

Westminster Community Schools

Together for Stronger Schools and Communities



FAIRER
WESTMINSTER



WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
PARTNERSHIP



City of Westminster

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LETTER FROM SARAH NEWMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

What a privilege it has been to be part of the efforts of our community schools and nurseries to put in place arrangements which will help all our children in Westminster thrive. This is a powerful vision for a long-term partnership of schools created by leaders who know their children and families, understand the pressures they face, the hard choices they have to make on a daily basis but who are like me, optimistic about the future.

The challenges are well rehearsed with falling rolls, an enduring cost of living crisis and arise in young people with special educational needs who need additional support. I see schools already working at pace to tackle these challenges and make things better while recognising that so much more can be achieved through greater collaboration and partnership. And there is a lot to draw on in Westminster, a richness of diversity, a cultural landscape that is second to none and big and small businesses offering opportunities of mutual support. A body of schools with shared values and aspirations will I'm certain be more able to unlock this potential.

This vision is ambitious for Westminster's children, it sees life and opportunity beyond the City where young people can thrive on a global stage. It speaks to the diversity in our schools, in language, culture, food and perspective.



Sarah Newman, Executive Director of Children's Services for the Bi-Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster City Council

It is also ambitious about high quality teaching and will inform plans to attract and retain fantastic teachers, to share specialist knowledge between schools, to broaden and create a more attractive offer of collaborative opportunities to businesses, cultural and public sector bodies for shared benefit.

I'm excited that the Council will be part of this venture because after all we share a common goal that our children and young people as they grow can take advantage of all the fantastic opportunities Westminster and the world have to offer.

LETTER FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Westminster Community Schools serve socially and culturally diverse local communities. Our schools are inclusive places, in which pupils are treated as individuals and learn to become confident, creative and strong members of their community.

The Westminster Community Schools Partnership brings together services who reach our community pre-birth and continue that wider support until the age of 25 within our two family hubs. We are reflective of our early-years community with our four main-tained nursery schools and nursery provisions within our schools. Alongside these our primary schools, alternative resource provisions and special schools, make for an important mix and creates an exciting opportunity for partnership.

Over recent years, we have seen challenges post pandemic, the cost-of-living impact and increasing numbers of children entering our education system with special educational needs. This coupled with reduction of services, financial constraints and a transient workforce has meant that effective collaboration has naturally developed and continues to be an important aspect of our work.

The present document reflects our shared vision for world-class education in Westminster. It is the result of a year-round process of guided discussions between the headteachers of all 14 schools, with collaboration from its governing bodies and the Local Authority, and represents a north for our schools collectively.

Through the Westminster Community Schools Partnership, our mission will be to provide resilience in the ever-changing landscape of education whilst at the same time protecting the identities and individual characters of each school and setting. We will do this first and foremost by engaging our school communities directly to complement our vision with their aspirations for a world-class education. But also, through increasing links with our neighbours, professional colleagues from social care and health and through working collaboratively with businesses and charities to remove the barriers that impact negatively upon pupils' achievement.

We are committed alongside our Local Authority colleagues to enacting change for the better and would like to thank Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consulting firm part of Bloomberg Philanthropies, for engaging and supporting us in this important conversation.



WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
PARTNERSHIP

WESTMINSTER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Our educational network comprises 4 nurseries, 7 primary community schools, 2 community special schools and one primary academy, serving almost three thousand children ages 1 to 12 and their families. Many of the schools in the network are members of one of these Federations: Queen's Park Early Years Federation (QPF), North Westminster Federation (NWF), Robinsfield George Eliot Federation (RGEF) the Federation of Westminster Special Schools & Bi-Borough Inclusion Service (FWSS).



- 1 Dorothy Gardner Nursery School (QPF)
- 2 Mary Paterson Nursery School (QPF)
- 3 Portman Early Childhood Centre
- 4 Tachbrook Nursery School
- 5 Barrow Hill Junior School
- 6 Edward Wilson Primary School
- 7 Essendine Primary School (NWF)
- 8 Gateway Academy
- 9 George Eliot Primary School (RGEF)
- 10 Hallfield Primary School (NWF)
- 11 Queen's Park Primary School (QPF)
- 12 Robinsfield Infant School (RGEF)
- 13 College Park School (FWSS)
- 14 Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School (FWSS)

CHALLENGES ARE OUR FUEL TO INNOVATE

UK schools have been facing significant challenges which are slowly transforming the educational environment and making the entire school community - students, leaders, teachers, parents - go back to the drawing board and rethink the best strategies to give our children the necessary skills to thrive in a global future.

This movement has brought together all community primary schools in Westminster to share and learn from each other, and design a self-sustaining model of continuing school improvement.

By coming together to discuss our individual challenges, we discovered not only the obstacles that we have in common, but also what connects us: ***The Golden Thread.***

Collectively, we acknowledged that we must think creatively about the barriers to achieve our common goal of giving all Westminster community school children a world-class education, and refuse to let the existing challenges prevent them from a positive and fulfilled future.

In the same way that we teach our pupils to be resilient, we too must not fear our challenges, but carefully study them, learn from others who may have faced them before us, decide and act on a strategy to mitigate them and evaluate the process so we can course correct when necessary.

There is only one destination for us - giving all Westminster children a chance to thrive and access high quality education and support.



Decreasing school rolls, cost of living crisis, post-Covid delays, changing demographics, these are just some of the obstacles schools have been facing. But these are the challenges of the moment, and many others will come in the future.

It is important that we build a cohesive system working together to solve problems. This collaborative endeavour will make our schools and its leadership stronger over time and more prepared to face and overcome future challenges.

We encourage our children to work together, parents to work together, communities to work together. We too, as Westminster Community Schools, while keeping our autonomy and individuality, will work together to foster schools and communities that continue to strive for excellence.

Decreases in Roll

Shifts in population dynamics have dramatic effects on schools. Lower birth rates in the UK, changes in migration policies and economic changes that resulted in increased cost-of-living pressures have transformed recent projections for schools' rolls. The expectation is that Westminster will continue to have fewer children applying for schools in the next 10 years.

This represents a challenge for all schools, but especially for state-funded schools because of the per-pupil funding structure.

Since 2019, there has been a decrease of more than 16% in the number of pupils enrolled in our community schools, with some schools being able to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2023, but others, following the rapid reduction in pupil numbers, have had to reduce entire forms of entry in order to remain viable.

There are 205,087 people who live in Westminster, and compared to other areas in London, the numbers of children and young people living in the borough are low. The percentage of those aged 0-18 is 21%, compared to 25% in London as a whole.

Schools will need to be smart about their finances and think creatively about new partnerships to ensure the children who are enrolled are still getting the best out of their schools. The Council too has a key role to play with those children who may not be enrolled in school or where there are attendance issues. How to attract and keep children in schools is a key priority of Westminster.

To manage resources efficiently, schools will learn from each other. Schools that have overcome financial challenges in the past will share knowledge with those who are struggling now. The Local Authority will also provide expert support to schools needing financial advice.

We believe that these challenges bring with them valuable lessons for school leaders which can outlast the current situation and make all schools run more efficiently in the future.

Our capacity as a group of schools to overcome this challenge is part of what makes Westminster Community Schools an ***Innovative Brand with Reputational Excellence.***

Cost-of-Living Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated conditions in our communities. Economic and social inequality is steeper than ever, with seven wards in the borough among the least deprived nationally and eleven in the top 10% of most deprived. And the latter are the wards where our schools are located.

Life expectancy in the North of the Borough and Pimlico is lower than in Knightsbridge & Belgravia, with 25% of children living in poverty, as highlighted by the Fairer Westminster plan.

Bi-Borough School Inclusion Strategy

Westminster Council, along with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, launched the Bi-Borough Inclusion Strategy to highlight amazingly inclusive work that is already taking place in our schools and across the local area to ensure children with persistent absence or who are at risk of exclusion receive support that addresses their vulnerabilities. This strategy acknowledges that there is no 'easy fix' solutions for creating a truly inclusive learning environment however is a journey to be taken in partnership, in which we learn from one another.

33% of the Westminster respondents of the survey conducted for the 2023-26 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) ranked 'I worry that some people may not have enough to eat' as their top concern.

This is directly reflected in our schools, where 43.2% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals.

More than ever, we see an opportunity for collaboration between our schools and Council departments – Health, Family Services, Safety. We are all bound by the goals to the Fairer Westminster plan, and schools want to effectively connect vulnerable families to the services the Council offers.

The moment to make community schools the centre of communities is now. By making our schools a connecting hub for children and families' services we are increasing the chances that these services are directed to those who need them the most.

Community Schools are committed to the **Holistic Development** of every child. To achieve this, we must consider children's physical, academic and emotional development as equally important parts of their growth. Children are also the product of their environment, their friendships, and most importantly, their family structure and experiences.

To serve the whole-child, we must act in coordination with other support services offered by the Council so the whole family can be served. The creation of this document is the first step to further increase our proximity to other Council services.

Together, we are defining our goals and commitments as a group of community schools. With the Local Authority, we are inviting each and every Council department

who wishes to join forces with us to align their existing programmes to ours and to sit down with us and with representatives of our school community to design new ways to make the existing offer more known and accessible and develop solutions for needs that were still not addressed.

Changing Demographics

Westminster has an ethnically rich community, which is represented by the pupils and families in our schools. There are 80 different languages spoken by families in Westminster's community schools, with only 24% of families speaking English as a first language. Out of the 2,919 pupils on roll during 2022/2023, 618 had Arabic as a first language, 278 had Bengali, and 226 spoke Kurdish at home.

Parents and pupils from such diverse backgrounds add so much to our schools. But we know that language differences can become a challenge for parents to have a more active voice in schools and for children to rely on them as support for in-home school assignments. Parents' language and cultural backgrounds sometimes also hinder school leadership from developing a cohesive Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) structure, which means that more outreach and support is required.

The Council has rolled out free school lunches to ensure all children from early years to key stage 3 (up to age 13) had access to this, complementing the number already in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM).

But the richness that this diversity offers to our students far outweighs these barriers.

We must act creatively to catalyze our schools' diversity into opportunities that connects children to a global future.

There are many schools in the UK in which children have no exposure to languages other than English. Our schools are global schools.

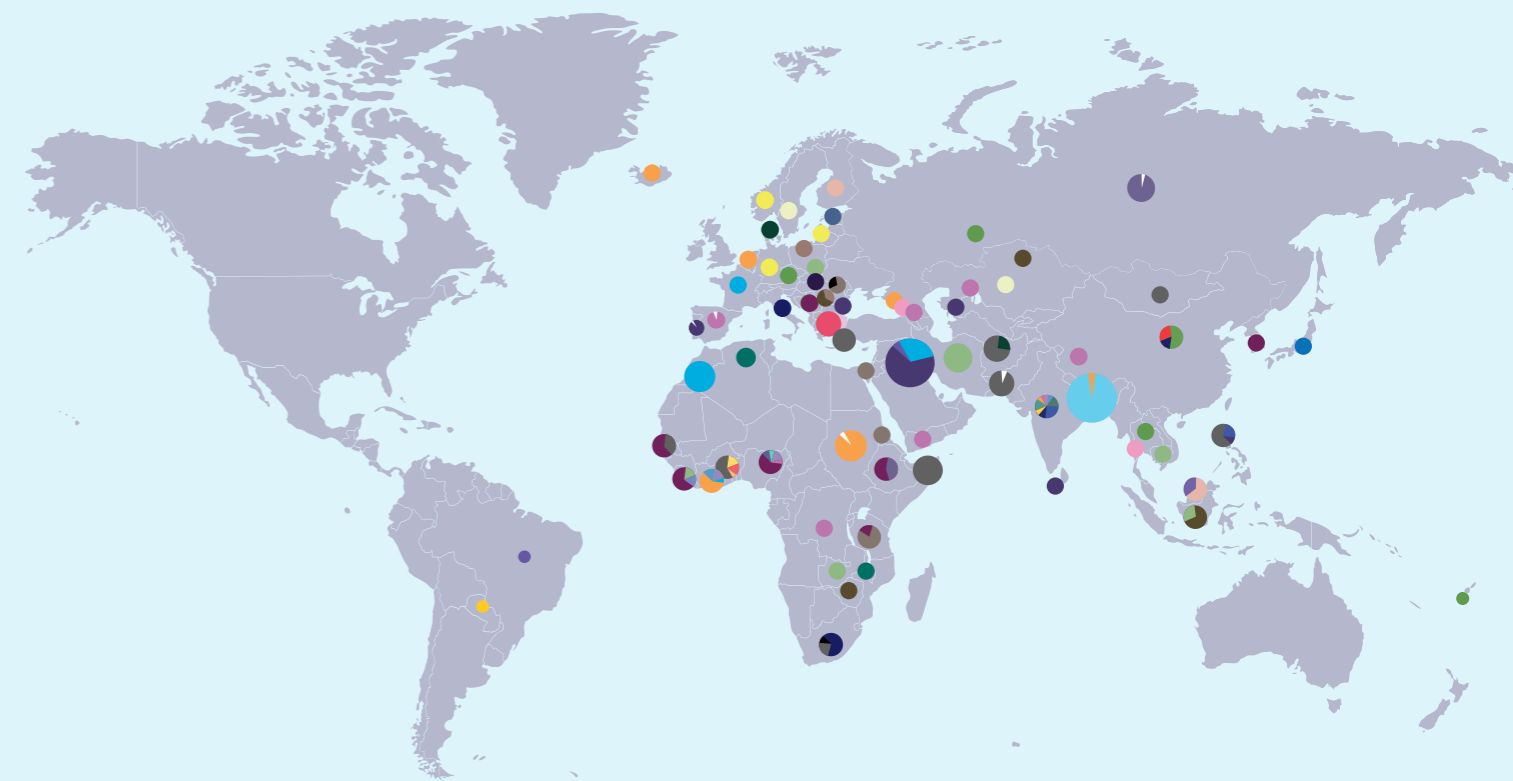
Children learn about equity, respect and inclusion from an early age.

Our Westminster Community Schools are committed to fostering a **Motivational and Inclusive School Culture** and ensure that all pupils are **Prepared for a Global Future**.

We want children to develop as globally competent learners who have an interest in and wish to take action on local and global issues and challenges.

Our schools are one step ahead in promoting engagement with multiple perspectives and various countries and cultures, including home, host and adopted countries.

We want to further engage parents, especially parents that have English as Second Language, to share their diverse background and encourage children to start reflecting on their place in the world from their home here in Westminster.



Countries of origin other than the UK reflecting the languages spoken by Westminister Community School students. The larger the circle, the larger the representation of students speaking the language from this country. Source: Westminster Council.

Special Educational Needs Services

Mental health has been ranked by residents of Westminster as a top priority. The city has estimated that approximately three thousand residents aged 5-19 years suffer with mental health problems. This is a concern not only for children in our schools but also for teachers and school staff.

Nationally there has also been a rise in the numbers of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In our community schools 14.4% of pupils have SEND and 10.7% are eligible for intensive support through Education, Health and Care Plans. Two of our schools are community special schools.

The demand for SEND services increased after the pandemic and continues to do so. Community schools and the Council have embraced children and families in need of this additional support. We will need to continue to work alongside the Council's public health and children's services and local NHS services, thinking creatively to meet growing demand and complexity.

Children in Westminster schools are also facing other types of health challenges. 32% of Westminster Children experience dental decay, 30% of two-year olds have not received an MMR vaccination and 41% of ten to eleven-year-olds are overweight or obese.

Westminster Community Schools have highly capable professionals who are leaders in supporting SEND children and their families.

All of our schools offer an **Inclusive Curriculum**, which provide different learning options and support services to children with special educational needs. In Westminster Community Schools all children have an equal chance to thrive.

To keep up with our reputational excellence as inclusive schools and the best options for children with SEND, we must develop new partnerships to support our school staff.

Investing in a **Highly Skilled, Trained, Motivated and Rewarded Workforce** is the most important ingredient for the success of our schools. Passionate educators want to see their actions propel children into their dreams. A motivated teacher can change a child's life - it can be the spark that ignites a successful future.

We will work amongst each other to transfer knowledge about SEND and create peer learning and support opportunities for teachers to mentor and lift one another.

Finally, we acknowledge the need for more mental health support. We will work with the Local Authority to help connect people to existing services already offered by the Council and by health services - for children, their families, and for teachers and school staff, and design new services, as necessary, to fill any gaps that we may encounter.



THE GOLDEN THREAD

Community schools are state-funded schools with the Local Authority as landlord, responsible for long term capital works. Like other state funded schools, community schools are non-fee paying, but they are unique for also being neither selective nor faith-based and being highly inclusive in the enrollment of students with special educational needs. We each have a distinct history and legacy, and unique communities, but we share the same ethos and values. Our goal is to leverage what sets us apart to achieve the vision that brought us together.



Open to all

Community schools provide a guarantee that each and every child in Westminster has equal opportunities to thrive regardless of origin, ethnicity, faith, or income. Our school community represents Westminster's culturally rich and diverse population.

Serving the whole child and the whole family

Community schools integrate the Council's ecosystem of services for children and families. Our schools can offer support services for families and children on-site and are equipped to detect students in need of early intervention.

Our Shared Values



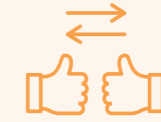
Trust

We foster a school culture in which parents and carers can be confident that schools are doing the best for their children and where school staff can rely on each other to promote a fertile learning environment.



Collaboration

Between parents, within the school, amongst children. We believe that each individual can make valuable contributions and that together we are much stronger.



Respect

Empathy and kindness are at the core of all Westminster Community Schools, they are key for our diverse communities to thrive.



Resilience

We all work to make our children persevere before challenges and to know that if they put their mind and heart into a goal there's nothing they can't achieve.



Curiosity

Westminster Community Schools encourage children to be creative thinkers and forever interested in the world around them.

Stable and Reliable

Community schools are here for families through thick and thin. We charge no enrollment fees and offer consistent high-quality education. Our schools follow the National Curriculum, and our campuses are owned and maintained by the Council.

Passionate and Committed School Staff

Community schools promote and support educators to provide the best for our children. Our teachers are protected by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

By and for the Westminster Community

Community schools are owned and managed by the Council, whose members are democratically elected and represent the views and wishes of all Westminster's community, not of any particular group of interest.

SUMMARY OF OUR VISION

We want all children in Westminster Community Schools to receive a world-class education, which will allow them to:

Have choices
in the future

Contribute to
a better world

Believe that they can

Be resilient

Achieve their
full potential

Be happy and
fulfilled in every level

Together we will work to advance these 7 priority pillars

- 1 Motivational and Inclusive School Culture
- 2 Prepared for a Global Future
- 3 Innovative Brand with Reputational Excellence
- 4 Inclusive Curriculum
- 5 Contextualised to Westminster
- 6 Highly Skilled, Trained, Motivated and Rewarded Workforce
- 7 Holistic Development

1 MOTIVATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

We believe schools must reflect a culture that is inclusive, responsive, and trauma informed.

Community schools are a place where children and families from the most diverse backgrounds meet every day. We want them to feel welcomed in school, to feel valued and heard. We know that when parents like the school their children succeed. We want children and families to be active and proud members of our network of community schools.

Many of our pupils and their families are dealing with poverty, migration and trauma. Our schools should continue to be able to provide them with the necessary support, directly or through partnerships, to overcome challenges and thrive.

Community schools should always be safe and peaceful. They are the stage where parents and children form long-lasting friendships to support them in school and in life.

To ensure this, equity, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of all of our schools. We are committed to these values and believe that they are the foundations of what makes schools motivational to all - children, families and school staff - regardless of their background.

Link professional development opportunities to cultural understanding of diversity

Continuous development from school staff on cultural competency is key to sustain a positive learning environment.

We must continue providing training to teachers, support staff and leaders so they are equipped to act fast and diligently before adversity and to tailor their assistance to culturally diverse audiences.

Westminster Community Schools will share with each other best practices on how to continue to nurture an inclusive and motivational community where every person matters.

We will also continue to work with partners and the Local Authority to bring experts that can train school staff on how to integrate trauma informed training into their school activities.

At *Hallfield Primary School*, for example, as in other Westminster Community Schools, trauma champions receive special training on how to de-escalate conflicts with children and families. Together with school Safeguarding officers, trauma informed teachers can provide timely and efficient support to families who are dealing with stressful situations, such as those living in temporary housing.

In the future, we would also like to see school teachers and staff that are more diverse in ethnicity and gender and can serve as role models to our diverse body of pupils.

Many Westminster Community Schools, such as the *Portman Early Childhood Centre*, which is both a nursery and a Family Hub, have established processes to hire staff from the local community, which more tightly connect culturally to the children being served at their facility.

We propose to work with the Local Authority and high schools to encourage more Westminster graduates to pursue a career in education and offer them local apprenticeship opportunities and jobs in our schools.

Parents as key partners in all of our schools

Children need references. Especially early in life, while they are learning the basic tools for communicating and living in society, children learn by observing and copying behaviour. When in doubt, they do as they see, not necessarily as they are told. Which makes it very important for young children to be surrounded by positive examples and role models.

Bringing parents back to school grounds is essential. In this early age, parents are the main source of guidance and security for children.

If parents feel safe, welcomed and happy in school, so will their children.

Our schools are committed to being welcoming to parents and working in close partnership with them to provide the best to all children.

This process many times requires serving parents directly, with peer support groups (especially for parents of children with SEND), English as a second language courses, or connecting them to other Council services.

Coffee mornings can become powerful opportunities to bring parents closer to schools. **Essendine Primary School** uses these morning events to bring outside community centres and support organisations to share about services available to adults in the community. They are also invested in creating a permanent room in their school dedicated for parents to use computers, and host meetings and courses. We believe that motivated parents can better motivate their children to learn.

During Covid-19, parents were physically isolated from schools. Parents that enrolled their children in Nursery or Reception during the pandemic started their interaction with their children's schools in an unusual setting, in which they could not directly mingle with teachers and headteachers or even visit their children's classroom.

Happily, this is far behind us and our schools have many opportunities for parents to participate in school life on school grounds: coffee with teachers and parents; professional lectures; parents support groups; fundraising events, festivals and fairs. But we want parents to have an even more active role in our schools. We will continue to work with parents' representatives to make sure that all parents feel welcomed and heard. Westminster Community Schools are open to all parents - regardless of their country of origin or level of English. We want to get to know them and we want to hear their opinions and recommendations for our schools.

In our vision of schools, parents share with children and teachers about their life experiences, home languages and cultures, talents (musical, painting, sports, cooking) and help organise clubs and electives, making school life wider and richer.

For example, recently at **Robinsfield Infant School**, parents who were originally from Australia presented about their country to children during Australia day. Or at **Gateway Academy**, where many mothers work as volunteers at the school. They provide classroom assistance to teachers and help accompany children during school field trips. Some mothers would like to achieve proper qualification status and pursue a career in education and this partnership with the schools gives them a first working experience in the area.



We also welcome parents to share professional insights and opinions with school administrators about areas where schools may need assistance or innovation (accounting, legal, design, landscaping, health).

Pride and a sense of belonging that is unique to Westminster Community Schools

We are very proud of our schools. They are unique diverse schools, which offer excellent education and beyond to our pupils and their families. Collectively, Westminster Community Schools want children to feel part of a cohort, where they are linked for life by strong values and shared positive experiences in our schools.

Community schools will open the gates to each other and organise events and opportunities to connect our worlds and share what makes each of our schools unique.

Individually, we will create a calendar of events to build stronger ties between students inside of our schools: international fairs, book fairs, arts fairs. Together, we will promote Westminster Community School events, including sports competitions, music and performing arts events, where students will represent their relative schools.

We want our children to work together to find a common voice that represents and unites their school community.

We also want these events to help forge a strong sense of pride for being part of their schools and a feeling of camaraderie for being a member of the larger network of Westminster Community Schools.

Prioritisation of offer of mental health and wellbeing support by the Council

Finally, Westminster Community Schools will continue to foster a culture of empathy and mutual support. This is particularly important for our schools given that so many of our families live in vulnerable conditions and have experienced some type of trauma.

The Local Authority has invested additional resources in a new programme to effectively connect members of the school community with mental health support services. Schools will have access to cluster based School Navigators who, with school based clinician support, are able to liaise with each school, signpost and facilitate access to specific services available through both the Local Authority and voluntary sector services including Family Hubs, Public Health, Early Help, Social Care, SEND, Educational Psychologists, GPs.

In Westminster, all school staff will hold Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) qualifications, which is included in induction programmes.

We will also continue to encourage the creation of peer support groups and networks in and across schools.

Westminster Children's University

Westminster Children's University is part of a charity that works in partnership with schools to develop extracurricular activities in and outside of school. Activities have shown a positive impact on students' lives, improving attainment, self-confidence and positive identification with schools. This work is led by Queen's Park Primary and is offered by many of the Westminster Community Schools.



2 PREPARED FOR A GLOBAL FUTURE

We believe our students must be prepared for a future that goes beyond borders.

The way of working today is fundamentally altered with skills demanded through technological advances being needed everywhere from the corner store to the global boardroom. The population in Westminster and in the UK is also largely diverse nowadays, with the majority of the families in our schools being originally from foreign countries.

Our children are already living global lives, with access to world-wide information online and/or many times having lived in different countries themselves since an early age.

But living global lives doesn't mean being prepared for a global future.

Children must develop the skills necessary to thrive on a global scale, with adaptability and resilience, empathy and emotional intelligence, and a transferable set of academic tools that will allow them to be successful anywhere.

Build global awareness

Our schools are already as global as they can be, with so many cultures, languages and ethnicities represented.

We must build on this significant advantage and learn directly from our school community. Just by creatively engaging our school community, our schools together can expose our children to cultures, languages, and habits from more than 80 countries in the world.

Together, we must continue to elevate the schools' cultural diversity to build awareness about the wider world and how to play an active and significant role in it.

We invite parents to show-and-tell about their countries of origin, and complement the experience with visits to museums and cultural/community centres. We would also like to learn about celebrations and organise international festivals in schools and among schools.

Online, we can also "visit" state-owned schools like us but in other countries. We would like to develop a friendship alliance with foreign public schools so in the classroom we can share and learn from children in Germany, Brazil, France and other countries. "How are children just like me going to school in Brazil?" We want our children to ask questions and be aware that the world is vast and rich in opportunities. We want to spark their imagination and ignite their curiosity and sense of discovery.

Bolster creative analytical thinking

Complex problem solving, analytical thinking, creativity, systems-analysis. These are some of the skills our children must develop to be successful in the UK and abroad. They can be used in any language and life field, helping children develop methods to address issues in their personal and academic lives, and some day in their professional lives as well.

Having clear problem-solving methods and practice in creative thinking can help children control anxiety when facing challenges. If they have the confidence to analyse problems and play with different angles of possible solutions in school, they will trust themselves to find answers to real life problems too.

Our schools work to develop multi-disciplinary activities for systemic and collaborative problem-solving. They do this in classroom activities but also challenge students through musical and performance arts projects.

But we would also like to partner with local companies and expose children to different professions, the challenges they face, the methods they use for innovating and problem solving - laboratory experiments, factory automation, anti-pollution renovations.

The connection with different industries is particularly important for children with SEND. **College Park and QEII**, for example, work side by side with local organisations who are truly interested in thinking about strategies to integrate youth and adults with SEND into the local workforce. The schools welcome more organisations who would like to develop these opportunities together.

Stay tuned to new technology and use it responsibly

Technology is changing so quickly that no one can say it with certainty exactly how it will change our children's professional lives and their relationships when they become adults.

What we do know is that while we must continue tuned to newly developed technologies such as AI, we must also use digital technology responsibly.



In our schools, we expose children to the possibilities digital technology brings to our lives. We want our children to grow versed in digital technology as users and also as creators. But we want them to use digital technology for the good, and understand the risks online tools can cause to themselves and to others if used irresponsibly.

Cyber-bullying, excessive personal exposure in social media, loss of basic sociability skills, severe mental health conditions, these are some of the topics we will be discussing as a group of schools to continue developing the most appropriate ways of building online-resilience in our children.

We will work together to select the best partners to help us bring curated materials for parents and children on new and developing technology and also age-appropriate advice on how to access it.

For example, we would like to extend invitations to expert speakers from universities, from the parents' community or from Council departments to provide training and lectures for the school staff about new technology and AI.

We would like to partner with local businesses, universities or Council departments to provide extra-curricular coding classes and other STEM laboratories for our children and school staff.

There are many readily available online resources such as STEM experiments for children and open-source AI tools, which our teachers can curate and bring to class.

We are also open to partnering with large local businesses who frequently replace their computers and wish to donate equipment to

our schools. **Essendine Primary and Gateway Academy**, for example, have secured laptop donations from local financial institutions. We would like all parents to feel welcome in our computer labs and for children who have no access to internet connection at home to use school computers after school hours as well.

Finally, while for many of our children online access is and should be limited or even nil given their age - for nursery aged children we strongly advise no screen time - we would like to improve and expand some of our school's online resources so parents can also benefit from them.

So much is done online nowadays, including access to benefits and enrollment in government assistance programs. It is important that parents are digitally included and fully integrated to Westminster's support system.

Develop interpersonal skills

A global future is a connected future -either online or in person. This means living with diversity on a daily-basis, in all aspects of our lives. Diversity of ethnicity, of religion, of race, but also of opinion, of political views, of personal tastes and preferences. We all perceive and interpret the world in our individual way.

In our schools, we teach our children that we must do more than co-exist and respect our differences, we must celebrate them. This large spectrum of colours, sizes and shapes of people and thoughts is what makes us human.

In our schools we foster empathy and cooperation. We also encourage open negotiation and leadership through social awareness.

We want our children to practice standing up for themselves with structured arguments, while continuing open to learn from others. We would like to promote Model UN, for example, so children can learn about diplomacy and role play as leaders discussing ideas that are relevant for them and the world.

We are also known for our work with children with SEND. In our schools, children with SEND and children with no special educational needs work together and represent equally important assets of our school community. Many schools have adopted the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Charter.

We also encourage children from different age groups to collaborate with each other through multi-year group projects.

The creation of volunteer opportunities in the community and implementation of a mentorship program through links with e.g. local secondary schools, approved volunteers, charities and business partners is also a strategy that we would like to advance.

Arts as a Common Language

Hallfield and College Park recently organised an arts activity, which included children with no special educational needs and College Park's pupils, all of them with advanced levels of autism. The interaction was extremely positive for children at both schools, who could learn from each others perspectives and free interactions with paint.

Hallfield teachers report that their children were challenged to think and explore outside their boxes because **College Park** children showed them new and more sensory ways of expressing themselves through arts.



3 INNOVATIVE BRAND WITH REPUTATIONAL EXCELLENCE

We believe our schools must represent an innovative brand with reputational excellence and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Our innovative learning environments should be playful including physical movement, experiential, computational, and with advanced multiliteracies.

Shifts in learning experiences should more closely mirror the future of work: personalised and self-paced; accessible and inclusive; problem-based and collaborative; and lifelong and student-driven.

Community schools should be known for the outstanding learning environment they provide with high academic results (Ofsted Good or above), holistic support to children with all needs – directly connected to all Council services, in a welcoming and inclusive environment, at campuses located in the heart of London.

Key Stage 2 outcomes at **Barrow Hill**, for example, are consistently within the top 20% nationally for reading, writing and maths.

Our diverse community, which represents the connected world we live in, and our students with SEND are assets, challenging us to constantly innovate and build an empathic student body in which every child matters.

We want to build a group of proud parents and alumni, who will forever cherish their time at our schools.

Challenges embraced as opportunities to innovate

More than ever, our schools want to foster a culture of collaborative learning in which problem-solving is a group exercise and diversity of opinions can generate creative solutions. Our Westminster Community Schools Partnership is a reflection of that.

We want to develop many ways to invite the school community to share ideas when problems arise, and feel ownership over challenges but also receive full recognition for the collaborative solutions.

Innovation is at the core of our schools. We want children and staff to think creatively, to challenge ideas. We believe in experimenting small, evaluating, and having the courage to go back to the drawing board if necessary. We want our children to develop a habit of testing, correcting and improving new ideas, with the emotional resilience to try again when things do not go as they had initially planned.

Our schools will work together to think how to promote an entrepreneur culture in which children are encouraged to try, learn, improve and retry.

Active promotion of Westminster Community Schools as leaders in education

We are proud to have amongst us some of the best schools in Westminster and in London. Our schools have passionate teachers, tireless leadership, and are located in prime locations in London.

Some of our community schools excel in the Arts, others are experts in children with SEND, some have a phenomenal outdoor space, and others have strong ties with Council family services.

By working together as a partnership of community schools we will leverage each others experiences and provide opportunities for all children going to community schools in Westminster to experience this wide network of resources.

We also want to export best practices from our schools to other schools in Westminster and beyond our borders. Our goal is to promote peer learning events and establish all Westminster Community Schools as the leaders among schools -world-wide.

We will promote our teachers and other school professionals for the leaders that they are and want them to be recognised amongst the education community for the incredible work that they do and the experience that they carry.

We know that many other boroughs in London, other cities in the UK, and other countries in Europe face similar challenges to those we face. We want to connect with them to share our experiences and learn from them as well.

We will do this, while continuing to promote the individual history, legacy and unique assets of each community school.

It is important that schools participate in large educational convening and conferences, and that our children get a chance to compete in academic competitions, such as Math leagues or spelling contests. These competitions can be existing ones or new ones that we create just for the Westminster Community Schools.

It is important that parents see Westminster Community Schools as the best options for their children, and that this is aligned with the Council's Economic Development strategies to attract and retain Westminster's workforce. We will work with the Council to promote our schools to Westminster employers (NHS, Thames Water, Met Police, Transport for London).

Financial sustainability and diverse funding streams

Community schools differ from other state-funded schools because our funding comes largely from the public sector.

Our schools receive a per-pupil amount, which must be considered for fixed and variable school costs. When enrollment decreases, so does schools' funding, which means making hard choices to maintain the high quality education we provide.

Westminster Community Schools have joined forces to think boldly and creatively about overcoming this and any other future financial challenges.

We will share our experiences and work closely with budget and accounting experts from the Council to design a flexible financial plan for our schools, one that can sustain political and demographics shifts.

There are also plenty of opportunities for partnerships in our schools with public and private organisations who wish to get closer to Westminster communities.

We see a big opportunity for better use of our real estate properties, one that could generate additional revenue for the schools, but also increase accessibility of wrap-around support services.



Given the increase in demand for SEND services, **Hallfield** and **George Eliot**, for example, already lease part of their properties to **College Park. Essendine** also found leasing opportunities in their musical instruments and classroom, which are rented and used by a local charity.

We would also like to develop climate sustainability strategies that will help our schools manage electricity, water and waste more efficiently.

Edward Wilson is leading the way amongst our Partnership, having joined the Mayor's Superzones programme. The school is working with the Council to improve local amenities within Westbourne Park, which will help children to play safely outdoors, be active and enjoy a healthier life.

There are also opportunities for other organisations to develop pedagogical projects with schools, such as STEM laboratories.

Many of the big companies in London have a robust catalog of social-impact programmes and we would like to collaborate with them to bring new activities to our schools.

We encourage our schools to seek national and international grants to support special programs and to work closely with foundations who wish to do more for Westminster families.

There are many educational think-tanks whose focus is to study and develop "what works" in schools, and we would like to help them find out.

Schools can also work with parents and other local organisations to establish a separately-managed fund, such as an endowment fund, where funds can be allocated and used to attend to priorities chosen by the school community.

Strong focus on attendance

We envision schools where children and parents want to spend their times in even after school hours, schools that are the right arm of working parents and that are central to neighbourhoods and communities.

Together, we will share what has worked in each of our schools to do targeted outreach and attract children to school -for the academics, but especially for the rich and safe socialization environment that we provide.

Partnerships with outside organisations to increase school's offer or engaging and diverse activities and field trips can help us achieve such goals.

We would also like to work with the Embassies and local community centres, including family, children and community hubs, to help raise awareness about the importance of consistency in children's attendance.

George Eliot, for example, has used its strong music team to direct a group of children with poor attendance in an activity in which they made a fun awareness video themselves and shared it with the school community.

We will also discuss a better and integrated system to keep track of children who are missing class so we can provide immediate assistance - either directly or through Council departments - to quickly solve the issue that is preventing children from coming to school.

Friends of Barrow Hill

Parents at Barrow Hill Junior School have organised as a registered charity, through which they fund raise to improve school offer of academic and leisure space. Funds are raised within the school community and outside of it by reaching out to private companies and philanthropic organisations.

Since its creation, the group has been able to deliver a new science lab to the school, as well as an all weather sports pitch in the playground. They also bought the school a 3-D printer so children can explore the latest technology.

The group of parents behind Friends of Barrow Hill also help promote the school and organise fairs and events that bring the school community together.



4 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

We believe our curriculum must be inclusive and accessible for all our students.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded in our schools so all learners can succeed. There should be robust, reliable and recurring assessment in all schools so timely and dignified support can be provided for all children focusing on each student's achievements, talents, and strengths.

We see the need for multiple learning modalities being available to help students engage better in school.

In terms of SEND, the process for securing specialised support should be easy to navigate, with parents being clear of what they can expect and where they can turn for help. The SEND Parent Reference Group plays an important role in liaising with the Local Authority and partners to share any concerns, provide feedback and help target improvement and development of practice.

Close collaboration between mainstream schools and special schools is key in this context.

Mainstream schools can learn from the experienced professionals from special schools, and also understand that the services that they provide are different from those provided for children with SEND who remain in mainstream schools. Their collaboration is particularly important for families with multiple children, in which one child goes to a special school and another child goes to a mainstream school.

We see targeted academic and emotional support being offered to complement high quality teaching and a voluntarily extended school day available for catch up, activities and parent coaching.

Multiple learning modalities

Our schools take great care of children who need special support for learning. But it is also important to provide extensive opportunities for children who not have SEND and would like more stimulus.

Edward Wilson students have become renowned for their success in sports competitions. Advanced sports opportunities are also offered at **Queen's Park Primary School**, where children get to work with some of Queen's Park Rangers' coaches.

In terms of academics, our goal is to take advantage of virtual labs that provide access to enhanced learning experiences beyond what a school may be able to offer. Non-mandatory reading platforms with fun quizzes, spelling games and STEM experiments can be used at home in each student's own pace.

Regarding our curriculum, community schools are connected through the National Curriculum, which makes it easier for children to transfer from one school to the other if necessary. Special schools adapt the curriculum where necessary to suit their learners' needs. At **Tachbrook**, play is also tailored to meet the interests of every child.

There is still room, however, for tailoring the curriculum to some of the particular needs of each school. We believe the revision process must be grounded in two principles:

- For content: student agency, rigor, focus, coherence, alignment, transferability, and choice; and
- For process: teacher agency, authenticity, inter-relation, flexibility, and engagement.

Early assessments and adaptability

No transformation can effectively happen if progress is not closely measured and managed. We believe that our schools must create a robust, reliable and recurring assessment system to identify children who need extra help through evidence-based support. An integrated assessment system for all community schools will help schools provide timely support to children, but also evaluate, over time, needs for directed funding and extra assistance from the Council and other departments. We will also be able to evaluate whether efforts are being targeted and effective or if strategies need to change.

We also believe that lowering age intake through provision of additional nursery and childcare places offered to younger children, allows greater opportunity for early identification of need and timely, targeted interventions and support, potentially reducing demand for later SEND support.

Some of our Westminster Community Schools are already offering 2 year old place in their nurseries, and one school will begin offering this in the next year. However the integration of the school nurseries with other Council departments, including Family Hubs, is necessary for improved early assessment. It can take more than one year to have SEND funds and services approved after applying

for them. By working together with organisations who are serving the family from the moment the child is born, schools and Family Hubs, together, can help bridge this gap in time and funding.

Promote early childhood education

We know that like the foundations of a house, which determine its capacity to survive inclement weather, early childhood determines people's ability to face challenges throughout life.

A safe and loving environment, with predictable events, nurturing food and proper stimulus of language, physical exercise and plenty of rest go a long way in preventing toxic stress in the early years -which can be later responsible for health and behaviour problems in adults.

Studies have shown that high-quality early education is particularly helpful for children from more vulnerable backgrounds, many times shielding them from poverty, abuse and neglect.

Early childhood education is also key for working and single parents, and for all new parents, who are adapting to a new role as caretakers and adjusting their lives budgets.

Westminster Community Schools can offer early education and care to children from 1 year old upwards. We would like to expand these services and offer better connection between education and health services so children with SEND can receive proper care as early as possible and parents can be coached to prevent certain health conditions.

We would like to work closely with Family Hubs so the work done by the schools is a continuation of the work that was started by them before the child turned 1.

We would also like to work with the Council to outreach parents at community centres and other family services to promote the Westminster Community Schools, answer questions and offer support for completing nursery and reception applications.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) embedded so all learners can succeed

All of our approaches consider EDI. We want to foster collaboration and bottom-up engagement between schools and London community, including community-based organisations, to embed EDI, whilst also retaining local, place-based approaches.

This is reflected in our effort to develop different progression pathways to meet needs of all learners, with appropriate provision at the right time.

But we want to have the voices of our children regularly canvassed to secure a sense of belonging is nurtured allowing them to see themselves and their context reflected in school curriculum and environment.

This effort is reflected in all aspects of our schools, from our walls which are covered with their drawings, to voting processes, which gives them opportunities to dictate activities and field trips.

Being creative about inclusion

Edward Wilson Primary School has been able to make families and children feel equally included in their school community.

Parents have created a strong peer group, which organises events and festivals.

The school also promotes sports activities, the Young Writers program and other school-based events for all school children.

Another way the school promotes inclusion is by offering the uniform for free.



5 CONTEXTUALISED TO WESTMINSTER

We believe our school system must be well integrated with other services in a shared vision for child development and family support.

To ensure all children can access curricula and progress, schools should be part of a network – a high functioning family of schools.

In time, this network and the Local Authority should work to have better, shared real-time data available to identify children not attending consistently and intervene early to make sure their attendance improves.

Attendance needs to be a shared outcome across all professionals working with children and families, not just schools' professionals. If children are missing school because parents are facing issues at home, the entire health and social service community should work to bring children back to school while parents receive support.

We know our schools' communities well. This is one of our strengths, and we always want to make sure that our school projects connect to their life in Westminster.

Creation of a solid network of Westminster Community Schools

Since early 2023, headteachers from Westminster Community Schools have been meeting to share and problem-solve together. In these meetings, we realized that we share core values and that if we work together our pupils can benefit individually. The Westminster Community School Partnership is our agreement to continue to problem-solve together and lift each other up to guarantee children in Westminster receive a world-class education.

We will work through thematic work-groups and meet periodically to exchange information and expertise to address current and future challenges.

By working closely with each other we can also be better informed about families and children who go from one of our schools to the other, helping us address the attendance issue. It also provides children and families with continued support while children advance from Family Hub support, to Nursery, and to Reception.

The **Portman Centre**, for example, which offers both nursery and Family Hub services, has now reestablished a close relationship with **Gateway Academy**, which is particularly helpful for children with SEND, who can have continued support when transitioning to school, instead of starting a completely new assessment process at Reception.

Staying connected with its unique community

Schools should clearly communicate core school values and value proposition to parents, so they know what to expect from schools.

We would like to establish the best ways to tailor communication with parents to their ability to understand it, possibly translating school announcements to other languages.

We will continue to work with our PTAs to reach parents that have ESL or that are difficult to reach. We could establish a system of Parent Ambassadors, who would be the connecting tissue between schools and hard-to-reach families.

We also believe that from time to time, it is important that school leadership takes the time to ask school staff and parents about their lives outside of the school to understand what challenges the community may be facing as a whole.

Both Family Hubs in our Partnership, the **Portman Centre** and **Queen's Park** are key partners in this task of staying tuned to community needs. Although their nurseries serve only a few families, the extended services provided by the hubs reach thousands of people in the communities. They make a true effort to connect to people, to engage them with the hubs activities, sometimes allowing community members to use their space for programming, and have periodic check-ins with the staff of social workers, educators and health professionals to discuss the communities most pressing needs.

Partnering with local organisations

We would like to foster more community collaborations. For example, each school should become a member of their Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and advocate for collaborative actions to improve enrollment, attendance and developing other partnerships with the schools.

We would also like our children to visit all the wonderful locations that only Westminster can offer: libraries, government buildings, museums, parks and plazas. Locations that many UK children can only see in history books, children in Westminster have the privilege to visit and experience them.



Opening schools as community leisure spaces during, before and after school hours

School should be a safe space where children and families can meet in the patio, garden or playground even while classes are not happening.

It should be their home away from home, their community's embassy.

We would like to work with the Council so that our schools are also open during and after school hours, including on weekends, so families can use the available outdoor space for children to safely play outside with their school peers during the weekends.

Behavioural planning approach

While we are fully connected to best practices and guidelines for dealing with common school issues such as access and attendance, SEND and transition between schools, we believe that our Partnership presents an opportunity for us to sit and work together on strategies that are particularly tailored to the Westminster context. Our demographics, our resources, our political context and our history.

We want to make sure that we are catering our support services to the reality of children and families in our Westminster community.

The Westminster Community Schools will form a panel to further discuss this.

Children relate to books and role models

It is important for our schools that children see themselves in the academic instructions. This helps them connect to the subjects being taught and understand the applicability of our lessons in their lives.

We would like to work together to share recommendations of books and instruction materials that may connect to their Westminster reality.

We will also work with the Local Authority to develop strategies to see a more accurate representation of our community's diversity in teachers and governors.

Mary Paterson and **Dorothy Gardner** are great examples of nurseries whose qualified staff is mostly recruited from the local community.



6 HIGHLY SKILLED, TRAINED, MOTIVATED AND REWARDED WORKFORCE

We believe all teachers must be highly skilled, well-trained, and rewarded for their efforts.

The quality of teaching is the most important in-school factor in improving outcomes, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND.

Competitive salaries and incentives should be paid to recruit and keep talented staff, especially for STEM in disadvantaged schools.

Our schools must be equipped to provide professional development that builds knowledge, motivates staff and develops teaching techniques.

Teachers in our community schools are passionate professionals who go above and beyond for their students.

However, they also face some of the challenges that our communities deal with, such as high cost of living and shortage of accessible housing. This makes it difficult for schools to retain good teachers and for teachers to build a long-lasting career in Westminster's community schools.

Some of our Westminster Community Schools, such as **Essendine Primary** and **Queen's Park Primary Schools**, are able to secure long-standing teachers by offering them subsidised housing opportunities on properties available on school grounds.

Schools need a well-trained, engaged and motivated staff to achieve a world-class vision in education.

Teachers also need mental health support and special training to be able to deal with challenges in schools.

Many of our schools pay the enhanced service offered by the Local Authority, which includes mental health support to teachers. Besides this, some schools work in partnership with Mind, a local organisation that offers mental health support and training to teachers.

For school leadership, the Council also offer coaching support, which is provided on demand through individual sessions.

As a group, Westminster Community Schools will learn more about strategies being adopted by private employers, including flexible working arrangements and job sharing.

But most of all, teachers need time to reflect on their practices, to duly prepare classes and projects, and freedom to teach, adapting their lessons to a learning environment that is constantly evolving.

Be a haven for those passionate about educating

Westminster Community Schools want to keep teachers grounded to school values but give them freedom to teach.

To do so, teachers must feel protected by the schools and respected by students and parents.

Our schools go above and beyond to make sure teachers feel compensated for their creative and resilient efforts.

Whether it is through tributes and prizes or other public recognition, it is important that teachers feel recognised for the work.

We want teachers in our schools to have opportunities to publish papers and books

on their areas of expertise. We want them to share their experience with other Council departments and receive multidisciplinary support from them in their work.

We also believe that schools should have a clear career plan for teachers and school staff, one that gives them a direction for a long career in the school.

Be intentional and creative to secure constant professional development opportunities

We want our schools to continue to attract and retain teachers that are passionate about learning.

Our hope is that collectively we will find more and better opportunities for teachers to continue developing in their careers so they can stay in tune with new educational tools and concepts.

For example, we would like to partner with philanthropic organisations around the world who can offer our teachers technical training and certification on key subjects –SEND, Tech and AI, ESL.

We would also like to find opportunities to collaborate with local private sector organisations and members of the school community who can share more about school safety and public health.

At **Edward Wilson**, a partnership with universities helps train school staff to step up and be able to occupy leadership positions.

We will work to enroll schools and/or specific projects led by teachers in national and international competitions. We believe this could be an opportunity for teachers and students to be amongst other people aiming for excellence.

Finally, professional development in schools should not be limited to teachers. We want to find opportunities for all school staff to advance in their careers, including inspectors and school support staff.

To invest in the schools' business staff, for examples, we could connect them to consultants or Council experts who can provide accounting support and training, especially during difficult times.

The Partnership can also develop thematic discussion groups for teachers and principals to debate particular topics that are relevant for their schools.

Services to Schools

Westminster Council offers a series of courses and training opportunities, which are free of cost for members of Westminster Community Schools and other state-funded schools.

Events can be found online based on their theme, calendar date, provider and participant's role (which includes parents, headteachers, teachers and range of school staff positions).

Courses are offered by professionals in Westminster schools, including community schools, or by partner organisations outside of the Council.

Themes vary from school finance, admissions and management, to speech and language therapy and religious education.

The Council also offers professional development programs for school staff focused on SEND through the Bi-Borough Inclusion Service.

7 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

We believe our schools must be committed to the holistic development of our students.

We commit to support young children's personal, social and emotional development together with instruction and offer the most effective learning environment.

Curriculum design should be more collaborative with wider society, offering a joined-up approach to families, with a view of the 'whole child' at the centre.

Parental engagement approaches – from encouraging parents to read and talk with their children at home, to the appointment of a family liaison – in early years education must occur to achieve academic success.

To achieve a holistic support to families, it must become easier to collaborate among teachers and with the wider children's services.

Support the parents

Especially for the early years, parents are the primary educators and children learn by mimicking their behaviour.

Children of parents who are avid readers also develop a taste for reading. The same goes for words - children whose parents talk to them and listen back develop a wider vocabulary than those whose parents do not engage them in conversations.

Our schools would like to coach parents and also connect them to informational materials about easy ways they can help with their child's development: talking, reading, proper nutrition.

We would also like to establish channels through which parents can ask for help –for themselves or for others. We will discuss the creation of a whistleblower system in which people in the school community can alert the school in case a child or family is facing severe hardship and needs special Council attention.

Supporting parents of children with SEND is a priority for our schools. In many Westminster Community Schools parents of children with SEND participate in coffee mornings and peer support groups, however their full engagement with the schools, especially with special schools, is of the utmost importance for the healthy development of their child through continued education and care at home.

Community Schools can provide parents with valuable training and coaching so they can help children communicate and self-regulate their emotions at home.

By increasing participation of parents of children with SEND in special schools we would like to show parents how much their children can accomplish and that there is a place and a path for them in the future and in our society.



Parent Support Group and Training

The special school **Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School**, has a longstanding support group for parents, who come together to share experiences and resources to support a children who has additional needs. From children with SEND relationship with siblings, to taking them to the dentist, this group gives parents a chance to share and be heard. The school is also connected to the Bi-Borough Inclusion Service, which provides training and coaching to parents, as well as Make it Happen, the Westminster Parents Participation Group.

QEII operates as a tight community, in which parents of children with severe and complex difficulties and disabilities can see them become members of the school - socialising, developing independence and engaging with the wider community around school and beyond school.

Bring social and health services to the school

We would like schools to become a place where the whole family can find direct wrap-around support or curated references to a Council support service, including job opportunities.

We will work with the Council to co-locate other Council children and family services in school campus for faster referral and integrated support.

By working together as a partnership of community schools, we will also improve information sharing processes, which allow schools to work closely with local Family Hubs.

Community schools together will also work with the Council to offer parents, school staff and students (age appropriate) lectures and referrals regarding sexual abuse, domestic violence, bullying, racism, youth violence, and drugs.

We believe our schools must use physical space as a playground for innovation – on campus and beyond school walls

Children must engage with the natural and built environment to have a life-lasting effect on their development and health.

Community schools want to continue to provide a safe, attractive and positive school physical space to retain teachers and students and increase the quality of teaching and learning.

Attention is paid to specific classroom design elements to improve children's academic performance, mental and physical well-being, such as acoustics, lighting, air quality, temperature and links to nature.

We must work together with our community members and parents to introduce children to their neighbourhood and the city, and expand knowledge beyond school walls, highlighting what makes studying in a community school in Westminster a unique and rewarding experience.

Create opportunities for outdoor play

Children should be exposed to natural sunlight, but also to rain and other weather conditions to better understand how to properly dress and protect themselves in each of them.

They should have the opportunity to interact with the natural environment and play with a controlled level of risk-taking that encourages them to be more autonomous. At **Tachbrook** children learn about the world around them through real activities such as cooking, hatching chicks, gardening and bonfires.

Barrow Hill has invested in excellent exercise learning facilities, including an indoor swimming pool and sport pitch.

Westminster Community Schools will exchange experiences about creative outdoor play, and create partnerships focused on shared use of gardens, playgrounds, forest groups, thinking about the schools' outdoor resources as shared space between all community school students so all children have opportunity to play outside.

Forest School

Schools under the **Queens Park Early Years Federation** are members of the Forest Schools Association. Children as young as 3 years old learn by experiencing different weather conditions and how to properly dress for them, how to walk in the woods and be careful around fire. Through the guidance of teachers trained in the Forest School methodology, children are invited to visit a local reserve and play with tools, build with natural materials, respect nature and help each other.

Forest Schools are proven to increase children's resilience, independence and motivation. They also offer plenty of opportunities for children to develop balance, attention and fine motor skills.

At **Dorothy Gardner Nursery School** and **Mary Paterson Nursery School**, the schools' outdoor areas are extensions of the Forest School field trips, offering tools, greenery and water features, and where children are given the freedom to equally explore and build their natural environment.

Develop partnerships to allow them to explore different types of physical activity

For many of the children in Westminster, learning how to swim is not a possibility. Often, their parents also have not learned how to swim.

Accidental drowning is an important and preventable cause of death for children in nursery and primary school age.

Thinking about that, **George Eliot** has developed a partnership with the Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre so children can learn how to swim from Year 1 on.

The same school has also developed a partnership with Cycle Confident, an organisation that teaches children how to lead healthy and active lives through cycling.

NEXT STEPS

Individually, each school will decide with their governing bodies and school community on the actions from this vision that should be implemented in their schools. As a group of community schools, we commit to working closely together to explore these and other actions and to help advance outcomes for the students and families served by the Westminster Community Schools Partnership.

CREDITS

City of Westminster and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Sarah Newman

Bi-Borough Executive Director
of Children's Services

Ian Heggs

Bi-Borough Director of Education and Libraries

Shelley Duffy

Assistant Director of Education - School
Standards and Early Years

Iraklis Kolokotronis

Head of Early Years and Childcare

Jackie Saddington

Bi-Borough School Governor Services

Madhu Chauhan

Head of Early Help and Youth Justice Team

Pro bono Consultants

Linda Gibbs

Principal, Bloomberg Associates

Clara Cezar de Andrade Hallot

Bloomberg Associates

Garrett Richardson

Bloomberg Associates

Westminster Community Schools

Aaron Sumner

Essendine Primary School and
Hallfield Primary Schools
(North Westminster Federation)

Amie Curtis

Portman Nursery School
(Portman Early Childhood Centre)

Ben Commins, Lyndsy Killip

Queen's Park Primary School,
Dorothy Gardner Nursery School,
Mary Paterson Nursery School,
Queen's Park Family Hub and
Bayswater Children's Centre
(Queen's Park Federation)

Claire Cleary, Lisa Breslin

Gateway Academy

Claire Dunnet

Hallfield Primary School
(North Westminster Federation)

Claire Shepherd

College Park School
(Federation of Westminster Special Schools)

Cory Mclauchlan

Robinsfield Infant School and
George Eliot Primary Schools
(Robinsfield George Eliot Federation)

Darren Guttridge

Edward Wilson Primary School and
Barrow Hill Junior School

Lisa Mafrica

Essendine Primary School
(North Westminster Federation)

Melissa Royle

Queen's Park Primary School
(Queen's Park Federation)

Pamela Murphy

Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School
(Federation of Westminster Special Schools)

Peter Watt

Church Street Family Hub
(Portman Early Childhood Centre)

Elizabeth Hillyard

Tachbrook Nursery School

