

# Overview & Scrutiny

## Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 8th February 2021

### Attendees

Sophie Conway (Councillor) (Chair)  
Margaret Gordon (Councillor) (Vice Chair)  
Ajay Chauhan (Councillor)  
Clare Potter (Councillor)  
Katie Hansen (Councillor)  
James Peters (Councillor)  
Sharon Patrick (Councillor)  
Clare Joseph (Councillor)  
Sade Etti (Councillor)  
Richard Brown (Statutory Co-optee)  
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)  
Ernell Watson  
Shabnum Hassan

### In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play
- Anne Canning, Group Director, Children and Education
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Stephen Hall, Assistant Director of Learning, Achievement
- Orlene Badu, Systems Leader, Hackney Education
- Anton Francic, Senior Secondary Adviser, Hackney Education
- Mary Reader, Senior Researcher, Education Policy Institute
- Prof Feyisa Demie, School of Education, Durham University
- James Page, Chief Executive of Haringey Education Partnership
- Anna Feltham, Headteacher, Clapton Girls Academy (5min)
- Nicole Reid, Executive Headteacher, New Wave Primary Federation
- Lisa Clarke, Headteacher Comet Children's Centre & Nursery

### Cllr Conway in the Chair

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Justine McDonald.

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from the following members:

- Cllr Clare Potter.

#### **2. Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as published.

## 3. **Declarations of interest**

- 3.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:
- Cllr Conway worked for Just for Kids Law;
  - Cllr Chauhan was a member of NEU and a teacher at a school external to Hackney;
  - Cllr Peters was a governor at a school in Hackney;
  - Jo Macleod was a governor at a school in Hackney;
  - Sahbnum Hassan was a governor at a school in Hackney;
  - Cllr Bramble indicated that she was an adviser to the Education Policy Institute.

## 4. **The Education Attainment Gap**

- 4.1 The Commission maintains oversight of the academic attainment of children across Hackney and receives regular updates on pupil achievement each year. Given ongoing disparities in educational achievement among different cohorts of young people, the Commission agreed to dedicate this meeting to further scrutinise the local attainment gap. Although the focus of the meeting was how the attainment gap impacted on Black Caribbean and other black or minority ethnic communities, the Commission acknowledged that other communities were also impacted and would assess these in due course.

- 4.2 The session had four aims:
- To review national data and trends in the attainment gap;
  - To consider how the attainment gap disproportionately affects Black Caribbean and other minority ethnic groups;
  - To assess those strategies which help to close the attainment gap with Black Caribbean and other minority ethnic communities;
  - To identify what further action the authority can take to support schools to close the attainment gap.

### Mary Reader, Education Policy Institute - National Policy Context

- 4.3 The Education Policy Institute reports on the attainment gap at national and regional level annually from early years through to primary and secondary. The most recent data was of cause for concern because for the first time in 10 years the attainment gap had not reduced for children on FSM. At GCSE level, children on FSM were 18.1 months behind their peers in respect of their learning and development and this gap has not closed for the past 5 years. The data also noted that the attainment gap had continued to widen as children progressed through their education where children were 4.4 month behind in their education and learning at the end of early years and 9.6 month at the end of primary.
- 4.4 The EPI has also published data from 2019 on the attainment gap and ethnicity for the past 10 years which has consistently confirmed the educational inequalities that exist for children from Gypsy Roma, Irish Traveller and Black Caribbean children. At GCSE level children from Gypsy Roma communities were on average almost 3 years behind children of White British heritage, and children from Irish Traveller and Black Caribbean communities were also 23 months years and 11 months behind respectively. It should also be remembered

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that there are specific variations within this ethnicity data and that some ethnic groups do better on average than White British young people.

- 4.5 EPI Trend data since 2011 would suggest that the attainment gap between Black Caribbean children and White British children had widened, where the former were now 10.9 months behind the latter at GCSE level compared to 6.2 months behind in 2011 (an increase of 68%). The same data noted that the attainment gap also widened between other Black minority ethnic groups of children and White British students.
  - 4.6 Children who have English as an additional language are known to struggle academically, and this was also confirmed in this data where they were on average 21 months behind their White British counterparts. The gap between children with English as an additional language and whose first language was English has also widened by 11% since 2011.
  - 4.7 In relation to children with SEND, the data indicated that the disadvantage gap grows as children get older. There has however been a marginal decrease in the SEND disadvantage gap at GCSE level since 2011; children with no EHCP were now behind by 24.4 months compared to 28.6 months, and children with an EHCP were now behind by 44.1 months compared to 44.3 months. There are also significant gaps in attainment for children in receipt of social care at GCSE age, those on a Child Protection Plan were 25.7 months behind and Children in Need were 19.6 months behind. Looked After Children have experienced little change in the disadvantage gap they have experienced since 2014, though there has been some improvement for those children on a Child Protection Plan and Children in Need.
  - 4.8 In summary, the evidence suggests that after many years in which the attainment gap has narrowed, progress has now stalled and is beginning to widen again. It is suggested that wider systemic change is needed to address these educational inequalities.
- Prof Feyisa Demie, Durham University - National Policy Context
- 4.9 Professor Demie has worked in education for many years and specifically in relation to the attainment and achievement of children from the Black Caribbean community. To ensure that certain groups of children are not left behind, the key question that policy makers need to address is the attainment gap. This gap in attainment has been evident in the Black Caribbean community for the past 50 years, where the academic results of young people from this community have lagged far behind their White British peers. Black Caribbean underachievement is real and persistent.
  - 4.10 Analysis from 2019 indicated that just 42% of Black Caribbean children achieved 5 GCSEs as compared to 60% of White British students. There are marked differences in the performance of young people from different ethnic groups, where the proportion of children from Indian (77%) and Chinese (86%) communities who achieved 5 GCSEs were consistently higher than those from

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other ethnic groups. Black Caribbean children are consistently at the bottom of this educational metric (with the exception of children from Gypsy Roma communities).

- 4.11 Educational policy in England has operated on a colour blind approach and has not fully recognised or responded to the attainment gap experienced by different ethnic groups. A Raising Achievement Fund was phased out from 2010 which meant that there were no dedicated earmarked funds to help improve attainment in underachieving groups or communities. This meant that National (£200m) and regional (£80m) assistance programmes to support underachieving groups have been lost.
- 4.12 Research has suggested that there are a number of other systemic factors which may explain why Black Caribbean children underperform at school. Seven key reasons were identified for underachievement in Black Caribbean communities from Professor Demie's research:
1. Poor leadership on equality issues (not so prominent in London);
  2. Institutional racism;
  3. Stereotyping;
  4. Low expectations from teachers;
  5. Curriculum barriers and relevance;
  6. Lack of diversity in workforce (91% of school leaders are white British)
  7. Lack of targeted support for this community and no national strategy to guide work.
- 4.13 Qualitative research also suggested there were also other reasons why Black Caribbean children under-perform at school which included disproportionate levels of school exclusion, low expectations of parents, low literacy levels and a lack of positive role models.
- 4.14 Research suggests that with effective support and targeted interventions, Black Caribbean children can do well and achieve at similar levels to other children from different ethnic groups. Evidence of best practice from Primary and Secondary Schools identified a number of key features of successful schools in raising attainment with Black Caribbean children which were:
1. Leadership and management of schools
  2. Inclusive curriculum and effective teaching and learning
  3. Good parental engagement and links with the community
  4. Role and work of learning mentors
  5. Diversity in the workforce and clear stand on racism
  6. Celebration of cultural diversity
  7. Effective pupil voice
- 4.15 Despite Black Caribbean and minority ethnic groups under achieving, there were few national initiatives focused within these communities to raise standards. Effective practice recommended:
- National action from DfE including targeted and ring-fenced funding for schools, targets for reduction of exclusions;

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- Tackling racism and addressing diversity issues should also be central to addressing Black Caribbean underachievement;
- Schools should audit workforce and address diversity issues, openly discuss race and diversity issues within lessons and among the workforce, celebrate cultural diversity;
- Local Authorities should audit the workforce to ensure diversity, diversification at all levels - this is particularly important for those LA's with high number of black children;
- Local Authorities should use data effectively to identify and target underperforming groups of pupils and improve local leaders and teachers' awareness of black history and culture.

4.16 Nationally funded schemes have been effective in the past in overcoming the barriers to Black Caribbean achievement. These schemes have employed black leaders and teaching staff to provide targeted support to Black Caribbean pupils (small group work, personal tutoring, summer school and after school activities). However, failure to provide dedicated funding to support such schemes has meant that the attainment gap has increased to 2005/6 levels. Without a national strategy with earmarked funding it would be difficult to make inroads in tackling these inequalities. There also needed to be further work to help identify and share good practice at the national level.

## Hackney Education Service - Local Policy & Practice

4.17 Although education is complex and there are numerous factors which may impact on attainment, HES was clear that it wanted all schools to be excellent for all their children. In terms of the culture and ethos of schools there were equally high expectations around the inclusivity of schools. These ambitions help achieve the best for all children. It should be remembered that schools are autonomous institutions and determine their own policies and approaches within the overall government education framework.

4.18 Although Hackney schools perform well against national averages, there are gaps in educational performance amongst certain cohorts of young people, in particular Turkish/ Kurdish boys and Black Caribbean boys. There have been notable success stories across schools and whilst they may have adopted varying approaches the aspirations of the school and effectiveness of teaching were undoubtedly key to this success. Schools were the key agents in delivering improvements to close the achievement gap and the local authority would work alongside them to assist them in this objective.

4.19 From the submitted report, key aspects of local data in relation to the attainment gap were identified;

- Overall local pupils exceeded expected standards in reading, writing and maths (1% above national average), however, there was a declining trend.
- At KS2 the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths has declined for the past 3 years.
- At KS2 - girls outperform boys, and the lowest performing group were Turkish Boys. Black Caribbean boys outperform national peers but

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under-achieve by 8% points locally. Black Caribbean boys and African boys perform at a lower level than Caribbean girls and African girls.

- KS4 - generally local students make better progress than peers nationally at Progress 8 (0.29 compared to 0.01).
- At KS4 Black Caribbean boys outperform national peers but are below local averages.

- 4.20 The Local Authority operates a 'Good to Great' policy to support schools to develop and improve. It offers a graduated system of support for local schools ranging from light touch support for those schools performing well, and more intensive support where improvements are needed. The policy was also a ground upward approach which aims to support schools to enable them to better help their pupils. A School Improvement Partner was allocated for each school in Hackney, all of whom are ex-headteachers and have extensive knowledge of inner city schools.
- 4.21 The Education Service operates a number of programmes to improve attainment among Turkish and Black Caribbean pupils and provides support at both pupil and at school level. The programmes help schools to deliver additional support to pupils and their families. The Education Service also employs a dedicated Systems Leader working with schools to support inclusive leadership, reduce unconscious bias and develop a more representative curriculum.
- 4.22 The attainment gap is evident at an early age when children first enter the education system into early years settings, which is mainly the result of language deficit and differentials in the nature and quality of parental support. It is therefore important to focus improvement work in these settings to equip children with the skills that they need to continue with their education. There are also effective programmes to support teachers to develop effective reading strategies for children in early years and primary settings as this is key to engagement and success of young people.
- 4.23 There was also strong leadership across local schools which recognised the value of diverse communities and who had very high expectations of their staff and all their pupils. Effective schools also provide a comprehensive coaching and training systems for staff to help develop and refine teaching skills. Such schools also use assessment carefully to identify areas of weakness in pupils, and to provide targeted support and monitor progress. Effective schools also engage well with parents and assess home learning support available to pupils.
- 4.24 At Post 16, there are 12 schools with 6th Forms and local colleges. The Education Service is working with all these settings and leaders around unconscious bias. These leaders are working together to ensure that there is diverse provision for post 16 pathways to increase the number of young people staying in education. It was noted that 45% of the disadvantaged cohort of pupils went on to higher education. At post 16, Black Caribbean children outperform their national peers which was to be celebrated.



- 4.25 The Systems Leader noted that there is an urgency to addressing the attainment gap and to ensure that requisite changes were in place to support this in terms of local policies and practice. All schools were cognisant of the issue and the need to address the attainment gap. Work had already begun on the inclusive curriculum and supporting documents were now available on-line to support both primary and secondary schools. 591 schools both in and out of the borough had engaged with this body of work which not only demonstrates how the curriculum can be developed for Black Caribbean children, but also provides a toolkit for wider curriculum development for other cultures. The SL has also worked with schools in respect of unconscious bias and examination assessments. The authority is also working with schools to develop the voice of Black Caribbean children and their parents to ensure that this is reflected in local approaches to improvement.

## Haringey Education Partnership

- 4.26 The issue of underperformance of Black Caribbean children in school is a systemic issue, but also an historic issue which has long been recognised for over 50 years. Given that Black Caribbean pupil under-performance remains an issue today, it is evident that what is required is more than the application of a 'toolkit' of interventions, but greater cultural literacy and a deeper understanding of local communities and their histories. The histories and experiences of Black Caribbean and other black and minority ethnic communities and the prejudice and discrimination that they have faced over time undoubtedly shape and influence their perspectives on society and education.
- 4.27 In Haringey disadvantaged children tend to do better than other London boroughs, and there is a relatively low disadvantage gap. The gap between White British and Black Caribbean children at GCSE level is the highest in the country, and the outcomes of this cohort are poor compared to other black and minority ethnic groups. Like in Hackney there are also education gaps among Turkish /Kurdish communities where just 51% of pupils at KS2 reached the expected standard in reading compared to 90% of White British pupils. Whilst the attainment gap may not be as visible, Black African pupils still face discrimination and disadvantage.
- 4.28 Within its submitted reporting, Haringey Education Partnership identified a number reasons behind the attainment gap for Black Caribbean children and their white peers, which included:
- White communities less likely to experience disadvantage and less likely to have English as a second language;
  - Institutional racism and cultural bias;
  - BAME representation in school teachers and leadership;
  - Cultural competency;
  - Impact of being a minority;
  - Limited representation or negative BAME representations in curriculum.
- 4.29 Work to redress these issues commenced 4 years ago (2017) which to begin with focused on analysing local data to help establish the nature and extent of

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the attainment gap, and to identify intersectionalities with underachievement. This work has included:

- The development of a school self audit tool;
- A conference for all schools to assess how best to tackle the attainment gap.

- 4.30 Haringey have also given considerable thought to appropriate governance structures to oversee the approach to closing the attainment gap. A borough wide Steering Group made up of Hackney Education Partnership, the Local Authority and Heads and Governors has been key in providing leadership and direction for this work. This body had developed a range of research, tools and resources to assist all schools across the borough.
- 4.31 The voice of young people has also been cultivated in the programme. The biggest issue to emerge from this work was the poor self image and self identity that young black men gain at an early age. This also impacts on not only self expectations of young black men and boys but also the expectations of others.
- 4.32 The Steering Group has also developed a pledge for local schools to sign up to which contain 8 commitments which include:
- There there is black attainment champion on the SLT within the school;
  - That there is a lead school Governor for black attainment;
  - That closing the attainment gap is included within school improvement plans and ambitious targets are set;
  - That there are effective strategies to engage and involve parents;
  - That the school maintains high expectations of young black pupils.
- 4.33 It is hoped that schools will use the new data, research and tools made available to enable them to close the attainment gap. In addition, schools will have the support of School Improvement Partners to help them achieve local goals and targets. In addition, training and support is offered through the HEP, including a BAME review for schools and maintaining local networks for attainment gap champions and lead governors.
- 4.34 Work is already taking place to identify ways in which schools can improve engagement and involvement of parents, particularly those from BAME communities. There is also a workstream considering developments to the curriculum which not only aims to ensure that these are knowledge rich, but also are sufficiently diverse and representative of different local cultures.
- 4.35 Haringey Education Partnership itself has three explicit targets for this work:
- Reduce attainment gap - year on year at KS1, KS2 and GCSE (Att8)
  - Focus on 3 key cohorts - Black Caribbean, Turkish, Black African
  - Close gap between white and BAME groups within 7 years.
- 4.36 Local conferences for all schools on this and related topics (e.g. exclusions) were noted to have been very productive as a tool to agree and plan change in relation to the attainment gap. Such local school conferences offer a way to discuss



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system wide issues, identify and prioritise solutions and also help maintain momentum for change and improvement. There has also been collaborative work with other London boroughs on this issue including with Lambeth, Brent and Hackney. It was noted that few boroughs outside the above named had dedicated programmes or initiatives to address the disadvantage experienced by Black Caribbean young people.

- 4.37 Haringey's approach to closing the attainment gap was centred around improved governance, greater public accountability and sharing of best practice.
- BAME steering group overseeing local work and initiatives;
  - Annual Conference;
  - Annual reporting to Council and Cabinet;
  - Develop local resources and best practice;
  - Partner with other LA's;
  - Not an 'add-on' approach - 'this is what we do';
  - Research and evidence base;
  - All players in the education system holding each other to account.

## Early Years - Comet Children Centre & Nursery

- 4.38 There are 120 children on roll at the nursery and funded provision for 2 year olds is also provided for disadvantaged children. Turkish and Kurdish speaking children make up 10% of the children attending and Black Caribbean approximately 3%. In total, there are 27 different languages spoken by children at Comet. Comet is also inclusive, which is reflected by the fact that 1 in 4 children at the nursery school or Children's Centre have additional needs.
- 4.39 Staff were inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement during the summer of 2020 and this provided the springboard to engage in strategies to address local disparities among BAME communities. Teaching staff had undertaken unconscious bias training and had found this to be both interesting and useful and helped staff to critically analyse their approach to supporting children.
- 4.40 Comet noted that gaps in children's development and attainment when they first entered the early years setting. The work of early years encompasses family support alongside the development of children. A home visit is undertaken for all children accessing the Children Centre which serve to demonstrate the disparities in children's home environments and the potential barriers to children's learning and development (e.g. poor housing, access to play facilities). Many young people from Turkish/Kurdish communities enter with lower levels of attainment which in part was attributed to undeveloped English language skills.
- 4.41 This early years setting focused on supporting children's development, self-esteem and identity. The setting used the Early Years Pupil Premium to support disadvantaged children via its natural explorers programme. This programme sought to improve the lived experiences of children by taking them out into the community to museums, restaurants, or to the shops to buy cakes. These experiences help build children's understanding and confidence in the community in which they live, and which help to shape and inform their own

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identity and aspirations. These visits are also important in developing children's language, communication and literacy skills by providing real world applications for their learning.

- 4.42 The pandemic had also exposed considerable disparities in young people's access to digital resources to support their learning. The setting has supported families to access on-line resources to support their child's development and learning.

## New Wave Primary Federation

- 4.43 The Executive Head of New Wave Primary Federation (3 primary schools in Hackney) emphasised the importance of high quality teaching as the single most important tool to improve outcomes of young people, especially those from disadvantaged communities. The NWF sought to grow and improve teaching staff by ensuring that teachers:

- Had access to knowledgeable and supportive mentors;
- Developed consistently high quality teaching to enable children to be consistent and stable learners;
- Had access to appropriate digital resources and technologies and was embedded within the curriculum;
- Had access to professional connections to enable them to refine and develop teaching practice.

- 4.44 The schools aim to create a positive and inclusive environment and curriculum for children. The 'Know me before you teach me' approach helped teachers to understand more about young people they taught which assisted in more bespoke learning approaches and helped to develop empathetic relationships in which children can be more successful. NWF teaching aims to celebrate all children and where they come from and will aim to accommodate different behaviours.

- 4.45 Staff had a clear understanding that disadvantage was not just a singular category and a nuanced approach was required to address the range of inequalities among different groups of children. Staff were also driven to help children overcome barriers to learning and close gaps in their personal development and attainment. Improving children's reading skills was key to engagement with the curriculum and wider learning and development environment. NWF ensured that children were also tutored in developing key skills in talking, phonics and comprehension which provide a solid foundation for learning.

- 4.46 A number of suggestions were put forward to help address the attainment gap:
- Having conversations to share good practice;
  - Ensuring that data on the attainment gap is widely circulated;
  - Holding schools to account for addressing the attainment gap.

## Clapton Girls Academy

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- 4.47 Clapton Girls Academy (CGA) is a stand alone academy with over 1200 girls aged between 11-19 years of age attending. To date CGA has focused on closing the gap between children in receipt of Pupil Premium and those not in receipt of this benefit, and has managed to have some success in this. The school is now moving to tackle disparities in achievement in other smaller cohorts of young people including young people from Black Caribbean and Black African communities.
- 4.48 There were a number of barriers to learning and attainment which contributed to inequalities in educational attainment:
- Social and economic disadvantage - some children were better resourced and supported at home than others;
  - Housing - young people were attempting to learn at home in often overcrowded conditions and those located in temporary housing were moving frequently, and some were travelling some distance to attend school;
  - Girls often had caring responsibilities for siblings which impacted on their own ability to study and learn;
  - Poor relationships with school;
  - Mental health - the incidence of poor mental health and anxiety among young girls was increasing;
  - School moves - children who have moved once or twice face significant barriers to learning and development.
- 4.49 High quality teaching was central to approaches to tackle the attainment gap in the school. This had been supported by additional training and development around unconscious bias, cultural competence and diversification of the curriculum. The diversification of the curriculum was noted to be important as this underpinned the inclusive ethos of the school. Teachers appraisal objectives were also linked to the diversification of the curriculum. The school was also working on the recruitment and retention of school teams and ensuring that the Leadership Team and Governing body reflected the diversity of the school.
- 4.50 The school has also instigated a number of developments from the student side, and actively engages young people what they would like from the school. There have been changes to school policies in respect of uniform and hairstyles to ensure that these do not discriminate and the curriculum gives all children an opportunity to express themselves. The school also aims to ensure that children from all communities participate in all aspects of school life.
- 4.51 The school has reviewed its timetable and the operation of the sets system and how children are moved up and down within that system. There has been a policy of having more mixed ability teaching, and more challenge provided to staff on why children may be moving up or down sets. How support staff are used has also been reviewed, and there has been a concerted effort to identify and address underlying issues in a children's behaviour, attendance or attainment. There is active surveillance of children to identify those children who

are not making necessary progress, and to understand why this may be the case.

- 4.52 A wide range of other advancements have been made in how children's attainment is monitored and supported included:
- More supportive transitions from primary and improved exchange of information;
  - Reviewing behaviour policies to ensure that these are positive and not excessively punitive;
  - Early literacy and numeracy development in Year 7;
  - Confidence building among students;
  - Multi-agency support for students;
  - Digital inclusion and making sure all students have access to a device and to the internet;
  - Improved engagement with all aspects of school life.

## Questions from the Commission

- 4.53 The Chair requested that in future, it would be helpful to have data which compared ethnic subsets against 'White British' rather than 'All other pupils' for a more accurate portrayal of how different groups compared against each other. The Chair also noted that it would be helpful to obtain attainment data by individual schools so that it was possible to identify and share good practice. It would be helpful to know if there were schools which were doing really well at closing the gap and those that lagged behind.
- There were many schools which were doing excellent work to close the attainment gap locally, and School Improvement Partners (SIP) were providing challenge to those schools which were not performing as well as could be expected on this issue. There was clearly much best practice which can be shared across the local school system, and this approach was preferred rather than public shaming those schools which may be underperforming.
- 4.54 A number of reasons had been put forward for lower attainment among Black Caribbean children from the research of Professor Demie (see 4.12). To what extent was HES addressing these issues locally?
- HES has been making substantive progress in all these areas and there was good uptake among local schools. HES had developed advice and guidance on unconscious bias and invested in the development of an inclusive curriculum, both of which have been well received and have a strong uptake among local schools.
  - There is a culture of high pupil expectations within and among local schools and School Improvement Partners tackled low expectations where these were identified. It was also standard practice for schools to deliver targeted interventions to those children and young people most in need of support. Additional funding was available for primary schools to target interventions with Turkihs/Kurdish and Black Caribbean children.
  - Sharing good practice was key to closing the attainment gap and there was local infrastructure in place to support this.

- 4.55 A school in a neighbouring borough which was almost exclusively made up of children from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds and had a high level of children on FSM, managed to support 41 students to Oxbridge in 2019. Whilst Hackney has performed well to date, what more can be done in terms of effective strategies to close the attainment gap? Why is it that girls from Black Caribbean communities perform comparatively better than their male peers?
- The Cabinet member noted that whilst disadvantage and other factors may underpin poor attainment it did not explain the disproportionality experienced by Black Caribbean children. What was needed was greater comfortableness in talking about race and racism and how this impacted on children's development and attainment. The Cabinet member commended all the work of all schools in helping to address the attainment gap.
  - Research was cited which indicated that children who were socioeconomically disadvantaged, were non-white and male were the most 'pushed out' by society and who faced the biggest barriers to attainment.
  - Given the scale of investment required, Local Authorities cannot be expected to deliver change alone and need central Government investment to ensure that there are sufficient resources to drive societal change and fund improvement programmes. Schools were just one area in which additional investment was required, and much larger investment was needed in other areas of community life (outside the school) to help close the attainment gap (e.g. other support services, tackling racism in society).
- 4.56 Whilst acknowledging that additional investment was necessary to deliver targeted interventions to close the attainment gap, is there anything else which the Local Authority can do to close the gap between Black Caribbean boys and their peers? Will the setting of targets help?
- Schools are asked to set targets for themselves each year and are challenged where they have not reached these targets. Data on the attainment gaps in individual schools are presented and discussed alongside strategies to overcome these gaps. It was acknowledged that Schools have to buy into this process for this to be effective.
- 4.57 As it was noted that some ethnic groups of students perform comparatively better than White British students, what can be learnt from research into this?
- Bengali and Bangladeshi communities do appear to perform better than their White British counterparts, though the academic literature was inconclusive as to the reasons behind this. It underlines the need to assess ethnicity as a heterogeneous issue and not simply as a black and white issue. It was noted that different ethnic groups have unique histories of migration and identities within the UK which shape perceptions of education. It should be noted that whilst there are high levels of socio-economic disadvantage among Bengali and Bangladeshi communities, young people from these communities still perform relatively

well, which suggests that there are other factors at play. This would also suggest that poverty and social deprivation is not necessarily a barrier to educational attainment and progression.

- It was noted that historically, young people from Bengali and Bangladeshi communities had high levels of English as an Additional Language which inhibited fluency in English and presented a barrier to attainment. This particular barrier has however been overcome and there are now lower rates of EAL in these communities, which together with high educational aspirations has meant Bengali and Bangladeshi children and young people on average now perform better than White British counterparts.

4.58 How do schools and the Local Authority ensure that underachieving children are not 'drowned out' in the general drive to catch-up after the closure of schools in 2020/21 due to the pandemic? When is the situation expected to get back to normal?

- It was understood that schools had developed baseline assessments to help identify those children who had fallen behind and who needed support to catch up. There would also be an element of schools adapting the curriculum to allow all children to recap, and rebuild the basic knowledge and understanding they need to progress. There is however considerable reliance on teachers and quality of teaching to ensure that all students are not left behind and that appropriate support is put in place for pupils that need it.

4.59 Is there more that can be done to help schools develop positive and affirming cultures which recognise the importance of self-image, self-confidence and sense of identity? The Commission noted that Haringey schools have signed up to a Charter with explicit commitments, could schools in Hackney be asked to develop and agree a similar Charter?

- The School Improvement Partners do regularly ask key questions of schools particularly in relation to the decolonisation of the curriculum and their approaches to antiracism. HES was building on the work developed by Young Black Men's Programme and had rolled out unconscious bias and cultural competency training across schools. All schools were cognisant how important these issues were to the community and were actively engaged in this agenda. The Good to Great policy was effective and was helping schools to improve to the point that 93% were rated as either good or better by Ofsted.
- Enabling schools to share good practice was a key development and improvement strategy, and HES was continually seeking to develop new platforms through which this can take place.

4.60 What explicitly does the Council and local schools need to do to improve the performance of Black Caribbean boys? What do parents and pupils think about these initiatives to improve attainment?

- Engagement with young people has suggested that self-image and self-identity are important to them and this is embedded within the approach taken by the Council in its engagement with schools in this area.



HES was aware of the negative impact that Stop and Search Policy was having on young black men and was supportive of the Young Futures Commission work and recommendations on this. It was also noted that Hackney Schools Group Board has undertaken a consultative exercise with parents at a number of schools to help understand their experience of race in education. A publication has been developed from this and has prompted further uptake and engagement among other schools in Hackney.

- The approach of the Young Black Men was about recognising the systemic inequalities and barriers facing young black men, and to encourage stakeholders to challenge unconscious biases which may influence their perceptions and expectations of young black men. As had been noted in previous evidence, this necessitated an approach which moved away from specific interventions to more system wide approaches.
- The pupil voice is very powerful and should be central to local approaches to improve attainment and from the research undertaken with young black boys in Haringey, a number of themes were identified:
  - They found it difficult to escape widely held negative images of young black men in society throughout schooling;
  - There were lower expectations of young black men in school by teachers which reinforced under-achievement. Young black men consulted here just wanted the same expectations of them as other male pupils across the school;
  - Whilst there was an acknowledgement that schools were trying to tackle the issues of race and discrimination, there was an expectation that school leaders needed to deliver practical developments to improve the experience of young black men in school.
  - A more representative and inclusive curriculum did not emerge as an important development for young black men in this research.

4.61 Contributors noted that poor housing was a contributor to underperformance of pupils at school, particularly when children and families lived in temporary accommodation or in overcrowded conditions. As a landlord, what can the council do to better support local educators?

- Schools are more commonly being asked to provide evidence to housing services on the impact of poor housing on children's education and learning. Overcrowding and living in temporary accommodation outside the borough were common issues raised by parents and which impacted on their child's education. The pandemic had brought this issue into sharp focus, as it served to highlight the disparities in the home study and schooling environments of children. Parents in temporary accommodation were often moving which was also unsettling for children and families. In addition, some of the accommodation did not have access to basic facilities such as a washing machine and early years settings often looked to provide grants through the Children Centre to obtain such support. Poor housing conditions may also lead to mental health issues which can also impact on the family and children's schooling.

# Overview & Scrutiny

- New Regents College (the local PRU) noted that unsettled accommodation was a common denominator in many of the young people who were excluded from school. As a Hackney PRU, it can only take children resident in Hackney, therefore when children in temporary accommodation are moved out of the borough this may mean that they are required to seek alternative provision outside the borough.
- It was also noted that remote learning can be difficult in overcrowded accommodation as young people may not have their own room or workspace in which to engage with on-line teaching. Urswick school has managed to close the digital divide within its school in recent weeks as it has managed to distribute upwards of 400 devices, and it was hoped that this will have a longer-term positive impact on young people's access to IT which may facilitate home study, learning and improved attainment in the future.

4.62 What work is in place to audit the ethnicity of the local education workforce (school leadership, teachers and governors) to ensure that these are representative of the community?

- HES has access to data on those schools which use the Councils Payroll system. Analysis of this demographic data suggests that the ethnicity of teaching staff is not representative of local communities. Higher levels of community representation are recorded among support staff than senior teaching roles. Whilst the workforce was not as representative as it HES would like it to be, there were excellent role models from black and other minority ethnic communities in senior leadership positions and the service was working to improve this situation.

4.63 The Chair closed the session noting the following:

- It was apparent that there was much good practice in local schools across Hackney and that sharing good practice was essential to bring improvement across all schools;
- The idea of the school pledge which had been successfully implemented in Haringey could represent a further avenue for improvement locally;
- It would be helpful to have further transparency on this issue to help identify areas for development and improvement.

4.64 The Chair thanked all contributors for attending and contributing to the session.

## 5. Work Programme

5.1 The final meeting of the Commission will be held on May 11th 2021 to avoid overlap with the pre-election period (for Mayoral election).

5.2 The Commission is drafting a scoping document for its next review on adolescents entering care. Officers from Children & Families Service have been consulted in this scoping review and this will be sent to members of the Commission for comment.

## **6. Minutes**

6.1 A number of actions were noted from the previous meeting held on 12th January 2021.

- 1) City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership were asked to respond to additional questions due to time limitations at the last meeting. Written responses are provided in the reports pack.
- 2) Hackney Education Service was requested to provide further information on Demographics of those Children in Elective Home Education and the The Out of Schools Project. Written responses are provided in the reports pack.

6.2 The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th January were noted and agreed

## **7.0 Any other business**

7.1 There was no further business.

**The Meeting concluded at 21.15**