> <li>• To evaluate the work already underway to reduce the attainment gap and to identify how this could be developed further.</li> </ul>

**How this Review will be carried out:**

The Committee will receive written and oral evidence; evaluate local and national research and practice; visit providers including schools; listen to the views of school leaders and listen to the views of children, young people, parents and the wider community.

**Scope of the Review:**

The progress and attainment of identified groups; the interrelationship of different factors which have an impact on progress and attainment in these groups; the identification of best practice.

**The Review will focus on:**

- The extent to which;
  - a child's background - including ethnicity, gender, culture, and social class and;
  - negative stereotyping and/or cultural bias can have an impact on the progress and attainment of identified groups
- The positive impact that schools can have on the progress that children make
- What children, young people, parents and the wider community think needs to be done to improve progress and attainment for identified groups
- The impact of school leadership, management and governance on attainment and equality
- The impact of support, monitoring, challenge and intervention mechanisms from the Local Authority/Academy sponsors on schools' culture and attainment practices.

**Type of evidence:**

The Scrutiny Committee will:

- Hear the views of children and young people to see what they perceive as the factors that support their engagement, progress and attainment
- Hear what parents and the community think can be done to improve outcomes for identified groups
- Receive evidence of alternative interventions and approaches that have been effective in improving outcomes for identified groups e.g. the interventions delivered by the Upward Bound Project
- Receive evidence from local authority officers and leaders in schools
- Receive oral evidence from key witnesses and analyses of relevant local and national performance data, including links between aspiration and academic attainment
- Receive written evidence from other interested parties
- Visit schools and examine first hand interventions that are in place for identified groups
- Receive expert witness presentation from national advisers.

**Witness evidence:**

It is proposed that witness evidence is taken from:

- Children and young people at school and beyond
- Parents and carers
- The community and community leaders
- Representative headteachers and other school leaders
- Practitioners and researchers expert in the field both locally and nationally
- Local authority officers

**Additional information:**

In carrying out the review the Committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

### **Witness Evidence Plan**

#### **Committee Meeting – Tuesday 9 July 2019**

<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Introductory Information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny Initiation Document</li> </ul>	For the Committee to agree the aim, objectives and scope of the review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary) with other relevant officers</li> </ul>	Introductory presentation: data, context; local and national position; work undertaken to date in Islington – Equalities 'Plan on a Page' and related documentation.

#### **August**

<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Background Information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written Evidence</li> </ul>	<p>Written evidence was circulated to members over August, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islington Council: Equalities Plan on a Page 2019</li> <li>• Department for Education: Multiple disadvantage and KS4 attainment: evidence from LSYPE2 (2019)</li> <li>• Extract from Children's Services Performance Report: Q3 2018/19</li> <li>• The RSA: The social class gap for educational achievement: a review of the literature (2010)</li> <li>• 'You can't say that! Stories have to be about white people' by Darren Chetty</li> </ul>



<b>Committee Meeting – Tuesday 17 September 2019</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Short update on progress and attainment; the views of headteachers and best practice</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary) with other relevant officers</li> </ul>	Update on data on progress and attainment for these key groups with national and local comparators where available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A panel of Headteachers from Early Years, Primary and Secondary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Martha Braithwaite (St Marks CE Primary School),</li> <li>- Juliet Benis (Ambler Primary School),</li> <li>- Damian Parrott (Drayton Park &amp; Montem Primary Schools),</li> <li>- Sarah Beagley (Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Secondary School),</li> <li>- Mita Pandya (Archway and Willow Children’s Centres)</li> <li>- Jane Heffernan (St Aloysius Secondary School)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Best practice in schools, successes and challenges in implementing targeted approaches.

<b>Committee Meeting – Tuesday 29 October 2019</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – The Local Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives who can provide evidence on innovative approaches and projects being used across schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary)</li> <li>- Emma Simpson, Secondary English Consultant,</li> <li>- Penny Kenway, Head of Early Years and Childcare,</li> <li>- Tracy Smith, EY Lead for Teaching and Learning,</li> <li>- Helen Cameron, Health and Wellbeing Manager</li> <li>- Hamish Mackay, Head of iWork.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Effective approaches currently in place that have a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes for these groups and lessons to be learnt.</p> <p>This included: the work of the Equalities Reference Group, early years services and Bright Start Islington, Whole Class Reading approaches, the Reading Road Map, 11 by 11, iTIPS in Islington, 100 Hours World of Work.</p>

<b>Committee Meeting – Tuesday 26 November 2019</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Data</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harry Donnison, QPMU Service Manager</li> </ul>	Data on educational outcomes, using four-year rolling averages.

<b>Committee Meeting – Tuesday 21 January 2020</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Any outstanding matters</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeff Cole, Head of School Improvement (Secondary)</li> </ul>	Update on data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Antonina Tereshchenko, UCL Institute of Education</li> </ul>	Research on the impact of setting and attainment grouping in school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practice Charter for engaging parents/carers, children and communities</li> </ul>	Charter developed in collaboration with the Equalities Reference Group to

<b>Committee Meeting – Monday 10 February 2020</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus – Recommendations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Recommendations</li> </ul>	To agree a set of draft recommendations that will form the basis of the Committee's report.

<b>Scrutiny Visits</b>	
<b>Who / What</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School (6 November 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe practice and talk to school leaders and pupils about their experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upward Bound Project (9 November 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe sessions and talk to Peer Mentors, Year 9 students and parents about their experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambler School (13 November 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe practice and talk to school leaders and pupils about their experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Marks School (20 November 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe practice and talk to school leaders and pupils about their experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willow Children's Centre (21 November 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe practice and discuss the review with centre staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Aloysius College (5 December 2019)</li> </ul>	To observe practice and talk to school leaders and pupils about their experiences.