



Building Back 
Stronger

Annual Report 2024

Appendix 2



Contents

Building Back Stronger: Report on Year 2 of implementation	2
Introduction.....	2
Ambition 1 A Fair Start	3
Goal 1: Thriving children who are ready to learn in school	3
Goal 2: Rooting schools at the heart of their communities.....	4
Goal 3: Parents as prime partners in their children’s learning	5
Ambition 2 - An Excellent School Experience	7
Goal 4: A good local school place for every child	7
Goal 5: Every child reading by 7 (ECR7)	9
Goal 6: Knowledgeable and skilled leaders and teachers who love working and learning in Camden	11
Goal 7: An inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening curriculum in all our schools	13
Goal 8: Harnessing technology to improve learning, schools and our local system	14
Goal 9: Successful transition between phases and settings for every child	15
Goal 10: Children’s health and well-being are supported through the ethos, curriculum and practices of school life.....	17
Goal 11: Improving school attendance	19
Goal 12: Ambitious, inclusive schools.....	20
Goal 13: Opportunity Centres to facilitate learning beyond the school day	23
Goal 14: A Camden accountability framework which captures the real story of the school	25
Ambition 3 Flourishing Lives	27
Goal 15: A generation of changemakers with impact in their communities	27
Goal 16: A post 16 education system that benefits all students	28
Goal 17: Greater access for young people to education, work and opportunity	30
Goal 18: Better information, advice and guidance to support learning and job choices which lead to economic opportunity	32
Goal 19: Young people are empowered to play their part in tackling the climate crisis.....	33



Appendix 2

Building Back Stronger: Report on Year 2 of implementation 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 across Camden from people doing 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. Working with Camden Learning and the Council, school staff, parents, governors, young people, 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 implementation and always recognise that our strength is in our partnership approach.

Our action plan to implement the strategy is monitored through an Education Strategy Board, with regular reports of progress against planned activities and milestones relating to each goal. This annual report summarises our achievements during the calendar year 2024, highlighting progress towards our milestones, while also identifying key areas for development. The context we work in changes constantly, with new opportunities emerging and new challenges arising, and this report and future action planning reflects that context.



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. At the end of 2019, Camden Council invested in services to support **a child's first 1001 days** to strengthen the offer for *all* parents during pregnancy and in their child's first two years and provide additional, innovative opportunities to identify families needing support. 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

We know that the early years are profoundly important in shaping the lives of children and young people, and the impact of disadvantage in these years can be particularly damaging. **Building Back Stronger** aims – through genuinely joined-up working between local services – to give all Camden children the best start, enabling them to thrive and be ready to learn in school. While it is the Council that leads and coordinates much of this work in Camden, Camden Learning, Camden health services, local schools and other educational settings, and voluntary and community services all have vital roles to play in its delivery.

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.

The particular importance of the first 1001 days (conception to age 2) in shaping long term outcomes for children has long been recognised. Supporting parents as they transition to parenthood to develop a healthy relationship with their baby leading to a secure attachment has been a key focus of our work over the past year. Our bespoke **Best Start for Baby** service is in place across the borough, with all Camden families now offered eight contacts with a health visitor in the first 1001 days, rather than just the mandated five. The appointments are face to face and their content is shaped by evidence-based practice, such as the **Newborn**



Behavioural Observations approach designed by the **Brazelton Institute**. It is too early yet to report on outcomes from this approach, but we have secured support from the National Institute for Health and Care Research to undertake a formal evaluation: we will publish the results of this when they are ready.

Camden KidsTalk, with its aim of improving communication, speech and language from pregnancy to age 5, is another example of the collaborative work underway in the early years. Led by an experienced Speech and Language Therapist, an Early Years Teacher and a Family Hub Locality Leader, the KidsTalk was developed in response to national and local concerns about children's speech and language development when starting school. Launched initially in Children's Centres, the project is now running in 18 primary school nursery classes. The programme offers audits of staff confidence in supporting early language, training for council staff and partners to address identified needs, access to useful reference materials (including the **Top Ten Tips for Language Development**), and the use of the **Wellcomm Screening Tool** to assess and evaluate progress.

In 2023-24, nine schools piloted a specifically structured and targeted programme to encourage high quality interactions in the early years. Children in eight of the nine pilot schools showed significant progress in communication and language skills as measured by the Wellcomm Toolkit. Initially, only 28% of 347 children screened were at expected levels, but this rose to 57% by summer 2024. The percentage of children with a language delay of one year or more decreased from 58% to 26%.

The training partnership between Camden's **Early Years Training** service – which primarily supports **Private, Voluntary and Independent providers (PVIs)** – and Camden Learning has further developed this year. Information about training opportunities is shared across PVIs and schools and regular meetings ensure that the content is rich, varied and avoids duplication.

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. 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.

Camden is one of 75 Authorities funded by government to deliver a **Family Hub programme**. The Hubs deliver joined-up services for families with children from 0-19, or 25 for those with special needs and disabilities and draw together the whole range of support available for the voluntary and community sector and schools.

Our aim is to develop the coordination of services through locality teams centred around schools, to better establish the school as a key gateway to guidance for support and advice. This is especially important for families who are harder to reach as it provides opportunities for communication and engagement that build on relatively trusting relationships that are already in place. Plans to develop closer links between schools and Family Hubs are in hand, with arrangements in place to begin piloting a **Team Around the School** initiative in the spring term of 2025.

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. Activities have been undertaken to encourage, support and strengthen that involvement.

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.

Camden Council's **Family Learning Team**, with its focus on early intervention and prevention, has continued to reach out to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families and communities, with the aim of improving life chances and raising children's attainment while narrowing the disadvantage gap. Family maths and English courses, for example, lead onto accredited programmes which give some parents / carers their first opportunity to achieve an accreditation. Programmes to support parents, carers and children in progressing in terms of education and training have been provided by initiatives such as the BookTrust programme, the Story Sacks Programme, Family Learning in the Early Years and the Winch Community project. Many schools play a key role in these programmes, with classes run in local primary schools, libraries, children's centres and community venues across Camden.

Our provision aims to bring together adults of all ages and backgrounds and to support them in pursuing interests, addressing a need, gaining a new skill, becoming healthier, or learning how to better support their children who may be struggling at school. In 2024, we enhanced



our focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and will continue to do so in 2025. A **Wellbeing and Information** event for Parents and Carers of Children with SEND, organised by Camden's **Adult Community Learning (ACL)** Service in partnership with **Camden Libraries** and **Camden Children Centres & Family Hubs**, involved 28 organisations / teams raising awareness of their services to residents. 50% of those attending the event were parents and carers with children with SEND.

In today's world it is important to support parents to increase their personal basic digital skills. Our actions this last year have included provision of a free course to help parents develop their understanding of and competency in digital literacy skills. These opportunities are very well-received when taken up and we are exploring ways to improve participation rates.

A key action during 2024 has been to undertake a **Family Learning Curriculum Review**, with a particular focus on establishing the right balance between early years and primary school settings. This is now complete and a report on the outcomes and recommendations of the review is expected in early 2025.

Camden's Adult Community Learning Creche service expanded significantly at the start of the academic year 2024/25, and it now services Family Hubs and some NHS provision in Camden. This will provide an additional avenue for our support work for families around physical and emotional wellbeing.



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. 98% 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 present particular difficulties
- There has been a significant increase in demand for SEND support, particularly since the pandemic, as the number of children with very complex needs has grown considerably.

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 4: 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 are supported to produce an action plan addressing viability and collaboration opportunities, rooted in Camden's School Places Plan agreed by the Council

One of our four foundations for success – a collaborating and federating system – is rooted in a belief that schools are stronger and more effective if they work in partnership, and so too is our local education system. This means that more children and young people are able to thrive in any of our schools in Camden. We have seen many positive partnerships across schools this past year. These have ranged from sharing ideas and practice through to structural collaborations, with shared staff, leadership and governance. Different types of partnership are appropriate and deliver benefits in different situations. Schools are, and will continue to be, part of multiple partnerships.

As in many parts of the country, schools in Camden are continuing to experience the challenges of falling pupil rolls with the financial and staffing insecurity that invariably generates. Camden's **School Place Planning Group** tracks and analyses data, reports on progress and emerging issues and makes recommendations on actions required. While the peak number of surplus places forecast last year is not expected to increase, the most recent data indicates that Camden will reach that peak sooner than previously thought. Overall vacancy rates compare favourably with local comparators, but the existence of a surplus continues to pose a significant challenge for some of our schools.

Working in partnership is one of the most effective ways to address these pressures so schools can maintain their quality and viability. We have therefore continued to raise awareness of the benefits offered through partnership working by providing data, information and guidance, by organising development and training sessions for headteachers and governors, and by helping schools to broker and build partnerships. By the end of the school year 2023/4, we saw an increase in the number of school partnerships led by an executive headteacher:

- Brecknock and Torriano – led by Helen Bruckdorfer
- Eleanor Palmer and Hawley – led by Sally Hill and Natalie Stevenson
- Gospel Oak, Netley and Robson House – led by John Hayes
- St George the Martyr and St Mary's Kilburn – led by Harvey Webb
- St Joseph's, St Eugene's, Our Lady's and St Patrick's – led by Moya Richardson
- H3 Federation: Harmood, Haverstock and Heath – led by Nick John
- Holy Trinity NW3, Emmanuel and Hampstead Parochial – led by Laura Hall
- Edith Neville and Richard Cobden – led by Ruby Nasser



A good school place for every child also means a good quality physical environment, which means that we have to ensure that our education buildings and estate are well looked after and maintained. Our **Schools Capital Board** brings together services which are key to school buildings, including Education, Planning and Development, Asset Management, Facilities and Maintenance, and Capital Programmes. The group has initiated a full survey of the entire Camden school estate, including condition surveys and capacity and utilisation analyses, key financial factors and individual school level information. This will help ensure that our planning and work is clearly based on accurate, up-to-date information, and that decisions on capital allocations, education site development or alteration are both in the long-term interests of Camden residents and rooted in best value principles. We expect to share the full implementation plan with schools during the Spring term 2025.

Goal 5: Every child reading by 7 (ECR7)

When we developed our strategy, we realised that we needed to focus more on the 20% of our children who still do not reach the expected levels in reading and writing by 11. Research indicates that only one in eight children who do not reach these levels by 11 achieves at least four good GCSE results at 16. While current results indicate we have a good overall performance benchmarked against both London and national statistics, 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. We therefore identified a challengingly 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 to encourage a love of reading and a community of readers involving a broad range of partners, for example business as well as libraries.
- Build on success in reading with a major initiative to ensure Camden children can speak and write with clarity and confidence by 11.

27 of Camden's 38 primary schools have engaged with the ECR7 initiative (led for Camden Learning by Richard Cobden and Argyle Schools). The 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.

Target schools were identified using statutory data and local information, and phonics scores were recorded and tracked for progress. Training for schools encourages them to reflect on their own teaching of reading and the barriers slowing progress for some children. Schools can observe good practice in phonics teaching and work with a specialist in reading to identify gaps in 'catch up' provision and knowledge.



The year began with professional development training for the schools on developing reading fluency with whole classes and on targeted intervention through practices like **Echo Reading**. Five of the target schools took up the offer of supportive visits to audit their provision and help develop outstanding teaching. 11 schools attended **Inference Training** CPD designed to help children's comprehension, with follow-up support to embed this practice in the classroom.

Five well-attended sessions at the British Library **Removing Barriers to Reading** brought together SENDCOS, Reading Leads, and classroom teachers to explore barriers to progress and share evidence-informed interventions. Using case studies as a starting point, colleagues were supported in developing and implementing a systematic approach to identifying difficulties and specific interventions to help children overcome barriers (the **ECR7 Flowchart**). Every Camden school now has access to comprehensive guidance on evidence-informed interventions to help children overcome reading difficulties, and all schools can access specific training on delivering these interventions.

As part of the **campaign to promote interest in reading**, every school received ECR7 resources, such as the **ECR7 booklet** for parents of 0-3 year-olds, designed to help encourage parents to read more with their children. Camden Learning also worked with the British Library, Bloomsbury Publishing, and Camden Libraries to arrange a number of author events for Key Stage 1 children in seven targeted schools. The children were able to meet well-known authors Caryl Hart, Effua Glead, and Smriti Halls, to listen to them read and ask them questions, and they were given copies of the authors' books. In March 2024, 60 Year 2 children from 16 schools attended the **Year 2 Reads** event at the British Library. Here, they were inspired by authors J.T. Williams, Jack Meggitt Philips, and Andy Scott. They learned about being a reading influencer and were given a set of books to take back to school for their classmates. In addition, every Key Stage 1 child in Camden was invited to the British Library for Camden Library's launch of the **Summer Reading Challenge**, where they were entertained by Jordan Stephens and Hannah Lee, met illustrator Allen Fatimaharan, and took signed copies of the books back to their class.

Interest and engagement in ECR7 from Camden primary schools is high, and there is growing evidence of its impact on outcomes: a 3% improvement in Camden's Phonics screening scores, for example, and a 4% improvement in the percentage of children achieving the expected standard at Year 2. Provisional figures indicate that 84% of pupils in Camden now meet the expected standard in phonics at KS1, an increase of 7% over recent years and well above national and London averages.

We intend to build on this progress in the current year, offering further CPD to secure reading fluency in Year 2 and expanding our collaborative work with Bloomsbury to more schools. There will also be an increased emphasis on storytelling and language development in the Early Years.



Goal 6: 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:

- Embed a culture of school-led development by initiating and supporting 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 bespoke to individual schools and across schools.
- Make sure that our improvement work with schools is grounded in research and evidence informed practice.
- Develop a sustainable model that enables schools to support staff wellbeing.

We continue to use school led and peer expertise to nurture, develop and retain Camden teachers.

In the last year, the **Camden Primary Maths Hub** has focused on improving KS1 fluency and Early Years curriculum planning. Initiatives such as the Spring Slam inter-school times table competition, which involved 24 schools, have given teachers meaningful opportunities to share and develop practice.

The **SEND Hub** has supported teachers to share and learn from best practices for autistic pupils. Activities included **Attention Autism training**, the creation of a Padlet to share resources, and carousel training on EYFS interventions. The hub's focus on what constitutes a good day for autistic pupils has led to successful bids from member schools to the **Camden Inclusion Fund**, enhancing learning environments with distraction-free workstations.

Other school led collaborative initiatives have addressed various themes, including transition from primary to secondary education, oracy, and curriculum development. These initiatives have fostered a sense of community and shared purpose among schools. For instance, the **KS2-KS3 maths transition project** and **Every Child Reading by 7** have enabled schools to work together to develop and test theory in practice.

Secondary Pedagogy Hubs, focusing on Cognitive Science and Inclusive Pedagogy, have been initiated, led by Parliament Hill school, as part of its work in the North London Alliance



Research School. These have enabled secondary teachers to collaborate, research, and develop practice beyond facilitated meetings. Participants engaged with practice development, including breaking down complicated tasks and scaffolding students through structured discussions. The **Cognitive Science Hub** explored models of memory, retrieval practice, and dual coding, while the **Inclusive Pedagogy Hub** focused on metacognition and assessing current practices.

Looking ahead, Camden Learning plans to further develop adaptive teaching and research informed practices. Ongoing partnerships with the North London Research School Alliance and UCL will support this effort.

Professional learning opportunities for school staff have been further enhanced through the **Primary and Secondary Subject Networks**. The newly introduced Primary Subject Network model of half-day professional development sessions featuring external expert speakers in the Autumn term resulted in high attendance, averaging representation from 20 primary schools at each session. All Secondary Subject Network meetings were scheduled on the same day in 2024 resulting in improved attendance, particularly in subjects where it can prove difficult to recruit and retain specialist teachers such as Maths, Science, Computing, and MFL. Feedback from 59 survey responses was overwhelmingly positive, with 97% agreeing that the meetings were useful and effective.

The **Early Career Teacher (ECT) Programme**, now in its fourth year, continues to be a great success. 150 ECTs are currently enrolled, and the programme boasts over 95% attendance at face-to-face training sessions and strong retention rates, with over 160 Camden teachers in their first and second years regularly meeting, fostering good social capital and peer support. A survey conducted in September 2024 confirmed that 100% of ECTs were on a reduced timetable and meeting regularly with their mentors.

Retention rates have proved higher than the average and many ECTs from previous cohorts have progressed to leadership roles. With the continuing success of this programme is crucial in ensuring that Camden not only attracts the teachers of the future but retains them.

Leadership support remains a priority, with professional coaching sessions being offered to all Camden headteachers. These have been well received. In 2023-24, 31 headteachers accessed the coaching offer, with almost all reporting increased confidence in their leadership abilities and noting improvements in their decision-making processes. The 'buddy' system for new headteachers has also provided valuable support and guidance and in the coming year we look to develop stronger leadership programmes, including more opportunities for experienced and executive headteachers.



Goal 7: 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.

In keeping with the **Camden enrichment pledge: curriculum plus for all**, Camden schools continue to be committed to fostering an inclusive, inspiring, creative, and horizon-broadening curriculum. This has been particularly evident through music and arts education during the last year, including an expansion of music education across primary schools. The Summer term saw nearly 700 children from 23 Camden primary schools participating in cluster concerts, showcasing their musical talents through individual and massed singing performances. Additionally, over 300 primary school brass players celebrated their learning at the Parliament Hill Bandstand, joined by borough ensembles like Camden Youth Brass. The introduction of the Voyagers music group for primary musicians with SEND has provided high-quality musical learning opportunities for children with high needs, enabling them to participate in social music-making. The programme has been instrumental in creating pathways for these children to progress to other local music activities, promoting inclusivity and creativity.

The **Camden Schools Art Biennale (CSAB)**, launched in 2024, was a highly successful initiative aimed at celebrating artistic achievement across Camden's schools. This event featured a week-long exhibition showcasing art from every school and children of all ages in the borough, from primary education through to A-Level. The exhibition was complemented by an extensive outreach programme, which included 68 individual activities such as workshops and gallery visits, engaging 1,900 students. Additionally, the Biennale offered professional development opportunities for teachers, with 91 engagements recorded. The event attracted



5,249 visitors, primarily school groups, and included 23 workshops and events linked to the exhibition, involving 984 participants. The CSAB aimed to strengthen and inform the teaching of art, enhance the prestige of the arts curriculum, and build links between schools, arts organisations, and businesses. Feedback indicated that 85% of teachers felt the Biennale positively impacted art teaching, and 90% believed it celebrated the diversity and creativity of Camden's young people, including those with SEND and from less advantaged backgrounds.

Looking ahead, Camden Learning will continue to support schools in driving curriculum change, particularly in ways that build children's agency, including through engaging Camden schools with the **Climate Charter** enabling schools to deliver funded climate action projects by connecting businesses with schools through the **Climate Connectors project**. Future initiatives will also include further development of experiential learning opportunities, such as the **STEAM Work Experience Week**, which connects students with local employers in the digital, scientific, and creative industries. This programme has already seen significant success, with 391 students participating in 2024, gaining invaluable skills and insights into potential career paths.

Camden Learning has also supported PSHE Leads through visits and termly network meetings to review their Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum and to share learning and resources, with the aim of **ensuring that pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to manage their lives**. Management of personal finances is one important example of this, and we have been working with HSBC to source and develop resources for schools, including using HSBC's financial education programme.

Goal 8: 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 is also looks to grow teachers' skills and confidence in planning and providing remote learning, and in using digital technology as an enabler of learning.

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.

In September 2023, Camden Learning published a three-year **Digital Learning Plan (DLP)**, addressing the needs, opportunities, resources, expertise, and challenges in Camden schools.



In the past year, the groundwork has been laid in bringing together key groups and mapping what is needed for success in this area. This includes a **Digital Learning Plan Implementation Group**, which met six-weekly to monitor progress across the four digital pillars set out in the plan (the Digital Foundations, the Digital Classroom, the Digital Learner, and the Digital Leader). An AI Community of Practice was also established. This is a group of headteachers and subject leaders who meet termly to explore this rapidly developing area and identify key issues for schools with a focus on time saving for teachers and leaders.

An example of a development from the Digital Learning Plan is a series of six practical CPD sessions on using digital to support SEND learners, co-led by Camden colleagues with specialisms in digital and SEND. There has also been training to support schools in understanding how they can meet cybersecurity and safeguarding requirements. The two school-led, DeepMind-funded, Camden Enthuse Partnerships held small conferences to share their learning. These comprised a conference at La Sainte Union School on AI in Education, and a conference at the CLC, led by the Torriano Brecknock Federation and Parliament Hill School with expert input from DeepMind, with ambitions to map a digital skills progression from KS2 to KS3.

However, the Plan has been harder to implement than anticipated. It has been particularly difficult to engage primary schools as they do not have as much staffing capacity as secondary schools. In the year ahead, the Digital Learning Plan will be refocused to engage more schools by placing more emphasis on practical teaching and learning and on improving pupils' outcomes.

Having the right ICT infrastructure in place is critical and too many schools feel this is a major gap for them. Although there was close working with the Council's Schools ICT service, many schools still need Office 365 upgrades and primaries will not receive these until September 2025. Schools also need to ensure that sufficiently modern hardware is in place to enable this upgrade, and this will require investment. Primary schools in particular have difficulties in paying for hardware upgrades.

A number of digital devices which came to schools during the pandemic have now started to break down, and a lack of access to digital devices could cause a further divide for disadvantaged pupils. We are currently working to identify exactly what support schools need in order to review need and increase access to digital devices.

Goal 9: Successful transition between phases and settings for every child

Building Back Stronger recognises the challenges posed by transitions, especially post pandemic. Our focus is on ensuring that children manage these changes well, thereby improving their emotional well-being and academic outcomes.

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 continued to embed the importance of well thought through transition into practice from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Representatives from primary and secondary schools developed the "**Say Hello, Wave Goodbye**" guidance, launched in Spring 2024. This resource provides comprehensive principles and stages of successful transition, featuring examples of good practice from Camden schools and key contacts to support the journey from primary to secondary education. The guidance addresses common concerns such as navigating larger school environments, making new friends, and managing increased academic demands, ensuring a smoother transition for both students and parents.

The **Enthuse Partnership** of 8 Camden Schools led by Torriano Primary and Parliament Hill schools, is designed to increase girls' participation and success in computing. At their end-of-year conference, '**AI in Education & Computing: Transition between KS2 & KS3**,' educators from primary and secondary schools collaborated to bridge the digital skills gap in Camden. The event focused on identifying opportunities for partnership, addressing gaps in digital learning, and refining the computing curriculum across key stages. Curriculum leaders shared their KS2 and KS3 plans, discussing best practice and mapping out an ideal digital skills pathway. This collaborative effort aimed to create a seamless learning experience for students, guiding the next year's initiatives to strengthen computing education through enhanced partnerships and strategic interventions. A transition project designed by Torriano and Parliament Hill School was offered to the wider partnership in Summer 2024, with a repeat planned for Summer 2025. Project leads will utilise planning time and remote training to develop this initiative, focusing on AI themes. The aim is to showcase the project's outcomes in collaboration with DeepMind.

During the last year, a one-page **transition passport** for children with SEND, has been created through joint efforts with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) leaders. This passport, implemented in 2024-25, will aid schools in identifying the adaptive phonics teaching required for these children as they enter reception. Collaboration between Camden Learning, the Council's Early Years Team and the Inclusive Intervention Team ensured that all schools received information about children with identified SEND and additional needs transitioning in September, allowing for better planning and support.

Project Health Resilience (PHR), an innovative health literacy programme for 16-19-year-olds, delivered by doctors and public health specialists was developed through extensive co-production with teachers, youth workers, and young people. PHR, initially piloted in Camden, is now being rolled out across London. It focuses on mental health resilience, first aid, accessing services, and honest conversations about screening and immunisations. The programme's success underscores the importance of trust and co-production in public health



interventions and highlights the potential of health literacy education to reduce health inequalities.

Looking ahead, we will build on these successes by refining and expanding these initiatives, ensuring that every child receives the support they need during critical transition periods. The continued focus will be on enhancing collaboration between schools and other settings, addressing curriculum continuity, and supporting the most vulnerable groups to achieve a smooth and successful transition.

Goal 10: 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:

- Build the improvement of health and wellbeing, especially mental health, into educational renewal 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.

In terms of structural organisation, Health and Wellbeing team has moved out of Camden Learning, returning to the Council's Public Health team. However, it continues to provide services direct to schools, including dedicated mental health and wellbeing support through staff training and pupil and parent workshops delivered by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser.

Mental Health Lead (MHL) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) network meetings were organised termly through 2024. These provided development and training opportunities for schools, supporting those in role helping to identify areas for development. 94 school staff received training to support staff or pupil wellbeing, including 'managing behaviour through a trauma lens'. The Wellbeing Champions programme has continued to run across Camden schools, with 8 schools engaged and 74 pupils trained during the year to support mental health and wellbeing and to lead initiatives in their schools.



The Healthy School programme continues to be popular and well-received, with 71% of schools engaged at the end of the summer term of 2024. 71% of Camden schools were engaged in maintaining and renewing their Healthy School recognition status.

Camden's pioneering Trauma Informed Practice (TIPiC) approach to supporting the wellbeing of children and young people – led by Camden's Educational Psychology Service in collaboration with Camden Learning – is increasingly embedded across Camden schools. An additional 5 schools came on board in the last year, bringing the total number involved to 35. A new addition to the TIPiC offer involved training Safer Schools officers in reflective practice, de-escalation and problem solving. Workshops for parents, led by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser, aimed to support the application of TIPiC principles in the home: 180 parents across 8 schools engaged in these workshops, which covered topics like understanding behaviour, building resilience and 'big little feelings'. Feedback on the TIPiC approach continues to be very positive. Pre and post staff skills checklist showed an increase in knowledge and confidence across all areas following the initial training, while 10 schools went on to complete an audit tool pre and post 12 months to gather longer term information about impact on existing practice and to identify areas for development. All 10 schools showed sustained improvements at 12 months.

Eight Families for Life primary and Family Kitchen programmes were delivered in the 2023-24, with an increase in in-person programmes compared with the previous year. A total of 87 primary aged pupils from 61 families were involved, with over half of the children reporting an increase in fruit consumption and 4 in 10 reporting an increase in vegetable consumption after the programme.

The Camden Race to Health programme was replaced with the Street Tag app-based physical activity challenge. 13 schools, including three secondaries, participated in this over the last year. 214 users took over 32 million steps, travelling a combined 27,500 miles. 20% of users increased their activity levels from Less Active (doing less than 30 mins per week) to Active (doing more than 30 mins per day).

Schools and voluntary, community and social enterprise partners worked together to develop joint community food approaches, including school-based food growing activities. Two meetings of the Schools and Early Years Food Growing network were held, with 19 staff from 15 schools and Early Year settings attending; these included three secondary schools for the first time.

Schools were offered food growing sessions at Omved Gardens and Regents Park Allotment. All Year 1, 2, and 3 pupils (over 100 in total) from Brookfield Primary School attended termly food growing and nature education sessions at Omved Gardens. Additionally, ten food growing sessions were accessed by Christchurch NW1, Netley and Robson House at Regents Park Allotment. Long-term impact evaluation is currently being undertaken to inform future provision.



Goal 11: Improving school attendance

While improving attendance was a clear objective in **Building Back Stronger**, it was not a specifically prioritised goal. However, growing concern about worsening school attendance rates since the Covid pandemic – nationally as well as in Camden – has resulted in ‘**Improving school attendance**’ being incorporated into our strategy as an additional specific Goal.

Our pledge is to:

- Strengthen the system-wide approach to improving school attendance in Camden, ensuring consistency with our work to ensure children’s health, wellbeing and safety.

Attendance rates at Camden’s primary schools increased to 94.3% in the 2023-24 academic year, up from 93.3% in 2022-23. There was a slight increase in secondary school attendance which rose to 92% in 2023-24, compared to 91.1% in the previous year.

Camden Council has invested additional resources in this area, including three School Inclusion Support Officers (SISOs) who started working for Camden Learning in December 2023. These officers hold termly targeted support meetings with school attendance leads and officers to agree actions. Schools with high rates of absence receive additional support on top of that through parent/carers’ meetings, coffee mornings, etc. Feedback from headteacher on the work of the SISOs has been positive.

The past year has seen an improvement in data collection by ensuring that all Camden primary and special schools and Pupil Referral Units share daily attendance data via the national reporting system, Wonde. Camden Council’s attendance team worked closely with various other teams, including School Improvement, SEN, Safeguarding, and the Virtual School, to ensure effective monitoring and to provide better support for poor attendance, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

Each week, schools receive a comprehensive update on school attendance, which provides valuable insights and benchmarks for schools across Camden, other London boroughs and nationally. These updates also highlight exemplary practice from Camden and other parts of England.

Weekly online drop-in sessions with the attendance team provide an opportunity for schools to ask questions, address attendance-related issues, and collaborate on policy development and communication strategies. These drop-in sessions have been instrumental in co-designing effective letters and refining policy and practice to ensure that all schools in Camden are well-equipped to foster a positive attendance culture.

In August 2023, the statutory DfE guidance ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’ was updated and became statutory. A series of training sessions for schools was held to ensure that all schools were aware of the changes introduced in and of the requirements the guidance put on them.

An attendance campaign was launched at the beginning of the 2023/4 school year which included publishing posters and a social media campaign to promote better attendance. This



was repeated in January and September 2024. In partnership with **Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA)**, an **attendance video** was also produced, targeted at secondary age pupils.

A detailed analysis of our 'persistently absent' cohort of pupils was undertaken in the summer of 2023 to examine the factors associated with more persistent absence among cohorts of pupils. These included pupils on free school meals, pupils with special educational needs, pupils known or previously known to social care, and young carers. In response to this analysis, a text-messaging initiative is being piloted in a small number of schools to see if this has an impact on pupils on the cusp of the persistent absence threshold. The learning from the analysis is also informing Camden Council's work in Family Hubs and signposting access to early help services.

However, there is much still to do. As an additional challenge, the number of Camden children being Electively Home Educated increased. This increase is in line with other local authorities across England. In Camden, 360 children were known to be home educated over the school year 2023-24. The Government has introduced legislation that require all local authorities to have a register of children not in school. Camden Learning maintains a voluntary register on behalf of Camden Council, which include details of children who are elective home educated or are children missing education. Work is already underway to ensure that the current voluntary register will meet the expected requirements of the statutory register once implemented.

During the next year, the impact of our approach will need to be seen in the numbers of persistently absent pupils reducing and overall attendance increasing to be above national averages.

Goal 12: Ambitious, inclusive schools

Inclusive education must be inclusive of everyone and find ways to support those at risk of exclusion and underachievement, and building an ambitious, inclusive system is a specific priority for Building Back Stronger.

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 address 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.



Building Back Stronger sets out an explicit **role for education leaders as leaders of social justice**. They are uniquely placed to accelerate change in their schools and across Camden. Inclusive education must be inclusive of everyone. Our well-attended 2024 Camden Learning Headteacher conference included a session delivered by historian, author and broadcaster, David Olusoga who spoke powerfully of the role that educators can play in delivering social justice. Camden Learning also held three anti-racist schools' workshops led by Orlene Badu, author of *How to Build Your Anti-Racist Classroom*, each one attended by over 25 school staff. They offered a rich opportunity to reflect on how schools can be perceived by the Global Majority (and why) and the actions that can be taken to engender a greater sense of belonging and allyship. A Global Majority Schools Network steering group was formed which planned the launch of a **Global Majority Schools Network**. This network seeks to increase the diversity of school leadership and representation in Camden schools and to make Camden schools a place of choice for Global Majority teachers.

The **Young Governors' Programme** aims to diversify and rejuvenate school governing bodies in Camden in recognition of the underrepresentation of young and minority governors: fewer than 25% of governors are under 45, for example. During the last year, the programme recruited and placed young governors in 13 Camden schools. The programme includes a year-long associate membership on a Camden Governing Body for participants aged 18-30. The initial cohort consists of 13 participants, who receive ongoing support and development opportunities. An initial review indicates that these young governors are not only younger but also more diverse than the Camden average, highlighting the programme's early success in achieving its aims. A review will take place in the Spring and Summer terms 2025 to examine how to take the programme forward and build on its initial successes.

Research commissioned by Camden Learning on the work of those Camden schools accredited with the **Rights Respecting Schools award** showed that this can be a powerful tool in improving understanding of human rights and promoting equality in schools. The research report captured the inspirational work of some of our schools and the positive impact on their pupils, and we are now seeking wider uptake in Camden schools. Through our work with the **Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit initiative**, Camden Learning has set up a **Child Rights steering group** to encourage all schools to take up the Rights Respecting framework and put child rights at the centre of school life. Chaired by a Headteacher, with representation from UNICEF and all Camden school sectors, a launch event in autumn 2024 was attended by over 33 school staff from 21 Camden schools. The work of this group will be monitored closely in the coming year, with the number of schools accredited benchmarked against our neighbours, and the impact on school activity used to embed understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Camden Schools.

As in other areas of the country, there is a high and increasing pressure to provide for growing numbers of pupils presenting with **Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**. **Camden Council's SEND Strategy** seeks to address these needs and has been a priority area of work. The Camden Local Area Self-evaluation framework (SEF) was published in January 2024 and subsequently shared with Ofsted. This document identified areas for improvement that



were incorporated into the Year 2 SEND Strategy Activity Plan, produced following a range of partnership events, and published in March 2024.

The SEND Inclusion Board, chaired by the Camden's Cabinet lead member for Best Start in Life, has overseen the implementation of the SEND Strategy activity plan. Year 2 activity has seen:

- The launch of the rebranded **Local Offer website**. Information on services supporting Children and young people with SEND and their families has been reviewed is now more accessible. We will continue to improve and develop the website during 2025, with support from a dedicated officer.
- The redesign of the **SEND & Inclusion Service**, to help ensure a more relational and responsive approach focused on outcomes. We will be recruiting a number of new staff into the service during the first quarter of 2025.
- A range of activities to support **Preparation for Adulthood** with partnership led events to support young people and their families.
- The development of an **Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy**, with delivery activities set out in the Year 3 SEND Strategy Activity Plan. This will be published in February 2025, following a period of consultation.

During 2024, we awarded around £2.5 million in capital grants to 29 schools to make improvements to school buildings to support inclusion and accessibility. These grants were mainly used for sensory rooms and hygiene facilities. All projects have already started delivery and eight have already completed the works which are fully functional.

Camden Learning's efforts to support schools on the ground have been focused on practical action, providing bespoke assistance to schools through advisory visits, collaborative work with teachers and staff, and delivering tailored professional development. A range of meetings has been held including SENDCo Forums and Special School Headteacher meetings, covering topics such as curriculum adaptation, provision mapping, and preventing exclusions. The school-led SEND Hub continued to offer well-received professional development opportunities to member schools. In response to increasing SEND needs, we introduced additional resources and activities. These included a vocational pathways subject network for KS4 and online peer surgeries for new SENDCos. Camden Council also funded schools with membership of the **National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) On Demand SEND CPD**, providing them with access to a range of quality training opportunities. Nevertheless, pressures remain strong and there is a need for more intensive support for schools. This is a priority for both Camden Learning and the Council as they work together in 2025.

Reflecting the commitment of Camden schools to inclusion in all activities, there was strong presence from Camden learners with SEND at the prestigious Schools Art Biennale across Camden, including representation from the Royal Free, Great Ormond Street & UCH Hospital Schools. Developments in the use of technology also continued to advance across mainstream



and special schools, with, for example, new projects such as the use of AV1 robots to help engage pupils unable to attend school.

Camden's **SENDIASS** provision (Special Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice and Support Service), now based in Camden Learning, is of growing importance, given the increase in numbers of children and young people with SEND and their families needing support. The service provides impartial, confidential, and free information, advice, and support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and to their parents and carers.

Implementation progress of Camden's SEND Strategy has been reviewed and the **Year 3 SEND Activity Plan** is currently under development. This will set out the **Local Area plans** up to 2027. Following a range of partnership consultation events, it has been agreed that the key areas of focus for the Council's activity will be:

- Strengthening inclusion in settings
- Developing excellent provision and services to ensure the needs of children and young people are met within their communities
- Empowering families through collaborative support
- Achieving excellence in SEND: Quality, Workforce and Performance

The plan will address the areas for improvement that have been identified in the revised **SEND Local Area SEF**. Both the Activity Plan and the Local Area SEF will be published early in 2025. Implementation of the Activity Plan will continue to be overseen the SEND Inclusion Board.

Goal 13: 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.

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 the feasibility of primary school engagement earlier than anticipated.



A **Strategy Board** has provided strategic oversight and guidance on the development and implementation of the Opportunity Centres, aligning this priority with **Camden's Youth Mission**. Two school-based Opportunity Centres have been successfully launched at **Acland Burghley School (ABS)** and **La Sainte Union School (LSU)**. These centres have provided a range of activities, including after-school study sessions, weekend study facilities, and holiday programmes. The focus has been on supporting Key Stage 4 students with their studies, offering homework space, IT facilities, and revision classes across various GCSE subjects. Disadvantaged students, including those eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have been well-represented, indicating that the centres are reaching those who need them most. Similarly, the centres have seen consistent attendance in their after-school and holiday programmes, with a particular focus on Year 11 students needing additional support in core subjects. The students report that they like the after-school centres because they provide good access to computers, books and other resources that enable them to carry out their homework and revision. They also enjoy the relaxed, social aspect of the centres and the opportunity to try out activities such as trampolining, cooking, textile crafts, painting and robotics.

Looking ahead, there are plans to expand the network of Opportunity Centres, with work underway to open two new centres: the **Euston Skills Centre** and the **AI Campus**. These centres will focus on vocational and digital learning, respectively, and are set to open in early 2025. This expansion is part of a broader '**test and learn**' approach, aimed at refining the model and ensuring it meets the needs of all students, particularly the 'forgotten third' and disadvantaged pupils. Pupil focus groups from **Camden Youth Council** and pupils from **Maria Fidelis** and **Regent High School** helped to explore the feasibility of the centres, providing key insights into the needs and barriers that could prevent young people from accessing digital education, skills training, and vocational opportunities in Camden. These included safety concerns, lack of parental support, and the need for relaxation and flexible timing.

Challenges remain, and we need to ensure that the target group of young people continues to benefit from these centres. We need to enhance careers provision and to further strengthen links with local businesses; and we need to address some of the logistical issues identified by students, such as the reluctance of some to stay late during darker months. We also need to explore when and how to involve primary schools and their pupils in opportunity centres.



Goal 14: A Camden accountability framework which captures the real story of the school

Our strategy determined a need to **strengthen professional accountability within and across schools**, beyond the compliance culture of Ofsted and league tables. Parents articulated their needs for something which tells the *real* story of a school and captures the voices of children, parents and employees. We have therefore been developing and trialling a **Camden School Report**.

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.

When we were developing ***Building Back Stronger***, parents and governors told us they wanted much fuller information about local schools. Some of this related to parents choosing schools for their children. For example, some parents wanted to know whether a particular school was strong in Drama, in Music or in PE, others wanted to know more detail about the approach to well-being or to discipline. More generally, parents and governors wanted the *real* story of a school, including more about the breadth of the education children experience. They also wanted something that conveyed the voices of children and parents from that school. Important though they are, test and examinations results, and an Ofsted report every few years, do not give the full picture.

Over the last year, a developer group of 15 school leaders has been developing a different model of accountability – the **Camden School Report** – which gives a rounded and fuller picture for each school. Parents have been involved at key stages in the development of the report, and parental views have been very important in influencing the design. The result is a very easily accessible web-based programme which can be read easily on a mobile phone as well as on other devices. Parents have been universally positive about the reports.

The report is short but features the key things parents said they wanted to know. The home page gives an immediate introduction to each school – not just facts but a real 'feel' of the school. Parents then click on each of the provided links to access further information.

For consistency across schools and clarity for parents, all reports have the same sections:

- School community and context.
- Pupil support and well-being.



- SEND and inclusion.
- Pupils' achievements.
- Curriculum and teaching and learning.

It has been fascinating to see how readily the differences between schools can be seen.

To ensure consistency as the reports are rolled out, Camden Learning will check and confirm that the information in the report is correct at the date of publication. The reports will be produced annually and will be updated to include any changes within the school, including national data about the school's performance, such as annual tests and examinations or the most recent Ofsted report.

The reports will have considerable value in supporting parents as they think about school choices. For admissions, parents will be able to go online, put in their address and find the report for any school they want to know more about. The reports will help parents decide, *Is this school right for my child?*

We began trialling the reports across all Camden schools at the end of 2024 and we will make further changes stemming from the trials – in response to parents' views, for example – with a view to finalising the format of the Camden school report early in 2025.



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 lived in work, training or education.

Goal 15: 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. These all underline **the importance of relationships and developing the skills of collaboration.**

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.

Key areas for work this year have included: an initiative to support the adoption of the **UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools** framework; increased provision of **opportunities for young people and teachers to engage with sustainability and green skills**; and the development of authentic approaches to **youth voice and participation.**

Our work to encourage adoption of the **Rights Respecting Schools** framework was described earlier, as a strand in our commitment to the goal of **Ambitious, Inclusive Schools**. This has been well-received in participating schools, and there is clear evidence of its positive impact on the understanding of rights and responsibilities on the children and young people involved. We expect more schools to participate in the programme in the coming year.

Young people engaged with social action through a range of **projects related to sustainability and green skills**, including a **Green Dragon's Den** where pupils from 12 primary schools took part in climate and environmental workshops and pitched ideas to panellists from Camden Youth Council, industry experts and innovative climate start-ups. Each school was awarded



funding of £500 for social action projects ranging from a uniform swap to creating wormery for wood waste.

Students from four secondary schools took part in **My Future**, a climate justice drama club with STEAM partner the Donmar Warehouse (a West End theatre). They participated in 112 hours of workshops and rehearsals to create a performance for the Donmar stage that aimed to provoke change in relation to the climate crisis, with topics such as the sustainability of school uniforms.

Sustainability and green skills have been embedded in all relevant **STEAM Ambassador career talks**, reaching 2000 students over the year with career talks on green careers within the built environment (such as sustainable architecture and engineering), including Year 6 career talks, sixth form apprenticeship talks and a school-wide careers day.

STEAM teacher events with a sustainability focus have included a professional development event for the D&T teacher network at architecture firm Piercy & Co, and a partnership secured with the GlaxoSmithKline Urban Garden for opportunities in 2024-25 including a teacher event and regular workshops for students which will support students to learn about innovation in sustainable food production.

A range of **youth voice consultations** and pilot **student leadership projects** were undertaken during the year. These included: a workshop on authentic youth participation with **Fitzrovia Youth in Action**; a **STEAM Board Youth Voice Working Group** led by the **Roundhouse**; consultations with groups of school students to shape the new Opportunity Centres; and a **Youth Council Careers Fair**. A new model of student-led assemblies to promote STEAM Work Experience Week was introduced, which saw significant increases in student applications for work experience.

In the coming year, we intend to explore a wider range of social action and volunteering opportunities, with a view to reaching larger numbers.

Goal 16: 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.

A group of schools, steered by **Post-16 Partnership Board** – formed last year and comprising all headteachers of the borough's secondary schools – worked together to set up a borough-wide **T Level curriculum** to improve post 16 technical and vocational education in Camden.

After extensive planning and consultation with employers in the borough, initial delivery of the Camden T Level Curriculum began in September 2024, with three of our schools' offering courses in **Business and Administration** (Haverstock School), **Media, Broadcast and Production** (Acland Burghley School), and **Laboratory Science** (Maria Fidelis Catholic School).

Two more schools have this year started planning to provide, from September 2025, T Levels in **Digital Production, Design and Development** (La Sainte Union School), **Education and Early Years** (Parliament Hill School) and **Marketing** ((Parliament Hill School).

This curriculum initiative is supported by the **Camden Learning School and Employer Partnership Manager**, who helps schools arrange and manage their industry placements. Support, specific to Camden, has also been secured from the **Education and Training Foundation (ETF)**, the government's official T Level training provider.

In the Autumn term 2024, the participating secondary schools, Camden Learning and the ETF established the **Camden T Level Network**, which provides collaborative support for all Camden schools that currently deliver T Levels and those who intend to do so over the next few years.

To ensure that our students know about the wide range of courses and qualifications available to them at providers across the borough, including T Levels, we launched the first **Camden Post-16 Prospectus** in October 2024, for those starting post-16 education or training in September 2025. The prospectus provides comprehensive information on post-16 education options, including apprenticeships, legal requirements, qualifications and how students can finance their studies. For the first time, the prospectus will also allow schools to view, in one place, borough-wide educational and training opportunities, and to help identify potential areas for rationalisation once the government's review of post-16 qualifications resumes.



Efforts to support Camden students in applying to elite universities through our **Flying High** initiative began with schools sharing their existing practices, including their links with top universities and student interview training for teachers. Activities included one school opening its doors to all Camden students for its Oxbridge information evenings and masterclasses. A significant development last year was the participation of 100 sixth form students, funded by the council, in the **Future Leaders** programme. Among other things, they visited Oxford University to sample student life and, through the year, met successful businesspeople and public servants to hear their stories and gain knowledge and confidence in applying for the best universities. Feedback on the programme showed that: 96% of the students felt more prepared to take up positions of power in Camden in the future; 98% felt their educational aspirations had been significantly raised; 91% felt more empowered to advocate for equality and diversity in Camden; and 78% are now more likely to apply to a high-status university / apprenticeship. Funding was agreed for a further 100 places in the academic year 2024-25), all of which have been filled by students across the borough.

Our students are likely to make better choices in Year 11 about their futures if they have had effective support in planning beforehand. To help address this, exploratory work was carried out in the academic year 2023-24 on the development and piloting of a **Life Futures Plan**. Students from Hampstead School, Haverstock School, Talacre Community Centre and Westminster Kingsway College were involved in developing the content and the process. Following this, pilots were undertaken with Year 8 students at Hampstead School and Year 10 students at Haverstock School in the summer term 2024. The outcomes of the pilots are being evaluated and recommendations to the Post-16 Partnership Board being developed for spring term 2025.

Goal 17: 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 need to do far more to support them 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 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.

Opportunities for young people to experience the world of work have continued to grow this year, especially through Camden STEAM. In total, 6496 students from 26 primary and secondary schools participated in at least one STEAM employer activity over the course of the year, delivered by 85 STEAM Ambassadors.

Over 350 Year 12 students took part in the **STEAM Work Experience Week** – up from 250 the previous year. The STEAM team supported 27 leading local employers including Google, the British Library, AutogenAI and Universal Music to design high-quality placements on a range of real-world projects, from writing an AI-driven bid and proposal for a business event, to designing, building and launching an app based on user research.

The team worked closely with employers and schools to recruit students, with a particular focus young people from underrepresented backgrounds. We made sure that young people were well-prepared for their placements and able to reflect effectively on their learning back in school. For more than half the young people, it was their first work experience placement. Students worked in teams to solve authentic business challenges over the week, culminating in end-of-week presentations of learning assessed by the employer. At Google – a long-standing partner who host over 100 local students each year – they had the incredible opportunity to collaborate with Google employees such as architects and mentors on the design of the company's new building; to learn about the gamut of roles within global tech; to be mentored throughout the week; and to present their team pitches to senior leaders.

The evaluation demonstrated that students were developing some of the key skills of collaboration and communication essential for the world of work. 83% of participants said they felt that they had gained skills that they would not have learned at school, such as collaborative working, networking, public speaking and leadership. 72% of participants said their placement helped them learn about the skills required by employers, and about the various career routes into the business concerned.

Employers from other sectors, such as healthcare were brought on board in 2024: AstraZeneca and UCL Biomedical Sciences, for example. Additional guidance has been developed to improve the support for employers in designing inclusive placements. Placements have been secured for the inaugural T level cohort across 15 employers. These include STEAM partners such as the Roundhouse, Francis Crick Institute, Zappi and Bauer Media – with highlights including a student visit to the ITV Studios. With secure foundations for T levels now in place, we need to strengthen our focus on apprenticeships in 2025.



Goal 18: 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 the Gatsby Benchmarks have led to an improvement in careers guidance programmes in the secondary sector, schools still say that they lack current specialist knowledge and understanding, for example, about apprenticeships. A range of interesting and valuable activities have been undertaken this past year that support students in making job choices, but we know we need to develop a stronger, more coherent approach to careers education in 2025.

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 attention has been given in 2024 to developing greater awareness in primary schools of the world of work and to supporting students to benefit from Camden's thriving tech sector, where there have been potentially significant developments through the launch of the **AI Campus**.

The **STEAM team** collaborates with Google and Camden primary schools to arrange workplace visits to the Google HQ for over 400 Year 5 children annually. This helps to demystify the company's complex operations and huge array of jobs, and teachers provide excellent feedback on the impact of these visits. A similar programme with GlaxoSmithKline is being developed. We have worked to engage with a greater number of primary schools this year, through career talks and visits for example. These have included electrical engineers joining lessons to demonstrate how subject knowledge and understanding is applied in industry, and structural engineers sharing their insights into the primary Design and Technology curriculum. Planning is currently underway for a significant primary careers event in 2025– the **Camden Primary Careers Fair**.

A range of mentoring programmes continue to play a key role in supporting and encouraging the ambition of our young people. As noted earlier, for instance, the **Future Leaders** programme has raised the aspirations and confidence of at least 100 of our young people to reach for more ambitious goals, while each student taking part in the **AI Connect programme** has been matched with a trained mentor from Google and other leading companies. The **Opportunity Centre programme** will give a wider range of opportunities for students to connect with role models in the year ahead.



A survey of Career Leaders has been undertaken and this will inform action planning in the year ahead, so that we can better share knowledge about good practice across the secondary sector and what constitutes good quality careers education, including information, advice and guidance.

Goal 19: 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.

Many Camden schools are actively involved in driving forward the agenda to address. Sign-up to the **Camden School Climate Charter** – launched at the end of 2021 – is one reflection of this, and 63 schools are current signatories – a 5% increase on the previous year.

[The Year of Clean Air for Camden Schools project](#) – a Defra-funded project in partnership with schools, businesses and third-sector organisations – was also developed during the year, for launch in the 2024-25 academic year. This has further promoted interest in and take-up of Climate Charter. Schools were able to register their interest and level of commitment through a **Have Your Say** section on the website. By the end of the school year 2023-24, the site had received 368 visitors, with nine respondents, 14 contributions and 10 news subscribers. This has further promoted interest in sign-up of the Climate Charter.

While we are looking to increase further increase commitment and sign-up to the Charter, there are many other ways in which schools are educating students about the climate crisis in creative and innovative ways.

Through the STEAM Hub, working in partnership with **Think & Do**, students from 12 schools took part in a **Green Dragon's Den** event, in which they pitched project ideas to Camden businesses. Each receiving funding of £500 to support tree planting, recycling and food waste projects across Camden's primary schools.



In 2023/24 Camden collaborated with **Power Up North London** to fund the installation of over 400 Solar panels in two Camden Schools (Regent High and Parliament Hill). These are expected to save the schools approximately 30.5 tonnes of CO₂e per year; and a digital display monitor for the installation provides information about the energy generated from the panels, helping to engage students and staff in developing thinking about renewable energy and the climate crisis.

As part of the **Future Neighbourhoods Programme**, we began working in partnership with the **Arup Group** to support the development of Climate Resilience Plans for four Camden schools. These will include physical, operational, and behavioural measures that will help the schools to adapt and build resilience to a changing climate. We expect this initiative to be completed by the end of 2025.

Building Back
Stronger



camden.gov.uk
camdenlearning.org.uk