

Learning and Culture
Children's Services
222 Upper Street
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Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 13th October

Ward(s): [All]

Subject: Putting Children First - An Education Plan for Islington 2023-2030

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. There is a strong political and corporate commitment to education in Islington. Islington is committed to educational excellence for all children and young people, regardless of their starting point. The Education Plan sets out this ambition for Education in Islington from 2023 to 2030.
- 1.2. Islington is uniquely positioned to drive educational excellence with a strong network of schools and access to a wide range of cultural partners and local businesses.
- 1.3. This is an ambitious plan that will drive a new relationship with schools and settings within the context of a changing legislative framework set out within the government White Paper, 'Opportunity for All: strong schools with great teachers for your child' published by the DFE in March 2022.
- 1.4. One of the objectives of the Government White Paper is for all schools to become part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) by 2030.
- 1.5. The Education Plan adopts a 'status neutral' approach embracing all schools and settings that aims to put children first recognising that it is the quality of the education, rather than the status of the schools that secures positive outcomes.
- 1.6. The Education Plan recognises this changing context but is committed to, 'Putting Children First' and so is centred on driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools and in this way aims to provide a strategic framework across a number of linked plans including, 'The School Organisation Plan' and the refreshed Special Educational Needs (SEND) Strategy.

- 1.7. The Education Plan is presented alongside the School Organisation Plan and The SEND Strategy to demonstrate that educational excellence is dependent upon inclusive schools where all children are supported to thrive in schools that are financially sustainable.
- 1.8. The School Organisation Plan includes some common principles that will be applied to pupil placed planning across the borough so that the quality of education is not compromised.
- 1.9. The Education Plan sets out the ambitions for education in Islington that will be delivered through strengthened relationships with schools and settings with a shared vision for what 'educational excellence' looks like.
- 1.10. The vision for the plan is that by 2030 every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school. Children and young people will be equipped and empowered so that every child and young person who attends our education settings with the learning and skills for life and the future world of work.
- 1.11. The linked plans within The Education Plan are set out as nine pillars.
- 1.12. To deliver the ambitions of The Education Plan, delivery plans have been developed for each of the nine pillars set out within it.
- 1.13. In addition to this, some immediate priorities are identified for issues that have not improved sufficiently over time that reflect the political manifesto including reducing exclusions; improving attendance; increasing the number of young people progressing into employment and training, improving outcomes for Black Caribbean boys, children, and young people with SEND and for Children Looked After as well as increasing the uptake of childcare for targeted two-year-olds.
- 1.14. It is proposed that The Education Board will provide strategic oversight for demonstrating the impact of The Education Plan.
- 1.15. The reason the Education Plan is important right now is because:
 - National grants are being reduced – School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant – 50% reduction in 22/23, 0% in 23/24. Whilst this can be replaced by requesting schools to de-delegate additional funding to continue these functions, it comes at a time when schools budgets are increasingly under pressure through inflationary uplifts; higher than anticipated teacher pay awards and unsustainable energy increases
 - The potential for schools to become academies has an implication on funding and relationships
 - An agile approach is needed, to support best outcomes for children
 - A new model is required to deliver this ambition in a fragmented system
 - The opportunity is to create a status-neutral schools-led system that sustains a relationship with all of our schools

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To support the development and implementation of The Education Plan

- 2.2. To note the feedback from engagement with key stakeholders including children and young people, parents and carers, governors, schools and settings attached as an appendix to The Education Plan.

3. Background

- 3.1. Islington is an ambitious borough with high aspirations for all children and young people.
- 3.2. The Education Plan reflects the corporate commitment to a more equal borough.
- 3.3. The quality of education in Islington reflected in Ofsted gradings for schools is good with 93% of all schools judged to be good or outstanding. Performance at each key stage (Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post 16) is typically in line with national or above.
- 3.4. Some children and young people, however, persistently under perform in Islington schools.
- 3.5. Children and young people who are more vulnerable, for example: eligible for free school meals; open to our support services through early help or social care or with social educational needs recurrently under perform in comparison to others.
- 3.6. Children from some ethnic groups: Black Caribbean, Turkish and Cypriot communities and British, White Boys do not do as well as they could.
- 3.7. The Education Plan will address these inequities through establishing mechanisms to recurrently review outcomes for vulnerable children through regular reporting through The Education Board.
- 3.8. Priorities will be agreed informed by data and in partnership with schools and these priorities will be set out within a 12-month Delivery Plan that is reviewed within The Education Board.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. The Dedicated Schools Grant has four blocks each containing their own prescribed uses with the Schools Block almost entirely allocated according to the DfE National Funding Formula. There are limited opportunities to retain funds centrally though this block with the exception of growth, falling rolls and de-delegated funding from schools.
- 4.1.2. In relation to the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant, to ensure that councils remain adequately funded to exercise their statutory intervention powers DfE intend to give councils the power in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to fund all school improvement activities, including core school improvement activities, via de-delegation of funds from maintained schools' budget shares, with the agreement of their local schools forum or the Secretary of State.

4.1.3. The removal of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant brings an opportunity to work collaboratively between schools and local authority and work within The Education Plan in a schools-led system.

4.2. Legal implications

4.2.1. As a local education authority, the Council has a general responsibility under the Education Act 1996 for education in its area. It has a specific duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential. It has functions in respect of provision of primary and secondary schools and further education. It has a duty to consider parental representations, and to have regard to guidance; and duties in respect of education and training for persons over compulsory school age. There are numerous other statutory provisions in relation to education, including Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children and young persons with special educational needs or disabilities, and Education, Health and Care Plans; and provisions in relation to Academies.

4.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

4.3.1. The Education Plan supports Islington's goal of changing attitudes to sustainability as a progressive force for goods. We want a skills offer for young people and to grow local green skills and carbon literacy, enabling a locally inclusive, resilient, and green economy. We will do this by:

- Ensuring schools and colleges update their careers offer so that young people leaving education are equipped with the skills they need to successfully enter the green workplace
- Working with Adult Community Learning and local Further Education colleges to create short introductory programmes and pathways to broaden access to green jobs
- Through our 100 Hours of the World of Work programme, providing children in the borough with 100 hours' exposure to a wide variety of career options including jobs with a green agenda
- Ensuring social value asks are embedded in all the council's corporate contracts. We will require organisations to commit and engage with schools and colleges to offer young people experience of green jobs/skills
- Seeking funding for a virtual work experience digital platform through which the council can host live, virtual placements "with green agenda" for school and college students

4.3.2. There are twenty schools involved in a carbon zero pilot. This aims to work with schools to creatively arrive at ideas to reduce their carbon footprint. The aim is that the learning from the pilot is then rolled out across all schools.

4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 4.4.2. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the EqIA screening tool signed off 10/8/22 found any impacts to be positive or neutral.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. To conclude, The Education Plan sets out the ambition for education in Islington, it aims to drive educational excellence for all children and young people, regardless of their starting point.
- 5.2. The Education Plan makes clear the corporate and political commitment to education in Islington and provides a framework to deliver that vision by identifying some priorities evidenced by data over time.
- 5.3. The Education Plan provides a 'hook' to bring together schools and settings to work collaboratively to shared objectives that will ensure the vision for education is achieved by providing regular reports through established governance arrangements across the Council as well as through the Education Board.
- 5.4. Committing to the Education Plan enables the Council to capitalise on Islington's unique position as an area that provides unrivalled access to arts and culture as well as businesses and employers through a tangible vision for education that partners can commit to.
- 5.5. The 'pillars' identified with the Education Plan are key pieces of work that contribute to educational outcomes. The Education Plan provides a framework that will pull together these separate pieces of work to commit to common goals for example: reducing school numbers, impacts on the quality of education, therefore, The School Organisation Plan needs to be informed by the impact of any school changes on the quality of the education. Similarly, in a post pandemic climate, more schools are dealing with an increased number of pupils with social, emotional and mental health issues. The Education Plan recognises that to drive educational excellence, it is essential to support an inclusive culture across our schools and settings that enables all children to thrive supporting early identification of need that triggers the right support.
- 5.6. Resident feedback: From 28 June to 1 August 2022, we asked young people, parents, and carers to complete two online surveys about our Education Plan's mission, goals, and priorities. The surveys were promoted through various

channels, including leaflets at events, posters at venues, newsletters, and social media.

- Information about our education plan was shared on our website (www.islington.gov.uk/educationplan) asking for parents and carers and young people to complete a short survey telling us what they thought of our education plan's mission, goals, and priorities
- The webpage and survey were promoted to parents, carers, and young people through:
 - A poster sharing the weblink and a QR code displayed at Adventure Playgrounds, Children's Centres, Libraries, schools, and other venues hosting events over the summer
 - A leaflet sharing the weblink and a QR code distributed at Parent/Carers forum on 12 July and the mother tongue supplementary schools' partnership conference on 30 June
 - A letter to parents sent by all schools
 - Social media posts by Islington FIS, Bright Futures, Islington Libraries, and the Islington Youth Council
- 94% of parents and carers and 100% of young people surveyed agreed with our mission statement.
- 80% of parents and carers and 75% of young people surveyed agreed that the education plan's goals matched theirs. Parents and carers and young people all agreed that the three most important goals for them were:
 - Ensure every child quickly gets any extra support they need
 - Create a sense of belonging so that every pupil wants to attend school and does
 - Ensure no child feels discriminated against in any school or setting
- Please note that respondents were able to select more than one goal.
- Full feedback is included within the full Education Plan, attached with this report

5.7. The recommendations within this report will enable a joined-up approach to education that puts children first in Islington.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 -'Putting Children First – an Education Plan for Islington 2023-2030'

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Cllr Michelline Ngongo Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families (for Executive / Council)

Date: **Date the report received final approval**

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