

Boys on Track

Improving support for Black Caribbean and Free School Meal-Eligible White Boys in London

A research report

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 What is the rationale for this research?

Pupils in London are more likely to achieve better outcomes at the end of both their primary and secondary schooling than pupils elsewhere in the country (Greater London Authority, 2017). However, by the age of 16, attainment among London’s most disadvantaged young people lags an average of 12 months behind their more advantaged peers (ibid.). This has an adverse effect on these young Londoners’ life chances.

Two of the largest underperforming groups in London are black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys. The boys are less likely to achieve good educational outcomes, and more likely than many of their peers to experience exclusion (Department for Education, 2018) or involvement in the criminal justice system (Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice, 2018; Ministry of Justice and Department for Education, 2016). This can make it more difficult for them to find employment (Stacey, 2018).

This research has been undertaken in order to address these entrenched and stubborn inequalities, and is the result of an extensive literature review and consultation with practitioners and young people across London. It sets out steps that can be taken to secure improvements in outcomes for these boys by stakeholders across London including early years, schools, colleges, and youth practitioners working on the frontline. It acknowledges that the challenges the boys face will require action in education and beyond.

1.2 How was this research developed?

This research was based on analysis of the challenges faced by black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys in London and the potential responses to these challenges. The report authors:

1. **Reviewed the existing literature** on black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys’ underachievement to identify key factors at play in London;
2. **Conducted interviews with experts and practitioners** who had relevant knowledge and experience;
3. **Ran focus groups with the boys themselves**, including boys currently at primary and secondary school and young offender organisations in London;
4. **Identified seven ‘best bet’ areas for action.** We first reviewed the evidence in relation to 24 possible strategies for supporting improved educational and other outcomes, before shortlisting the seven that the evidence suggested would effectively target need in London, and;
5. **Refined these ideas**, with input from a steering group of experts and practitioners.

Throughout the research, it became clear that:

- While black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible boys are part of cohorts that underachieve on average, the boys are first and foremost individuals and their needs should be addressed accordingly.
- Approaches likely to support outcomes among black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys will be beneficial for all children and young people in London.
- We cannot assume the challenges affecting black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in London are the same (although they often overlap).
- There is lots of work already taking place across the capital to support black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys. Future work across London can support and build on this.



Tackling these issues will require a number of interventions. Our research proposes an interlocking framework of activity that recognises the interplay and overlap between issues and solutions.

1.3 What action does this report call for?

We have identified seven key ‘best bet’ areas for action to improve outcomes for all pupils from early years to post-16 study and training, but in particular black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys. These areas were selected following an extensive literature review, alongside engagement with a wide range of experts and stakeholders.

The stakeholders we spoke to, and the existing research evidence we reviewed, emphasised the need for support across a range of areas, including academic progress, social and emotional wellbeing, and careers education and guidance. Particularly in the London context, where nearly all schools are good or outstanding, stakeholders identified that the focus for action must move beyond classroom teaching alone.

The seven ‘best bet’ areas for action are cross-cutting and require consistent focus, from the early years through to post-16 education and training.

The areas are not ordered by their importance; the areas are interlinked, and work on one could well benefit the others.

Taking action across these seven areas will involve a mix of agencies including the Greater London Authority (GLA), frontline practitioners, early years and education settings, youth agencies, and employers as well as local authorities and health professionals, other professionals and parents. While all seven areas are important, many of the experts and practitioners we spoke to – and young people themselves – identified mental health and wellbeing as a key priority.

Seven ways in which outcomes for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys can be enhanced are:

- 1. Enhancing pupils’ emotional wellbeing and mental health.**
- 2. Working with parents and families, involving them in their children’s education.**
- 3. Securing access to high quality early years provision.**
- 4. Raising teachers’ expectations and addressing their biases.**
- 5. Recruiting and retaining a more diverse teaching workforce.**
- 6. Enhancing access to work experience opportunities, careers guidance, and support into employment.**
- 7. Encouraging peer support among young people.**



1. Enhancing pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health

The emotional wellbeing and mental health of all children and young people – including black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys – should be everyone's responsibility. This involves raising awareness, skills and capacity to respond among frontline professionals, organisational and sector leaders, families and communities.

Considerable work is underway in London in support of this, including Thrive London, a campaign to raise awareness about mental health. Additional work could now be undertaken to develop and share good practice guidance, support and training for those working with black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys. This could include settings working towards achieving and improving their Healthy Early Years London or Healthy Schools London award.

2. Working with parents and families, involving them in their children's education

Organisations working with young people should build strong, constructive relationships with parents and families. This is already a focus in many settings across London, and further value could be added by showcasing examples of good practice, and providing practitioners with specific guidance, support and training for engaging black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys' families. These parents can feel disengaged from their children's education if they themselves had negative experiences of school, or feel alienated from settings whose behavioural norms and expectations differ from their own.

3. Securing access to high quality early years provision

Disadvantaged and vulnerable families should be supported to take up free, quality childcare provision across London. Efforts are already underway across London local authorities to do this as well as through the Mayor's Early Years Hubs. Additional work could target support to increase uptake among the most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach families. This may be particularly beneficial for young, free school meal-eligible white boys, who are less likely than their peers to enter school at a Good Level of Development. An increased Early Years Pupil Premium (bringing it into line with the primary school-age Pupil Premium) would help ensure all children from poorer families have access to high quality early years education provision.

4. Raising teachers' expectations and addressing their biases

Greater understanding of teachers' and school and college leaders' awareness of unconscious bias, and ways of reducing the impact of biases, is needed. This could be gathered through the commissioning of new research.

Currently biases may affect black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys' experiences at school, where they impact upon areas such as setting and streaming, teacher assessment outcomes, and disciplinary measures such as exclusions.

Early Years, school and college practitioners could benefit from increased access to quality guidance, support and training that will help them explore (and minimise the impact of) their biases. Thus far, limited work has been undertaken in London on this issue.



5. Recruiting and retaining a more diverse teaching workforce

Teachers and school leaders from a diverse range of backgrounds need to be recruited and retained in London, as well as supported into leadership roles. These practitioners bring a diverse range of experience and can also help fill shortfalls in the workforce. Some research suggests that there are academic benefits to students from minority ethnic backgrounds being taught by a teacher from the same ethnic background.

Work is already underway in this respect including City Hall's Teach London and Getting Ahead London schemes, and in some schools and boroughs schemes to give new teachers financial support. More can be done, though, to identify and share good practice that helps schools recruit and retain teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds and under-represented groups.

6. Enhancing access to work experience opportunities, careers guidance, and support into employment

Young people need support to make informed and ambitious decisions about their futures, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds (including white free school meal-eligible and many black Caribbean boys in London).

Furthermore, **more targeted support could also be offered to young people across London who have been excluded from mainstream education, helping support their transitions into employment.** Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are disproportionately likely to underachieve academically, face permanent exclusion, and to enter the criminal justice system. These experiences severely limit job prospects, and extra support should be extended to young people in these positions.

Work is underway in London to provide young people with access to careers guidance and work experience opportunities, including the London Enterprise Advisor Network (LEAN). However, universal provision such as LEAN could be supplemented by targeted activity with a more specific focus on black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys, for example by pairing these young people with adults with relatable life experiences. Specific support for settings working with excluded or convicted young people could extend the careers opportunities available to these young people who are at higher risk of unemployment.

7. Encouraging peer support among young people

Young people in London should have access to peer support, particularly during the primary and secondary school transition. Promising work is already underway in many London schools with peer mentoring schemes. Further efforts could now be made to support black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys specifically, since they stand to benefit disproportionately from the academic and social benefits of such activity.



2. How was this research undertaken?

This report is the product of extensive research into the challenges facing black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys in London, and potential responses to these challenges. The research proceeded as follows:

Stage	Activity
1. Defining the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collating statistics on black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys' educational performance.
2. Compiling a database of causes and solutions.¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting a literature review (the references for which are available in the database (see footnote 1, below), and this report's appendices); Interviewing twelve experts and practitioners; Running six focus groups with young people across London, and; Coding and synthesising our data and incorporating it into the database.
3. Evaluating the evidence and identifying 'best bet' areas for action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying a long list of 24 solutions, drawn from the literature review, interviews and focus groups; Searching for and reviewing high quality evidence, evaluating the impact of these solutions on educational outcomes (including attainment, and also in terms of young people's personal, social, and emotional development), and; Shortlisting our seven 'best bet' areas for action.
4. Assessing the suitability of our 'best bet' options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convening two stakeholder steering groups, one with practitioners and experts, and one with GLA staff, and; Holding two steering group meetings to discuss and feedback on the proposed best bet areas for action.
5. Identifying ways forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key ways forward in each 'best bet' area for action, and; Seeking feedback on these from the steering groups.

¹ The database is available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TONi7DbtvHA9WDIaAXN65-bOvGim2u8OLrRQ_sIIWCM/edit#gid=1577724257

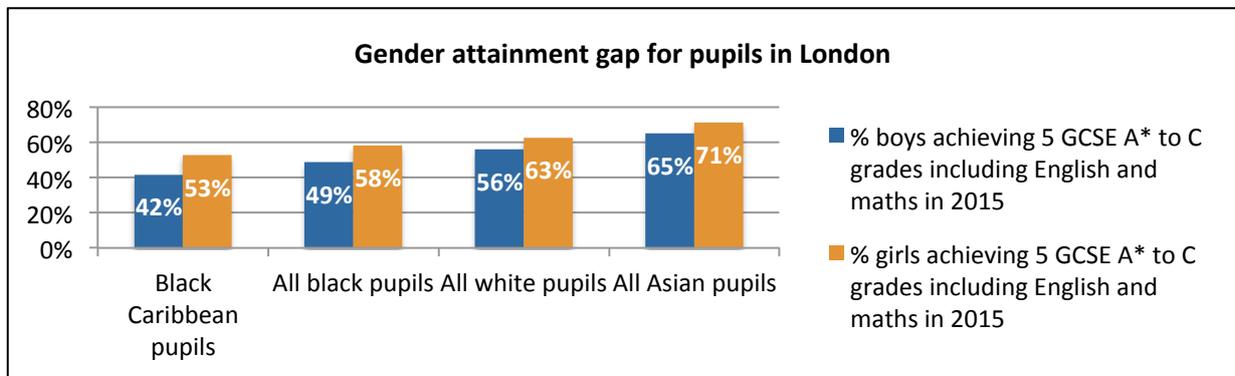


3. Defining the problem: what are the key issues for London?

This research focuses on the challenges facing black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys because they are two of the largest underachieving groups in London (GLA, 2017), and how these challenges can be addressed.

3.1 The attainment of black Caribbean boys

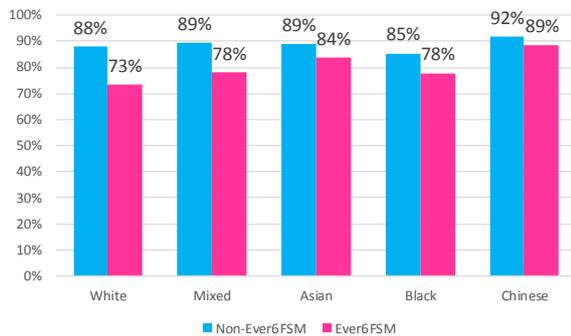
Black Caribbean boys' attainment in London is lower on average than pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The GLA's 2017 Annual Education Report shows that 42% of black Caribbean boys in London achieved expected standards in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 in 2016. While this is ahead of black Caribbean boys nationally, it puts them 17 percentage points behind the average for pupils in London (GLA, 2017). Black Caribbean pupils – and boys in particular – tend to fall behind their peers as they progress through school (Cabinet Office, 2017). Furthermore, the gender attainment gap between black Caribbean boys and girls is one of the largest for any ethnic group, as data taken from the GLA's 2017 Annual Report and presented in the graph below shows.² Demie and McLean describe this trend as a 'real and persistent' national challenge (2017).



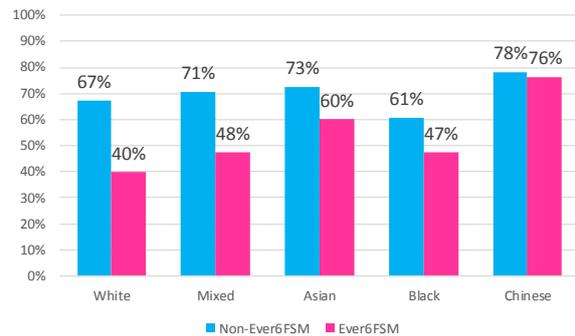
3.2 The attainment of free school meal-eligible white boys

White pupils eligible for free school meals are the lowest attaining of the main ethnic groups in London at both primary and secondary level. In London they are less likely to achieve good results at the end of primary, and this gap widens as they move through secondary school, as the graph below shows (GLA, 2017):

Key Stage 2 - Percentage level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics



Key Stage 4 - Percentage 5+A*-C including English and mathematics



While pupils eligible for free school meals have lower attainment on average than their non-eligible peers, the impact of deprivation on white pupils (and boys in particular) is more pronounced than in other ethnic groups (Cabinet Office, 2017; Shaw, Baars, Menzies, Parameshwaran, & Allen, 2017; Strand, 2014).

² See Figure A1.3a on page 88.



3.3 What challenges do these boys face?

Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in London face a range of challenges that can hinder their educational performance and wider outcomes. Here we outline some of the key challenges. These are explored in the literature, which can be accessed through our database and filtered by demographic characteristics, challenges, and solutions.³

However, there is a limited body of research focusing specifically on black Caribbean or white free school meal-eligible boys in London (much of the literature addresses one or two but not all of these characteristics). Consequently, we also draw, below, on key themes that emerged during interviews with experts and practitioners, and in focus groups with young people.

Structural and societal factors

Stereotyping and blame

The portrayal of youth culture in London – and of black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in particular – can be disproportionately negative, often focusing on crime and anti-social behaviour (Tucker, 2010; Demie & Mclean, 2017).

This was a theme that came through prominently during interviews with practitioners and experts, and in the focus groups with young people across London. Young people talked about the threat of crime in London, which we describe, below. However, they also described the prejudice they feel from the media and society more generally. This prejudice can have a racial and class dimension, and mean black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys can feel singled out:

“I feel like it’s actually just a whole society point of view. ...You’ll just think, ‘oh, white boys from estates’, ‘that boy is from a working-class estate’, ‘they’re just going to be a distraction and just ruin the class’.”

Young person during a focus group

Interviewees expressed frustration that the media portrayal of schooling and youth culture in London can be biased and unfair:

“You’re fighting the media stigma that is attached with that particular identity. ...If you put on BBC News and they start talking about underachievement, failure in school, I would almost guarantee that the image that they choose to portray that would be either of a black Caribbean kid or a white working class boy.”

Alison Kriel, CEO, AMAYA Trust

There was concern that this can become a self-fulfilling prophecy: how young people are portrayed affects how they see themselves and, in turn, their behaviour. Interviewees said this could disproportionately impact black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys, because stereotypical portrayals of these groups in the media are more likely to be negative:

“The media has a massive impact on these young people. ...All we’re seeing on the news over the last couple of months is how high the spike is in knife crime in London: ‘Youths out of control, carrying knives, [etc]’. [The boys] start to conform to that stereotype.”

Martin Bisp, CEO, Empire Fighting Chance

³ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TONi7DbtvHA9WDIaAXN65-bOvGim2u8OLrRQ_sllWCM/edit?usp=sharing
The full references given throughout this section can be located in Appendix 6.2, and in the database.



Poverty

Children and young people growing up in poverty do not, on average, achieve the same educational outcomes as their more affluent peers, and this seems to affect black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys particularly strongly, perhaps because they are more likely to experience more persistent or extreme poverty (Shaw, Baars, Menzies, Parameshwaran, & Allen, 2017). While there are steps educational settings and other partners can take to raise outcomes for young people, these cannot compensate entirely for social inequality.

Experts and practitioners stressed the inter-connectedness of poverty with other, negative outcomes such as lower educational attainment, wellbeing and employment prospects:

“There are things that schools can do, but they aren't going to reshape inequalities in society... if we're going actually to do something about it, it's going to have to be a much more structural view about society, about fairness and equity in society.”

Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford

In their focus groups, young people described how growing up in deprived areas in London can affect their day-to-day life. This can include their access to educational and enrichment activities:

“If you... can afford to go to private school, ...and if you need extra support, you're going to get extra tuition, you're going to get extra lessons, you're going to get all these different opportunities that require money that these young boys from poorer backgrounds couldn't afford to pay for.”

Young person during a focus group

Young people we spoke to also talked about the prevalence of crime in London:

“I don't like travelling in the morning to school ... because sometimes I feel scared. ...There's loads of knife crime. So, I feel scared sometimes when I'm walking to school, that maybe something might happen.”

Young person during a focus group

Cuts to services

Schools and other service providers are working in a context of public sector budget reductions, and experts, practitioners and young people talked about the impact these cuts have had on families of black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys. One interviewee described how local authority work in London “has just been cut to the bone”:

“While we're told there's two and a half billion going into Pupil Premium, there's obviously huge amounts of money being cut from other areas of schools' budgets. So the overall money that schools are getting is actually, in relation to the rise in pupil numbers, decreasing.”

Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford

Young people – and the practitioners working with them – have noticed the effects of funding cuts, in particular citing the impact on the availability of youth clubs:

“I think they should re-open a lot of youth clubs and stuff like that, because I've literally seen the youth club close and then gang violence increase, literally the next day. ...At the youth club, you could...come in and get some food, have a drink, just chill and play pool and stuff.”

Peer Outreach Worker

Involvement in crime and the youth offending system

Young people who are male, eligible for free school meals, and/or from a black, Asian or minority background are over-represented in the youth custodial population, according to data from the Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice (2018), and Ministry of Justice and Department for Education (2016).

This was also highlighted by practitioners and experts interviewed for this research, who said white boys eligible for free school meals and black Caribbean boys can face a disproportionate likelihood of involvement in the youth justice system. One interviewee who works with young people who have committed offences explained that a culmination of factors could make black Caribbean and poor white boys more susceptible to getting involved in crime. These include the influence of poverty and proximity to crime, a lack of constructive role models, and disengagement with education. These factors and the impact of having criminal records can severely curtail future employment prospects (Stacey, 2018). Stakeholders we spoke to felt the career prospects for these groups of young people can be severely limited by these experiences:

“I’ve just met with a young person now who said he was struggling to get into an apprenticeship because of his previous conviction. He’s recently come out of custody, and all of the main engineering companies that he’s trying to get an engineering apprenticeship in will not take him.”

Sherry Davis, Consultation Manager, Waltham Forest Youth Offending Service



School factors

Teachers' expectations and bias

Teachers' unconscious biases can shape their interactions with, and expectations of, pupils. For example, **pupils' class, race and gender can influence teachers' expectations**. Teachers may have higher expectations of white and Asian students' academic potential. Furthermore, non-black teachers can have lower expectations of black students (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent and Ball, 2012), and are more likely to negatively judge (such as discipline or label) pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds (Hattie, 2009).

This was something young people – and in particular black Caribbean boys – talked about during the focus groups, where they felt teachers' assumptions about them had marred their experiences at school:

"I just feel like it's a lot to do with ... stereotyping [of] the actual students before they (teachers) even know what they (pupils) really are [like]. So, while you're treating them how you perceive them, they're actually taking on the characteristics of what they think [they] are."

Young person during a focus group

This can impact differently upon pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, and can disadvantage pupils from black backgrounds:

"White people tend to have very different expectations of Indian and Chinese and black Caribbean kids. [Research indicates that] if a Chinese student age 14 is being predicted a C in science, the teacher will very often see that as they're underachieving, ... whereas the black Caribbean kid who's predicted that same C grade would tend to be told, 'Oh, you're doing alright. You're going to pass. It's going to be fine.' They won't get any of the extra push."

David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies, University of Birmingham

Teachers' judgements about pupils' (and particularly young children's and boys') academic performance are influenced by perceptions of their pupils' behaviour (Harlen, 2004). Discussing his research on the subject, Professor Gillborn highlighted that academic performance, expectations about behaviour, and race are especially likely to impede young black boys:

"I was involved in a large study, ... where we interviewed 62 middle class black Caribbean parents about their experiences at school when they were kids, and then their experiences now as parents. ... They're teachers, they're lawyers, solicitors, doctors, and yet they're coming up against a set of ingrained low academic expectations, and heightened expectations of disciplinary trouble."

David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies, University of Birmingham

This was also something young people talked about, with one saying:

"They [teachers] pick and choose who their targets are. So they pick on Asians, blacks, sometimes Eastern Europeans... we was always in isolation, in the isolation room."

Young person during a focus group

Pupils' self-perceptions can be positively or negatively shaped by interactions with teachers and other adults. Teachers' expectations produce stronger self-fulfilling prophecies among pupils from minority ethnic and poorer backgrounds than richer students from other ethnicities (including Asian



and white) (Jussim and Harber, 2005). For example, one young person talked during a focus group about the impact being in low sets can have on pupils' self-esteem and academic ambition:

"If you're in the bottom set and you can't even do a test or you can't get an A, you're not really going to want to put any effort into your education because you don't have the chance to get the best grades. So why even bother? ...Everyone in the bottom sets, all their lessons are always just wasted."

Young person during a focus group

Negative peer pressure and a lack of positive role models

All young people can experience peer pressure, and it can be particularly acute for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys (Scott & Spencer, 2013). Media stereotyping, the influence of social media, and an absence of positive role models in school and media (made worse by the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce) can exacerbate this (Demie & Mclean, 2017).

Interviewees said this is be a particular challenge for boys in London, as these young people can feel under pressure to reject school and academic success:

"The peer group itself can be - at times - not very supportive.... Because they are surrounded by other boys who are not doing very well, it coalesces into a kind of group-think that really does try and find an alternative to school or academic prowess. So, for example, that group [might] look towards forms of bullying, violence, it will be engaged in anti-school behaviour, it will encourage a typical type of masculinity."

Tony Sewell, CEO, Generating Genius

Likelihood of exclusion

Poor white and black Caribbean pupils are disproportionately likely to face temporary or permanent exclusion from school (Department for Education, 2018).



Home and family factors

Stress at home

Young people's outcomes can be negatively affected by exposure to stress at home. This is particularly likely where there is a shortage of financial resources and in single parent households, where money and time can often be placed under greater pressure (Demie and Lewis, 2014). Children in London are relatively more likely to grow up in a single parent family, with nearly a quarter of all families in the capital headed by a single parent.⁴ Moreover, poor white and black Caribbean families are relatively more likely to be headed by a single parent.⁵

This was an issue raised in our interviews, specifically where a single parent struggles to find time for their work and children:

"The thing is, if you're a single parent, you're going to work, you come home, to make ends meet... If [a] mum is raising, let's say, even two children or three children, it's really hard to just focus on the one child."

Peer Outreach Worker

'Low' and 'different' aspirations and views towards education

Sometimes young people's potential can be stymied by low parental aspirations, or a lack of faith in the importance of school and education (Rhamie, 2012; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). Free school meal-eligible white boys can be vulnerable to this, particularly if their parents had negative experiences of school (Demie and Mclean, 2017).

Interview participants explained that young people who do not receive as much parental support as their peers need additional input at school:

"Ultimately the students who don't have that parental support, don't have that aspiration, don't have that follow-up at home and that kick up the backside at the right times, they are already miles behind everyone else. So, we have to put more in to catch them up."

Tom Knott, Assistant Principal, The Totteridge Academy

However, it is important to note that sometimes families' aspirations are not 'low' but different to those traditionally supported by schools. This can mean they are not seen as valid by educational settings (House of Commons Education Committee, 2014).

"[These families] do aspire. They've got high aspirations, but they don't necessarily have high educational aspirations, because they don't see education as instrumental in leading to the kind of outcomes that they want."

Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford

Furthermore, black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys often have different aspirations. David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies at the University of Birmingham, emphasised that pupils from black backgrounds "tend to have higher than average aspirations:"

"[Black pupils are] very motivated to achieve in school. They're very highly supported by their parents and other adults. ...The evidence shows that on average black students have higher aspirations and work harder than their white peers."

David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies, University of Birmingham

⁴ These figures relate to London in general, and not specifically black Caribbean or poor white families. See: <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/what-we-do/where-we-work/london-and-south-east/>

⁵ See: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/ethnicity-in-the-uk/ethnicity-and-type-of-family-or-household>



Individual factors

Developmental delays

Children growing up in poverty are more likely to have language developmental delays, inhibiting academic progress throughout school. Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are less likely than their peers to enter school with a 'Good Level of Development' (the government's measure of adequate achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage).⁶

Interviewees talked about this, explaining that developmental differences are apparent among young children from a young age:

“Early intervention is really important and that goes right the way back to nought to three. Because these social class differences are there before kids even start school. Even at the age of three we're picking these things up.”

Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford

Lack of engagement in education

Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys can feel the curriculum lacks relevance to their lives, and that it does not link to their career prospects. This, combined with the factors outlined above, can lead to these young people feeling alienated from school and by their education (Demie and Lewis, 2014). One interviewee explained: “One of the things that turns a lot of white working class and black Caribbean working class boys off in school is they don't see the relevance of what they're learning to the world of work.”

This was something expressed particularly strongly by young people who had been excluded from school, with one saying:

*“Nothing was helpful to me in school I learned s*** in school. I'm a good DJ and I've been DJing [despite] my education.”*

Young person during a focus group

Poor mental health and low emotional wellbeing

Many young people experience difficulties relating to their mental health and emotional wellbeing, with signs that mental health among teenagers in particular has worsened over time, and that this disproportionately affects pupils from poorer backgrounds (Shaw et al., 2017).

Interviewees and steering group participants emphasised the urgent need to recognise the impact of negative mental health on black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys. These groups are particularly susceptible to the influence of poverty and societal inequality, stress at home, low self-esteem, and negative peer influence:

“Most kids who are struggling at school aren't struggling at school because they don't want to learn. It's because they're not really in a position to learn in the classroom because of all the other things that are going on in their lives... Alongside many other factors, we find time and time again, with black Caribbean boys and white FSM boys, there's a whole macho, masculine culture around not admitting weakness, being tough the whole time.”

Jack Reynolds, Director, Football Beyond Borders

⁶ A breakdown of Early Years Foundation Stage profile results by ethnicity, gender and region is available from the Department for Education's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2016-to-2017>.



4. How can we improve outcomes for black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys in London?

From our initial literature review,⁷ interviews and focus groups, we identified 24 possible strategies for improving outcomes for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in London. We then reviewed evidence on the effectiveness on each of the 24 areas to identify seven 'best bet' areas for action in London. We number these areas '1' to '7', but this is not reflective of their importance in relation to one another. These areas for action are:

1. **Enhancing pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health.**
2. **Working with parents and families, involving them in their children's education.**
3. **Securing access to high quality early years provision.**
4. **Raising teachers' expectations and addressing their biases.**
5. **Recruiting and retaining a more diverse teaching workforce.**
6. **Enhancing access to work experience opportunities, careers guidance, and support into employment.**
7. **Encouraging peer support among young people.**

4.1 Enhancing pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health

Why is this important?

Mental health and wellbeing are critical in supporting educational outcomes, as well as wider success and happiness. Interventions targeting pupils' emotional and social wellbeing have an 'identifiable and valuable impact on attitudes to learning and social relationships in school,' and on attainment (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018a). Specifically, interventions targeting pupils' emotional wellbeing can have a positive influence on non-cognitive attributes such as young people's social skills, motivation, wellbeing and resilience (Siddiqui & Ventista, 2018; Blank et al., 2009).

The meta-analyses we reviewed do not relate specifically to black Caribbean or free school meal-eligible white boys in London. However, the research evidence suggests that addressing mental health and social and emotional wellbeing can be of particular benefit to pupils with low prior attainment, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they progress from the early years up to and through secondary school (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018a).

Furthermore, and as was outlined above in section 3.3, participants in this research reported that free school meal-eligible white boys and black Caribbean boys are particularly prone to mental health challenges, and so efforts made to improve young people's mental health in London across the board could disproportionately benefit these groups.

"I believe that anger is a mask for pain. So, I think we need to see past the behaviour, and actually take it upon ourselves, as educators or as social workers, and people that work within the system, to really try and find out what is the reason for this and try to help them."

Sherry Davis, Consultation Manager, Waltham Forest Youth Offending Service

⁷ The references for the initial literature review of challenges and potential solutions for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in London is outlined in Appendix 6.2, and the references for the meta-analyses review in Appendix 6.3.

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Success factors across interventions in this area include:

- Providing appropriate training to practitioners, including initial identification and how to discuss mental health and wellbeing with young people;
- Securing practitioners' buy-in, ensuring they understand the importance of mental health and challenges facing young people;
- Combining different modes of delivery, for example including peer mediators, whole-class or group teaching, and specialist and targeted provision;
- Ensuring more targeted and specialist support is available where required, for example when dealing with more complex or advanced cases. This means securing access to specialists, rather than 'universal' support from teachers or the police, and;
- Where appropriate, collaborating with parents and families in delivering mental health services to young people.

(Education Endowment Foundation, 2018a; Siddiqui & Ventista, 2018; Blank et al., 2009).

What needs to happen next?

The emotional wellbeing and mental health of all children and young people – including black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys – should be everyone's responsibility. This involves raising awareness, skills and capacity to respond among frontline professionals, organisational and sector leaders, families and communities. Lots of promising activity is already underway that can support this, including:

- Thrive London⁸, Time to Change⁹ and Minds Ahead,¹⁰ all of which are campaigning and providing training in young people's mental health;
- The Mayor's Healthy Workplace Charter,¹¹ Healthy Schools London award,¹² and Healthy Early Years London award,¹³ which celebrate organisations' commitment to mental health, among other aspects of wellbeing;
- Resources for teachers and families, such as those available from Mentally Healthy Schools¹⁴, MindEd for Families,¹⁵ and the PSHE Association¹⁶;
- Training led by Teaching Schools;
- A Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training programme for London schools, which has been established to ensure every school in London has access to a dedicated member of staff with appropriate mental health training to support both themselves and their pupils, and;
- Training specialist school-based mental health practitioners for all secondary schools, colleges and pupil referral units as part of Thrive London.

Further support could focus on:

- The development of good practice guidance, support and training on whole-organisational approaches to supporting emotional wellbeing and mental health. This could include early years settings, schools and colleges reviewing potential risk factors to staff and young people's

⁸ <https://www.thriveldn.co.uk/current-projects/>

⁹ <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.mindsahead.org.uk/>

¹¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health/healthy-workplace-charter>

¹² <http://www.healthyschools.london.gov.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/health/healthy-early-years-london>

¹⁴ <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/teaching-resources/#>

¹⁵ <https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people/>

¹⁶ <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and>



wellbeing, in the context of the community in which they work. This might include, for example, inappropriate behaviour management or teachers passing stress down. The National Children's Bureau's whole school framework offers an example of how this can be done;¹⁷

- Early years settings, schools and colleges working towards achieving Healthy Early Years London or Healthy Schools London awards, to demonstrate the quality of settings' physical and mental health and wellbeing provision, and continuing to share examples of good practice in schools' and early years settings, and;
- Building relationships and partnerships between frontline professionals (including those in different organisations), local families, and communities. This could include communication with parents about mental health to help families reinforce positive and healthy routines at home, particularly with the families of potentially more vulnerable pupils, including black Caribbean boys and free school meal-eligible white boys. The Mentally Healthy Schools and MindEd for Families resources (as above) could provide a starting point for this work, as these have guidance and tools already available to support schools and families.

¹⁷ <https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/NCB%20School%20Well%20Being%20Framework%20Leaders%20Resources%20FINAL.pdf>



4.2 Working with parents and families, involving them in their children's education

Why is this important?

Working with parents and families can have a positive influence on young people's outcomes, with evidence that parental aspirations in particular support academic outcomes (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018b; Jeynes, 2007). Effective parental engagement was also highlighted as a success factor in the Mayor of London's 2018 'Schools for Success' report (Featherstone, Quinn, and Spence-Thomas, 2018). However, research indicates that impact varies a great deal, depending on the sort of involvement parents have.

An American meta-analysis of parenting interventions suggests 'parental involvement may be one means of reducing the achievement gap that exists between white students and some racial minority groups' (Jeynes, 2007). Because of the difficulty in establishing the direction of any causal relationship between socioeconomic status and the impact of parents' involvement, research is less clear on the specific benefits for young people from lower income backgrounds (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018b; Jeynes, 2007).

Contributors to this research, including interviewees and members of our steering group, talked passionately about the role families can play in helping young people fulfil their potential. Many felt that while this is true for all pupils, it is particularly the case for white free school meal-eligible and black Caribbean boys, whose parents' experiences of education may have been negative. Specifically, working with families can help to set high expectations at school and at home, and ensure everyone is 'pulling in the same direction.' This helps support good wrap-around care, making young people less susceptible to the distractions that can pull their focus away from education.

Recent research undertaken by LKMco for the GLA and its Teach London partners examined how to improve teacher recruitment and retention in London. This found that black, Asian and minority ethnic teachers in London were more likely to cite improved parental and community engagement as a factor that would keep them as teachers in London (Small, Trethewey, Menzies, Bowen-Viner, & Shaw). This therefore highlights how best bet areas of actions identified in this report overlap and pull together: working with parents and families could also serve to help recruit and retain a more diverse teaching workforce (see section 4.5, below).

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Success factors across programmes that support parents' involvement in their children's education include:

- Working with parents from when children are young, because children are more malleable at a young age, parents are likely to be more involved in their children's lives at this stage, and children's self-image about their own strengths and weaknesses is less fixed;
- Encouraging parents to engage voluntarily in support interventions;
- Supporting strong practitioner and parent relationships, so that both sides 'pull in the same direction'. ParentKind have a range of resources available to help schools approach this,¹⁸ and ParentKind¹⁹ and the Department for Education²⁰ have each published guidance for schools seeking to increase parental engagement, and;

¹⁸ <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-schools/Resources>

¹⁹ <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/uploads/files/1/29913%20ASCL-NAHT%20document%20FINAL.pdf>

²⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182507/DFE-RR156_-_Practitioner_Summary.pdf



- Developing parents' educational and career aspirations for their children, as opposed to encouraging 'surveillance' (such as monitoring homework, the amount of TV children are watching, or the time they are spending out with friends). Staff building strong relationships with parents and creating environments in which parents feel comfortable to meet and discuss their children's education can help support this.

(Featherstone et al., 2018; Menzies, 2013; Jeynes, 2007; Hattie, 2009).

What needs to happen next?

Organisations working with young people should build strong, constructive relationships with parents and families. This is already a focus in many settings across London, and further value could be added by:

- Increasing frontline professionals' access to support, guidance and training specifically with regard to developing relationships with black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys' families. Information and resources about developing parental relationships for schools are already available (for example through the ParentKind website,²¹ and the School Home Support's Parental Engagement Toolkit²²). However, these are not specific to the groups focused on in this report, and;
- Disseminating knowledge about building strong parental relationships through Schools for Success.²³ This could help to tackle underlying factors behind weak practitioner-to-parent relationships, such as a lack of understanding about one another's expectations and norms, or a lack of engagement between settings and 'harder-to-reach' families.

²¹ <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/>

²² <https://www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SHS-Parental-engagement-toolkit.pdf>

²³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/schools-success/mayors-schools-success-programme>



4.3 Securing access to high quality early years provision

Why is this important?

Attending high quality early years provision (including pre-school settings), or accessing targeted support such as a specific programme targeting young children’s development (for example, a family reading programme), can support learning and developmental benefits (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018c; Hattie, 2009). Analysis conducted by the OECD suggests early childhood education can also make children’s learning outcomes more equitable, reduce poverty, and improve social mobility between generations (OECD, 2017).

Attending a quality pre-school setting is associated with ‘a positive and long term impact on children’s attainment, progress and social-behavioural development’, improved GCSE outcomes, and longer term economic benefits (Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, & Siraj, 2015; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj, Taggart, Smees, Toth, Welcomme & Hollingworth, 2014). This finding was corroborated by OECD analysis indicating that students who received two years’ early childhood education perform better on average in assessments aged 15 (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, later and/or remedial interventions with older children can be more expensive, so early intervention offers cost efficiency (Taggart et al., 2015).²⁴

Early intervention programmes and quality early years provision are particularly beneficial for children from poorer and minority backgrounds (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018c; Hattie, 2009), and Taggart et al. note that attending pre-school can be especially beneficial for boys and ‘children who had a less stimulating home learning environment’, who in practice are often from poorer backgrounds (2015).

Interviewees and steering group participants stressed how important early intervention is, with benefits for children and their families including improved academic outcomes throughout school, and better social and emotional wellbeing. This would disproportionately benefit poorer families, and in particular free school meal-eligible white and black Caribbean boys, who are less likely than their peers to achieve a Good Level of Development (see section 3.3).

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Early intervention can take many different forms, from full-time attendance at a setting with high quality early years provision, to programmes targeting specific family needs. Success factors for early interventions include:

- Providing quality interactions between trained practitioners and children. This appears to influence outcomes more than the amount of time children attend, or the physical environment within the setting;
- Ensuring young children have sustained access to provision, with evidence suggesting that two years’ early education has a beneficial impact on attainment aged 15 and 16;
- Promoting educational, social and emotional development simultaneously;
- Balancing practitioner-initiated and child-initiated play activities;
- Practitioners and settings collaborating with families, and;
- Focusing on helping young children develop their language and communication skills.

(Education Endowment Foundation, 2018c; OECD, 2017; Taggart et al., 2015; Sylva et al., 2014; Hattie, 2009).

²⁴ Some studies have found that the benefits of early years interventions drop off as children get older (Hattie, 2009).



Both the literature and our interviewees suggested that black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys' language development can lag behind their peers' as they start school. The Education Endowment Foundation's Early Years Toolkit notes that early literacy, oracy and numeracy interventions can be beneficial in terms of supporting disadvantaged young children's learning outcomes, at relatively low cost (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018d). LKMco's research on oracy also highlights benefits of an early focus on spoken communication skills for children and young people (Millard and Menzies, 2016). Such interventions may take place in early years provision, or outside (for example supporting parents to engage with their children).

What needs to happen next?

Disadvantaged and vulnerable families should be supported to take up free, quality childcare provision across London. While efforts are already underway across London to ensure this, additional work could support:

- Evaluating and sharing of emerging good practice from the Mayor's Early Years Hubs in Newham, Wandsworth and Merton, helping other boroughs target resources towards families who are most in need;
- Outreach and engagement with families across London who may not otherwise take advantage of free childcare provision about the benefits of early years provision. This should include provision for two-year-olds;
- Encouraging providers to promote the Early Years Pupil Premium so that parents and carers self-declare and enable childcare providers including nursery schools and childminders to apply for the funding, and;
- Encourage the government to raise the Early Years Pupil Premium to match that of the full primary school-age Pupil Premium, supporting the quality of early education and childcare places for the families who need them most.



4.4 Raising teachers' expectations and addressing their biases

Why is this important?

Teachers' expectations for pupils influence educational outcomes (although the effect of teachers' expectations on learning is not clear-cut or straightforward). Generally speaking, the better a teacher expects a pupil to perform academically, the better a student is likely to do (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Hattie, 2009). Importantly, teachers' expectations relate closely to students' self-perceptions of themselves as learners. This can mean that young people view their abilities in terms of their physical or social characteristics, rather than in terms of their academic and personal strengths (this is sometimes called the 'stereotype threat') (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Holding high expectations of pupils was identified as a component of schools' success by Featherstone et al. (2018).

As is indicated in section 3.3, teachers' expectations and potential biases featured prominently during our discussions with experts, practitioners and young people. There was general agreement among participants that teachers' expectations exert a powerful influence over young people's academic outcomes and sense of self. Contributors felt black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys in London are particularly likely to have their achievements capped by inappropriately low expectations. Efforts to address this could therefore disproportionately benefit these groups.

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Success factors in addressing inaccurate and/or low teacher expectations include:

- Emphasising progress over ability;
- Helping practitioners explore their sources of bias, particularly when assessing attainment. High quality training on implicit bias may help with this (see below);
- Embedding counter-stereotypical examples into the school curriculum, for example showing boys (and girls) a range of career options are open to them whatever their gender or background;
- Adopting 'multicultural' approaches which acknowledge and value group differences, rather than 'colour blind' approaches that ignore them, and;
- Introducing school assessment procedures to guard against unfairness, such as triangulating teacher assessment with results from standardised tests.

(Finnegan, Oakhill, & Garnham, 2015; Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Hattie, 2009; Harlen, 2005).

Evidence regarding the impact of training addressing unconscious (also 'implicit') biases is mixed, and suggests it can result in at-best limited changes in behaviour (Atewologun, Cornish, & Tresh, 2018; Forscher et al., 2016). Where training has been shown to be more effective, success factors have included:

- Working with teams as opposed to individuals, or groups who do not know one another;
- Educating participants about unconscious bias theory, rather than simply its negative impact;
- Celebrating diversity, rather than seeing it as something to 'overcome', and;
- Providing concrete strategies for addressing unconscious bias in the workplace.

(Ibid.).



What needs to happen next?

Greater understanding of teachers' and school and college leaders' awareness of unconscious bias, and ways of reducing the impact of biases, is needed. This could be gathered through the commissioning of new research.

Currently biases may affect black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys' experiences at school, where they impact upon areas such as setting and streaming, teacher assessment outcomes, and discipline including exclusions. Next steps could include:

- Commissioning research into the impact of unconscious bias and teachers' expectations on educational outcomes across London, and the impact this has on disadvantaged groups including black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys (possibly exploring issues such as teacher assessment, academic streaming and setting, and disciplinary practices such as exclusion). The research could also explore ways of combatting negative effects of biases;
- Enhancing school and college practitioners' access to quality support, guidance and training in unconscious bias, adhering to the evidence about how it can generate a positive impact on practice (such as that outlined, above). Given the mixed evidence on unconscious bias training thus far, the impact of any training offered to practitioners should be closely monitored;
- Building strong and constructive communication about culture and identity among school staff (including support staff), and with parents and the wider community. Relational Schools offer one such model of how this can be approached,²⁵ and;
- Exploring ways in which schools and teachers could receive more support specifically related to the London context; the mix of London pupils and their needs, specifically SEND, EAL and socio-economic disadvantage. This proposal, originally set out in LKMco's Teach London report (Small et al., 2018), suggests such support could include specialist training or expert practitioners working across different schools.

²⁵ <https://relationalschools.org/about/>



4.5 Recruiting and retaining a more diverse teaching workforce

Why is this important?

Some research suggests that there are academic benefits to students from minority ethnic backgrounds being taught by a teacher from the same ethnic background, and when the teacher workforce in their school represents different ethnicities equitably (Donlevy, Meierkord, & Rajania, 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). This was also something that came through during our focus groups with young people, who said they find being taught by someone ‘like them’ can be helpful. US research (Villegas & Irvine, 2010) suggests teachers from minority backgrounds are particularly likely to:

- Have high expectations of the students;
- Use culturally relevant teaching (for example, in terms of their use of language);
- Develop caring and trusting relationships with students;
- Confront issues of racism through teaching, and;
- Serve as advocates for their students, helping them understand and navigate cultural expectations.

Exposure to teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds can encourage pupils from similar backgrounds to remain in education (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). The evidence that teachers from these backgrounds serve as good role models (motivating students to become successful adults) is less well established, although it remains a popular hypothesis.

Furthermore, teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds benefit the wider workforce, helping to fill the employment shortages in London. Evidence from the US suggests these teachers may be more willing than their white counterparts to work in schools with high proportions of minority ethnic students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). This is important partly because these schools are more likely to have teacher shortages (ibid.), and a recent UK study shows the important role they play in London’s workforce (Small et al., 2018).

A US review suggests young black boys and pupils from low-income backgrounds stand to disproportionately benefit from being taught by a black teacher during primary school, improving longer-term attainment and increasing their likelihood of staying in education (Gershenson et al., 2017).

Practitioners, experts and young people talked during the interviews, focus groups, and steering group discussions about the need for a more diverse teaching workforce. This is particularly relevant in London, where participants felt that ethnically- and culturally-diverse pupil intakes were not currently reflected in the capital’s school workforce. While all pupils in London stand to gain from a more ethnically diverse teaching workforce, interviewees felt boys from black Caribbean and poor white backgrounds could disproportionately benefit.

“I remember in my school, Year 7, Year 8, we didn’t really have a science teacher, or anything, and the science lessons were a joke for us. Then in Year 9, a lady from Jamaica [came]. We were in a predominantly black school, and I think she understood what the needs of the students were and she saw us as individuals, rather than a black collective. She was actually really dedicated to us learning, and us actually understanding science, and also us getting the grades.”

Young person during a focus group



What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Success factors for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce include:

- Actively supporting practitioners from less well-represented backgrounds into, and then during, their training, for example through mentoring and financial support;
- Ensuring hiring practices are fair for ‘frontline’, middle, and senior leadership posts, for example by advertising roles both internally and externally, and ensuring the hiring process is transparent in terms of the skills and attributes required, and;
- Improving working conditions, through quality leadership that encourages all staff to remain at an organisation.

(Carver-Thomas, 2017; Donlevy et al., 2016).

Recent research undertaken by LKMco for the GLA and its Teach London partners examined how to improve teacher recruitment and retention in London. The research notes that non-white teachers are far more likely than their white colleagues to experience workplace discrimination. The research found that particularly important retention factors for black and minority ethnic teachers included improvements in:

- Relationships with colleagues;
- Opportunities to work in different schools;
- Professional development and career progression opportunities;
- Support on return from maternity, paternity and adoption leave;
- Opportunities to participate in paid internships as a teacher, and;
- Engagement between schools, parents and the wider community.

(Small et al., 2018).

What needs to happen next?

Teachers and school leaders from a diverse range of backgrounds need to be recruited and retained in London, as well as supported into leadership roles. Work is already underway in this respect in London, including:

- Efforts to diversify the new teacher workforce as part of Teach London,²⁶ and;
- Getting Ahead London,²⁷ which seeks to increase the number of school leaders from minority ethnic backgrounds and women.

Additional strategies could include:

- Supporting the uptake of school-based training places by existing school support staff, particularly those who are from the communities in which schools are based, and;
- Identifying and sharing examples of effective practice in supporting new teachers’ living costs, which can be prohibitively high in London. LKMco’s Teach London report identifies possible ways of addressing this, including compensating the costs of travel and the repayment of student loans, schools offering accommodation on site, or in housing sourced by the school community (Small et al., 2018).

²⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/teach-london>

²⁷ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/improving-standards-schools-and-teaching/getting-ahead-london-creating-londons-next-headteachers>



4.6 Enhancing pupils' access to work experience opportunities, careers guidance, and support into employment

Why is this important?

High quality careers education and opportunities can be particularly beneficial for young people from poorer or minority ethnic backgrounds, and younger pupils of primary age. A sizeable body of this evidence is from the US (Hughes et al., 2016; Hattie, 2009).

Some careers education programmes have a positive impact on young people's understanding of different occupations, training options, and job-search skills, although there is considerable variation in the quality of provision (Hattie, 2009).

How teenagers envisage their futures 'impacts on what becomes of them as working adults', and teenage work experience and careers guidance can improve economic outcomes in later life (Hughes et al., 2016). Careers education can also help young people develop a realistic understanding of the qualifications, skills and training required to access their chosen line of work (Whiston, Li, Goodrich Mitts, & Wright, 2017).

Careers programmes are linked to modest positive academic gains for young people (Hughes et al., 2016), although the evidence in this area is weaker. The importance of quality provision that delivers academic and social benefits for young people is vital, otherwise poor quality careers programmes could simply distract from regular teaching and learning.

Many interviewees and focus group participants saw improving the explicit links between work in school with the outside world as a means for increasing engagement in learning. Several participants also emphasised the potential benefits of more targeted careers work for groups of young people who have been permanently excluded or with a criminal record, among whom black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are over-represented.

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Careers education can take many forms, such as careers mentoring, job shadowing, enterprise activities, and work experience. Common success factors include:

- Personalising the intervention to meet a young person's specific needs;
- Running careers education from an early age (primary level or earlier), and continuing through education;
- Helping young people reflect upon their motivations and strengths;
- Offering individual counselling;
- Helping young people build networks of contacts;
- Young people exploring different options for study and work, in dialogue with a range of adults (including teachers and employers), and;
- Experiencing the world of work.

(Hughes et al., 2016; Hattie, 2009).



What needs to happen next?

Young people need support to make informed and ambitious decisions about their futures, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds (including white free school meal-eligible and many black Caribbean boys in London).

Furthermore, **more targeted support could also be offered to young people across London who have been excluded from mainstream education, helping support their transitions into employment.** Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are disproportionately likely to underachieve academically, face permanent exclusion, and to enter the criminal justice system. These experiences severely limit job prospects, and extra support should be extended to young people in these positions.

Steps towards these aims could include:

- Using funding from the Mayor’s Young Londoner’s Fund to develop programmes of careers support for young and vulnerable pupils,²⁸ an approach also outlined in the Mayor’s Careers for Londoners Action Plan;²⁹
- Inspiring black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys and helping them develop strong networks, enabling them to meet and network with men and women who originate from these communities themselves, who have experience in employment areas the boys are interested in, or who can open them up to new ideas. The Mayor’s Peer Outreach Team³⁰ is actively developing these opportunities as are other organisations across London;
- Commissioning research into ways to support careers guidance and opportunities for young people who have been excluded from school, or who have prior convictions, as there is a dearth of research into this important issue;
- Reviewing the extent to which Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (APs) take advantage of the many careers education opportunities on offer in London, including the London Enterprise Advisors Network (LEAN) and services provided by organisations such as Bounce Back.³¹ Black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys are over-represented in PRUs and APs, so it is important to understand what careers education opportunities are available to pupils in these settings, to help mitigate the consequences of permanent exclusion on the boys’ employment prospects, and;³²
- Helping young people working with youth offending teams to gain access to careers education opportunities, including work experience, by growing a network of employers who can provide such opportunities.

²⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/young-londoners/mayors-young-londoners-fund>

²⁹ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/careers_for_londoners_action_plan.pdf

³⁰ <https://www.london.gov.uk/peer-outreach-workers>

³¹ <http://bouncebackproject.com/>

³² <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/reducing-barriers-social-mobility/enterprise-adviser-network>



4.7 Encouraging peer support among young people

Why is this important?

Peer support – for example through peer tutoring or mentoring – can have a positive impact academically and socially for all pupils of both primary and secondary age. This is particularly the case for pupils with forms of special educational needs and disabilities (particularly emotional and behavioural disorders), or low prior attainment (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018e; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013). These approaches can benefit both the tutors and the tutees (ibid.).

Mentoring – the pairing of a younger partner with an older peer or adult – can have a positive impact on learning and educational outcomes, although positive impact tends to be associated more with non-academic outcomes such as attitudes to school (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018f). The specific impact of mentoring on academic outcomes is mixed (ibid.).

Despite the positive impact of particular forms of peer support in relation to particular outcomes, peer tutoring and mentoring carry risks if poorly executed, and interventions therefore require particular attention in terms of delivery. For example, negative peer interactions are linked with lower attainment and educational engagement (Hattie, 2009).

Experts, practitioners and young people felt positive peer interactions and support could be beneficial for black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys, both in terms of their academic performance and personal, social and emotional growth.

What are the key features of good practice in this area?

Peer support can take different forms, including:

- Mentoring, between peers of similar or different ages;
- Cross-age tutoring, which involves pairing older students with younger tutees;
- Peer-assisted learning, in which peers undertake structured learning sessions (for example, in maths or reading), and;
- Reciprocal tutoring, where peers take it in turns to be tutor and tutee.

Success factors for peer support include:

- Ensuring interactions between peers are underpinned by a clear structure and objectives;
- Providing pupils with support and training, to help underpin quality interactions (such as questioning frames, or training and feedback for tutors);
- Ensuring interactions take place over a sustained period of time;
- Ensuring an age gap of around two years for cross-age tutor pairs, and;
- Ensuring interactions supplement and do not replace regular teaching.
(Education Endowment Foundation, 2018e, 2018f; Connor & Waddell, 2015; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013).



What needs to happen next?

Young people in London should have access to peer support, particularly during the primary and secondary school transition. Promising work is already underway in London in the form of Stepping Stones, first piloted in three secondary schools in 2016/17, and now expanding into a further 15.³³ Franklin Scholars³⁴ and Fitzrovia Youth in Action³⁵ also provide examples of existing models.

In addition to this work, further opportunities to generate positive peer support could include:

- Providing specific guidance and support for schools with high proportions of black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys, which may include sharing emerging findings from the Stepping Stones programmes, and;
- Conducting a feasibility study (given the relative lack of evidence relating to the impact of mentoring during the KS4 to KS5 transition) to explore the potential to expand peer mentoring into colleges and sixth forms, to support students transitioning between year 11 and post-16 study.

³³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/initiatives-schools-pupils/stepping-stones-2018/about-stepping-stones>

³⁴ <https://www.franklinscholars.org/>

³⁵ <http://www.fya.org.uk/new-peer-mentoring/>



5. Concluding remarks

By the age of 16, attainment among London's most disadvantaged young people lags behind their more advantaged peers, which has an adverse effect on these young Londoners' life chances. Two of the largest underperforming groups in London are black Caribbean and free school meal-eligible white boys who, alongside worse educational outcomes, are more likely to experience exclusion and involvement in the criminal justice system. However, this research also highlights that while these cohorts underachieve on average, the boys are first and foremost individuals and their needs should be addressed accordingly.

This research was undertaken in order to address these longstanding and stubborn inequalities, and is the result of an extensive literature review and consultation with practitioners and young people across London. It sets out steps that can be taken to secure improvements in outcomes for these boys by stakeholders across London including City Hall, schools, colleges, and frontline practitioners.

While all young people in London stand to benefit from the seven 'best bet' action areas identified in this research, enhancing provision in these areas could disproportionately benefit black Caribbean and white free school meal-eligible boys. Furthermore, the areas overlap, and addressing provision in one area could well improve provision in another. For example, enhancing access to early years provision across London could well lead to improvements in the work taking place to engage parents and families.

There is a great deal of good work taking place across London and the country more broadly, some of which is highlighted in this report and which could be used to model future strategy.



6. Appendices

6.1 Interviewee, focus group, and steering group participants

We are grateful to the following individuals and schools for the time they gave us during our research.

Interviewees:

- Alison Kriel, CEO, AMAYA Trust.
- Andy King, Deputy Headteacher, Longlands Primary School.
- Chris Brett, Senior Assistant Principal, Harris Boys Academy Dulwich.
- David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser at Lambeth, and Honorary Fellow at the School of Education, Durham University.
- Jack Reynolds, Director, Football Beyond Borders.
- Martin Bisp, CEO, Empire Fighting Chance.
- Peer Outreach Workers at the GLA.
- Sherry Davis, Consultation Manager, Waltham Forest Youth Offending Service.
- Steve Strand, Professor of Education, University of Oxford.
- Tom Knott, Assistant Principal, Totteridge Academy.
- Tony Sewell, CEO, Generating Genius

Focus groups:

- The Mayor's Lynk Up Crew and Peer Outreach Team.
- Harris Boys Academy East Dulwich.
- Longlands Primary School.
- Plumcroft Primary School
- The Totteridge Academy.
- Young people working with the GLA.

Steering group participants:

- Anthony Doudle, Head of Primary School Improvement, Islington Council.
- Chris Jones, Head of Department, Cardinal Hume Catholic School.
- Danny Swift, Head of Operations, The Difference.
- Emma Simpson, Islington School Improvement Team, Islington Council.
- Everol Halliburton, TBAP Lead for Safeguarding & Welfare, TBAP Multi-Academy Trust.
- Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser at Lambeth, and Honorary Fellow at the School of Education, Durham University.
- Jackie Jones, Secondary School Improvement Adviser, London Borough of Lewisham.
- Jeff Cole, School Improvement Adviser, London Borough of Islington.
- Jon Abbey, CEO, Camden Learning.
- Julia Scannell, Lead Improvement Partner, Haringey Education Partnership.
- Kate Chhatwal, CEO, Challenge Partners.
- Kris Wodehouse, Regional Director for London and the South East, Achievement for All.
- Ruth Browne, Executive Head of Commissioning and School Support, TBAP Multi-Academy Trust.
- Sarah Worth, The Difference.



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³⁶ This literature review is outlined in our database, here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TONi7DbtvHA9WDIaAXN65-bOvGim2u8OLrRQ_sIIWCM/edit#gid=1577724257



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This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.

We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

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Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood

