



Meeting or Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning
Date:	15 April 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Bi-Borough School Inclusion Strategy
Wards Affected:	All
City for All Summary	<p>The Inclusion Strategy supports Westminster’s City for All vision, specifically the Vibrant Communities strand which strives to create an environment where children and young people can thrive “ensure all our children can access our excellent schools which celebrate the diversity of our communities and promote inclusion.” Westminster is home to outstanding educational settings which support the development of our children and young people. The inclusion strategy highlights what currently works well within our schools, whilst recognising the disadvantages children and young people who experience exclusions face. The strategy outlines the current exclusion data, alongside priorities and actions to ensure our educational provision supports every child and young person to succeed.</p>
Key Decision:	Yes
Financial Summary:	There will be no financial implications related to this strategy
Report of:	Sarah Newman, Executive Director of Bi-borough Children’s Services

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Council is committed to reducing exclusion rates, particularly in secondary schools. In order to support this aim, officers have prepared a new bi-borough inclusion strategy (Appendix C). The inclusion strategy highlights best practice and sets out how we will work together as a local area to promote positive engagement in education, reduce rates of exclusion and improve outcomes for young people who have been or are at risk of exclusion.

1.2 The aims of the strategy are to:

- Reduce the number of children and young people being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour.
- Address factors that lead to specific groups of children and young people being disproportionately affected by exclusion.
- Drive a whole system commitment to work with children and young people at risk of exclusion in a trauma informed way.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people who are excluded.
- Improve reintegration rates from alternative provision back into mainstream education

1.3 The development of the strategy and the commitments it outlines have been informed by engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, detailed data analysis, a review of published research and learning from examples of good practice nationally and locally.

1.4 The strategy should be seen in the context of Westminster City Council's 'City for All Vision and Strategy 2021/22' which under the theme 'vibrant communities' recognises school as an important place for a child's development, and that every child should have the resources to succeed. The Bi-Borough Children and Young People's Plan commitment to do more to avoid children and young people being excluded from school. Westminster's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2018 - 2021 which commits to all children and young people achieving in educational settings.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning approves the publication of the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy'.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 The publication of the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy will support the Council's commitment to reduce exclusion rates across the borough and to ensure those that have been or who are at risk of exclusion are well supported. This is referenced in the WCC City for All Strategy "ensure all our children can access our excellent schools which celebrate the diversity of our communities and promote inclusion"

4. Background, including Policy Context

- 4.1 The standard of education across the Bi-Borough is very high, schools are good or outstanding and exam results are some of the best in the country. However, the rates of exclusion from our secondary schools are higher than the national and London averages and we know that the impact of exclusion on young people's academic and lifelong outcomes is significant.
- 4.2 Over the last few years there has been significant attention on school inclusion, both locally and nationally. Published research has highlighted that our most vulnerable children and young people are at the greatest risk of being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour. Such occurrences often have an immediate and longer-term negative impact on a child or young person's health and wellbeing.
- 4.3 The national and local focus, engagement with stakeholders and detailed analysis of local data present a compelling argument supporting the need for a local strategy focused on working collectively to promote inclusive practice and reduce exclusions.

There are too many students being removed from mainstream education due to their behaviour

- 4.4 While exclusion rates in primary schools have come down since 2017/18, the rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions from WCC secondary schools have risen above the inner London and national rates. In addition to these formal exclusions, over half of students placed into alternative provision as a result of their behaviour are on managed moves (68% at Beachcroft AP Academy) pending their reintegration where possible back into mainstream education.
- 4.5 Exclusion rates vary significantly between schools in Westminster with the one secondary school with the highest number of fixed term exclusions arranging as many exclusions as the eight schools with the lowest numbers of fixed exclusions over a three year period.
- 4.6 There are significant spikes in exclusions at certain age groups, for example in Westminster there is a spike in permanent exclusions for pupils in year 10 (2.8 times the Inner London rate).

- 4.7 Early indications from data not yet published by the DfE comparing data from Autumn Term 18/19 and Autumn Term 19/20 (detailed below) suggest that the levels of exclusion across the borough are reducing, but there is of course still a great deal more to be done.

Number of Fixed term exclusions in WCC Secondary Schools						
Sept 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18	Jan 19	Feb 19	Total for period
84	137	149	132	124	135	761
Sept 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	
50	88	111	98	129	84	560

Certain groups are disproportionately affected by exclusions

- 4.8 We know that boys, children who have SEN or are from certain ethnic minorities, are disproportionately excluded from schools.

- The rate of students in alternative provision with SEN support is much higher locally than in other areas. The proportion of pupils in the excluded population with SEN support stands at 89.8% in Westminster, this is above the London average of 64.9%. This trend suggests that some children and young people in Westminster are being placed into AP with unidentified or unmet specialist needs.
- Across the bi-borough children and young people from certain ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by exclusions. Children and young people from BAME backgrounds are more likely to receive a fixed term exclusion standing at 6.8% in WCC, compared to the national average of 3.9%. The proportion of children and young people from black Caribbean backgrounds is around 2.5 times higher in alternative provision than in our mainstream secondary population and are therefore over represented in the excluded cohort.
- Boys are overrepresented in the excluded cohort, making up over 70%. This is replicated across London, as well as nationally.

The impact of Covid-19

- 4.9 The complexities of school exclusions have increased further due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many schools will have amended behaviour policies to incorporate government guidelines around social distancing, the 'digital divide' will have been greater than ever as many students received their education remotely, and an extended period of time without going into school will have exacerbated vulnerabilities including social anxiety and will

have made it harder for some children and young people to return to school this year. Careful recovery planning has and continues to support those children and young people who may be struggling to manage the return to school.

- 4.10 During this time there is an even greater need to explore the impact exclusion has on lives and learning and to understand how we can support young people not only to stay, but also to thrive, in school to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and be healthy regardless of their background.

The need for an inclusion strategy

- 4.11 The circumstances leading to a student being removed from mainstream education are complex and no one agency is responsible or able to solve this challenge alone. Responding to this challenge requires strong partnership working and as such the inclusion strategy sets out an ambitious vision and set of commitments for schools and services to work together by intervening early and taking collective responsibility for ensuring that no child or young person is left behind.
- 4.12 It is proposed that following the publication of the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy, officers will work to develop an action plan to drive forward the delivery of the commitments that have been made.
- 4.13 The Bi-Borough Inclusion Strategy contributes to Westminster's City for All vision by continuing to support our schools to ensure our children and young people can thrive. As recognised in the City for All strategy, schools are important places for our children to develop. Recognising the drivers of exclusions across Westminster is the first step to implementing suitable interventions and support mechanisms to reduce the overall rate of exclusions across the borough. The inclusion strategy will support our 'vibrant communities' by ensuring we are working collaboratively with families, schools and other partners to reduce exclusion from school.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications at this stage. There may be some implications that arise through the development of action plans that result from the strategy, particularly in relation to commissioning arrangements and financial responsibilities. These will be kept under review.
- 5.2 There are no specific Property, IT or other resource implications outlined in the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Local Authorities have a legal duty to ensure that every child fulfils their educational potential and to promote high standards of education and fair

access to education. The policy sets out the Bi-Borough Council's strategy for ensuring education is inclusive for all.

7. Staffing Implications

- 7.1 There are no Human Resource implications expected to arise for the publication of the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The development of the strategy and the commitments it outlines have been informed by detailed data analysis, a review of published research and learning from examples of good practice nationally and locally. We have also drawn on the findings of the Family Services Select Committee Working Group.
- 8.2 We have engaged with a range of individuals and groups to inform the strategy. We have spoken to parents and a small number of children, engaged extensively with local primary and secondary schools, with SEN and Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools. We have also engaged with local voluntary and community sector organisations. We also established an internal working group comprising key Children's Services teams to inform the development of the strategy.
- 8.3 It is acknowledged that more extensive engagement with children and young people is needed and we want to take some very tangible ideas for children and young people to comment on, working with our local mainstream schools. It is anticipated that this would be undertaken as the detailed action plan which will underpin the strategy is developed.
- 8.4 A full EqIA has been completed for the bi-borough Inclusion Strategy (Appendix D). No negative or adverse consequences are expected to result from the publication of the Bi-Borough inclusion strategy. It is anticipated that the publication of the strategy and the associated work to achieve its ambitions will have a positive impact on cohorts vulnerable to exclusion.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

Laura Gregory – laura.gregory@rbkc.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Appendix A – Inclusion strategy Stakeholders
- Appendix B – Inclusion Strategy Data Charts
- Appendix C – Inclusion Strategy Final draft
- Appendix D – Inclusion Strategy EQIA

NB: For individual Cabinet Member reports only

For completion by the **Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: _____

State nature of interest if any

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(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled **Bi-Borough School Inclusion Strategy** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed

Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:
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If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Operating Officer and, if there are resources implications, the Director of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.