

Briefing: The Mayor's Education Inquiry

March 2012

Introduction

In November 2011 the Mayor's Education Inquiry was launched to examine key challenges for education in London and make recommendations for practical action with key partners including the boroughs, schools and policy-makers. On 24 February, the Inquiry published its first report¹ and a call for evidence, which closes on 24 April 2012. The first report is aimed at setting the context and asking some challenging questions. The final report, which will be published in September 2012, will promote examples of good practice and put forward practical recommendations aimed at ensuring high quality teaching and learning in the capital.

The establishment of this Inquiry is the Mayor's response to a need for improvement in London Schools, within the context of wide reaching educational reforms being implemented by the Coalition government. The Interim Inquiry Report identifies the following as some of the features of state education in the Capital: "some excellent state schools... but... some serious challenges: the need for growth and investment; raising aspiration; improving discipline and stretching children from all backgrounds; the discernible unevenness in London's education system – whether between London boroughs, between adjacent schools or by ethnicity or disadvantage". It notes that "schools with similar ethnic and socio-economic mixes of students can achieve different results, suggesting that great schools can often overcome social, cultural or economic barriers. Much good practice now exists in London. This creates a tremendous opportunity for sharing ideas and strengthening school leadership. We want to explore strategic ways to support schools to improve".

Key areas of the Inquiry's focus include improving standards, championing excellent London teachers, the availability of good school places and other funding issues, strengthening links with businesses, the voluntary sector and universities, and maximising young Londoners' opportunities.

The GLA is a strategic authority for London and works collaboratively with a range of agencies, including boroughs, Government and the business, cultural and voluntary and community sectors. Whilst the Mayor does not have statutory responsibilities in the area of education, he does have a responsibility to promote the social and economic development of the city.

¹ Mayor of London (2012) *The Mayor's Education Inquiry. London Context and Call for Evidence*. Greater London Authority. Available at www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Education%20Inquiry%20First%20Report_0.pdf.

This briefing summarises the First Report from the Inquiry and the key themes and questions being explored through the call for evidence.

ROTA will be submitting evidence that highlights current forms of race equality in education in London and proposes solutions to be taken forward following this Inquiry by the Mayor of London and regional and local partners. This briefing also includes a number of questions focused on educational inequality in London, which we are asking alongside the Mayor's Inquiry Panel's questions, to give London's BAME sector the opportunity to inform our response. Given the Mayor's current approach to race equality, which ROTA has previously expressed concerns about² and the risks of national educational reforms and public spending cuts pose for educational equality³, it's very important that the voice of London's BAME sector is strong in this consultation. If you would like to contribute to and sign our response, please contact Barbara Nea at e: barbara@rota.org.uk or t: 020 7842 8531 by 09 April 2012 with answers to the enclosed questions from the Inquiry and ROTA.

Key themes and questions being explored through the Inquiry

London context

The Inquiry Panel's First Report begins by introducing the following London Context:

- The social and economic context of London schools is very different to those in the rest of the UK. Approximately two thirds of children in London state schools are from an ethnic minority background, compared to less than one third in the rest of the UK.
- Half of all London state school children hold English as a second language, compared with 17 per cent in the rest of the UK.
- One in four London school children in maintained schools is eligible for Free School Meals, eight percentage points higher than the rate for England. The rate of pupils in inner London on Free School Meals is 16 percentage points higher than in outer London.
- The total population is predicted to grow by 15 per cent over the next 20 years (an addition of 1.2m people) in London.

Themes and questions

This sub-section summarises the themes and questions being explored by the Inquiry Panel and frames several questions from ROTA. If you would like to contribute and sign up to ROTA's response we would welcome your thoughts on the questions we have posed alongside those from the Inquiry Panel.

² For example see ROTA's responses to Mayor's consultation on the GLA's Equalities Framework, Race Equality Scheme, and strategies on Violence against Women and Girls, Young People, and Health, which are available on the publications pages of our website at www.rota.org.uk.

³ See ROTA's latest Agenda magazine, which explores the risks that national policy reforms and public spending cuts pose for educational equality in the capital, which will be available on our website (www.rota.org.uk) in April 2012.

1. Good school places, funding and structures

- The London population is growing fast, meaning an additional 70,000 school places are needed over the next four years. Some boroughs have considered teaching in shift patterns and one has even argued to expand the legal minimum classroom size.
- Planned changes in funding arrangements would mean a reduction of average funding per pupil in London. At present, London schools receive from the Government on average 20 per cent more than elsewhere, rising to 50 per cent in Hackney, Camden and Tower Hamlets.
- One third of London families did not manage to get their child into their first choice school in 2011 which is double the proportion in the rest of the country.

The Inquiry Panel is interested in how schools can find creative ways of addressing the shortage of school places, maximising resources and generating more revenue. It will also ask what strategic support is needed to help improve coordination of admissions and growth of free schools in London.

Inquiry Question 1: What creative ways can schools, boroughs and strategic agencies use to address the growing demand for school places?

Inquiry question 2: What more can be done at a strategic level in London to support free schools?

ROTA question: Do you have any thoughts/evidence on the opportunities provided by government's free schools initiative to improve educational outcomes for children and young people from BAME communities that have been traditionally disadvantaged in education?

ROTA question: In relation to the key points listed under this theme, do you have thoughts on any issues of particular concern to London's BAME children and young people that the Mayor needs to address? Please support your answer with evidence if possible and pose solutions alongside any problems you identify.

London has traditionally received higher funding than other parts of England because of its significant social and economic challenges, particularly in the inner city. The pupil premium was set in 2011.12 at a flat rate of £488 for each deprived pupil and looked after child. This will increase to £600 for pupil next year and cover any child that has been registered for Free School Meals in the past six years. However, the 'flat' rate (with no area cost adjustment) will mean that the pupil premium will not go as far in London as it will in other regions. The Inquiry Panel wants to understand the impact of changes to the school funding formula on London schools. The Panel also want to find out some of the best ways for schools to spend the Pupil Premium, and what can make the most difference to results.

Inquiry question 3: How can schools maximise their resources including the Pupil Premium to support the most disadvantaged pupils?

Inquiry question 4: What can be done on a wider strategic level to maximise available resources for London schools, as well as make the case for more appropriate funding?

2. Education standards and under attainment

- Standards in the capital overall are rising faster than in any other part of the country with 62 per cent of state-school educated children achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths, compared with 58 per cent in the rest of the UK.
- This still means that 28,000 (four in ten) London state school children do not achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths, a minimum needed for good life chances.
- Children on Free School Meals do better in London than elsewhere in England.
- Just 18 per cent of London school children achieved the EBacc (English Baccalaureate), only slightly higher than 15 per cent nationally. This is despite considerable investment in London schools over the last decade. In London, 24% (around 19,000 pupils) failed to achieve level 4 (the expected level) in both English and maths at Key Stage 2 in 2011, which compares with 26% in England.
- There is notable variation in the rates of attainment amongst different ethnic groups. Chinese and Asian children achieve the highest results. However, because of London's complex diversity, there is also variation within ethnic groups. For example, Black Nigerian and Ghanaian children are almost three times as likely to reach the national benchmark as those from Black Congolese or Black Angolan backgrounds. Although sports and music can help support the whole development of children and

create a sense of ethos in a school, far fewer children in state schools play competitive sport or learn a musical instrument than in the independent sector.

- 64,000 children are taking formal music qualifications in state secondary schools in 2011-12, but nearly 40 per cent of these students come from just 10 per cent of London's schools (43 schools). Only 10 per cent of state schools reported in the GLA's Music Education Audit (2011-12) that over half of their children were continuing to learn musical instruments after initial lessons funded by the Government's Wider Opportunities scheme.
- There is an 84 per cent London participation rate among pupils aged 5-16 for completing at least 120 minutes of curriculum PE per week and 709,000 (75 per cent) Years 1 -13 students participated in intra-school competition (2009/10 figures). Yet, in the Beijing Olympics, over a third of the Team GB medal winners were privately educated.
- The Inquiry will probe the variation in standards between boroughs, schools and groups of children within London. It will explore which initiatives help improve literacy in schools, the relationship between primaries and secondaries, and what factors enable great schools to 'buck the trend'.
- There have been concerns expressed about the types of subjects young Londoners are studying at secondary school and how subject choice can prevent progression in higher and further education, particularly at more prestigious universities.
- Collectively London's schools are producing higher results than the country as a whole. However, within London the achievement of some boroughs, schools and groups of children stand out, while others are falling unacceptably far behind.

The Inquiry Panel is keen to explore the interplay between ethnicity and wealth, cultural attitudes to learning, education experience and the recent histories of families moving into London from other countries. Given the diversity of the children in capital's classrooms, this is a central aspect of narrowing gaps in educational achievement in the capital. They are interested in how some boroughs are bucking the trend and overcoming the barriers that exist. For example, in certain boroughs, such as Hackney, it appears that African Caribbean boys are doing well compared to other boroughs. Why is this so? What has been achieved in and what can be replicated.

Inquiry question 6: Which approaches are most effective in Improving Literacy in London Schools?

Inquiry question 7: What examples are there of good practice in managing the transition from primary to secondary which ensure good attainment and progression?

Inquiry question 8: What are the key factors which prevent some groups of children from fulfilling their potential and how can we better address and share these lessons across London?

Inquiry question 9: What are the values, aspects of teaching, learning and discipline and ethos that make some London schools so successful? How can these be shared more strategically in London?

ROTA question: In relation to the key points listed under this theme, do you have thoughts on any issues of particular concern to London's BAME children and young people that the Mayor needs to address? Please support your answer with evidence if possible and pose solutions alongside any problems you identify.

3. Behaviour and attendance

- There is no concrete evidence that London schools experience worse behaviour than elsewhere in the UK. Rates of permanent exclusion and the percentage of schools receiving Ofsted ratings as 'good' or 'outstanding' for standards of behaviour and attendance are similar to other regions.
- However, London schools experience higher pupil turnover, which can disrupt classroom dynamics and create a 'chaos factor'. London also has higher rates of children in care, child poverty and special educational needs, which can contribute to behaviour issues.
- Behaviour is linked to other social problems in London. Of children brought before the courts following the August 2011 riots, on average they missed almost one day of school per week and were more likely to have been excluded from school at least once².
- The Inquiry will explore how good schools address behaviour and attendance, the role of alternative provision and 'managed moves'. It will also look at what can be done strategically to support schools to address behaviour and attendance issues.

The Inquiry panel wants to identify effective, whole school approaches to reducing the need for exclusions. They will consider a range of alternative approaches, for example, school-

based counsellors to deal with real psychological problems that face a minority of adolescents and the role of pastoral care for all students.

Inquiry question 10: What are the factors connected to poor behaviour and attendance in some London Schools and what can be done to improve it?

Inquiry question 11: What are the changing patterns of school exclusions and techniques for managing disruptive pupils, and how can the quality of alternative provision be driven up to the standard of the best?

ROTA question: In relation to the key points listed under this theme, do you have thoughts on any issues of particular concern to London's BAME children and young people that the Mayor needs to address? Please support your answer with evidence if possible and pose solutions alongside any problems you identify.

4. Preparing young people for life in a global city

- London has lower rates of children aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (4 per cent) than the England average (6 per cent). Yet, there is wide variation across London boroughs from 3 per cent to 8 per cent and the NEET figure increases to 18 per cent and around 159,000 for the whole 16-24 age group.
- By 2020, half of all jobs in London will require degree level qualifications. Yet school children from poorer boroughs are less likely to go to the most research-intensive universities (Russell Group and 1994 Group) – 15 per cent of students in Newham, for example, compared with 40 per cent in Richmond.
- Study of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering or maths) and modern foreign languages is low in London state schools. In 2011, 46 per cent of GCSE students took a language GCSE (compared with 39 per cent in England as a whole), 63 per cent attempted two science GCSEs (62 per cent for England) and just one fifth of students took triple science GCSEs.

The Inquiry will examine how to increase the number of school children in London studying STEM and modern foreign languages, the key challenges in delivering careers education for

young people and the scope for a 'London curriculum' to encourage more children to learn about their city. The Inquiry Panel is also interested in looking at how good schools increase take-up of these subjects – how they address staffing needs, employ innovative teaching methods, work with business and university partners, and the value of engaging primaries in early learning, especially the effect of 'all-through' schools.

Inquiry question 12: How can we improve the take-up of STEM subjects and modern foreign languages in London?

Inquiry question 13: What kind of careers advice do young Londoners need and how can this be linked more strategically to employers and FE/HE?

Inquiry question 14: What good models of practice exist to help young people from the most disadvantaged groups access higher education?

Inquiry question 15: What should every London school child know about their city and how can we help schools to achieve this?

ROTA question: In relation to the key points listed under this theme, do you have thoughts on any issues of particular concern to London's BAME children and young people that the Mayor needs to address? Please support your answer with evidence if possible and pose solutions alongside any problems you identify.

5. Developing partnerships – cross cutting theme

- Some London schools are working to create new and innovative partnerships for a variety of reasons: to encourage greater interaction with children from other schools and different backgrounds; to develop links with businesses and universities that can offer mentoring, advice, and work experience; or to improve the provision of sports, arts, and extra academic support.
- The Inquiry will explore what more can be done to encourage state schools to seize the opportunity to work with partner organisations and how to encourage more of these organisations to work with London schools.

Inquiry question 16: How do schools currently access opportunities to build partnerships across London and what more could be done to help them?

ROTA question: In relation to the key points listed under this theme, do you have thoughts on any issues of particular concern to London's BAME children and young people that the Mayor needs to address? Please support your answer with evidence if possible and pose solutions alongside any problems you identify.