



**Support us to
rethink education
for a better future**



Coming Back
Stronger





2020 will go down as the year that everything changed

The value and importance of education has shot into the headlines. 'Exams', 'school meals', and 'remote learning' are all now front-page issues.

The vital role of schools at the heart of their communities has been brought into sharp relief by the wide-reaching impact of school closures. As the pandemic has washed through the population like a tsunami, it has revealed great divides in our society. Food poverty, digital inequality, access to adequate housing, outdoor space, the impact of the virus on disadvantaged communities, and the prospect of mass youth unemployment and financial insecurity are all being acutely felt in our schools.

In Camden we believe passionately that education is the path to a better future.

Waiting for solutions to the great educational challenges that now lie before us is a luxury that our children and young people, especially those who experience the greatest disadvantage, cannot afford.

We want to make education better for everybody.

We're starting from strong foundations. Every school in Camden is now rated good or outstanding. In 2019, nearly three-quarters of children began school with a good level of development (compared to just over half in 2009); almost three-quarters of pupils left primary school with the skills they would need for their next stage in learning; and more young people are achieving well in their GCSEs and A-levels. And yet, we also know we have a lot further to go.

In Camden, the chances of leaving school without a purposeful destination – with no education, no training and no job – remains higher for young people from a disadvantaged background compared with their peers.

Similarly, although the number of young people being excluded from Camden's mainstream secondary schools has reduced overall, young people from some of our most disadvantaged communities and young people with special educational needs are much more likely to be excluded from school than other young people in Camden. In parallel we need to continue to focus on emotional wellbeing. It is a concern that inpatient admissions for mental health conditions in Camden are higher than the comparable figure for England as a whole. These problems are not unique to Camden, but we may have a unique opportunity to do something about them.

Schools are facing an uncertain future in which both the direction of government policy and the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis are unclear.

Schools are also facing significant financial challenges with too few primary-aged children to fill our schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has turned lives and systems upside down but it also provides us with a moment to reflect on what we do now, and what we would like to be different in the future.

We judge that the time is now right to ask ourselves some big questions. Camden's education strategy review will ask:

- How can we root our schools in the hearts of their communities?
- How can we collaborate to tackle inequalities, build capacity and innovate?
- How can we harness the power of technology for connecting and learning?
- How can we prepare children better for life and learning?
- How can we attract, grow and retain great professionals and leaders?
- How can we develop an excellent, equitable and just education system?

If ever there was a moment to ask ourselves what education is for, and how we can equip our young people to be happy, successful, engaged and inquiring citizens of the future, then surely it is now

How can you get involved?

A Strategic Board, with members from both within and outside Camden, has been set up to steer the development of the strategy.

Over the next few months, the Board wants to engage as many people as possible in this process. The strategy will be a cornerstone of our commitment to make Camden a fantastic place for families to live and to bring up children. Of course, we have to work within the parameters of what is possible, but we are determined to 'think the unthinkable'. This means gathering the best ideas and the most innovative practice from within Camden, from across the country and from around the world.



This is where you come in.

The best answers will come from the widest possible range of ideas. We want to invite everyone with an interest in education in Camden to contribute their ideas, energy and inspiration to this process. There will be plenty of ways to get involved:

- We have set up a website where you can find out about our latest thinking and contribute your own ideas. Every contribution to the website will be fed into the process.

Visit our website here 

- We will be setting up discussions and expert speaker sessions on specific themes and topics which will be a chance to debate ideas.
- We will be organising a virtual conference for governors.
- We will engage young people in discussion about their experiences of education in Camden and ways in which it could be improved.
- We have set up a stakeholder reference group made up of head teachers and governors from Camden and directors of education from the two dioceses.
- We will be engaging young people, parents and teachers to gather views and feedback.

We are also open to your ideas about how all those with an interest in education in Camden might be able to participate in and learn from this journey.

Please email:

comingbackstronger@camden.gov.uk

We look forward to hearing from you and working with you over the coming weeks and months