

# Building Back Stronger: Report on Year 1 of implementation

## Appendix 2

### Introduction

Camden's education strategy, **Building Back Stronger**, was published in 2022 in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic and in it we challenged ourselves and our partners to ensure that all the young people in our borough have: **a fair start, an excellent school experience and flourishing lives. These three ambitions are each based on the two pillars of equity and excellence.** These ambitions are not based on narrow ideas of attainment but come out of what we see as the core purposes of education. They build on the creative and innovative practice to be found in many Camden settings. These ambitions have been well supported by the outstanding and determined work we see from Camden leaders, including governors, teachers and staff as they do their very best to serve the needs of all children. Our schools do not have to choose between achieving academic excellence or supporting children who start from a position of disadvantage. A system which is better for disadvantaged children is better for everyone.

We were clear in the strategy that we want all our young people to leave Camden schools as ambitious, knowledgeable, intellectually curious, good communicators and collaborators, healthy, creative and enterprising adults. The strategy also reflects Camden's history of social activism, emphasising the importance of our young people becoming socially and morally responsible changemakers, able to contribute positively to their communities and society. These aspirations were captured in Camden's enrichment pledge which committed to providing a range of rich experiences for every child.

**Building Back Stronger** sets out a **vision for a system-wide approach based on a sense of place, inclusion, collaboration and innovation.** School staff, parents, governors, local businesses, statutory partners and community organisations all contributed to the development of the strategy, so it is vital that we are transparent about its delivery and always recognise that our strength is in our partnership approach.

Our first action plan to implement the strategy ran from 2022 to the end of 2023. Implementation has been monitored through an Education Strategy Board with termly reports of progress against planned activities and milestones relating to each goal. In addition, this Report outlines how far we have come since launching the strategy. It highlights actions and progress while also identifying key areas for development. The context we work in changes constantly, with new opportunities emerging and new challenges arising, so this report shows that too. It reflects the fact that we are still in the early part of the delivery cycle, so the link with outcomes is not always direct at this point. It will become clearer in the course of 2024.

### Ambition 1 A Fair Start

By 2030, our ambition is that every child will have a more equal start in life, ensuring that they have the support and skills necessary to succeed in education. We pledged that the outcome gap between

## children growing up in disadvantage and poverty in Camden and the national average would be narrowed.

We know that the most important period of a child's development is the first five years of their life. However, this is also where poverty first starts to impinge on children's learning and their life chances. Support for families is therefore crucial to give children the best start in life. Although Camden has a proud history of supporting families in their children's early years, that support has not always had sufficient impact. As work on developing the strategy was beginning, the Council decided to invest in services to support a child's first 1001 days. This enabled resources to be used to strengthen the universal offer for parents in the period before and after birth, providing additional and innovative opportunities to identify families needing support enabling more children to learn better in schools. Our ambition of a **Fair Start** for all Camden children builds in this work and **has three goals:**

- **Thriving children who are ready to learn in school**
- **Rooting schools at the heart of their communities**
- **Parents as prime partners in their children's learning.**

### Goal 1 Thriving children who are ready to learn in school

Camden's Integrated Early Years service has responded to the evidence by developing a new 1001 pathway. The pathway initially included a licensed programme, *Parent and Child Psychological Support Programme (PCPS)*, which is referenced in the strategy, but a decision was taken to move forward with an in-house model. The pathway will be fully implemented by the end of 2023/24 and will include three additional universal contacts during the first year, supporting both the sometimes challenging transition to parenthood and the time of most significant development for the child. The contacts, every 3 months for every child, will focus on the parent child relationship and attuned parenting, supporting children to develop a secure attachment to their principal caregiver. The more regular contacts will also enable the earlier detection of emerging need and, therefore, earlier intervention to prevent needs escalating.

It has become clear that one of the most significant impacts of the pandemic has been on children's early language development. Camden's primary schools are reporting that children are taking up nursery provision with much lower starting points. Schools are addressing this in a range of ways. The Early Years Service has launched Camden KidsTalk, a strategy aimed at improving the development of early communication and language. A workforce screening tool has been designed to determine the level of confidence in supporting children's language development and has been deployed across the Council's Early Years services and in the 9 primary schools that have, to date, signed up to join the project. The launch of the Family Hub project in 2022, and the additional funding available to Camden as a funded authority, has enabled additional speech and language therapy and early years teaching support to be offered to settings to train staff and to support the implementation of the WELLCOME screening tool to assess children's language development and provide interventions.

The Early Years Locality Partnerships are extending to include services that work with school age children through the development of Family Hub networks. Two events with partners have been held to determine what form the networks should take and to identify barriers to effective locality working across organisational barriers. The first new Locality Partnership meetings will be held in the spring term 2024.

Additionally, our work to achieve further consistency in the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been strengthened by a new approach to supporting provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. The Inclusive Intervention Team has, this academic year, extended its remit to include primary school nurseries. The team of specialist teachers and educators can now support children who transition into school from other settings and observe children in school early years environments to offer strategies to ensure that our SEND children are able to access the curriculum.

Our shared approach focuses on access to high quality early education, social and emotional wellbeing and good speech and language development as the foundations for education success – and early identification of any special needs.

*In the strategy, we pledged to:*

- Focus on **building the common skillset of the early years workforce** across all settings
- Further develop our multi-agency approach to intervening early to identify and **support children’s speech and language development**
- Continue to be at the forefront of innovation in using **psychological support to strengthen the emotional and social development between parent and child**
- **Strengthen our locality based early years partnerships** across schools, childminders and nurseries to integrate support for children and families across the age ranges.

**We’ve made progress in a number of areas, including:**

- **Camden KidsTalk** was launched: a **strategic approach to building communication, and speech and language development into all early years provision**. As part of this, a workforce screening tool has been developed to identify staff skills and competencies in supporting children’s language development so that support and training can be targeted at those who will benefit most. Implementation has begun with the council’s early years services and nine schools.
- A new **‘1001 pathway’** (recognising the importance of the first 1001 days of a child’s life) has been developed and will be fully implemented by the end of 2023/24. The pathway gives families **three extra contacts** (beyond the nationally-prescribed checks) during the first year of the baby’s life, focusing on the parent child relationship and attuned parenting, as well as supporting children to develop a secure attachment to their caregiver – the foundations of emotional wellbeing. The extra contacts will also provide the opportunity for **early identification of emerging needs** so help can be put in place to help the child be ready for school.
- **Camden’s Early Years Locality Partnerships** are being extended to include services that work with school age children, through the development of Family Hub networks, so are in a phase of redevelopment.
- The work of the early years **Inclusive Education Team**, made up of specialist teachers and educators, has been expanded to include primary school nurseries so that children

in **all** early years settings who may have special education needs and disabilities can be observed and strategies put in place so they can access the curriculum.

- The **Early Years Hub**, a training and development collaboration between Thomas Coram Children's Centre and Brookfield Primary School, has built the skills and understanding of some early years teachers and leaders, working with 16 schools.

These new strategies and initiatives to widen existing provision are at early stages and need to progress to full implementation. Services must adapt constantly as the context is challenging, with the early years sector facing also experiencing the difficulties with funding and staff recruitment and retention that are evident in other sectors, while demand for support for additional needs is greater than ever following the pandemic. We recognise too that the different backgrounds, skills and experiences of staff in different sectors means it is sometimes difficult to join up effectively and establish one culture.

## Goal 2: Rooting schools at the heart of their communities

The work to develop **Building Back Stronger** focused on the critical role schools play in building a more place-based approach across their local community, particularly in bringing people, services and community resources together. As we saw so often in the pandemic, schools know their communities well and have established trusted relationships with parents, carers and partners. Camden has a wealth of vibrant community-led resources and there is a good quality support offer of services from the Council and its partners in health, the police, and the voluntary and community sectors. Schools need to be able to access these better and to signpost them in a more personalised way to parents.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Improve information and guidance to schools and families to clarify the 0 to 25 pathways for support, enabling a better shared understanding of how to navigate the system for both professionals and service users
- Bring together a range of services in a team around schools, empowering and establishing the school as a gateway to support, help and guidance
- Grow the skills of school staff to work with more vulnerable children, including strengthening the links between family support workers employed by schools and early help services.

The initial model and plans discussed when developing the strategy changed in the course of the year as Camden is one of 75 Authorities funded by government to deliver a Family Hub programme. The Hubs will deliver joined up services for families with children from 0-19, or 25 for those with special needs and disabilities. Work is underway to develop Family Hub networks that draw together the range of support available for the voluntary and community sector and schools. The intention for 2024 and beyond is still to coordinate a range of council, health and voluntary sector services in a locality team around schools, better establishing the school as a gateway to guidance for support, advice and help and linking with a remodelled and broadened Family Information Service. This will strengthen the pledges made in the strategy as well as enabling us to offer earlier support and swifter resolution of issues, so that barriers to learning are reduced. The model should be more successful in bringing support to families who are harder to reach, building on the trusting

relationships established by schools. Detailed planning will begin early in 2024, including a special event with schools to a Camden model of a team around a school.

Additionally, a new [families@camden.gov.uk](mailto:families@camden.gov.uk) website has been launched which will develop into a joined-up service and information resource for parents and professionals. Ultimately, the site will also become a gateway to the whole range of digital services for families

The focus on securing the funding for the Family Hub Programme has limited progress on delivery this year, but the increasingly challenging context for families, in particular the cost-of-living crisis in has led many schools to make links with community organisations such as food banks. The 'team around the school' work will build on this and help fill in gaps in provision.

### Goal 3: Parents as prime partners in their children's learning

Building Back Stronger recognises that when parents are involved in their education, children do better on a wide range of measures. In particular, we realised that the pandemic had opened a window for parents into teaching and learning and this window needed to be kept open.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Work with parents and schools to develop a structured programme of opportunities for parents to know more about how best to support their children's learning
- Support parents to develop a good home learning environment from the early years onwards
- Ensure every parent has the opportunity to acquire basic digital skills, as well access to a device and connectivity so they can use them.

Schools seek to engage parents in a range of ways and see it as essential to good learning. In addition, in 2023, the **Camden Family Learning Team** worked in partnership with 6 schools, including one special school, to reach 594 parents and carers across the borough. Beyond this, the team also held one-off family fundays which engaged a further 150 families. The family learning offer includes a range of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum subjects, including phonics, literacy, communication and maths. Parents have been enabled to participate through the provision of a crèche facility, with participants reporting that the crèche 'impacted greatly on their achievement'.

The Early Years programme has been developed to enable parents to **support their children to learn** with topics such as communication (for example, through stories and rhymes), physical development, behaviour and mental health. One of the most popular topics with families looks at ways to manage behaviour and mental health - the sessions focus on developing the skills to understand and identify behaviour associated with good mental health, as well as some of the warning signs of poor mental health. Parents are given strategies and guidance to help them support their children to build resilience.

To help tackle the digital divide, during 2021-2022 the Digital Inclusion Team ran courses and workshops themed round specific topic. At Rhyl Community Primary School and at Netley Adult Learning Centre, these included drop-in digital workshops accessible to parents who were unable to commit to regular attendance at a course. Parents were shown how to achieve specific learning goals, such as setting up an email account, editing a document in MS Word, or getting to know their smartphone and its settings as well as using the school online payments system. A 3-week course on online safety was delivered at Rhyl and parents were able to discuss key questions around safeguarding themselves and their children. Work will continue on organising opportunities for parents to increase their own basic digital skills in 2024.

A key initiative in 2024 is to undertake a Family Learning Curriculum Review. This will have a particular focus on whether we have the right balance between early years and primary schools. It will also help shape the broader parent learning programme.

## Ambition 2 An Excellent School Experience

Our ambition is that by 2030 we will ensure that all young people leave Camden schools as knowledgeable, intellectually curious and collaborative learners who drive change for social good, with skills and achievements in a broad range of areas, including outstanding academic performance; and, through a relentless focus on inclusion and equity, we will improve the learning and outcomes of children from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups so there is no gap between them and national averages.

We are proud of our schools in Camden and they perform well measured against the public accountability framework. 97% of our schools are now rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and results are above national averages. Their leaders are inspiring and the people working in them are committed and passionate. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, children from poorer homes continue to perform less well than those from homes with more obvious advantages and there are differences between groups of pupils. *Building Back Stronger* therefore set out a programme of work to ensure that **all children have an excellent school experience**. This work continues to have a challenging context.

- London demographics are causing continuing falling school rolls (including a 24% reduction in birth rates)
- Economic inequality and the legacy of the pandemic threaten to widen the attainment gap between better off and more disadvantaged children
- The labour market for teachers, head teachers and support staff presents particular difficulties
- There has been a significant increase in demand for SEND support since the pandemic

The world of work is also changing rapidly through the growth of AI and other new technologies. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for Camden to be at the forefront of educational innovation given the wealth of tech businesses and resources in the borough.

When we published *Building Back Stronger*, we set out ten Goals to help achieve our Ambition of An Excellent School Experience but early in 2023 added an eleventh Goal: Improving school attendance.

### Goal 1: A good local school place for every child

*Building Back Stronger* highlighted the financial insecurity of schools with falling rolls and the risks this presented to staffing and the quality of education. The strategy highlighted an increasing need for schools to consider a range of strategic collaborative arrangements, including federating to ensure their future.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Develop training for school governors and headteachers on promoting collaboration, proactive scenario planning and new organisational models
- Expand the scope of Camden Learning's annual standards' meetings with schools to address future planning for collaboration
- Ensure all schools were supported to produce an action plan addressing viability and collaboration opportunities, rooted in Camden's School Places Plan agreed by the Council

We launched our **structural planning tool** to help schools to review their own position and plan for their own futures, with the expectation that they will actively consider collaborations. This was alongside training for school leaders and governors in spring and summer 2023 on **system leadership and forming partnerships**. Schools' viability and scope for collaboration and federating are now part of the **improvement dialogue between schools and Camden Learning**. There have been regular updates throughout the year to meetings of both headteachers and governors, with Council officers responding positively to individual requests for further discussion.

Working closely with schools, the council and Camden Learning published an **agreed partnership statement on collaboration and federation** 'Towards Greater Collaboration and Structural Partnerships' (LINK). This was warmly welcomed by schools and supported by the two church dioceses.

The number of **school partnerships overseen by an executive headteacher** rose to six. We are improving partnership working so that early in 2024 we will have schools, the council and Camden Learning round the table to review the overall picture and specific plans: our **School Place Planning Group** and, for SEND provision, our High Needs Subgroup. The work of these two groups will be connected. We have also **improved our understanding of trends** so that we understand local demand in granular detail. This has fed into a report on School Future Options to go to Scrutiny Committee in February 2024.

The School Place Planning Group needs to become established as a working partnership between the council, schools and Camden Learning. The numbers of children coming through into Camden schools is predicted to stabilise, but the numbers must be kept under constant review.

We will intensify our efforts to ensure that all schools feel supported, in the context of Camden's School Places Plan, to consider a range of collaborative arrangements, including federating and other structural collaborations. This will include providing a summary for each school of key features to support their action planning to include information about:

- pupil place planning
- succession planning
- school standards
- finances
- school assets/development opportunities
- existing and planned collaboration initiatives.

## Goal 2: Every child a reader by 7 (ECR7)

When we developed our strategy, we realised that we needed to focus on the 20% of our children who still do not reach the expected levels in reading and writing by 11. This is a good overall performance for London, but we did not want to accept that so many children, many with low family incomes, would start secondary school unable to access the full curriculum. So we identified an ambitious target – that every child should be a reader by the age of 7.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Revisit the evidence about effective approaches to the teaching of reading, with a focus on support for and monitoring of implementation within schools
- Organise a Camden campaign involving a broad range of partners, as diverse as libraries and business as well, to encourage a love of reading and a community of readers
- Build on success in reading with a major initiative to ensure Camden children can speak and write with clarity and confidence by 11
- Ensure the approach to reading is inclusive of children with SEND

27 of Camden's primary schools have engaged with the initiative which has three strands. initiative has three strands:

- Ensuring that, across Camden schools, the teaching of reading is the very best that it can be
- A drive to improve knowledge and expertise about how to support children who have fallen behind or who have SEND needs
- A campaign to enthuse stakeholders, generate funding and attract resources and opportunities.

The first year of ECR7 identified the need to link more strongly with the work underway in *Goal 1, Thriving children who are ready to learn in school*, Early Years. This involved working with parents of pre-school children to improve children's language development and ensure that they entered school better prepared to learn to read. As part of this work, an ECR7 booklet for parents of 0-3 year olds was produced and provided to every Camden school.

Training for schools encouraged them to reflect on their own teaching of reading and in particular, the barriers slowing progress for some children. Schools had the opportunity to observe good practice in the implementation of a successful systematic, synthetic phonics programme and to work with a specialist in reading in order to identify where the gaps in provision and knowledge lay and how these might be addressed. ECR7 has also provided training on how to implement specific interventions to accelerate progress. It has also organised a series of 'overcoming barriers' sessions for SENDCOs, Literacy Leaders and teachers which aim at disseminating knowledge and developing understanding, whilst also creating a supportive network of skilled colleagues who can learn through collaboration.

The ECR7 programme has created opportunities to support schools in their encouragement of children becoming skilled, interested and confident readers. A wide range of enrichment opportunities such as author visits, peer book clubs, projects with Camden Libraries and The British Library, have created enjoyment and excitement around reading in schools.



A strength of ECR7 has been its ability to be responsive to changing needs and to provide bespoke support to the schools facing the biggest challenges. It will continue to engage with target schools throughout supporting them to find ways to dramatically improve reading attainment.

### Goal 3: Knowledgeable and skilled leaders and teachers who love working and learning in Camden

*Building Back Stronger* sets out our commitment to building a system which will inspire a strong sense of pride and belonging in all our children and young people and the staff who work with them. We want our schools to be outstanding centres of high-quality teaching and learning where all our children thrive. All those working in our schools should enjoy their jobs, have the knowledge and skills to do them well and feel appreciated for all they do for the children in our schools. An excellent workforce requires excellent professional learning and development and that endeavour continues to be an important focus for Camden Learning.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Continue to embed a culture of school-led development, including initiating and supporting and initiate a range of collaborations within and across schools to develop the quality of teaching and increase its impact on learning
- Develop a distinctive and structured Camden offer of high-quality professional learning opportunities, including initiating
- Make sure that Camden Learning's work with schools is grounded in research and evidence informed practice
- Develop a sustainable model that enables schools to support staff wellbeing

During 2022-23, the **Professional Learning Framework** was successfully developed, giving a clear and effective overview of our school-led system and pathways for staff at different levels. This set out Camden Learning's commitment to core professional development opportunities for leaders, teachers other school staff as well as governors. Collaborative networks and professional learning communities are at the heart of this provision.

**Learning Hubs**, comprising networks of practice in specialist areas, and other **school-led initiatives** are central to the partnership approach of Camden schools to school improvement and professional development. In 2023 there were five Learning Hubs: Anti-Racist Learning Hub, EYFS Hub, Primary Maths Hub, SEND Hub and a STEAM Hub. There were also a range of effective School Led Initiatives including groups of schools working together on a range of themes : Transition, with a focus on primary to secondary schools; Oracy; and KS2-KS3 Maths Transition. Work continues with 15 Developer Schools on the development of a school profile which captures the real story of the school. The learning from these networks demonstrate the value of this approach and the strength of schools working together to develop practice.

**Subject specific networks** at both primary and secondary school level have continued to offer support and professional development to teachers around curriculum specialisms. These cover 18 subject areas and we want to strengthen these in 2024.

**Camden's Early Career Framework (ECF) and National Professional Qualifications (NPQ)** programmes have been very successful and are vital to the **recruitment and retention of high-quality staff**. The *ECT programme* is attended even by teachers from schools outside the borough, and the Camden staff retention rate of 92.5% is better than the national figure of 87.5%. Our *NPQ programme* welcomed another group of aspiring senior leaders this year and a pilot literacy group. These programmes now have more than 100 participants. Our NPQ completion rate is high, and many participants have already secured promotions within Camden's schools. A quality assurance of Camden Learning's ECT/NPQ provision carried out by the *Education Development Trust* praised Camden Learning's strong working relationship with schools and the fact that "*the delivery of the national frameworks in Camden benefits from this.*"

The **Early Career Framework** system in Camden was reviewed following the Government's change in regulation. A successful partnership with the Central London Teaching School Hub as the appropriate body was developed for September 2023, using previous successful aspects of Camden's own system.

Whilst continuing with the **National Professional Qualification in Leading Literacy** which ends in April 2024, Camden Learning has successfully commissioned a repeat of the **National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders**. In addition, this year we have also started the **National Professional Qualification for Leading Behaviour and Culture**, in direct response to the communicated need from secondary school headteachers.

Our **Induction and Mentoring programme for new Heads** provides important support and development opportunities for new senior leaders in Camden schools, which together with the close partnership links between schools has contributed to effective succession planning. Many senior posts are filled through promotions within the borough, as was the case for a number of Camden schools undergoing leadership changes over the past year. We will build on both the induction and coaching offers introduced in 2023.

We are also actively exploring ways to promote and encourage greater diversity in the leadership of Camden schools in addition to our **Black and Global Majority Governors network**. **Governors continue to play an important leadership role in schools** and are supported in this through a range of training opportunities, resources, forums, and our specialised clerking services. The third annual *Diversity Monitoring Survey*, carried out in the summer term 2023, confirmed the continued under-representation on governing bodies of governors with Black and Global Majority backgrounds. The *Governor Diversity Working Party* has been active in promoting the role of governors and strengthening diversity, through promotional events, for example. These have included visits to the *Camden Parents' Forum*, the *Camden Black Workers' Group*, and the *Swiss Cottage Parents' Group*. And, in June, the *British Somali Community Centre*, together with Camden Learning, hosted an online event with over 20 attendees aimed at members of the Somali community. The Working Party has also developed a new suite of resources which include guidance on recruitment, additional resources to support advertisement and selection, and revised terms of reference.

We were delighted to see the Education Endowment Foundation choose to establish a **Research School in Camden** in 2023 which will work across North London. The **North London Alliance Research School** is a collaboration between lead Research School, Torriano Primary and secondary partner, Parliament Hill School. Additional associate schools are

Eleanor Palmer and Brecknock Primary. Funded by the *Education Endowment Foundation*, the Alliance will develop partnerships with networks of schools, teachers and school improvement partners to support the use of evidence to improve practice. It is also helping Camden Learning to tackle key areas of need by providing research-informed professional development opportunities and further improve the educational experiences and outcomes for every Camden child.

In 2024, we will clarify and **develop our approach to Think, Test and Learn** as one of the four foundations of Building Back Stronger so it is more widely understood and begins to be embedded. This will include providing guidance and advice to schools and staff within Camden Learning. More work is planned to support schools across the borough to engage further with research-based learning, drawing on relevant evidence from a range of sources, including the Education Endowment Foundation and local universities, and to share this across the school community.

## **Goal 4: An inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening curriculum in all our schools**

Building Back Stronger emphasises the value of a broad and balanced curriculum designed to develop the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable children to thrive in the 21st century. The strategy highlights the role of the curriculum in bridging equity gaps and the importance of ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Give active support to schools in developing an inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening curriculum, in line with our definition of the purposes of education
- Share the work underway in some schools who use the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to inspire others about their potential for transformational change
- Establish an initiative for students to work more creatively beyond their school walls by creating experiential opportunities to learn about the world of work or social action, including volunteering
- Explore the possibility of a research project on creativity in schools with an academic partner
- Identify good practice in incorporating specific life skills in the curriculum, for example, managing personal finances and share across schools.

We've made progress but know deep change takes time.

During 2022-23 our school led **learning hubs and initiatives** produced a series of 'end of year' [reports](#) detailing the impact of work undertaken, disseminating learning and good practice in curriculum delivery to all Camden schools. Camden Learning also commissioned researchers to produce learning and impact reports that share case studies of Camden schools using the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and tackling climate change to encourage curriculum development and student agency.

Our commitment to music education continues with over 2000 children (representing every Camden school) performing in the **Camden Schools Music Festival at the Royal Albert Hall**,

with excellent feedback from schools, parents and audience members. A livestream option was introduced this year that reached 7000 devices in 71 countries. 35 primary schools are participating in the whole-class first-access instrumental lessons scheme, with at least one year-group having a weekly class instrumental lesson for one year.

The **STEAM Work Experience Week** for Year 12 students from every Camden secondary school and the FE college was successfully delivered in July 2023. A total of 253 students took part and 18 employers hosted teams of students, with 306 placements overall. STEAM Work Experience Week was highly rated by students, employers and teachers.

Camden learning will continue to provide powerful support to schools in driving curriculum change, particularly in ways that build children's agency. Post pandemic schools are focused on ensuring their curriculum supports both the quality of students learning and their well-being. Supported by Camden Learning, this includes adapting the curriculum to bridge equity gaps and ensuring there is sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Digital literacy is now a feature of the curriculum in all schools in a way it was not before the pandemic and we will build on this to enrich the curriculum.

In the coming year we look forward to the delivery of a funded **Future Leaders programme** for 100 Year 12 students across all Camden secondary schools. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is a particularly important area of the curriculum and new experts have been recruited by Camden Learning to develop this area of work, involving PSHE Coordinators in action research that produces resources which can be shared across schools.

To support our vision of a curriculum that is inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening, Building Back Stronger set out an **enrichment pledge: curriculum plus for all**. We see enrichment as a right for every child, not just those whose families can afford it. As part of our review of the Year 2 Implementation Plan, we shall consider how well embedded the pledge is across schools.

## Goal 5: Harnessing technology to improve learning, schools and our local system

This strategic goal addresses the digital divide between better off and disadvantaged families, which came into such stark relief during the pandemic. Unequal access to devices, connectivity, space to study, and access to adults with the time and skills to support children in their learning all contribute to widened inequalities. This goal also addresses the growth of teachers' skills and confidence in planning and providing remote learning and using digital technology as an enabler of learning, both complementing and enriching teaching.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Develop Camden's potential for children learning together across schools, localities and even countries
- Use Camden's connections with tech industries to support learning, develop career opportunities and stimulate innovation

- Use technology to help break down the barriers to learning, through stimulating thinking and action about more imaginative models of inclusion.

We've made progress and are establishing good foundations.

Led by an expert in this area, who engaged at all stages, **a digital learning plan was devised in 2023**. The detailed, action-oriented plan is based on overarching principles that reflect Camden's values of inclusion and a strong sense of place. It is underpinned by the principle that digital learning is more than just technology. While technology plays a crucial role in digital learning, it is only one element in a broader approach to education that emphasises collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. The Plan identifies a framework comprising four key pillars:

- Digital foundations
- the digital classroom
- the digital learner
- the digital leader.

Within each of these areas, it has set out delivery activity through to 2025. A steering group to steer and monitor the implementation of the Plan has been established from school and technology partners. A key challenge is that the speed of change within technology, developments in the use of AI for example, is so strong that the Plan does not keep pace with it.

Camden has an unrivalled set of tech companies and academic experts within its boundaries so has more scope to develop partnerships. The work and relationships with business set in train through STEAM have been important here. Two Camden based **ENTHUSE Partnerships** of Camden schools, funded by DeepMind, the leading artificial intelligence company, have been set up. Each Partnership is selecting an area of focus within computer science for the two-year programme. For example, this could be increasing the number of girls taking Computer Science GCSE, or progression in primary pupils' coding skills with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils. A possible Camden AI campus facilitated by experts is also being discussed for the coming year.

## Goal 6: Successful transition between phases and settings for every child

Issues around transition emerged strongly during engagement and discussions about what should be in the strategy. It is evident that when children and young people move from one phase in their lives to another, it can be unsettling. We have long known that that the experiences of transition can impact on children's emotional well-being and academic outcomes. We have therefore focused on refreshing our approach to successful transition, and building good practice into Camden's education system is a priority. The most successful systems are those with close links and coordination between individual schools and other settings and organisations. These take account of the social and institutional adjustments that need to be supported as well as curriculum continuity.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Improve transition into schools, between phases and settings, beginning with a focused and well-researched initiative on primary to secondary
- Improve support for pupils admitted in-year or in-phase

- Integrate the Transition to Adulthood initiative into the 16+ curriculum to support students' health and wellbeing as they transition to further or higher education, training or work

We have made progress in various ways.

Over several months in 2023, a group of senior staff from primary and secondary schools, supported by the Camden Learning team, looked at research and reviewed examples of good practice locally and nationally so they could make recommendations about what might be done to improve our approach to primary and secondary transition. Excellent and very practical guidance, with the strapline '*Say hello, wave goodbye*', was produced at the end of 2023. This comprised guidance for schools and a separate guide for parents. The guidance will be supported with opportunities for staff to come together in early 2024 to discuss ways of using it to improve practice in their schools.

A second interesting school-led initiative involving Brecknock, Torriano and Eleanor Palmer Primary schools together with Camden School for Girls also got underway. They researched the barriers and identified effective practice that would influence a successful **transition in mathematics from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3**. Year 6 and Year 7 teachers worked in partnership to develop transition units of learning taught sequentially, initially by Year 6, then taught by Year 7 teachers to bridge the key stage transition. These units have been disseminated through the Maths Hub.

Our focus on transition continues with the focus in 2024 on support for pupils admitted in-year or in-phase. Camden continues to have high numbers of pupils admitted in year, with some schools experiencing high overall 'churn'. We have yet to decide exactly how to address this issue but research is underway to identify good practice on in-year admissions, particularly for large groups of pupils.

## Goal 7: Children's health and well-being are supported through the ethos, curriculum and practices of school life

*Building Back Stronger* identified the growth in mental health problems in children and their parents. Schools continue to identify this as a major issue. Linking mental and physical health, the strategy aimed to make real impact in this area of work, health and well-being needs by supporting schools who wanted to building approaches into the ethos, curriculum and practices of school life. We also make the link between this area of work and the avoidance of exclusions and improvements to attendance, given the links between mental health problems, behaviour difficulties and school refusal.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Improve health and wellbeing, especially mental health, through joint working across health and education, building on our trauma informed work
- Continue to provide and further develop mental and healthy lifestyle improvement programmes including targeted interventions, for pupils in most need
- Develop approaches to food in school which link up with boroughwide work on food poverty and health, including obesity prevention

Activities have been initiated and programmes introduced in a number of areas.

Healthy eating and increased physical activity has been promoted through the **Families for Life** 4-week healthy lifestyle and cooking programmes for families with children aged 2-11 years. These were attended by 201 families (490 total attendees) of which 75% were from Black and Global Majority groups. There were high rates of completion and evaluations showed increases in fruit and vegetable intake, decreases in consumption of foods high in fat and sugar and increases in physical activity. Schools were encouraged to take part in the **Daily Mile** and Active classrooms and seven schools took part in the **Race to Health** online physical activity challenge with 876 pupils taking part and increasing their 'active minutes'. A targeted programme was piloted in one school to increase girls' confidence and participation in sport and physical activity, with positive results and plans to offer further bespoke programmes to impact on pupils' activity levels.

As part of **Camden's Food Mission** and drive to reduce food poverty and insecurity in the Borough, schools were encouraged to provide breakfast clubs. All schools now provide free places for pupils on Free School Meals (compared to 24 that were charging in December 2022). Free cooking webinars, along with supermarket vouchers for ingredients were offered with 49 requests received.

There was increased uptake of mental health support, with 53 parent workshops attended by 439 parent/carers which provided tools to support their own and their child's mental health and wellbeing. 12 Wellbeing Champions sessions were delivered across eight primary schools to give pupils a voice and empower them to take a lead role in improving the mental health provision in their school.

A **Trauma Informed Practice (TIPiC)** approach to support children and young people's well-being continues to be embedded across Camden schools. This is led by Camden's Educational Psychology Service in collaboration with Camden Learning, with an additional 17 schools coming on board to make a total of 45. This approach continues to be much valued by schools who see it as making a real difference. A new part of the offer is TIPiC parent workshops to support parents to embed learning at home.

The GLA is refreshing the Healthy Schools London and Healthy Early Years London standards and, while 78% of Camden schools are currently engaged, this engagement process will need to be launched afresh to get schools and early years providers on board with the new standards.

## Goal 8: Ambitious, inclusive schools

Our strategy recognises that many of our schools have built a strong focus on equalities and human rights into all aspects of school life, but this is an area where we need to be constantly challenging ourselves. The strategy sets out an explicit role for all leaders across our education service as leaders of social justice. It also highlights that children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) make up 11% of our school population and argues that how we enable them to thrive is a litmus test of our approach to inclusion.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Recruit and develop headteachers and governors as leaders of social justice
- Increase the diversity of governors to better reflect the school population

- Establish an initiative to accelerate Black and Global Majority leadership progression in schools and keep under tight review
- Develop the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum, particularly as it relates to healthy relationships and sex education, and addressing important issues such as gender-based violence and transitioning
- Develop a new SEND strategy which focuses on making our local provision the right provision in a coherent, connected system, building knowledge, expertise and capacity to meet increasing need and identifying early and acting early to support children and their parents. We have made some progress in all areas but we need to find ways of accelerating that in 2024.

A series of **Social Justice Leadership** training sessions delivered by [Professor Paul Miller](#) over a four month period were attended by over 100 leaders and governors from schools, with positive feedback. Sessions involved leaders across the service but there was an emphasis on supporting school leaders when reflecting on their equalities duties. More generally, using case studies from global practice and contexts, participants were encouraged to develop an understanding of social justice leadership.

Camden schools worked with the organisation [Class 13](#) on themes of Racial Justice and Literacy. Participants have been given the tools to build their knowledge and understanding of racism and deficit thinking through videos, academic research, and self-study. This has increased participants' confidence and competency, supporting them to become thought leaders in their schools on social justice and race.

Our well attended Camden Learning Headteacher conference in February 2023 included a very well received session delivered by Baroness Floella Benjamin, who spoke powerfully of her own experiences of racism alongside an inspiring presentation from Orlene Badu, author of *'How to Build Your Anti Racist Classroom'*. The latter has now been commissioned by Camden Learning to continue work with schools in 2024. We know it continues to be a priority to actively explore further ways to promote and encourage greater diversity of leadership in Camden schools.

In the Summer of 2023, a research report was commissioned to exemplify the work of Camden schools accredited with the **Rights Respecting Schools** award. This captured the inspirational work of some of our schools and the positive impact on their pupils. We are now seeking to establish wider uptake in Camden schools, engaging with a proposal from the Mayor of London to work with UNICEF on an initiative that provides Rights Respecting resources and assessment at no cost to schools.

Monitoring surveys of the diversity of school governing bodies was undertaken by Camden Learning in 2023 to provide a baseline for increasing diversity. This led to work with the British Somali Community Centre hosting an online event with over 20 attendees aimed at recruiting governors from the Somali community. Camden also launched the **Global Majority Governors Network**, jointly with Islington Council. This group, aimed at Black and Global Majority governors, met three times, twice in Camden and once in Islington, with high numbers of governors at each event. The Network is building the capacity of existing governors as well as getting involved in recruitment.

Camden Council launched its **Camden Local Area SEND Strategy 2022-27** in autumn 2022 and its implementation is being overseen by the SEND Inclusion Board. Governance



arrangements have been established for delivery of the three priorities: making life easier for families; supporting children to thrive in learning, health and wellbeing; and enabling young adults to build a good life locally. Key achievements against this strategy include:

- improving engagement with families through increasing investment in SENDIASS, setting up regular engagement between the Parent Carer Forum and Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion and establishing a new role of Communication, Engagement and Coproduction Manager;
- improving the quality of our work with families through conducting an audit of EHC plans, developing a workforce development plan and establishing a Practice Learning Framework
- improving how we communicate with families through reviewing and refreshing our Local Offer, to be launched this month, providing easy to access information about services and activities in Camden
- restructure of social care teams to enable better support for the families who need it.

There has been **significant change in the workforce and leadership for SEND, but a permanent team is now in place**. Vikram Hansrani, the new Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion, is keen to ensure the strategy is underpinned by a **strong SEND Implementation Plan**, drawing on emerging data and insight from our engagement with families, a newly implemented multi-disciplinary data dashboard and joint strategic needs assessment. This will have a specific focus on making our local provision the right provision, in a coherent and connected system, including increasing SEND provision to ensure that children and young people can remain in their local communities. There will be an emphasis on building knowledge and expertise to meet increasing needs, such as autism. Identifying early and acting early to support children and their parents will be fundamental to the success of the strategy. Targeting resources where they are most needed and in a fair and transparent way will be important and so too will be co-production with partners.

Kentish Town Primary School leads a **SEND Hub** which plays an important role in identifying, testing and disseminating good practice in areas like the curriculum, assessment and transition for pupils with SEND. Given the importance of advice and guidance for parents, the **SENDIASS (SEND Information, Advice and Support Service)** has been expanded.

The **Camden Virtual School** achieved some **positive attainment results** for children who are looked after. Attendance improved and levels of attainment of 'children in need' and children on a child protection plan in Camden were above national averages. Additionally in 2023, 71% of **Camden care leavers were in education, employment, or training**. This is a 10% increase from 2022 and is higher than the Inner London average of 64%.

A number of positive developments were either established or designed in 2023. The Virtual School extended its CLA enrichment offer to children in need, including free zoo tickets, free books for 0-5 year olds, via Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The Camden Care Leaver Internship Roll-Out began in September 2023. Run by the Camden Apprenticeships team, (CAT) with support from HR, Drive Forward and the Virtual School, this project is based on the Civil Service model. Camden Council announced a new partnership with Camden Inner Circle Trust (ICET) to begin early in 2024 to deliver a programme of wrap-around support for two cohorts of young people on their journey to higher education and employment. Camden Virtual School's in-person Celebration of Achievement Event for all Children Looked

After and Care Leavers was held at the British Museum in October 2023. It was highly successful and well attended and enjoyed by children and young people. It was good to see so many foster carers, social workers, managers and councillors in attendance.

## Goal 9: Opportunity Centres to facilitate learning beyond the school day

Building Back Stronger recognised the wide gulf between those who have good housing, IT equipment and connectivity and those who do not when it comes to a child's ability to learn beyond the school day. We saw work to bridge this gulf as vital in promoting equality.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Develop a school-led network of high technology learning venues – “Opportunity Centres” – across the borough operating in the evenings, at weekends and in the holidays to provide access, in the first instance, for secondary age students to learning and technology (including digital learning programmes); small group tutoring; good information, advice and guidance; and enrichment activities
- Explore the potential of Opportunity Centres as places parents can come to use devices or Wi-Fi or to attend more formal learning programmes, including those which help them support their children's learning
- Consider when and how to involve primary schools and their pupils in opportunity centres.

Opportunity centres are currently being trialled at two Camden secondary schools, offering out-of-hours interventions, 1:1 tuition and targeted support. These school-based opportunity centres are also delivering programmes in music, physical activity, creative arts, and food and nutrition, making use of the schools' cookery and technology workshop facilities. These offer access for secondary age students to learning, targeted at those who most need it, but with wide access alongside to technology designed for students' individualised and personalised use

We will be reviewing the impact of the trial Opportunity Centres in Summer 2024. If they are successful, we will look to extend the provision through, for example, greater access to mentors, enrichment activities, signposting other services, holiday programmes for Year 6 and closer links to services such as Camden Adult Community Learning and Youth and Community. We continue to scope the possibility of working with industry partners, including the possibility of an opportunity centre linked with an AI technology campus.

## Goal 10: A Camden accountability framework which captures the real story of the school

Our strategy looked at how we could **strengthen professional accountability within and across schools**, beyond the compliance culture of Ofsted and league tables. We identified that we need a system which tells the real story of a school and captures the voices of children, parents and employees.

In the strategy, we pledged to develop and trial a 'Camden School Report Card' for each school, as a new system which:

- Recognises the value of the breadth of the education children experience
- Incentivises rather than disincentivises inclusion, recognising schools' achievements with pupils who do not show up well on exam league tables or who arrive in school with a more challenging journey ahead of them, such as refugees
- Recognises success in improving children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Takes into account the views of young people, parents and teachers
- Understands the importance of young people's contribution to the community and opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

We engaged a **Camden Developer Group of 15 schools** to provide intensive developmental support for this initiative and have made good progress. These schools are Argyle, Brookfield, Christ Church, Hampstead, Christopher Hatton, Edith Neville, Eleanor Palmer, Gospel Oak, Holy Trinity and St Silas, Rhyl, Torriano, Swiss Cottage, Acland Burghley, Parliament Hill, William Ellis, Regent Hill School. The Developer Group met in a series of workshop sessions to explore ideas, reflect their feedback and develop proposals. By the end of November 2023, we had held seven separate workshops and work continues into 2024. We have followed a broad methodology to engage the school leaders in developing proposals, allowing them reflection time to develop ideas in their schools and test proposals with parents, and come together collectively to review and determine the ways forward.

We began by gathering proposals from the Camden Developer Group on the key areas that they thought might form part of any **Camden School Profile**. We asked the Developer Group to consider for each of these areas: **why would this area be useful for parents**; what information, data or evidence might need to be included; and what might be the risks or unintended consequences of including this area. This led to narrowing of the initial 19 areas to **4 distinct groups** with a focus on : School and community context; Pupils support; Achievement and destinations; Curriculum and teaching and learning.

Towards the end of 2023, school leaders in the Developer Group each separately engaged small focus groups of parents, from their own school community, to talk them through the draft profile and ask them: what did they like, what was unclear or unnecessary, what was missing; did the homepage cover the right information for parents; and would the school profile help parents to understand the school better? The **main messages from parents** in the early stages of the development of the profile

- Less is more, focus on the homepage and that might be sufficient (parents wanted simple comparisons)
- Recognised the workload implications for schools of providing lots of material
- Homepage might provide the "atmosphere" about a school to go alongside the numbers
- Camden search would be useful ("*Camden school search*")
- Find 10 parents from the school community who would be willing to talk to other parents, external to the school, about the school would be useful
- Homepage might provide a good balance between what parents want to see and what schools want to share that suits both.

We have an outline for a Camden School Profile that has now been designed into a **prototype digital version**. We have developed a narrative profile that can tell the story of a school -one of the school leaders described it as providing the “atmosphere”. Following the feedback and testing with parents, **the focus is on the homepage of the profile, which can be read on a mobile phone, with links to more detailed information**. Early in 2024, we be seeking further feedback from parents on this prototype digital version.

The prototype ‘school report card’ **will be trialled by a wider cross section of schools in the spring term 2024**. We will be organising dissemination in Camden beyond the developer schools We have already had considerable interest from outside Camden and would hope to be able to support some other areas in trialling the model.

## Goal 11: Improving school attendance

As indicated earlier, since producing the strategy, we have added a new Goal, ‘**Improving school attendance**’ though attendance has indeed been a concern in Camden for some time. We wanted to highlight increasing concerns since the pandemic about school attendance levels. While we are not alone in facing new and increasing levels of school absence, this is a burning issue as children cannot learn if they do not attend school.

[We pledged to review the system-wide approach to improving school attendance, linking with the work underway on children’s health, wellbeing and safety](#)

An **attendance campaign** was initiated in September 2023 with posters issued for schools to use alongside a social media campaign. Staffing was increased to enable Camden Learning to meet the requirement to hold **Termly Targeted Support meetings** with all schools across Camden. This was a meeting to support schools in their management of attendance with both challenge and advice.

The management and use of data has been improved by ensuring that all Camden primary, special schools and Pupil Referral Units are **sharing daily attendance data** via Wonde. Plans for an enhanced education database which captures attendance data alongside other pupil data are progressing, but are delayed due to development issues with the supplier. Two secondary schools are not sharing their attendance data but the others now are.

The Attendance Team has worked closely with colleagues involved in school improvement, SEND, safeguarding and the Virtual School to monitor poor attendance, especially for pupils who have social workers or EHCPs and Looked After Children. Local data shows that **school attendance of children looked after** has improved during academic year 2022/23 with 15.2% Children Looked After (CLA) meeting the threshold for Persistent Absence compared with 23.3% in the previous year.

- **Children in Need (CiN) and Children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP)** attending primary school improved their school attendance and reduced their levels of persistent absence and are now in line with National CiN figures. School attendance of children on a CPP also improved to 86% in October 2023.

Over the last two years, school attendance in Camden has got worse rather than better, reflecting national trends, but since we also started from a low base, work to improve that is now a top priority. As an additional challenge, Elective Home Education cases increased, in line with other LAs across England. 362 children, the highest number in the last five years, were known to be home educated over the school year 2022/23. Camden’s procedures on

attendance and Elective Home Education will be updated when new guidance is issued by the DFE in 2023/24.

## Ambition 3 Flourishing Lives

Our ambition is that by 2030, all young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will move into adulthood as confident lifelong learners, able to relate well to others, drive change for social good and making progress towards fulfilling lives in work, training or education.

### Goal 1: A generation of changemakers with impact in their communities

Equipping young people to be changemakers is a key aspect of Building Back Stronger. Academic attainment is important but so too is experience, quality, inclusion, and active citizenship.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Work with schools, employers and community and voluntary organisations to stimulate ways of designing experiential opportunities for young people's engagement in work, social action or volunteering
- Use research and local best practice, to stimulate schools and youth groups to create opportunities for young people to work together on the concerns facing them and their communities
- Collaborate with the Youth Council and local youth groups to run an initiative designed to make change happen by developing young people's local leadership skills
- Use Camden's Climate Crisis Campaign as a focus for young people's engagement and activism (*see Goal 6 below*)

The STEAM programme has been designed so that all activities empower students and teachers to create change for good, with impact on their communities. This has included leading a GLA-funded **rewilding STEAM project** at The UCL Academy, and partnering with Camden's Sustainability Team, Camden Think and Do, and Camden Clean Air Initiative to support projects such as the **Green Dragons' Den** competition for primary schools. A total of 27 primary and secondary schools, and 40 teachers, are active members of the STEAM Hub.

We have actively shared opportunities with schools for young people to work together on concerns facing them and their communities and have established a young person's working group within the Camden STEAM Board which will provide opportunities for young people to have social impact through supporting their peers to engage with STEAM.

In developing the 2024 programme, we are increasingly focussing **STEAM Hub** activities on providing teachers with an understanding of STEAM jobs and skills, for now and in the future, through experiential learning for them; and providing a STEAM project hook to take back into the classroom to provide the same experiential learning opportunity for their students – especially focussed on changemaker activities. Recent projects have focused on

projects have been focussed on accessibility (at a Hub event hosted by Google) and sustainability (at a Hub event hosted by Troup Bywaters + Anders), with further plans to build on this.

## Goal 2: A post 16 education system that benefits all students

Our strategy recognised the pressing need to improve the quality, breadth and take-up of post-16 education in Camden. It also articulated our belief that all young people would benefit from a dialogue about their future plans which is recorded in an engaging way. Initially, this 'Life Futures Plan' for every young person at 16+ was presented as a separate Goal in the strategy but experience during 2023 showed it was inextricably linked into our plans and aspirations for strengthening young people's experiences of the system. We have therefore subsumed the Life Futures Plan into the bigger Goal. These Plans already exist for children who are looked after and for those with Education, Health and Care Plans, but we committed to extending this process to all young people.

In the strategy, we pledged to

- Establish a new post 16 partnership to develop a coherent and more inclusive sixth form system for Camden, rationalise provision and improve the non-A level offer
- Give greater priority to developing technical and vocational education, including T Levels
- Develop links with Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, exploring a boroughwide 'Flying High' scheme
- Liaise with Capital City College Group so that local FE provision aligns with the ambitions of this strategy.
- Work with schools, other providers and young people themselves to develop and pilot a format and process for developing a 'Life Futures Plan' for every young person at age 16

Three initiatives have been the main foci of activity of the Post 16 Strategy Implementation Working Group, reporting to the newly-established Post 16 Partnership Board: (i) improving technical education in Camden by developing a T Level curriculum provided by schools across the borough; (ii) raising the confidence of students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, in applying for Oxford, Cambridge and wider Russell Group universities; and (iii) encouraging students to prepare for their next steps in education, training and work through developing an approach to a 'Life Futures Plan' process.

Since registering in the summer of 2022 with the DfE to provide a T Level as part of a cross-borough approach, eight of our ten secondary schools have now identified subject areas of interest for students. Three of these eight schools will deliver T Levels from September 2024 in: Media, Broadcast and Production (Acland Burghley School); Laboratory Science (Maria Fidelis Catholic School); and Management and Administration (Haverstock School). Two of these schools already have partnerships set up with sector-leading organisations that will provide the extensive industry placement experience necessary for students to complete their T Level successfully. Camden Learning is supporting all our schools in securing relationships with employers. The other five schools are finalising their decisions on which T Level subjects they will provide from either September 2025 or 2026. From those dates, Camden students should also be able to choose T Levels in: Education and Childcare; Healthcare Science; Legal, Finance and Accounting; and Engineering. Camden's joined-up

approach to a T Level curriculum also enabled us in October 2023 to take advantage of joint teacher professional development provided free by the Education and Training Foundation.

The 'Flying High' initiative got off to a successful start in the spring term 2023 when Camden School for Girls (CSG) opened up access for students from all our secondaries to their masterclass series of events. These sessions were led by experts in their fields covering a wide variety of topics, for example, across literature, history and science. This is now an open invitation from CSG to Camden sixth formers for a very small fee. Additionally, joint training was held in the summer term 2023 for Camden teachers wishing to know more about interviewing student applicants for Oxbridge colleges. The medium-term plan is now that these teachers can support each other across our schools by sharing interviewing to provide a more realistic experience for students of being interviewed by someone they don't know. Another area that requires development is in sharing expertise across our schools in providing subject-focused sessions after school for Russell Group applicants.

Finally, our first full year of post 16 strategy implementation has also achieved the setting up of pilots in Haverstock School and Hampstead School with Y8/9 students to test out approaches to developing the 'Life Futures Plans'. This initiative really aims to give all our young people the knowledge, skills and crucially the confidence to make the right choices for themselves in their next steps in education, training or work. While not specifically 'post 16', the logic here is that by preparing our students to plan their futures rather than walk into them blindly, they will make the right choices for their futures. The pilots are built upon earlier work done with students from Hampstead School, Haverstock School, Talacre Community Centre and Westminster Kingsway College during which our implementation group gathered ideas from older students about what would have helped them make those decisions. The pilots are due to start later this term and will be evaluated in the summer and autumn 2024.

### **Goal 3: Greater access for young people to education, work and opportunity**

*Building Back Stronger* recognised that young people were amongst the groups hardest hit by the pandemic in terms of employment. We acknowledged that, despite many local initiatives, young people still need more support to access skills and opportunities, including greater knowledge about existing initiatives, such as Good Work Camden.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Link with employers to give young people work experience opportunities especially through the STEAM initiative and in local growth areas such as health and the digital, scientific and creative industries
- Increase the number of apprenticeships for young people, not only by stimulating greater interest from local business and public services but also increasing awareness and understanding of the opportunities with staff in schools, young people and their families
- Encourage more innovative opportunities at 14-19 that would provide not only a balanced education but also greater exposure to the workplace and the development of employability skills

- Raise awareness of the importance of local employment programmes being inclusive enough to the needs of children and young people with SEND.

The Camden STEAM programme continues to create high-quality opportunities for young people across Camden's schools (from early years to sixth form), to access and learn from Camden's thriving creative, digital, and scientific sectors. These opportunities range from career talks and curriculum co-design to mock interviews and work experience placements, much of which is delivered by **STEAM Ambassadors** – the network of 300 trained employee volunteers. Almost 60 local employers are committed to the STEAM pledge, reaching approximately 6000 pupils annually in Camden schools through the STEAM team.

The flagship Year 12 **STEAM Work Experience Week** continued to develop last year, with 253 students taking part (an increase from 154 in 2022) with excellent feedback and a focus on recruiting from under-represented groups. The STEAM team partnered with 18 employers (up from 9 in 2022), including Google, the British Library, Cadent Gas, Arup, Camden Council, Lendlease, and Models 1. 74% of the young people participating said this was their first ever work experience placement, 75% of the young people reported that they would be interested in working for the employer they did their work experience with, as opposed to just 32% prior to their work experience.

We secured a new partnership between **Camden Inner Circle Education Trust (ICET)** and the Camden Virtual School to deliver a programme of wrap-around support for care leavers on their journey to higher education and employment.

We developed the **Camden Young Talent Guarantee** - a branded campaign that aims to make employment support recognisable and accessible to young people and their families and carers, with an associated call-to-action to employers. Under this entitlement, all 16-24 year old Camden residents will:

1. be supported into a training place, an apprenticeship or job
2. be supported at key milestones in their lives to make informed choices about long-term employment prospects
3. take part in an employer-led Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) experience while at school and be offered work experience through their post 16 education setting
4. be able to access one-to-one, long term career support with a trusted advisor in their local area.
5. be able to access help with accessing benefits, mental health, housing and financial advice.

While the Camden Young Talent Guarantee campaign has been developed, it will not be launched until later in 2024. We will do all possible highlight the employment support available to all Camden 16-24 year olds under this entitlement. Take-up and outcomes will be monitored.

**Goal 4: Better information, advice and guidance to support learning and job choices which lead to economic opportunity**



In developing our strategy, a common concern raised by young people, parents and employers was the extent, quality and objectivity of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) offered in secondary schools and beyond. Schools themselves told us they could not afford to buy in as much IAG as their students need and few could afford to employ their own specialists. For example, although we heard that the Gatsby Benchmarks had led to an improvement in careers guidance programmes in the secondary sector, schools still felt they lacked current specialist knowledge and understanding, for example, about apprenticeships.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Develop greater awareness in primary schools of the world of work
- Give every student in a Camden school the opportunity to have a mentor or support from a role model
- Work with schools, Camden's Connexions and Careers Service and STEAM to share what works in providing high quality IAG and how digital technology can be used to improve the offer.

Some progress has been made this year. For example, to develop greater awareness in primary schools of the world of work, over the past year we have **shared curriculum resources co-designed by primary school members of the STEAM Hub and employers**. We have also developed strategic partnerships, for example with Google HQ to deliver a monthly programme of Year 5 visits, and with Camden's Sustainability Team, Camden Think and Do, and Camden Clean Air Initiative to deliver the Green Dragon's Den competition. For secondary students, we have developed a **partnership with The Future Leaders programme** - a leadership and careers programme for Year 12 students from underrepresented backgrounds, run in partnership with the University of Oxford. This launched in September 2023 (with funded places for 100 students) and includes mentoring. Future work is planned to focussing on developing experiential opportunities for students and teachers through STEAM Ambassadors, Work Experience week and the STEAM Hub, since we have found these are most effective at engaging young people. We will also look to build further partnerships with other organisations which support young people to understand and have access to the careers opportunities available in Camden's thriving tech sector.

This Goal needs to be an area for greater focus and development in 2024. Camden has a wealth of initiatives designed to support 16- to 24-year-olds looking for advice and employment support and we need to connect these better with Camden Learning and schools. We will consider how we might best meet the ambitions expressed by the **Youth Mission leadership group** that careers education in Camden is appropriately funded, expert and consistent across our schools and that it is responsive to Camden's economy and reflects the views of young people.

## Goal 5: Young people are empowered to play their part in tackling the climate crisis

While work to address the climate crisis was threaded through Building Back Stronger, it became clear that this has risen even higher up the agenda and the work within the area of education is especially crucial. We therefore identified it as a separate Goal and development priority.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Provide guidance for schools to develop their work in tackling climate change across the curriculum and through student agency, including using the Camden School Climate Charter
- Enable schools to deliver funded climate action projects by connecting businesses with schools through the Climate Connectors project.
- Deliver events to raise students' awareness of the climate crisis and the action they can take
- Work with the STEAM team to develop and promote information about careers in sustainability and green technology
- Encourage schools to involve school council and environmental champions in school policies on climate control, including recycling.

Schools have been proactively driving forward climate change in their schools. 26 schools have signed the **Camden School Climate Charter** since it was launched at the end of 2021. However, many more schools across Camden educating students on the climate crisis in creative and innovative ways, including delivering climate focused projects whether or not they are signatories.

To support schools with the funding, time and resources to deliver projects, Camden Council appointed Think and Do Camden to deliver the Climate Connectors programme. Highlights of this work included the **Green Dragon's Den event** (April 2023). More than 50 students from 8 primary schools pitched their climate projects to a panel of dragons, including local business people, to secure funding for their school/project. On the day, students pitched their idea and took part in a series of workshops, including rewilding and biodiversity, air pollution, waste and recycling and careers in sustainability, with STEAM Ambassador St George PLC. These participating schools, with Camden business supporters, were funded for the following projects:

- o Argyle Primary and 3 Verulam Buildings for their 'Picnic area and food growing' project
- o Brecknock Primary and Troup Bywaters + Anders for their 'Our Edible Garden' project
- o Brookfield Primary and Media Insurance Brokers for their 'Secret Garden' project
- o Edith Neville and Troup Bywaters + Anders for their 'Plastic Bottle Greenhouse' project
- o Hawley Primary and Clearcast for their 'Flower bed and food growing' project
- o Kentish Town School and Troup Bywaters + Anders for their 'Forest Garden' project
- o Rhyl Primary and Media Insurance Brokers for their 'Butterfly Garden' project
- o Torriano and 3 Verulam Buildings for their 'Green House' project

Think and Do Camden workshopped with students from La Sainte Union Year 8 students to create a board game, 'Where does it come from, where does it go?' to promote circular economy. The gameplay focuses on problems and solutions in the climate crisis with thought-provoking questions of varying levels of difficulty in order to collect tokens. Questions such as "How many litres of water are needed to make one pair of jeans?" The project has received support from Camden businesses to design and produce the game sustainably in 2024. As part of this, Think and Do Camden team will offer game playing sessions to Camden secondary schools and distribute copies of the game to secondary schools, libraries, community centres.

Young people at The UCL Academy participated in a project focussed on rewilding. This environmental leadership project was supported by [Camden STEAM](#) and funded through the [London Schools' Climate Kick-Start programme](#). It demonstrated how student environmental leadership can be nurtured. Forty students from Year 7 to Year 10 took part in workshops hosted by Think and Do Camden in collaboration with Camden's sustainability team, Camden Clean Air Initiative, Camden Arts Centre, and KOKO to lead the design and development of an unused piece of land in the school grounds. Following a design process, a community planting afternoon took place with students and teachers working alongside volunteers from the business community to make the plans a reality.

Work in all these areas, particularly linking with local community organisations and businesses, will continue into 2024. Effective dissemination of the successes from 2023 is important, for example, sharing the **'Where does it come from, where does it go?' board game** across schools. More events will be organised as they have been shown to generate interest, enthusiasm and commitment. Schools will be encouraged to formalise their commitment to sustainability by becoming a signatory of the Camden School Climate Charter. It will be important to use the outputs from the funded projects. It will also be valuable to look at national and international examples of best practice.

**Near final DRAFT as at February 2024**