

Working for every child

**EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS  
– THE HACKNEY PICTURE**



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## FOREWORD FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR, Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Education

**Education in Hackney is often discussed as an excellent system: our schools consistently perform above the national attainment averages and provide brilliant extracurricular activities. Families actively move into the borough to have their children taught here and educators and leaders consistently seek to work here.**

Central to this success has been our cohesive local education system in tandem with our unrelenting political commitment to education. Our sense of place is intrinsic to who we are: the leadership of education in the local area is crucial to ensuring the best for our children. We believe that a strong network of schools (Hackney's family of schools) acting together – and bound by a central education service – works best for all children, including our most vulnerable.

Hackney Education's tagline – 'Working for Every Child' – is one that is lived and breathed by the service. We believe in every child; we champion every child; we're ambitious for every child; and we care for every child.

Fundamental to this is our exceptional staff who lead or champion the objectives we hold paramount as the education authority; that all children and young people feel cared for and safe; that they are happy and healthy, and ready to learn; that every single child has access

to an excellent education that allows them to fulfill their potential and achieve their ambitions. I want to commend the work that goes on in our schools and settings to enable this to happen.

Councils have a unique leadership role in supporting these shared ambitions and operating as the 'middle tier'. We are able to work in partnership – in areas like wellbeing and health of local children – and provide overarching support in a way settings and schools are not empowered or mandated to do in isolation. As the Council we hold the boroughwide perspective enabling us to work with schools on important themes: improving exclusion rates, for example.

We are best-placed to bring professionals together: to learn from each other in order to relentlessly drive improvements in a collaborative and bilateral way, and to ensure that every member of staff in any educational setting or school has access to comprehensive professional development pathways.

We have a truly first-class support structure in Hackney; a system that ensures that strong, experienced leaders take responsibility for helping schools where issues have been flagged. Our School Improvement Team, working with all headteachers, are able to respond quickly to needs and issues, and direct resources to

schools that require them – enabling teachers to concentrate on high-quality frontline teaching. Our leaders know the value of working together for the greater good, as do our governors who provide strong and effective governance.

Parents and carers are the most important people in their children's lives as primary carers, partnership between schools and parents is fundamental to success. That's why I thought it important for us to have roles in the Council that support this: we have appointed a systems leader on parental involvement with schools; and the Mayor and I created Hackney's Schools Group Board, to support schools and the education service, which has made an important shift in developing ever-more inclusive approaches for all parents.

But once again our highly successful model is under threat. The education secretary announced last year that the government plans to move towards a 'fully academised model' across the country – a move first touted in 2010 and abandoned after outcry from local educators and now with a white paper on the issue expected this year.

I want to be clear: we are not against academies per se, but do not agree with forced academisation. Academies are valued members of our family of schools and we work closely and collaboratively with them. And academies in Hackney have been part of our education success. Hackney was one of the few Councils who took forward the Building Schools for the Future programme, when our education system was at its lowest ebb, building a wave of new schools, in partnership with others, to the highest architectural and design standards for our children, and in the process setting the standard for new schools across the country. This was a pragmatic step, and of its time,

allowing us to tap into much-needed capital investment at a time when, like now, Councils were banned from building maintained schools. But importantly, academies all had to commit to being part of the Hackney family of schools, which valued working collectively within the system. And, working together, we proved it possible to achieve excellence in an inner-city borough, with a comprehensive intake, and with a catchment area among the most deprived in the country.

But forced, unilateral academisation is an entirely different picture and against which we firmly stand. Forced academisation is unpopular and we oppose something done against the will of educators and governors. And parents and carers have repeatedly told us it is not something they want. It could erode our ethos that 'every child matters' and undermine collective responsibility. All our children need to feel cared for, welcomed and protected by a strong sense of belonging to their school and to the borough as a whole.

If councils are sidelined, then safeguarding practices can be weakened with less oversight of children, both in school and out of school; vulnerable children can be left longer without an education; care leavers have a less integrated approach to their future; and early years provision can be more fragmented.

And if the pandemic has proven anything, it's that local authorities have the unique ability to offer critical, centralised action – mobilising support at local level – at a time when it's needed most. This booklet is our riposte to the Government's forced academisation agenda – and shows why a locally led family of schools is best for children, parents and carers, and professionals alike



## FOREWORD FROM THE MAYOR OF HACKNEY, Philip Glanville

**Hackney is a place with incredibly high aspirations for our children, this passion comes from our families, young people themselves and the wider community, but is also reflected in the Council's approach to work for every child.**

For all our successes in Hackney over the past two decades, there sadly remains significantly high levels of poverty and need. It is our job, as a local authority, and it is my job as elected Mayor, to create life-changing opportunities for those in the borough who most need them – this starts with first-class support and education, from pre-birth upwards.

The transformation of education in Hackney is one of the greatest success stories of public policy in the country. The education offer has moved from being one of the worst in the country to one of the best.

In 2002, Hackney's Key Stage 2 results were the lowest in the country. The latest figures available from 2019 show our three-year average at 70 per cent, above the England average of 64 per cent. In 2002, none of Hackney's maintained secondary schools had a sixth form – a reflection of a pervasive culture of low

expectation that existed in the borough at the time – now they all do. And, at one stage, more than half of our primary school pupils left the borough for their secondary education; now families actively move into the borough to have their children educated here. All Hackney schools, with only a few exceptions, have been rated 'good' or 'outstanding'; and our schools sit within the top 10 per cent in the country.

The local authority in Hackney, while responsible for many of the problems of the past, has since played a singularly critical role in the turnaround of education in the borough, with a political and officer leadership today that drives a culture of continuous improvement, ambition and excellence. Absolutely central to this has been the political focus on constant investment in our schools estate, with new spaces to learn and play, alongside first-class facilities to inspire both students and teachers.

Over the past 20 years, the Council invested hundreds of millions of pounds in renewing the infrastructure of the majority of educational buildings in Hackney, including:

- Built or refurbished 11 academies – the latest opened last year
- Rebuilt or refurbished five Council maintained secondary schools
- Rebuilt five Council maintained primary schools
- Expanded or refurbished 10 Council maintained primary schools
- Built three special schools
- Built four new youth centres.

In the past 12 months alone we have opened the state-of-the-art City of London Academy Shoreditch Park and we'll soon see the opening of a sixth form extension to The Garden School, a special school for children on the autistic spectrum.

At Hackney, we believe the best outcomes for children are delivered through collaboration between the Council and every education setting. The Council plays important roles in all types of Hackney's schools, including admissions, and exclusions; it runs services for Special Educational Needs; supports careers services; and operates a strong central school improvement service.

Every maintained school in Hackney, including academies, chooses to buy services from the Council, which demonstrates not only the quality of our offer but also helps to maintain a sense of connection and mutual support. They've also been supportive of our leadership and work on inclusion, reflecting our communities and diversity in the curriculum and apprenticeships.

Hackney works hard as a council and an education service to ensure that every local academy is part of our family of schools. Relationships between academies and the Council are strong. But we stand firmly against the Government's ongoing pursuit of a forced academisation agenda for schools, in which schools are made to become academies overseen by independent sponsors or trusts and accountable only to the government.

We have seen time and time again schools in other parts of the country going through multiple changes in sponsors, enduring repeated changes in ethos and look, leading to a turnover of staff and a rise in exclusions and off-rolling. There is no stability in this system and it is pupils, parents and staff who lose out.

It also means less local accountability and the Council playing a much smaller role in supporting schools. It would also mean schools competing more with each other rather than working collegiately to serve all of our children.

It is clear: power to drive improvement and to maintain standards, ambition and inclusion, lies at local authority level, where, like Hackney, there is competency and will. Parents know and want this too. In 2017, we asked residents what they wanted from schools in the borough. They told us: a high-quality, locally provided comprehensive education system; they oppose academic selection and forced academisation; they believe that the Council should oversee the school admissions process and ensure it's fair; and they want our schools to be inclusive.

What Hackney's experience and this booklet powerfully illustrates is that a high-functioning and ambitious local authority can deliver and support the education, aspirations and life-chances of every child that it serves. We must and should continue to be given the government support, funding and powers to do so.



## FOREWORD FROM DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, Annie Gammon

Why does the education system in Hackney work so well? There are many, many reasons, but they are all bound by three key elements: ambition, inclusion and collaboration.

We have outstanding leaders locally, who play a part in developing other staff, who in turn make each child's day in school a success. We have outstanding teachers and support staff, who are, it goes without saying, fundamental to the quality of education in Hackney. The outcomes of the children and the judgements about the quality of our schools is testament to their drive, hard work and relentless quest to serve our children.

Together, they work to ensure each of their institutions is as good as possible but they also have a sense of shared ownership across our education spectrum and within the system as a whole. There is a shared pride in Hackney as a place; there is an unerring belief in the quality of our local education; there is a joint-purpose to provide for every child in the borough; and there is always the collective desire to share and learn from best practice.

I want to thank each and every one of our present, past and current staff members, teachers and leaders.

I also want to express my thanks to all the staff in Hackney Education whose skill and commitment ensure we can provide for children and families, schools and settings. We have a wide-range of workers, from our frontline staff in SEND transport and the children's centres, to ex-headteachers in the School Improvement Team, and technical experts in specialist fields, such as management information and education psychology.

It is an assembly of inestimable knowledge and expertise, and working together we act as agents of continual oversight, change and improvement locally, brokering and resourcing connections and developments across schools and settings.

We also know the importance of area leadership and oversight of education. We foster a sense of strong accountability across our whole system for every Hackney child and every Hackney school or setting. Without this local leadership, accountability is fragmented, and the strength of our education system would be much poorer.

We are all proud of our work and committed to our motto: working for every child.



# INTRODUCTION

It has been a turbulent decade in national education, with successive governments driving a policy of the continued removal of schools and colleges from local authority control, encouraging – and in some cases forcing – schools to operate within multi-academy trusts.

Building on the work of a decade previously, Hackney Council has taken a different path, building an ambitious and forward-looking model of educational provision, preserving what is best in local authority involvement while working with a mixed economy of school types, particularly in the secondary sector, to achieve the best for every Hackney child.

Instead of encouraging schools to see themselves as competitors in an educational marketplace, Hackney believes the best outcomes are delivered through collaboration between schools, colleges and other educational settings, with the local authority offering a strong central school improvement service, as well as the key central services such as admissions, and facilitating the involvement of other vital borough services and agencies.

In this model, the council has a role both in leading the agenda and being the ‘glue’ that supports schools in their core educational function. The result is a cohesive borough wide system of support and services, which benefits every learner in Hackney.



***‘Someone needs to hold the ring for education as a public good in a locality.’***

- Baroness Estelle Morris,  
former Secretary of State for Education

Brooke House Sixth Form College

A Level Results Slip for Summer 2021

**BSIX**  
BROOK HOUSE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Student details		Candidate No.	UCI No.
Saima Farjana Alam (05/12/2000)		9467	132270190186B
Tutor: Serhat Kaysi Email: 62036@bsix.ac.uk		UCAS No.	ULN No.
Centre No. 10450		1467575166	4489960106

Awarding Body	Subject Code	Subject Name	Grade (Practical Endorsement)
	H432A	CHEMISTRY A	A (Pass)
EDEXCEL	MA0	MATHEMATICS	A
	56A	PHYSICS A	A (Pass)

**Important Information:**  
All grades listed above are provisional until any queries are resolved, and certificates are issued by the exam boards.  
If you need UCAS clearing advice and support, please call the BSix UCAS hotline - 0203 137 5322 from 9am on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August.  
This year there are very limited grounds for students to appeal grades and it must be done through the college, and not directly with the exam boards. Information regarding the process for this year can be found on the BSix website at <https://www.bsix.ac.uk/exams/>. Please submit your query via the online form as we are currently unable to take telephone queries.  
If you would like to sit any of the above exams in the Autumn series (Oct/Nov) please submit your request via the online form at <https://www.bsix.ac.uk/exams/> by 20th of August and we will be in touch with more information.

This strong place-based approach, means Hackney is one of the most successful educational areas in the country for young people to grow up, to develop and to achieve. It also offers teachers, support staff and school leaders the chance to thrive, to enjoy and take pride in their work within a well-supported environment.

Hackney school leaders, governors, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils have a strong sense of pride in belonging to a successful and effective local authority, with good and outstanding early years, primary, secondary and further education provision. This clear sense of shared ownership of the borough’s educational provision, and responsibility for all children within it, is not always possible within a fully academised system.

***‘In a fully academised model, schools are encouraged only to think of their own children, to compete. You lose sight of children, and particularly vulnerable children.’***

- Sir Alasdair Macdonald,  
Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THE)



## Overview of services and links to Hackney schools

	Local authority maintained schools	Voluntary aided maintained schools	Academies/ free schools	Colleges	Independent schools in Hackney
Hackney family of schools/part of Hackney Schools Group	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Briefings/advice/School improvement partner keeping in touch/ headteacher meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Safeguarding and COVID-19 briefings and advice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good to great support/ school improvement partner regular or intensive support	✓	✓			
Governance and accountability	✓	✓			
Admissions authority	✓				
Education property	✓	✓			
Placement of pupils with SEND	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early years QA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hackney Education traded services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Multi-academy trusts can be spread across different parts of the country, with very different local characteristics and challenges. This can make it impossible for trust leaders, however dedicated, to develop strong knowledge, meaningful connections, loyalty to one locality and responsibility for all local children.

Hackney has a 'mixed economy' of school types, which includes academies and free schools, legally independent of local authority control. Hackney Education maintains strong links with this whole family of schools.

The borough assumes responsibility for every child within its borders, no matter what kind of school they attend: a maintained (council) school, an academy, a faith school or a special school. All are Hackney children who need support and services throughout their educational life. No child, and particularly not the most vulnerable, is allowed to fall through the net. At post 16, Hackney has grown and strengthened provision.

The core offer from the two Hackney colleges, Bsix and New City College Hackney, are supplemented by strong and growing offers at the school sixth forms. The work across the post 16 sector has seen results improve significantly and an increasing number of Hackney pupils choose to stay in borough post 16.



Hackney is not the only borough to promote positive partnerships, including professional peer-to-peer support and dialogue, across the entire range of its schools. The London boroughs of Camden and Tower Hamlets, and the city of Birmingham, are among other areas in which a partnership model has successfully been used to boost school improvement, professional development and positive relationships between a locality and its educational settings.

In this document, we explain the chief elements of Hackney's approach, developed over the past two decades, and how it continues to ensure high expectations, high standards and genuine inclusion for Hackney learners. We hope it will inspire other authorities to build and develop similarly cohesive and collaborative models. As a local authority, our representatives and Council officers, remain directly accountable to all who live, learn, teach or lead in the borough.



# THE STORY SO FAR



Hackney's education system has undergone radical improvement over the last twenty years, moving from being one of the lowest-performing boroughs in the country to one of the top-performing.

In the late 1990s Hackney education was chronically underfunded and under poor management. A series of Ofsted reports identified a crisis of 'ineptitude' in the corporate management of the council, resulting in the poor performance of the borough's schools. Nord Anglia, a private company, took over the School Improvement and Ethnic Minority services, and in 2002 The Learning Trust, a not-for-profit body, was charged with turning round the borough's poor educational performance.



2020/21



**96.4%** of Hackney primary schools are graded **Good or Better by Ofsted** (well above the national average)



**92.9%** of Hackney secondary schools are judged **Good or Better by Ofsted** (well above the national average)



**37%** (30 out of 82) of Hackney schools have **outstanding Ofsted judgements** (national 19%)



**96.6%** (32,688 children) of Hackney pupils are **at schools rated Good or Better by Ofsted**

*‘As a Hackney resident for many years, I have seen the educational landscape transformed. The educational offer has vastly improved.’*

- Hackney parent



From the start The Learning Trust adopted as its motto: *Aspire, Achieve, Innovate*. It focused on high expectations and high standards, based around a strong network of early years and children’s centres, schools and colleges. Within ten years, Hackney primary school children were achieving around the national average in primary tests while the percentage of children gaining 5 ‘good’ GCSEs had risen from 31 % in 2002 to 75 % in 2011, an improvement of 44 percentage points in a decade.

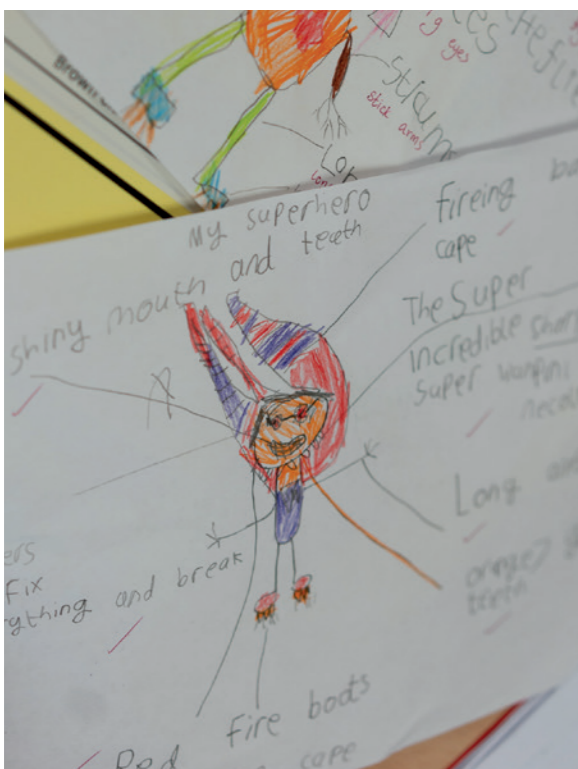
Results also improved for pupils from previously low-performing groups, including Turkish, Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot boys and Caribbean heritage pupils. From 2006-2011 the percentage of children eligible for free school meals gaining 5 good GCSEs increased from 50 % in 2006 to 70 % in 2011. Parents who had previously shunned Hackney schools now struggled to get in.

When Hackney education returned ‘in house’ in 2012, the Council was determined, despite the unfavourable national economic climate of austerity, to consolidate and build on the work of the Learning Trust, emphasising the highest expectations for all pupils, whatever their background, and continuing to invest in, support and extend the borough’s educational provision.

Over the past ten years, under the auspices of its in-house central education service, now called Hackney Education, it has continued this trajectory of improvement, with the vast majority of the borough’s schools achieving well and above the national average.

Like many boroughs, Hackney has a mix of school types within its borders. The vast majority of primary schools and children’s centres are ‘maintained’ – that is, directly responsible to the local authority, and its representatives. Most of these schools are community schools; a number are voluntary aided: supported by the Church of England, the Catholic Diocese or a Jewish trust.



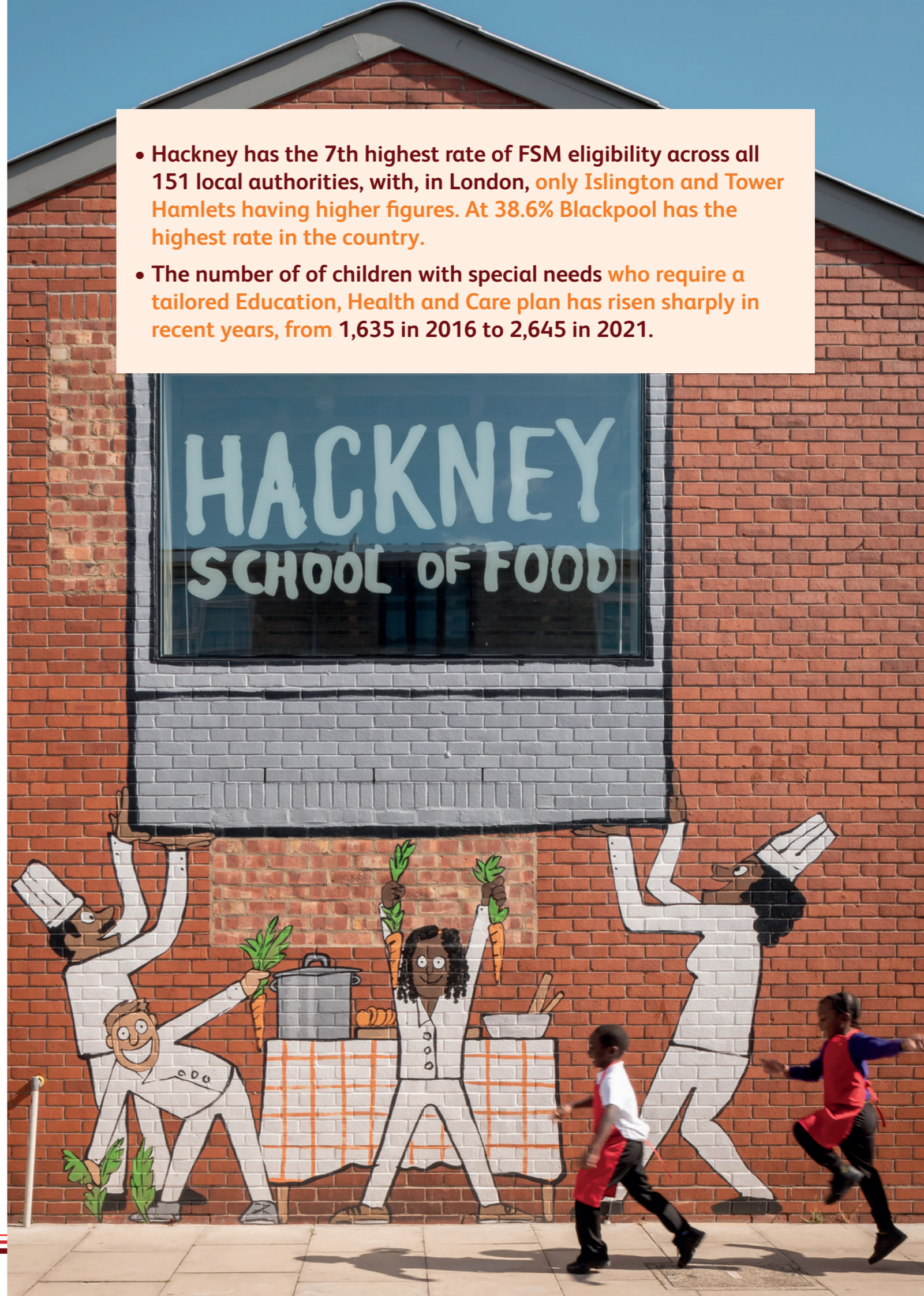


**In 2021, the percentage of pupils in Hackney eligible for Free School Meals is 36.6% – well above the London rate of 22.6% and the national rate of 20.8%.**

Secondary provision is a mix of maintained schools and academies, and one free school. The borough also has a number of independent schools, many of them run by the Orthodox Jewish Community, based in the north of the borough. There are three special schools, serving children with complex special educational needs. Under the law, academies, independent schools, free schools, and university technical colleges (UTCs), are free from local authority control.

Whilst Hackney Education is not accountable for how well these schools perform, the council remains closely in touch with all in the state funded sector and recognises the important role it can play in fostering partnership, developing respect and promoting cooperation between all schools. Hackney Education also holds a safeguarding responsibility for all Hackney children.

- Hackney has the 7th highest rate of FSM eligibility across all 151 local authorities, with, in London, only Islington and Tower Hamlets having higher figures. At 38.6% Blackpool has the highest rate in the country.
- The number of children with special needs who require a tailored Education, Health and Care plan has risen sharply in recent years, from 1,635 in 2016 to 2,645 in 2021.





Hackney Education therefore works closely with all school types in the borough, as it believes that a strong network of schools, acting together, is the best for all children in the borough, particularly the vulnerable. As an inner city authority, with high levels of poverty and inequality, Hackney Education continues to face distinct challenges. The borough has a high percentage of children eligible for free school meals or on pupil premium.

Some groups of pupils – particularly black Caribbean boys, and Turkish Cypriot boys – perform less well than other groups of learners, and some groups experience higher levels of exclusion, although the rate of permanent exclusions has come down in recent years, from 0.13 % in 2016/2017 to 0.07 % in 2019/20.

There are also high numbers of children identified as having special educational needs, which involve them being assigned an Educational Health and Care Plan.

Improving the educational performance, inclusion and wellbeing of these groups is an ongoing priority for Hackney Education.

***‘When I first came to work for Hackney, I was struck by the power of Hackney Education in the borough. It is very well thought of by all its schools.’***

- Council officer

# THE HACKNEY MODEL

What are our school values and virtues?

all aspects

Integrity

Wisdom

Kindness

Honesty

27th May  
School  
and 6/1

## FROM GOOD TO GREAT: CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Hackney Education believes in school leaders and their governing boards owning the performance of their school or group of schools. Schools or federations are responsible for themselves, including maintaining and improving school standards, inclusion and pupil well-being. However, as a responsible local authority, Hackney keeps in close touch with all its schools: offering regular comparative data, and advice, in order to help schools further improve.

Hackney's policy of rigorous school improvement aims to bring all schools in the authority from Good to Great.

The building blocks of this policy include:

- the active promotion of regular, accurate, rigorous school self-evaluation
- basing school self-evaluation on the current Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and all other criteria by which schools could be externally judged
- effective use of performance data and early intervention with appropriate planning, prioritisation, and identification of necessary actions
- celebrating and sharing good and outstanding practice between schools, leaders and teachers and a commitment to utilise school-based specialists to support the school improvement processes.



Every Hackney school or educational setting has an allocated School Improvement Partner (SIP), who is based within Hackney Education. These are former headteachers, senior leaders or trained Ofsted inspectors; this gives them invaluable expertise, and peer credibility.

The School Improvement Partner is a key point of contact between the borough and the school, and has many roles: to survey and challenge the school's own self-evaluation, to analyse and interpret school data, agree priorities – and solutions – for change, and identify strengths and areas for development. If needed, the SIP will carry out headteacher performance management.



School Improvement works from the early years upwards. Hackney has 20 children's centres offering a wide range of services for expectant parents and carers and families with young children, including early education and child care, 'stay and play' activities, parenting support, child and family health services, advice and training, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and employment support.

Many of these centres were developed under the national Sure Start Children Centre programme, established in 2007, when outcomes for young children in Hackney were well below the London and national averages, and unemployment was high. The most recent figures show a steady increase in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at five years old, rising from 57% in 2013 to 77% in 2018.

Lisa Clarke is the Headteacher of the outstanding Comet Nursery School and Children's Centre, 'Our School Improvement Partner will look at what we are doing to support our children, particularly disadvantaged children. Hackney is incredibly good at understanding how best practice works for under-5 children, and how it is through open-ended play and meaningful experiences that we lay the proper foundations for future learning.'

***'Over years of austerity, we have been required to do the same with fewer resources. And we have succeeded. In 2004 only 34% of our early years provision was judged good or better by Ofsted. Now that figure is between 90–98%.'***

- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help and Wellbeing



Hackney Education keeps a close eye on all its schools. Outstanding practice is widely developed, shared and promoted. Support is given where needed.

According to Stephen Hall, Assistant Director, School Performance and Improvement, 'We go to schools where there might be emerging concerns and say, 'You tell us what's wrong. And we will work with you to improve performance.' Our advisers go in every term to every type of school. We look at teaching and learning, high quality curriculum, well-being and workload, governance and financial issues. We also keep a close eye on particular groups of young people that are presenting difficulty or the achievement of vulnerable groups such as SEND and children in care.'

Hackney Education currently has 10 schools in its Supported Schools programme, working closely with each of these to help them raise standards, provide a full curriculum and high-quality teaching. The authority also brokers partnerships between schools in the borough, if it thinks it will help improve performance. It will also act to de-federate a group of schools, and dissolve a governing body, where the leadership is no longer working.

***‘There’s a sense of common purpose in Hackney. I think that’s because there’s a strong local authority that helps to join up the dots. We want every child to do well, it’s a practical thing.’***

- Stephen Hall, Assistant Director,  
School Performance and Improvement

Stephen Hall explains the processes at work, ‘We look at all the data and information on offer, and the schools’ priorities for improvement. So if a school says “We are concerned about maths teaching at Key Stage 2” and this tallies with the other information that we have, then we will help them work with that. We have also helped local schools to reduce exclusions and develop an anti-racist curriculum conceptualised by Cllr Bramble. We can identify best practice, and help them share this. Hackney’s results are above national average, particularly for disadvantaged groups.’

A number of Hackney’s secondary schools are academies; legally, they can refuse most offers of help, or forms of intervention, from the local authority. Hackney Education, however, has worked, says Hall, to develop ‘a really good relationship’ with them all. The academies and free schools can buy our school improvement services, and we have a Keeping in Touch visit every term, with all the schools in the borough’. Hackney Education also stays in regular communication with the DfE.

Hackney Education carefully uses data to identify where particular groups of pupils are falling behind, and to tailor teaching and support to help those groups catch up. Anton Francic, Principal Secondary Advisor, School Performance and Improvement says ‘Hackney Education offers training and assessment, on curriculum leadership, on issues of cultural competence and racial identity. We do audits on gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils. The school improvement team also works to grow system leaders.’

A key part of the school improvement policy is to bring together heads, middle management and teachers on a regular

basis to share outstanding practice and, discuss issues of common interest and concern. This is done through events such as Headteacher Briefings or groups such as the Primary Heads Consultation Meeting and the Assessment Group.

Louise Nichols, Executive Headteacher of The Leap Federation, describes how these regular briefings and peer support events work, ‘At headteachers’ meetings, we share data on ethnic group achievement, and look at which groups are underachieving, or at the progress of children on pupil premium. By paying close attention to different groups, it drives improvement. Hackney gets very strong results.’



Support can be informal, built on a long history of mutual trust between educational professionals in the borough. Sian Davies, Executive Principal of the Primary Advantage Federation, describes being ‘asked by professional peers to come to their school and do some work around a specific issue. Or maybe they want a fresh pair of eyes on the school and how things are working generally. I will walk around the school, look at work and results and then offer a professional assessment. It’s a collegiate and collaborative process, sharing leadership and teacher expertise. Even though we now face so many more challenges – the years of austerity, the crisis of the pandemic, there is that level of benevolence towards each other. Everyone in this borough wants the best for every Hackney School.’

***‘Hackney has strong relationships with its maintained schools and academies, based on trust. All know we are here to give advice, offer support and challenge, so that we can maintain high quality education in the borough whilst enabling the local system to go on improving. For academies we offer a Keeping in Touch visit. The direct and regular contact keeps the connections strong. The visits nurture the relationship between academies and the borough.’***

- Anton Francic, Principal Secondary Advisor, School Performance and Improvement



**CASE STUDY:**

**Finance**

School A reported a cumulative deficit of £328,327 in 2019–20. Intervention by the Council included the brokering of an DfE external audit, alongside support from the education finance and school improvement teams.

Further advice and support was offered in relation to the reorganisation of staff along with strategies to increase funding through growing pupil numbers. This resulted in a deficit recovery plan being agreed and educational standards sustained. School A closed its accounts in 2020–21 with a revenue deficit

of £199,827, and a plan to eliminate the total liability by close of 2022–23. Savings identified were in the region of £663k over 3 years.

School A commented: ‘The school has a new School Business Manager, we conducted initial assessments which highlighted areas of need. These were confirmed through the exercise with the LA, the DfE and the SRMA. It enabled us to understand the importance of having a range of support systems and networks and provided us with various perspectives on the budget both in terms of the curriculum and non-curriculum elements.’



# SUPPORTING SCHOOLS



*‘Heads say to us, “I want to feel safe when I am dealing with staff issues in terms of the law. If I am challenged, I want to have done everything properly”.’*

- Jo Larkin, Head of Human Resources, Hackney Education

Hackney’s support for schools goes beyond advising on curriculum, attainment or leadership. Hackney Education also offers Human Resources services, including advice on employee relations, sickness and absence management, disciplinary problems, recruitment of governors, and teacher references. The council has established good relations with local trade unions; when a school has to restructure, Hackney Education can help schools to produce a clear and workable plan.



Schools are not obliged to use Hackney services; they are largely offered as ‘traded services’ which the school uses its budget to purchase. They are free to go anywhere they like. But as Jo Larkin, head of Human Resources, says, ‘We have 80% buy in from our maintained schools because they do know that we will help them. Chairs of Governing Bodies come to us on issues such as levels of pay for school leaders or to manage the school’s payroll. We produce a regular Human Resources newsletter that keeps schools up to date on the key issues.’

During the pandemic, says Larkin, ‘we were supporting on a daily basis, helping to reassure headteachers, staff and unions about what they could and couldn’t do. We produced a regular Coronavirus bulletin, and were constantly in communication with schools.’ Hackney Education also offers a range of high-level financial support to its schools, says Yusuf Erol, Head of Finance. The service can help schools deal with complex matters such as Public Procurement rules, and how to prepare audits for DfE grants. Yusuf Erol confirms that ‘Hackney can

offer advice across the borough's schools, to those who need it, at a fraction of the cost of a commercial firm. There are huge benefits to being able to bring together schools from around the borough, who share common problems, which we can help them solve. A big multi-academy trust might be able to offer to help their schools but I don't think a small trust would be able to do it.'

Hackney Education's Services for Schools provides a range of traded services and training packages supporting leadership & management and school improvement. This also provides a platform to share best practice – e.g. at the start of the pandemic, schools and parents were able to access a range of free remote learning tools which could be used to support home learning. Advice and guidance regarding summer activity provision and diversifying the curriculum is also available.



***'When I talk to governors of schools in other boroughs, I realise that we are much better served in terms of briefings and other resources.'***

***'When our primary school was considering academisation, the council did a superb job articulating the benefits of us staying a maintained school, and why they wanted to stay connected to us, compared to the much less satisfactory presentation of the Government department.'***

- Hackney Governor

***'Our matrix of support, our working relationship with Hackney is so close, so mutually beneficial, it is hard to imagine functioning without it.'***

- Alister Bould, Hackney Chair of Governor

### **CASE STUDY:**

#### **School Improvement**

Burbage Primary School was suffering from multiple challenges. A poor reputation in the local community, children underachieving, and a number of leadership changes had led to a falling pupil roll and a deficit budget.

The school was graded Requires Improvement in December 2013, and there were concerns over the capacity of leadership to bring about the rapid change needed. Hackney Learning Trust brokered a new partnership with a successful local federation of two other Hackney schools, putting in place a new executive headteacher and a governing board that held a range of professional experience and expertise. Additional financial advice alongside the brokering of capital works, and fresh-starting the school as Hoxton Garden Primary School had a transformational impact on the school and the experiences of the students.

The school continued to access school improvement support and challenge through the Good to Great programme, receiving a Good grading at its next inspection in February 2016, and then again in 2019.

Pupil standards continue to be well above national averages, the number of pupils on roll increased and financial stability was achieved. Hoxton Garden is now a happy, thriving community maintained primary school.



# INVESTMENT IN SPECIAL NEEDS



Children with special educational needs are a high priority for Hackney, with the council currently planning an increase in future provision, due to rising numbers of children with particular learning needs. It is currently working to embed the best SEND provision in its maintained schools and expand its specialist provision. The borough has three Special Schools: The Garden School, Ickburgh School and Stormont House School.

As part of its SEND policy, Hackney Education is working to develop innovative approaches to the early years. It has funded a number of assessment places for SEND work in the early years, before families apply for an Educational Health and Care Plan. The Council currently funds seven full time and 14 part time – places for children under 3 with high special needs.

For Lisa Clarke, headteacher of the Comet Nursery School and Children's Centre 'the project is all about early identification and support. We provide learning support on a one-on-one basis and in a small group. Those children may go on to get an Educational Health and Care Plan or they may not need it.'

Clarke continues, 'If Hackney did not give us that money, we would not be able to provide the level of support to children that we do now. We are hoping to develop this work into an alternative resource provision, and possibly become a formalised assessment unit. For that to happen, for us to continue to improve and innovate, we need the support of Hackney Education. We are in constant contact with Hackney officers and councillors. They take a passionate and knowledgeable interest in the early years.'





Hackney is also pioneering work to help ease the transition for SEND children from nursery to primary school and primary school to secondary school. Identifying distinct language and communication difficulties as early as possible helps young people tackle the challenges of transition to both primary and secondary schools significantly.

Councillor Caroline Woodley is the Cabinet Member for Family, Early Years, Parks and Play, with special responsibility for Special Educational Needs, 'Our casework shows that children function well in early years. As they get older and have to get used to the pressures of school and peers, it gets more difficult. We need to help them make that transition from primary school to secondary school, and then from secondary school through to adult life.'

Rachel Davie is Executive Head of the Viridis Federation, 'The SEND issue is a big theme for all headteachers, and there are always going to be questions of resource. Hackney Education is committed to a clear strategy and invites its headteachers to participate in its design. Headteachers are invited to sit on the evaluation panel for Educational and Health Care Plans. There's a sense of shared dialogue, and a strong measure of speech and language support.'

Hackney is currently working to develop a network of children and family hubs, based on existing children's centres. Under this scheme, families will be able to access health care and help from other professionals for their children from birth to 19. Councillor Caroline Woodley identifies this as an innovative scheme that is 'saying to families that there is help and support for your children, not just in the early years of 0–5, but for those who are older and beyond.'



### CASE STUDY:

#### HOW HACKNEY HELPED ICKBURGH SPECIAL SCHOOL THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

During the pandemic Ickburgh special school, a school for pupils with severe learning disabilities from 3–19, realised that remote learning would prove extremely challenging. Joe Sieber, head of Ickburgh, says, 'The support from Hackney was first rate. They very quickly set up a group meeting involving social care, public health, the nursing service and schools.'

They offered a group, problem-solving, service for the 3 special schools in the borough. Sieber adds, 'During the height of the pandemic crisis, I had to make certain clear decisions, despite never having faced any situation like this before. Hackney Education couldn't offer me certainty but it did offer me reassurance, support and good advice. Other national networks and hubs of advice were available, but I took the decision principally to rely on Hackney.'

# GOVERNANCE

*‘Effective, ethical and accountable school governance is a cornerstone of the education system in England’*

- (National Governors Association 2019)

Governance across all of our schools adapted incredibly well to the challenges during the pandemic. We saw our governing boards and their leaders embrace new strategic responsibilities around the use of technology, remote learning and curriculum recovery. We also witnessed a deeper focus on equalities, anti-racism and safeguarding pupils from sexual harassment and abuse.

To support the work of Chairs and their governors, during these exceptional times, Hackney Education School Governance Services established and still continues to host Governor Forums every half term, with an average participation of 60–70 people from across our mixed economy of schools.

We also publish Chairs and Governors Updates with the same frequency and readership of several hundreds. These communication channels provide a roadmap for continuing strategic governance, where we spotlight clear guidance, best practice and collaborative development across our Hackney family of schools and key partners. They focus primarily on providing high quality education and addressing equalities and anti-racism, and also matters related to SEND, Reducing Exclusions; Engagement with Parents; Strategic Planning and Risk Assessment.

We also have a policy to respond swiftly to any governance query across our community of schools. Our Chairs of governors from all types of schools tell us these forums, publications and advice have been instrumental in keeping governing boards informed in the midst of an ever evolving landscape.

Hackney is indebted to its chairs and their governors, who continue to give generously of their time to support, challenge and encourage their school leaders. We know the success of our education system depends on the combined talents, determination and the strategic team efforts of governors, school leaders and staff. Going forwards, we are on a mission to Get Hackney Youth Governing, with an innovative pilot across 15 schools that was launched by Cllr Bramble in September a recommendation from Hackney’s Young Future Commission.

We are also taking forward plans to develop strong and more inclusive governance. We recognise the importance of diversifying governing boards so they can draw on wide ranging perspectives to inform decisions for the communities they serve and strive to give our children a future full of promise and success.

# INNOVATION

Over the past few years, Hackney has pioneered a number of exciting new programmes that broaden pupils' enjoyment of their school years, and deepen their appreciation of the environment.



**48**  
SCHOOL STREETS



**5,000**  
STREET TREES



**58**  
PARKS & GREEN SPACES



## HACKNEY SCHOOL STREETS, STREET TREES AND WALKING TRAILS

Hackney is committed to integrating its educational and environmental ambitions. School Streets is a pioneering programme that has transformed the use of roads outside schools, so that pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised at school start and finish times.

The scheme tackles congestion and improves air quality at the school gates, making it easier and safer to walk and cycle to school.

School Streets creates a more pleasant environment for everyone, while making sure residents, businesses, pedestrians and cyclists can still use the road. The streets around a school temporarily becomes a pedestrian and cycle zone at set times in the morning and afternoon.

Vehicles are not permitted to enter the zone between these times unless they have been granted an exemption. Councillor Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Family, Early Years, Parks and Play, describes the thinking behind this initiative, and other programmes such as Street Trees and Walking Trails. She says, 'How do we see our children getting from home to school? Can they travel there safely? Are there interesting routes along the way? Do those routes accommodate children with additional needs?'

The Street Trees allow children to stop in front of a particular tree, and through using an app on a phone, learn all about the history of that tree and its surrounding location.'



**Destination Reader** is an approach to teaching reading in Key Stage 2, which was developed within Hackney, and is now sold as a traded product nationally. It involves daily sessions incorporating whole class modelling. Children then continue through partner work and independent reading. Children deepen their understanding of the texts they read through the systematic use of a series of strategies and language stems.

The approach encompasses the key principles of effective reading provision and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum by creating deep understanding of texts, developing oracy around reading and increasing breadth of reading. Destination Reader also helps to build a culture of reading for pleasure and purpose. Destination Reader is used in most Hackney primary schools and in 200 schools - mainly in the UK - but also in Denmark and China.





**The Forest School Project.** Hackney Forest School is an innovative outdoor teaching and learning experience, developed and delivered by Clapton Children's Centre. Through it, children and families can enjoy the beautiful landscaped garden of the Children's Centre or go across the canal to Hackney Marshes which is planted with mini woods: an exciting and unfamiliar natural setting, and a precious asset in inner city London. Here, the children can climb trees, sit around a camp fire, and study animals close up in their natural habitat.

Hackney Forest School is open to all schools, early years settings, families, childminders and organisations. Its aim is to spread good practice and the ethos of the Forest School throughout the borough. Currently, 15 Hackney schools and childrens' centres are signed to the scheme; in addition, the project helps train teachers, who work in primary schools and early years centres, in Forest School skills. It is estimated that half of the children living in Hackney have had little or no experience of the outdoors.

The Forest School Scheme gives them a taste of the natural world, and helps them develop their communication and language skills and boosts their self-confidence.

Lauren Mills, Forest School Lead for Hackney, describes the sense of wonder that some of the children experience when they go into Hackney parks or nature reserves for the first time. 'Some of the children are nervous to sit down on the grass, or sit on a log, because they have never really spent time in a green space before. But to see them watch a baby squirrel at close quarters – it's absolutely magical. Afterwards, a lot of the children say to me, "Miss, when I grow up, I want to do what you do!"'

***'It's wonderful to see the children develop their sense of awe and wonder in the natural world.'***

- Lauren Mills, Hackney Forest School Lead



# FAIR ADMISSIONS

WELCOME  
EVERYONE

THIS SPACE  
HAS BEEN  
DESIGNED  
& BUILT  
BY  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE



In a competitive educational landscape, schools can feel under pressure to try and attract high-achieving pupils who will do well in public exams, and to find ways not to admit, or to exclude, pupils who struggle to achieve. In recent years, the practice of 'off-rolling' had become more frequent within English education, with some schools appearing to 'lose' difficult or low-achieving pupils around the time of public exams or Ofsted inspections.

Hackney Education has developed a firm policy of inclusion and fair admissions. As the local council it is responsible for ensuring that every child finds a school place, and the council acts as the admission authority for all its maintained schools. Academies and free schools act as their own admissions authority, in accordance with the law.

Hackney has, however, brokered arrangements to ensure fair systems are in place around the question of 'in-year admissions' – finding a school place for those children who leave a school mid-way through primary or secondary school, often as a result of exclusion or those of school age who are newly arrived in the borough and looking for a school place.

Hackney is determined that every child should find a school place, and particularly that any child who leaves, or is excluded, from one Hackney school is found another high quality place. It works in partnership with the borough's academies through the Fair Access Protocol.

All Hackney's headteachers are signed up to the Protocol. Representatives of every school, meeting as the Fair Access Panel, meet regularly to consider cases of in-year admissions. Schools agree to take 'fair turns' to admit children that may have been excluded from other schools, or who have arrived from other boroughs or parts of the country, or who may be recently arrived in the country as migrants or refugees.

Hackney also takes the strategic lead on other key issues around school admissions, particularly for the most vulnerable. It has a statutory responsibility to make sure that there are sufficient SEND places in the borough, and that children with special needs find an appropriate school.



Currently the population is falling slightly in Hackney, particularly since the pandemic when many families have moved out of the capital. That is creating a problem of 'falling rolls' where some schools are taking in fewer pupils than previously. Declining pupil numbers can have a more substantial impact on some schools than others. This situation can also lead to a position where more pupil movement occurs as places become available.

Without careful joined-up thinking, such a development could create an unbalanced local schools landscape and could affect children in some areas disproportionately. Hackney is currently working with schools across the borough to find a fair solution to this possible imbalance in school admissions.

According to Fran Cox, head of High Needs and School Places, 'There is goodwill towards Hackney Education from all the schools, as we try to come to a fair and equitable solution to the problem of falling rolls. Without our intervention, it might be a much less coordinated and potentially damaging change.'

***'I feel happy and lucky to be a Hackney Head.'***

- Primary School Head, Hackney

# JOINED UP SERVICES



Over the last decade, Hackney Education, building on the legacy of the Learning Trust, has worked hard to integrate the borough's key services with its education provision. Children's services, health agencies, social workers, youth workers and safeguarding teams all work to ensure that all of Hackney's learners have a maximum chance of achieving their potential.

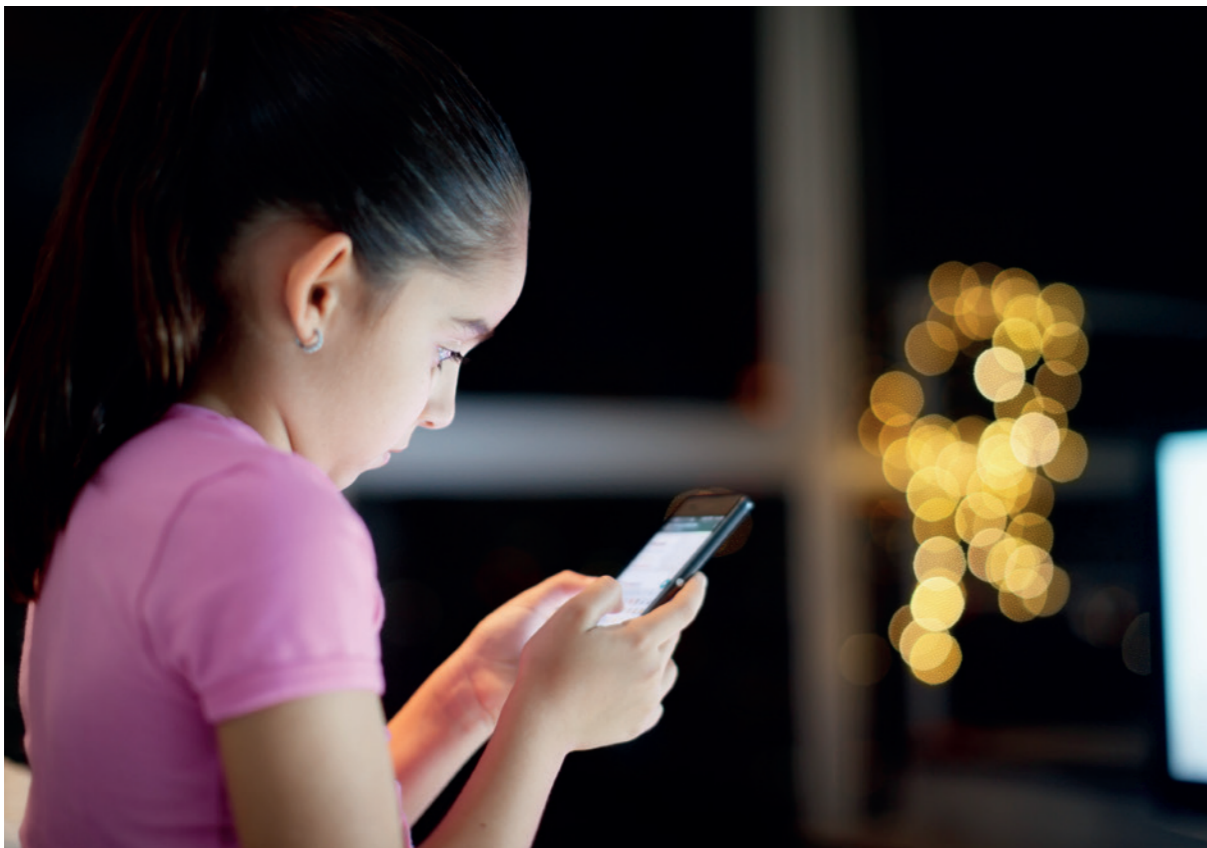
Hackney provides a number of universal and targeted services that benefit Hackney children and young people. The council runs a number of adventure playgrounds, clubs and youth hubs.

The borough's sport and play team, a legacy of the 2012 London Olympics, offers young people the chance to take part in community based sports activity.

The Council also runs an outreach team that engages with young people in key parts of the borough. According to Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention, 'These teams played a very important role during COVID-19. They helped reassure young people, signposting them to support, sharing health and social distancing information.' Hackney also ran virtual youth clubs during the pandemic.

Another service provided by the borough aims to increase ‘learning engagement’, focussing on traineeships, career advice and running inspiring events. The borough’s Youth Opportunity Fund gives young people a chance to come up with projects of their own. They can bid for funds and a panel of young people oversee the dispersal of the funds. Hackney also has a vibrant Youth parliament.

Hackney has a Health and Wellbeing team which works in every school. Pauline Adams stresses the importance ‘of the work being focused on the lived experience of young people and their families, concentrating on relationships, sex education, and staying healthy. But we put the biggest emphasis on how to create healthy relationships, following the revelations of the Everyone’s Invited and Me Too movements.’



The council’s Substance Misuse team helps young people to find pathways into treatment for drug misuse or abuse. Hackney also provides a number of targeted services which aim to keep young people who have had challenges within the school system. These services provide targeted early help to children, young people and families.

Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention, is clear on the rationale of this work – to ensure every child thrives, ‘We all want every child to thrive. That’s the desired outcome. You don’t get a great outcome by being in custody and care. We all share the drive to keep young people out of those settings.’



**Young Hackney** is a borough-wide service for all young people aged 6–19 and up to 25 with additional needs. Bringing together the skills and expertise of the council’s youth service it aims to help Hackney’s young people to enjoy their youth and become independent and successful adults.

The scheme runs a number of youth hubs and projects in different parts of Hackney. Each centre has a team of workers who oversee the youth activities, offer advice and guidance, and work with young people who need extra support. The hubs also run youth participation projects to help young people get more involved in their communities and provides a full range of activities and support services including: sports, arts, multimedia and homework, the chance to get involved in the community, accredited programmes such as art awards or the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, employment and training advice.

**‘Our aim is to try and understand children’s lived experience. Our mantra is “Working with, not doing to”.’**

- Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention



The council also runs a Contextual Safeguarding Team, which can be called upon by schools if they are worried about particular children or groups of children. Concerns might arise around pupils receiving, or sending, inappropriate messages on their phone or social media or there is worry that some young people are on the periphery of gangs or some form of exploitation.

The Team, working in partnership with the school, will employ a mix of approaches, working with the family if that is appropriate, deploying community based approaches and solutions, based on deep local knowledge.

For Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children's Services, Hackney's 'wrap-around' approach to education and services means 'we have the means to make sure every child succeeds – getting a good or outstanding education. We also have the ability to really mobilise on local issues such as children missing in education among the Orthodox Jewish community or the over representation of black and ethnic minority children in school exclusions.'



**Each Young Hackney Centre has a nominated specialism, chosen by young people themselves.**

For example, Young Hackney Hoxton Hall specialises in arts and performance, Young Hackney Stoke Newington concentrates on IT and Media while Young Hackney Forest Road fosters youth leadership.



Hackney is also responsible for assessing the quality of elective home education, which rose considerably during the pandemic. Burke says, 'Our job is not just to consider the education that children kept at home are receiving, but thinking about their health. We do a considerable amount of joint work with health. For some children that's very important in terms of accessing health care and their general resilience.'

Since the pandemic, Hackney has, says Burke, 'worked to get as many children back into school as possible, ensuring that there are accurate assessments of progress, so that children can properly catch up. Schools are crucial in protecting children: they did a great job during the pandemic, working closely with children's services to make sure we could protect the most vulnerable, reaching out to children and their families with advice and support and acting as hubs for the community.'



**The Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) service** aims to improve mental health and well-being support for children and young people in schools, colleges, specialist and alternative provision education settings in City & Hackney. With an initial 40 schools proving the success of the pilot in 2019, a total of 69 schools from the 80 schools in City & Hackney are now part of the WAMHS service. This innovative service is led by the CAMHS alliance, with the support of the Children and Young People's Integrated Commissioning work stream in City & Hackney.

WAMHS focuses on building academic, social and emotional resilience and coping skills in students and helping them to identify and access additional support if needed. The service is also based on further developing knowledge and skills in education staff so that they are more confident and feel more able to support students, and their families, who may be experiencing mental health difficulties. Sian Davies, Executive Principal, Primary Advantage Federation, celebrates the work of the WAMHS project in her school. 'We have been able to call on mental health practitioners and clinicians to support children and their families.

These professionals are in school once a fortnight. They have an understanding of the school environment, and they work with key families, and with our staff. They have helped us develop a mental health friendly school. We need that guidance as we are not mental health experts. We are teachers and school leaders. But they make that expertise accessible to us.'

For Sian Davies, the WAMHS project is just one example of how the local authority 'acts as an agent of collaboration. The council is the glue that holds things together.'

*'We are constantly in dialogue with the Council about what's going on in the school. Social care, health care, youth care... they all link up.'*

- Sian Davies, Executive Principal,  
Primary Advantage Federation

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



*‘Outstanding professional development has to have a place-based element. It needs an understanding of everything from the nature of your pupil population to the local job market and, of course, wanting to make a real difference to your local community.’*

- Sir Alasdair Macdonald, The Tower Hamlets Partnership

One of the key drivers of Hackney’s transformation in recent years has been its provision of Continuous Professional Development. This training has been made available as a traded service, to teachers in schools and settings in Hackney, London and beyond. Many of the bespoke courses are held in the purpose-built Tomlinson Centre, named after Sir Mike Tomlinson, who was Chair of the Learning Trust.

Within the borough, Hackney Education aims that, through school, borough and extra borough services and activities, every member of staff in any educational setting or school has access to a comprehensive professional development pathway. Hackney Education works with schools to ensure the whole system in the area is committed to developing great teachers.

The Hackney Education CPD offer is broad and inclusive, with training that is pertinent to respective year groups and subjects. It also ensures it is relevant across various roles, such as SEND, Safeguarding, Leadership and Ofsted framework planning.



Hackney teachers and leaders, in both the primary and secondary sector, can listen to expert external speakers, or attend sessions on leadership such as Growing Great Leaders. There is extensive advice for governors around key themes of tackling inequalities, wellbeing, safeguarding, Stakeholder Engagement, Ofsted and Performance Management of Headteachers. For practitioners, Hackney CPD offers courses on a wide range of classroom issues, such as Moderation of Writing in Year 6 to Building a Resilient Classroom, Cultural Competence: Tackling Disproportionality in Attainment and Exclusion of Young Black Men and Writing Effective Behaviour Plans and Pastoral Support Programmes.

Hackney Education also puts on special one-day events such as its recent Annual Music Education Conference, looking at how the pandemic has affected music and arts education, and how to keep these subjects alive in Hackney schools and the wider community. A series of Secondary Subject Network forums provide an invaluable opportunity for subject leaders to meet together. They are led by recent or current practitioners with highly successful track records and provide an opportunity to give subject leads access to up-to-date national developments and guidance. They also provide an important chance to network and share good practice.





# ANSWERABLE TO THE COMMUNITY

Hackney Council is accountable to its pupils, parents and all those who work in early years settings or schools at a number of levels. Principally, the council is responsible through its 57 local councillors, who are elected every four years. Beyond that, there are a number of forums that work to strengthen the link between those who use, or work in, education in the borough.

*The local authority is accountable for driving excellence and tackling poor performance in schools and settings, if the entire system is academised, careful thought needs to be given to the relationship and responsibilities of local authorities and academies.*

- Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children's Services, Hackney Education

***'When a problem arises, or parents have demands, I can go to someone in the council, share the issue with them... and things start to move. Our local councillor has been responsive.'***

- Hackney Governor



The Hackney School Groups Board is an independent council supported organisation, representing all schools in the borough, from early years to academies and free schools, with representative governors and elected members. It acts as a think tank for Hackney Education and promotes forward thinking practice amongst schools.

The Board, set up by the Council with clear terms of reference, has a theme of encouraging an even greater sense of 'belonging for all' within the borough's schools. It puts strong emphasis on parental engagement, and particularly in bringing in those families that might remain outside the process of dialogue. It has brokered the use of and participation in research by schools in the areas of reading and the curriculum

*‘Listening to what parents say is really important. The aspiration to succeed for all children – a vitally important aim – can seem easier for some groups of parents than for others in the current system.’*

- Eleanor Schooling, Independent Chair of the Hackney Schools Group Board



**The Interlink Foundation.** Interlink’s mission is to strengthen Orthodox Jewish community infrastructure, improving access to services and achieve better outcomes for disadvantaged people. The Foundation helps community organisations gain new skills and access to resources, and to work in partnership with public bodies to tackle inequalities.

**Hackney Independent Parents Forum for Parents/Carers of Children with Disabilities.** HIP aims to help Hackney parents become ‘empowered’: to get their voices heard and to have real influence over borough services. Parents can bring issues of concern to Hackney representatives, and discuss how to resolve them.

**The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission** focuses on all services provided by Hackney Education: providing challenge, endorsing developments and publishing reports from a well informed local perspective. The Commission co-opts faith representatives and parent governor representatives, in addition to Councillors. To fully represent Hackney’s diverse community, the Commission includes representatives from the Free Church Group of Churches Together in England, and the Orthodox Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as Hackney School Governors Association and the Hackney Youth Parliament.

*‘Hackney is prepared to have those difficult dialogues about unconscious bias or a diverse curriculum. You only start to address the big challenges by having those uncomfortable conversations.’*

- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help and Well-Being



#### CASE STUDY:

When George Floyd died in May 2020, Hackney Schools Group Board felt it was vital that the Board initiate a debate about race. It facilitated conversations with parents and schools together, on Zoom, in which the Board asked the parents to answer just two questions. What should schools continue to do to promote a sense of belonging for black pupils? What could it do better?

Eleanor Schooling, Chair of the Board, says, ‘The parents spoke from the heart; they spoke their truth. They explained how they felt: how they felt their children often still had to work harder, run faster, than white children just because of the colour of their skin and the importance of schools just listening to their concerns, without feeling that they need immediately to offer a reply.’

The debate opened up discussion on a number of connected issues: how well the school curriculum covered anti-racist issues and black history. It also sparked discussion of school policies around appearance – for example, how some pupils wear their hair – that might discriminate against black children, and the way that cultural differences created problems with communication. Eleanor Schooling believes, ‘The exercise resulted in schools having really important conversations with their parents about race.’

# HACKNEY EDUCATION: THE COVID CRISIS

**Hackney Education provided guidance and support for local schools, children and early years on an ongoing basis since the initial announcement of schools closing on 17 March 2020.**

**This included:**

- Providing joined-up local public health, health and safety and educational advice throughout the whole period for schools and settings, parents and carers.
- Advocating for our schools locally and nationally, via our political and officer leaders.
- Writing to pupils to encourage them during this time of challenge when they were away from school.
- The Mayor, Cllr Bramble, Cabinet Members and councillors held sessions with Hackney Young Futures Commission to hear directly from young people about the effect of COVID-19.
- Cllr Bramble and officers held online sessions for parents, carers and pupils.
- Supported the early set-up of learning at home and safe provision in school for key workers' children and vulnerable children.
- Provided online learning materials for all ages via its website and worked to distribute laptops provided by the government.
- Running a scheme to get additional locally sourced laptops to our more vulnerable children.
- Provided guidance on best practice in remote teaching during the periods of remote learning.
- Individual schools were provided with educational materials and to help parents to home-school children.
- Liaised weekly with our Department for Education representative, providing feedback and information.
- Conducted regular briefings, supported by Council public health and HR teams, dealing with queries and concerns from headteachers, and provided ongoing advice, both general and customised, about recovery and catch up.
- Sent out regular bulletins to schools with the latest local and national guidance.
- School improvement partners made regular contact with headteachers of maintained schools, and conducted regular meetings for key groups e.g. special school headteachers, union representatives.
- Supported secondary schools through the unprecedented process of having no formal examinations, providing advice and guidance about the process of teacher assessment including how to ensure the avoidance of bias in the awarding of grades.
- Worked closely with schools and Children and Families Service to ensure a safety net of partnership work between education and social care was in place to support vulnerable children – or those for whom safeguarding concerns emerged during this period.
- Worked to ensure that for pupils in Year 6, the transition from primary to secondary school went as possible.
- Over the summer of 2020, facilitated 15 school-based summer activity camps, providing for over 600 children; delivered with partners the Holiday Activity and Food programme in Summer 2021 with over 4,000 children benefiting from this.
- Young Hackney ran an online programme during the Easter 2020 holidays, and continues to run its Youth Hub activities online where possible and when needed.
- Youth workers stayed in touch with young people, supporting them remotely, and families linked with Hackney Children's Centres received practical resources to support their wellbeing and parenting.
- Children's centre staff were available to provide advice on housing and welfare, and supported families to access other necessities such as food and nappies, where needed.
- The Disabled Children's Service opened up its Short Breaks offer, enabling options such as the purchase of equipment to use at home, and expanded this to include outdoor face-to-face or online sessions such as sports, exercise, cycling, drama, dance coaching and lessons.
- The Local Offer was updated to reflect the changes to services and to offer online resources to children, young people and families with SEND, such as social stories explaining the changes brought about by coronavirus.
- The Early Years team supported the wider network of childcare provision by independent nurseries, childminders and playgroups. This included guidance and individual support.
- The Council's Young Futures Commission organised a series of video calls for young people to give them a safe space to discuss the issues affecting them.
- Young people raised a variety of issues affecting their lives – including education and employment, health and wellbeing, the impact of domestic violence, overcrowding, disproportionate policing and the length of lockdown restrictions.
- Students raised specific concerns about predicted grades, applying and starting university and other courses in September. All of the above helped inform our response to the situation and continues to shape our work and influence.

# WHAT NEXT FOR HACKNEY EDUCATION?

The aim of Hackney Council – and in all schools in the borough – is to improve the life chances of every child, young person and learner in Hackney. This is especially important as we support young people and the education system recover from two years dominated by COVID-19.

Working through Hackney Education, the mission is to make Hackney the most forward-looking education system in the UK, where schools, settings and partners provide an exciting environment that ensures inclusion and success for everyone. It views Hackney as being one of the best places in the country for young people to grow, learn, develop and achieve – and one of the best places for teaching and other professionals to work and thrive in the education system.

The values that underpin how Hackney keeps children and learners at the heart of what it does are being ambitious, inclusive, open, proud, pioneering and proactive.

In particular Hackney will promote equalities and anti-racism; lead and support excellent workplaces (including recovering from the pandemic); and promote high quality professional development. We will work inclusively, further improving our provision for and

understanding of our children with special educational needs or disabilities.

Throughout, it will work with all partners, most particularly our headteachers and other school staff, governors, parents/carers and all council members and staff.

Its priorities for the next three years are:

## 1. All state schools either 'good' or outstanding'

It will enable the best possible achievement for every child. The aim is to ensure every single one of its state maintained schools is 'good' or 'outstanding', with the proportion of 'outstanding' increasing, and the achievement of pupils remaining significantly above the national average and London averages. It also wants to work with its independent schools more closely to support their journey to a consistently stronger quality of education. We will continue to work to ensure highest quality early years care and education.

## 2. Inclusion and wellbeing

It will keep the focus firmly on closing gaps in achievement with specific attention to Black, Turkish and Orthodox Jewish pupils, and ensure that achievement of pupils entitled to the pupil premium grant rises further. It will continue to promote wellbeing, caring and

inclusion for every child. This includes further development of the work on skilling-up staff in working with children with special educational needs; continued work on emotional wellbeing (building further on the WAMHS work); and continued work on tackling any systemic issues. It wants more schools to achieve the 'inclusion schools award' and support them with this journey.

## 3. 300 more specialist school places

It will implement plans to further provide quality places for every child through its 'school place strategy' and support schools/settings through change. This will include realisation of its more than 300 more specialist places in Hackney for children with special educational needs or disabilities. In addition we will continue to invest in our whole school estate.

## 4. Promotion of all schools

It will proudly promote schools and the education system in Hackney through public events and publications. Continuing to always advocate and celebrate the work, achievements, successes and ambitions of pupils, educators and wider school communities: from exam successes and vocational achievements to systemic reforms and aspirations that demonstrate Hackney Education's and its family of schools' relentless drive to improve and change for the better.

## 5. Supporting parents and carers

It will support parenting and the engagement of parents/carers so that every parent/carer feels welcomed by their child's school and that they have access to the information and support they need at



any stage. We will explore family hubs in our search to implement best practice.

## 6. Continued commitment to reducing exclusions

It will do everything in its power to include children, reduce exclusions, and the disproportionality of exclusions for some groups of children and young people. As part of this, it will further improve the education early help service and develop the quality of alternative provision.

## 7. Supporting children into further education and jobs

It will promote the range of pathways for young people age 16+ into its excellent college and school sixth form provision and beyond into local jobs and apprenticeships. In particular it will seek to promote equality issues through this phase and the changing local economy including STEAM and green skills.

## 8. Embedding the Diverse Curriculum in all Hackney schools

It will aim to encourage all schools in Hackney to subscribe to the Diverse Curriculum: the Black Contribution, a groundbreaking piece of work, curated by Hackney teachers and Council staff, that teaches young people about Black history.

# THE 10 KEY PILLARS OF HACKNEY'S EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Be ambitious for every child

Include and understand  
every child

Value and understand  
school staff and school leaders

Bring professionals together

Tackle inequality

A borough wide approach:  
all schools are interdependent

A cohesive comprehensive  
central education service

Join up council services to  
work for young people

Be responsive to  
changing conditions

Share and promote highest quality  
educational approaches

Hackney Education sells  
specialist services to schools

 [hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk](https://hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk)

# Working for every child