

People Directorate  
222 Upper Street, Islington

Report of: Corporate Director of Childrens Services

Meeting of: Childrens Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 February 2022

Ward(s): All Wards

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## Subject: Equalities in Educational Outcomes

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1. In June 2020 Childrens Services Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of educational outcomes through the lens of equalities.
- 1.2. A report was presented to the Committee outlining 14 recommendations.
- 1.3. Following the scrutiny report, education settings experienced a further national lockdown due to the pandemic. This disrupted educational settings. National exams were again suspended for Early Years and Primary schools. Significant adjustments were applied to Key Stage 4 and 5 assessments.
- 1.4. This report is an update on the recommendations.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note the progress against the 14 recommendations
- 2.2. The Education Plan, SEND Strategy and School Organisation Plan are ambitious plans to reduce inequality in Educational Outcomes. These plans have a lens on disproportionality and the relentless focus on reducing the gap for all disadvantaged groups.
- 2.3. Targeted support for schools will remain the focus of the education team to ensure that the quality of education demonstrates impact through improved outcomes to meet the first milestones of the Education Plan.
- 2.4. The introduction of the Islington Professional Partner programme provides challenge and support to schools to improve outcomes and narrow the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. Childrens Services Scrutiny Committee formed the view that, despite the fact that inequality in educational outcomes 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.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. **Theme 1: Values, Aspirations and Relationships**
- 3.6. **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.**

Working collaboratively with Early Intervention and Prevention, Bright Start and Bright Futures, schools can support families understand their local community and the services that are available to them. Alongside this valuable work is the contribution that is provided through the Mother Tongue Supplementary School Partnership and how to helps to support parents/carers understand the local community. Parent Champions for Bright Start, Families for Life and SEND continue to champion the services available to the community.

Islington Council, in association with the Big Think charity, has supported six primary schools to hold values-led consultations with families around relationships, sex and health education. These were effective at engaging with 'hard-to-reach' carers, who felt seen, heard and valued.

During 2020 -21,42 education settings including schools, governors and LBI staff attended Unconscious Bias training offered by School Improvement. The course

was designed to support staff working in schools to explore unconscious bias, its implications and what we can do about it. The training aimed to achieve the following:

- Understanding what unconscious bias is and how it can impact our interactions with others.
- Exploring our own unconscious biases and reflect on experiences we have had which involve unconscious bias
- Engage in solution-based thinking to consider what we can do to positively affect the interactions in our school

Schools were encouraged to review current policies to reflect the training they had received. These policies may include:

- School Behaviour policy
- Teaching and Learning policy
- School Complaints policy
- Code of Conduct policy
- SEND policy
- Equalities statement

Since the pandemic, school leaders have refreshed their induction of staff so that they are more aware of their local communities. Induction support has also been provided to Early Career Teachers as part of their induction programme. This has focussed professionals on the importance of guided support in areas of behaviour and planning for the needs of children and young people.

**3.7. 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.**

The Islington Education Plan launched in October 2022, has set out a series of ambitious plans to ensure that Islington is a more equal borough for its residents. The plan will focus on reducing the disproportionately of underachieving groups and focusses on 6 priorities, which include:

- Reduce Fixed Term Exclusions (FTEs)
- Reduce levels of Persistent Absence (PA)
- Reduce levels of young people aged 16-19 not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Improve outcomes for our vulnerable groups
- Increase take-up of Islington's Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) for two, three and four-year-olds
- Improve attainment at KS2 and KS4

Schools during the pandemic and following the full return to face to face education reviewed the curriculum offer for their pupils. This included reviewing the intent of the curriculum, its implementation and impact on outcomes for all groups. Schools ensured that the curriculum offer was anti racist and included a broad diversity that reflected the context of their local community

**3.8. 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.**

Islington secured funding to pilot a programme entitled "Becoming a Man" in Islington schools. The programme, delivered in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation, employs a full time counsellor for two years at each school. They run group and 1:1 mentoring for groups of boys at risk of exclusion and poor mental health outcomes. Three secondary schools were selected. Three BAM counsellors, all black men themselves, were recruited and trained, and commenced work in the schools in September 2022. As well as supporting the students selected for the BAM 'circles', the counsellors are integrated members of staff within the schools, providing relatable and inspiring role models for all students.

**3.9. Theme 2: Supporting children and young people's wellbeing through the curriculum**

**3.10. 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.**

The support provided for schools for personal, social and health education (PSHE), has been updated and amended in the light of the new statutory curriculum. The revised primary school scheme of work You, Me, PSHE has been well-received, and the majority of Islington schools use this resource to plan a progressive curriculum addressing all aspects of wellbeing and health in an age-appropriate way.

Secondary schools receive personalised support to review and enhance their PSHE curriculum, responding to the needs of their pupils. The January 2023 Ofsted inspection for Beacon High found: “Leaders prioritise teaching pupils about healthy relationships, keeping safe, staying physically healthy, to promote their personal and social development”.

The health and wellbeing survey in 2021/22, engaged the views of approximately 3000 pupils in over 30 schools. This supported schools to reflect on the success of their curriculum and identified aspects of wellbeing that were of concern in their school communities. Schools are supported to incorporate and integrate a wide range of specialist agencies within their curriculum, which also supports access to more specialist support; for instance, Brook delivers sexual health lessons in schools, as well as offering support for targeted groups of young people, and individual support through clinics.

The 11 by 11 partnership with the Children in Need service reaches some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough. The Cultural Enrichment Team have worked with key cultural organisations to deliver this work – including Soapbox, Cubitt Artists and Crafts Council. This year we are focusing on ways to engage with social workers through CPD, so that they have a greater understanding of how 11 by 11 works and the value of enrichment. This will enable them to advocate more for the enrichment activities to their service users. We will also commission an 11 by 11 partner organisation to deliver a taster enrichment event for children with a social worker in May 2023

- 3.11. **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.**

Schools are responsible for how they arrange learning and the allocation of staff so that all pupils are exposed to the most effective teaching experiences and expertise. Schools are focussing on the importance of developing an inclusive curriculum that supports the individual needs of children and young people. This includes knowing and understanding the learning needs of cohorts of pupils and how best to arrange learning. Schools understand that setting of classes for learning needs to be flexible and responsive to individual needs and progress. All professional development training delivers key messages of the importance of

Quality First Teaching, the importance of scaffolding learning, the role of adults to support engagement and access to the requirements of the national curriculum.

- 3.12. **Theme 3: Developing school processes to offer the best support to children and young people**
- 3.13. **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.**

The Islington Education plan sets out an ambitious strategy to improve outcomes for underachieving groups. These include the following actions that underpin the outcomes of the education Plan:

- Schools and settings have a whole school ethos of attainment for all
  - Schools are data driven and respond to evidence
  - Schools/settings put high importance on addressing behaviour and attendance
  - Leaders and staff focus on meeting individual learning needs through a personalised curriculum
  - Schools/settings deploy staff effectively to maximise pupil outcomes and ensure positive impact on school led tutoring
  - Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning through various organisations including the Mother Tongue Supplementary School Partnership
  - Schools engaging with 11 by 11, Music and the World of Work
  - Strengthening the Bright Start (0-5)/Bright Futures (5 – 19) offer to all educational settings
- 3.14. **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.**

Islington remains committed to supporting schools to understand and support children and young people and their families to be trauma informed. More than half of all primary schools in Islington (including 50% of secondary schools) have now been trained in, and supported to embed, trauma-informed practices in their work. This supports them to recognise children's behaviour as a means of

communication and respond to them more effectively, helping both staff and children to avoid dysregulation and better manage their emotions and responses.

Newer programmes, Tiny TIPS and Community iTIPS, which work with early years settings and VCS organisations in the same way, support the communities around schools in this approach so there is consistency throughout children, young people's and families. The iTIPS team have developed and piloted a workshop for parents which has been facilitated with eight parent groups to date. A video explaining dysregulation and how adults can help children who are dysregulated has been filmed with children from Prior Weston primary school and will shortly be available to view on Islington Council's YouTube channel.

More recently, the local authority is working with Islington Safer Schools Partnership is exploring how the approach could also be supported in schools' work with the Police.

- 3.15. 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.**

All schools have undergone a process of reviewing their behaviour policies in line with the recommendation above. As a result, this has seen a decrease in Islington's national ranking for permanent exclusions in secondary schools has improved from 111/151 to 17/151 since 2016 – 2022. This equates to 210 pupils placed in alternative provision in 2016 to 27 pupils placed in alternative provision in 2022.

Islington Council have been successful in securing a bid to take part in the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) – Nurturing and Inclusive Schools programme. 10 Islington schools have been identified to take part. This will bring a significant investment to Islington are part of a three-million-pound investment across 7 local authorities. The 10 schools will benefit from training, leading to national accreditation as nurturing schools.

- 3.16. 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.**

Islington Schools HR service work closely with schools in the local authority to ensure that all recruitment is in line with council policy and national guidance. Schools understand their communities well and ensure that staff reflects the local

community.

Islington Governor Services undertook an online survey of governors in spring 2021. The 155 responses (about 20% of governors) indicated that Black communities, people with disabilities, younger people and to an extent males were under-represented on governing boards. Respondents felt that there was good diversity practice at two thirds of governing boards but poor practice at around 10%. The survey indicated that there was interest in a Black Governors' Forum. An action plan was produced as a result of the survey. This has been shared with governing bodies in the local authority. Achievements to date include:

- Facilitating three online governance information sessions (February/March 2022) aimed in particular at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Each of these sessions had at least one global majority governor talking about their experiences and the importance of diversity.
- Following this, an online Prospective Governors Event in March 2022, in partnership with Governors for Schools, at which schools pitched to potential governors.
- On 19 October 2022 the first Global Majority Governors' Network took place in conjunction with Camden. This meeting was chaired by Cllr Angelo Weekes (also an Islington governor) and Cllr Nanouche Umeadi from Camden. The next meeting will be held on 1 March 2023 and will focus on attainment.

Governor training in Equalities is scheduled for summer 2023. The focus of this training will be to support governors to:

- understand the local context including the focus on Equalities in the Education Plan: Putting Children First and related local plans
- understand their legal duties in relation to Equalities
- explore a range of ways to fulfil these duties, including holding the executive leadership to account with an Equalities lens and appointing an Equalities governor and understanding the role of that link governor
- have an opportunity to learn about and share good Equalities practice.

- 3.17. **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**



This has been a particular focus of work with secondary schools to support a better transition from primary school and beyond. This includes coordinating transition activities across the borough in a more systematic way.

Islington Council officers are now meeting more regularly with schools to understand and respond to developing pupils' resilience and ensuring that information about pupils is shared before pupils start the new school year. An example of this work is the engagement of all secondary school heads of departments meeting with primary specialists in Summer 2021 to understand Key Stage SATs assessments and how secondary colleagues can develop a smoother transition by understanding what pupils has already achieved. Following this in the Autumn term 2021, colleagues meet again to discuss emerging issues and potential resources and solutions to challenges regarding attendance, suspensions, the role of New River College to support outreach work on behaviour and self-regulation and how the resources of Bright Futures can support better transitions into Year 7.

Pupil Services have introduced the Nurture UK 'Transition Toolbox' to a number of our Primary Schools to trial for September 2023-4 cohort and already receiving positive feedback. The toolbox is designed to support children by helping them to build the confidence and skills they need to ensure a smooth, successful transition. It also provides a range of resources for parents and professionals. The materials can be used flexibly to suit the learning context and individual student need and are organised in six sections:

- Making the transition
- Building self-esteem and confidence
- Developing resilience and problem solving
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Being a learner in high school, and
- Building strengths and setting goals.



The annual SENCO network day is where primary and secondary SENCOs come together face to face to share information.

All schools maintained by a local authority are required to send a Common Transfer File (CTF) to the new school on transfer. This also applies to pupil referral units. This is a statutory obligation. Academies (including free schools) are 'strongly encouraged' by the DfE to send CTFs when a pupil leaves to attend another school.

A working group (SENCOs and Officers) are developing a protocol for SEND information exchange.

**3.18. 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.**

Islington Council remains committed to raising awareness of equalities. The Challenging Inequality Programme sets out how this will be achieved. Initial commitments have included:

- Work with partners to ensure we are collectively tackling racism, inequality, and injustice
- Ensuring our Covid-19 recovery plans focus on supporting Black and ethnic minority communities and other disadvantaged groups
- Working with the Police to understand the reasons for the high rates of stop and search for the Black community and what we can do to address this
- Investigating the history and origins of all statues, artworks and heritage plaques across the borough to ensure they do not represent issues and events which go against Islington's long history of equality and fairness
- Working with schools to ensure the curriculum highlights issues of racism, inequality and injustice and is honest about the role of Britain in history
- Ensuring we lead the way as an exemplar employer tackling issues around recruitment and selection, staff development and making sure we have a representative workforce at all levels of the organisation
- Creating forums for the community and our staff to engage with, and be at the heart of, our work to challenge inequality
- BLACK Curriculum – 3 workshop – number of schools

**3.19. 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'.**

Support for schools continues in this area of work. School Improvement Service in collaboration with schools created a suite of 16 assemblies that reflect the diversity and experiences of differences in self-definition and personal identity. Extensive resources have been shared with schools on Windrush, Black History and Your Voice Matters - lessons and teaching resources for Key Stage 3 and 4 aim to help schools tackle racism and unconscious bias. Students' learning journeys will uncover their identities, help them to understand how communities reinforce racism and learn how to change their perception of racism. Included are lessons on how to safely challenge racism both in school and wider society.

Resources have been shared with schools on Windrush and lesson plans and ideas were prepared for schools to support the launch of the Windrush Nurses statue at the Whittington Hospital.

School Improvement has worked collaboratively with the data team to produce a range of comprehensive reports on the academic outcomes of pupils from various ethnic groups. This data is now tracking the learning journey of these groups from Reception to the end of Key Stage 4. This is part of our commitment to report to the Education Board on the progress being made by underachieving groups.

Ofsted inspections of Islington schools (98% good or better) confirm that the curriculum is broad, balanced and diverse so that the curriculum meets the needs of the community and addresses the expectations of the national curriculum.

- 3.20. **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.**

In January 2022, Islington Council recognised the importance of facilitating closer partnership working with school leaders and in particular secondary school leaders, who for some years had not benefitted from regular professional collaboration. To this end, a secondary school leader network was established. **ISSCL**, Islington Secondary School and College Leaders now meets on a half-termly basis with all schools represented.

This has helped develop and accelerate some of the following initiatives and tackle issues that affect students in all our schools, irrespective of status:

- **Active Row Islington** – This innovative programme has been designed and part funded by the council in collaboration with 13 secondary settings in the borough, Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust (HRRCT) and London Youth Rowing (LYR) who deliver the programme. The initiative supports school leaders in tackling challenging issues facing some of their more vulnerable students. School leaders have agreed to work in partnership with LBI and each other to provide more comprehensive and 'deeper' support strategies designed to achieve the following outcomes with a **targeted cohort** of 250 Year 8 students across 3-years from September 2022 to July 2025:
  - Increase attendance and reduce Persistent and Severe Absence rates
  - Reduce Fixed Term Exclusions (FTEs)

- Improve school engagement
  - Support positive mental health and well-being strategies
  - Develop a Year 8 milestone as part of a KS2 to KS4 inclusion pathway
  - Reduce the risk of NEET at 16 (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
  - Develop positive relationships with the police
  - Develop skills to better support improved outcomes from Year 9 – Year 11
- **NEET Early Identification** – The council has been able to work closely with school and college leaders to identify and target KS3 students for early intervention support. ‘At risk’ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including:
    - English as an additional language (EAL)
    - Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
    - Special Education Needs Support
    - Attendance and Persistent Absence
    - Elective Home Education
    - Fixed Term Exclusions
    - Educated away from school (Alternative Provision)
    - Looked after children
    - Young parents/carers
    - In custody and/or involvement with youth justice service

**ISSCL** is now planning more ‘joined-up’ transition programmes at the end of KS2 to support early identification of students at risk of NEET at 16.

- **SEND – New Ways of Working**  
The council and schools are developing closer partnerships with the Special School sector to support SEND students in mainstream settings. The ambition over the next three years is to develop a school-led system that provides support and challenge to mainstream schools regarding the provision and practice they deliver for children with SEND. This will be underpinned by a new approach to SEND funding and the development of Additionally Resourced Provisions (**ARPs**) in mainstream schools.
- **Deputy Headteacher Network**  
**ISSCL** has given its full support to help the council facilitate a network of pastoral Deputy Headteachers, Vice Principals and Designated Safeguarding Leads (**DSLs**) across all secondary settings. This network will devote its time, effort and resources to creating a more inclusive culture across Islington’s family of schools.

The network will reduce the number of FTEs across Islington by supporting:

- Individual Schools
- Effective support of ethnic groups and disadvantaged students
- SEND students
- KS4 Boys

- The sharing of best practice
  - The reform in the Fair Access Protocol process
  - Transparent use and sharing of data
  - The implementation of an effective transition programme between KS2 and KS3
  - The introduction of an Inclusion Pathway that supports the borough's most vulnerable young people from Year 6 to Year 11
- **Islington Safer Schools' Partnership**  
**ISSCL** has developed close links with the police and now meets regularly with the Safer Schools Team including the Inspector and Superintendent who oversee strategic and operational responsibilities. March 2023 will see the release of the Islington Safer School Partnership Protocol (**ISSPP**). The **ISSPP** provides the framework for schools, the council and the police to work more closely together and will be launched at a public meeting in March 2023.

The **ISSPP** will provide more clarity on how the current team of Safer Schools Officers (**SSOs**) will be deployed. It will also outline how a newly formed working group comprising the schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads (**DSLs**) will be working more closely with the police to provide reliable and timely intelligence.

The aims and objectives of the **ISSPP** is to make clear what the 'offer' is from the Safer Schools Team and what the expectations are from schools, police teams and council staff.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1. Financial Implications

4.1.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### 4.2. Legal Implications

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, that are connected to that characteristic, to take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, to advance equality of opportunity and to encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life.

4.2.1. Additionally, under Section 158 of the Equality Act 2010, it is lawful for the Council to take action to compensate for disadvantages which it reasonably believes are faced by people who share a particular protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

4.2.2. Positive action is lawful if it is taken to:

- Enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to overcome a disadvantage connected to the characteristic;

- Meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic where those needs are different to those people who do not have the characteristic; or
- Enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in an activity in which their participation is disproportionately low.

4.2.3. The Council must also have regard to the overriding duty placed on public authorities to act fairly, lawfully and reasonably in the exercise of their functions and powers.

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

4.3.1. There are no environmental implications for this report

#### 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. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1. To note the progress of the 14 recommendations

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