

HILLINGDON EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-29

Cabinet Member & Portfolio	Cllr Susan O Brien, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education
Responsible Officers	Abi Preston & Julie Kelly – Children’s Services
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Papers with report	Education Strategy 2024-2029

HEADLINES

Summary	<p>This report seeks Cabinet’s approval of the Hillingdon Education Strategy 2024-29, following consultation and engagement with stakeholders.</p> <p>The proposed Education Strategy sets out the main priorities that should be a key focus of the Council education teams, schools, academies, Early Years and Further Education providers over the next five years to support them in their work of raising education standards and performance outcomes at key stages of a young person’s education.</p>
Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026	<p>This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: Have opportunities to earn an income that supports their families</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households</p> <p>And if there are any other sub-strategies or policies, e.g. Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Housing Policy add these here.</p>
Financial Cost	NIL cost
Select Committee	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Ward(s)	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet approve the Education Strategy 2024-29.

Reasons for recommendation

1. The proposed Education Strategy sets out priorities which many schools and settings have already identified as priorities, such as the attendance of young people at school. The Strategy provides an area wide focus to these challenges and the opportunities this brings for schools to work together and learn from each other.
2. Hillingdon's vision is that all young people are prepared for their adult life while they are educated at school or other settings. It is hoped children enter adulthood able to make active choices about the paths they take, because they understand what is available to them across society and they have the qualifications that act as a common currency to embark on these paths.
3. The priorities detailed in the strategy have been identified through data analysis, feedback from schools and from listening to young people to understand what is important to them:

Priority 1:

Every Hillingdon child and young person benefits from high quality, supportive and inclusive learning in a good school or setting.

Priority 2:

Preparation for Adulthood: Supporting all our children and young people to reach their potential, understand their options, promoting independence and be ready for their future.

Priority 3:

Addressing the issues of the decade: Schools, settings and key partners collaborate to address the key issues that put some children & young people at risk of educational underachievement.

Currently these are:

- Closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged children and young people
- Closing the achievement gap for White British & Black Caribbean heritage students and other disadvantaged cohorts
- Improving outcomes at Key Stage 5
- Improving inclusion by improving attendance
- Addressing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)
- Reducing suspensions and exclusions

The full Strategy is attached as an Appendix.

Select Committee comments

The draft Strategy was discussed at the Children, Families & Education Select Committee meeting on 13th November 2024, and the following comments were agreed following the meeting:

“The Draft Education Strategy demonstrates the Council’s strong commitment to continuous improvement within education and employment opportunities for our children and young people. Through collaborative working and shared practices, the strategy sets out ambitious targets that

focus on providing high quality, supportive and inclusive learning, the preparation for adulthood and addresses key issues which put some young people at risk of educational underachievement. The Committee endorses this Draft Education Strategy.”

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The process for the Education Strategy started in 2022, when performance data was first published again after the Covid-19 pandemic. The data was published with a caution about what it could tell us, after a turbulent two years since the onset of the pandemic. This data revealed themes that were explored pre-pandemic and again in 2022-23. The themes showed us which cohorts of young people had bounced back from the pandemic and which had not done as well.
2. In addition to this, we have been consulting with school headteachers about their own school improvement needs, including the needs of their staff for their own ongoing professional development. Overwhelmingly, we have been told they would like more school-to-school development opportunities and more sharing with their peers from other schools. This has informed Priority One. We believe that with over 100 schools in Hillingdon, there already exists enough expertise and outstanding practice to support other schools and address the area wide priorities. This has been an aspect that was adversely impacted by the pandemic and, as such, we need to work hard on bringing it back.
3. The key area wide themes we have extrapolated in Hillingdon are that our young people who are identified as non-disadvantaged are doing very well. However, disadvantaged students are performing much lower than their non-disadvantaged peers. The disadvantaged groups we are focussing on are those supported by Pupil Premium funding, due to having Free School Meals, being students with Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged white British and black Caribbean heritage students. The performance gap for these students existed pre-pandemic and continues to exist today. This has informed Priority Three.
4. The ‘disadvantaged gap’ is a national challenge as well as one seen in Hillingdon, so it is important that we continue working with our schools and settings to do everything possible to address this. Just under 25% of our student cohort are classed as disadvantaged. The gap starts in Early Years education and continues to widen through primary school and secondary. By the time a disadvantaged student is entering Year 11, their GCSE exam year, they are statistically 12 months behind their non-disadvantaged peers (see table inside Education Strategy appendices). The overwhelming majority of our young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) come from disadvantaged groups. For that reason, it has been identified as an area that we must look at together as area priority to see what more we can do to close this gap.
5. Priority Three also includes other connected themes which both hard and soft data have revealed to us: attendance to school has become a barrier for a large group of young people since the onset of the pandemic. Attendance statistics in the Strategy document show a significant number of young people are absent for at least ten percent of their school week and this has become a barrier to their achievement. As an area, we must

work together to understand its causes and work to overcome it.

6. One strand of non-attendance is Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). All schools have cases of students who cite extreme anxiety and other health concerns as the reason they can't attend school. This is supported by our mental health providers who are working with these young people. Again, we need to understand how we work together to tackle this so that schools are supported and young people can continue their education.
7. In 2022-23, exclusions and suspensions were the highest in Hillingdon for many years. We know that exclusion from school puts a young person's life chances at risk and, as part of Priority Three, we want to work with schools to help reduce exclusions and suspensions.
8. Finally in Priority Three, we have included the performance of our young people at Key Stage Five, when they take Advanced Level courses and other similar qualifications. Compared to other London boroughs, our Key Stage data has not been strong. A number of our schools have this as a priority area already. By including it in our Strategy, we believe it will provide an opportunity for schools and further education providers to collaborate and make improvement together.
9. The focus on disadvantage, including for white British, black Caribbean heritage students and the need to review Key Stage Five were identified by the Education Select Committee in March 2024 as areas for development.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report, any changes to service delivery as a result of the updated strategy will be brought back for consideration, with the financial implications of such changes to be considered in these later updates.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

Children, young people and their families live healthy, active and independent lives. Improved educational outcomes will enable them to find better employment as adults, provide them with more active choices in their careers and contribute to the local economy.

Consultation & Engagement carried out (or required)

1. We have been consulting with schools for more than a year, sharing the area wide data and asking them to identify our area wide priorities. We have shared at headteacher termly events, with the School Strategic Partnership Board and other key events. We have been consulting with young people and their families through a variety of fora, including SEND forum.
2. Young people have been asked what else they want from their education that would help prepare them for their adult life. Overwhelmingly, they have asked for education about finance and financial literacy, employability skills, taxes, credit, politics and the political system. For this reason, Priority Two focuses on a Universal Preparation for Adulthood,

where all school and settings understand the role they can play in ensuring young people are ready for their adult lives. This starts in Early Years and continues into lifelong learning. It also covers healthy lives, diets, exercise, developing mental resilience, all areas schools are already working on. In many other parts of the country, local areas have developed Preparation for Adulthood Strategies to create a framework for this and help schools to address this. We believe this will help schools recognise what they already do well and identify areas where young people say they want more education.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting the recommendation to approve the new Education Strategy for the period 2024 to 2029. Furthermore, it is noted that the financial implications of the strategy will be reviewed as and when service updates are presented that deliver against the strategy set out in this report.

Legal

There are no legal impediments to the recommendation within the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL