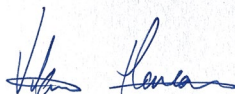


LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE School Future Options Work	
REPORT OF Director of Education and Inclusion	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 26 February 2024
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>To ensure we achieve the outcomes in 'We make Camden' we work to protect our family of schools and our shared vision of a collaborative local comprehensive education system. We celebrate the ethos of Camden education, rooted in our communities, and seek to help all our children and young people achieve academic excellence and grow up to be active and engaged citizens. Through Camden Learning, the Council's unique proposition for achieving these aims, schools have taken responsibility for their own and their collective performance, supporting each other to help improve achievement and wellbeing in schools across Camden.</p> <p>As a result of these principles Camden has unique education architecture characterised by high levels of cooperation and low levels of Academisation. To protect this position and in response to a changing national policy framework the Council, throughout the last academic year, commissioned a piece of work focusing on one of the four foundations for success of Building Back Stronger, Camden's Education Strategy– a Collaborative and Federating system.</p> <p>This item introduces that work and resultant report alongside the suite of materials produced to support schools in their engagement with this agenda.</p> <p>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - ACCESS TO INFORMATION: No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Nicholas Smith, Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation Supporting People Strategy London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, NC1 4AG 020 974 1149 / nicholas.smith@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Committee is asked to note the content of the School Future Options Report and range of support available for Camden Schools to explore partnership and collaborative arrangements.</p>	



Signed:
Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education and Inclusion
Date: 6 February 2024

Introduction

1. The Camden Education Strategy sets out a vision for a “collaborating and federating system”. Camden believes that schools are stronger and more effective if they work in partnership.
2. Our education system comprising Camden Schools, Camden Council, and Camden Learning is committed to supporting our schools to foster effective partnership work between institutions that improves outcomes for children and young people and to ensure a degree of system coherence so that the partnerships established today provide a sound bedrock for future sustainability.
3. The Council, Camden Learning and our schools identified that a challenge to achieving this over the medium term would be how to enhance existing collaborative arrangements and foster new pathways for a truly placed based system in the context of reducing numbers of pupils, the increasing complexity of need, rising costs and reducing budgets. This challenge also had to be placed in the context of a potentially increasingly academised, and therefore fragmented, education system.
4. In response the Councils convened the Schools Future Options Group that was designed to provide a forum and access to support to consider these questions and then provide a report for the Council, Camden Learning and our education community.
5. The Schools Future Options Group comprised a cross-section of eight headteachers and governors across primary, secondary and special schools alongside the Director of Education Commissioning and the CEO of Camden Learning. The group was supported by Camden’s HR, Financial and Legal leads and was facilitated by Isos Partnership. The Schools Future Options Group reported to an Executive Group which included the Leader of the Council, the Lead Member for Children’s Services, the Director of Children’s services and the Chair of Camden Learning.

Outputs

6. In the summer the Council received the report of the School Future option group, included as appendix 1. The report is structured in three parts; The policy context and the groups remit, the development of structural partnerships to support schools responding to pressures identified now and how the system is prepared for potential increased academisation in the future. This agenda item focuses on the Councils work in support of the development of structural partnerships between schools.
7. The School future options report sets out principles on which partnerships should be founded. These set the basis for partnerships ensuring that they;
 - Maintain the individuality of Camden's schools and where possible strengthen the relationship with and responsiveness to the local communities they serve.
 - Reinforce the strong identity of Camden as a place, and the collegiality of schools within that, brought together by Camden Learning.

- Create a school system that is more sustainable and resilient, financially, demographically and politically.
 - Maximise opportunities for sharing staff, expertise and resources and realising economies of scale.
 - Create greater opportunities to share and develop talented leaders and governors.
 - Sustain and strengthen approaches to inclusion of vulnerable children and families, through a sense of collective responsibility.
 - Create greater opportunities to locate family-facing support services within and around schools, anchoring schools in the heart of their communities.
 - Ensure that no schools are left behind.
8. The report further suggests a role for the Council and Camden Learning in formally supporting schools as they undertake their own assessments of the potential work. Specifically, the report states the following measures that would need to be taken by both bodies;
- Supporting schools to find the right partners by ‘brokering’ initial discussions;
 - Supporting schools to make informed decisions about the future, by helping them to accurately plan for different scenarios and making sure they have good data and projections at their disposal;
 - Identifying schools that are potentially vulnerable in terms of falling rolls and financial pressures and proactively exploring with them whether working within a structural partnership may help to ensure their ongoing sustainability.
 - Learning from the experience of schools that have established, or on the path towards establishing, structural partnerships and making that experience available to other schools for example through the development of a bank of resources and materials;
 - Ensuring the school leaders, middle leaders and governors have the right skills and understanding to take forward structural partnership working, through a tailored programme of CPD;
 - Keeping a watching brief over the system to ensure that emerging structural partnerships are sustainable and are likely to lead to better outcomes for children and young people.
9. In response to the report and specifically to these considerations the Council and Camden Learning issued a number of documents and resources to our school community. Firstly, the Schools Future Options Group developed a position statement on structural partnerships, which has been adopted by Camden Learning and Camden Council, provided as appendix 2. Secondly the Council has provided a response to the report provided as appendix 3.
10. Camden Learning, in partnership with the Council has also provided schools with a suite of materials and resources to use to engage with this subject.
- An ongoing series of sessions for school leaders and governors outlining the role of system leaders and the practicalities of forming school partnerships.
 - An interactive school map showing contextual data and geographical locations to support schools seeking to form partnerships has been provided to all schools.

- A register of current Camden school headteachers who have an interest in opportunities to become future system leaders.
- A **toolkit** of supporting resources for use by schools when considering and forming a partnership, such as template MOUs, resource sharing agreements etc.
- The Council and Camden Learning have also committed to support all Camden schools who are considering forming a partnership by providing support that helps introduce or broker partnerships based on system intelligence, also support initial scoping / vision generation discussions where this is requested by schools. In addition, both organisations are being proactive in identifying schools that may benefit from further exploration and targeted support.

11. The Committee received a paper relating to the current demographic trends pertaining to school places in November, that report provides considerable context to the environment in which schools are operating. Council Officers and Camden Learning will provide updates to the Committee on the development of collaborative structures across the education system within Camden.

12. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Executive Director Corporate Services has no further comment to add on the content of the report.

13. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Executive Director Corporate Services has no further comment to add on the contents of the report.

14. Environmental Implications

None to report

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 - School Future Options Group Report

Appendix 2 - Partnerships Statement

Appendix 3 - School Future Options Group Council Response

REPORT ENDS