

Building Back Stronger Annual Report Report on Year 3 (2024-25) of implementation

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Introduction

Camden's education strategy, **Building Back Stronger**, was published in 2022 in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic and in it we challenged ourselves and our partners to ensure that all the young people in our borough have: **a fair start, an excellent school experience and flourishing lives. These three ambitions are each based on the two pillars of equity and excellence.** These ambitions are not based on narrow ideas of attainment but come out of what we see as the core purposes of education. They build on the creative and innovative practice to be found in many Camden settings. These ambitions have been well supported by the determined work we see across Camden from people doing their very best to serve the needs of all children. Our schools do not have to choose between achieving academic excellence or supporting children who start from a position of disadvantage. A system which is better for disadvantaged children is better for everyone.

We were clear in the strategy that we want all our young people to leave Camden schools as ambitious, knowledgeable, intellectually curious, good communicators and collaborators, healthy, creative and enterprising adults. The strategy also reflects Camden's history of social activism, emphasising the importance of our young people becoming socially and morally responsible changemakers, able to contribute positively to their communities and society. These aspirations were captured in Camden's enrichment pledge which committed to providing a range of rich experiences for every child.

Building Back Stronger sets out **a vision for a system-wide approach based on a sense of place, inclusion, collaboration and innovation.** Working with Camden Learning and the Council, school staff, parents, governors, young people, local businesses, statutory partners and community organisations all contributed to the development of the strategy, so it is vital that we are transparent about its implementation and always recognise that our strength is in our partnership approach.

Our action plan to implement the strategy is monitored through an Education Strategy Board, with regular reports of progress against planned activities and milestones relating to each goal. This annual report summarises our achievements during the calendar year 2024 - 2025, highlighting progress towards our milestones, while also identifying key areas for development. The context we work in changes constantly, with new opportunities emerging and new challenges arising, and this report and future action planning reflects that context.

Ambition 1 A Fair Start

By 2030, our ambition is that every child will have a more equal start in life, ensuring that they have the support and skills necessary to succeed in education. We pledged that the outcome gap between children growing up in disadvantage and poverty in Camden and the national average would be narrowed.

We know that the most important period of a child's development is the first five years of their life. However, this is also where poverty first starts to impinge on children's learning and their life chances. At the end of 2019, Camden Council invested in services to support a **child's first 1001 days** to strengthen the offer for *all* parents during pregnancy and in their child's first two years and provide additional, innovative opportunities to identify families needing support. Our ambition of a **Fair Start** for all Camden children builds in this work and has three goals:

- **Thriving children who are ready to learn in school**
- **Rooting schools at the heart of their communities**
- **Parents as prime partners in their children's learning.**

Goal 1: Thriving children who are ready to learn in school

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

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Focus on building the common skillset of the early years workforce across all settings
- Further develop our multi-agency approach to intervening early to identify and support children's speech and language development
- Continue to be at the forefront of innovation in using psychological support to strengthen the emotional and social development between parent and child
- Strengthen our locality based early years partnerships across schools, childminders and nurseries to integrate support for children and families across the age ranges.

Our work to develop a comprehensive offer across the first 1001 days (conception to age 2) has been further developed this year with strategies to engage expectant families whose babies may be at risk of poorer outcomes with appropriate services.

Revised agreements have enabled sharing of maternity data with Money Advice Camden to identify families that could benefit from a **Family Hub Pregnancy Grant** and an antenatal visit from a health visitor. This is in the pilot phase but already resulting in over 300 families seeking and receiving help earlier and providing opportunities to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's outcomes.

Our **Camden Kids Talk** initiative has already shown excellent outcomes in primary school nurseries. During the 2024–25 school year, over 1,700 Camden children received a WellComm screening across 24 settings, supporting early identification of speech, language and communication needs. Screening data shows positive early impact, with the proportion of children identified as having significant communication needs falling from around 39% in the Autumn 2024 term to 23% by the Summer 2025 term. However, we know that we need to reach more children if we are to increase the overall number who meet their expected levels in communication, language and literacy. To that end, this year Camden Kids Talk has also been trialled in Private, Voluntary and Independent nurseries.

To further support school readiness, a new intervention was launched in the summer of 2025, working with a small group of families whose children were due to start reception in September. The intensive programme, delivered twice weekly over four weeks, supported 32 families, 27 living in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. The programme helped almost all the children involved to be toilet trained and to improve their self-care skills.

A new project, led by Public Health, is being launched to further build on the **Family Hub Locality partnerships**, strengthening the relationships with Voluntary and Community sector partners and enabling a more comprehensive understanding of families' engagement with services across the borough.

The government has, this year, launched a new strategy for Early Years and Family Hubs. 'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life', published in July, sets an ambition to break the link between background and success. Locally, We Make Camden commits to giving every child in our borough the best start. Independent research published in the Autumn of 2025 shows that the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers in Camden has narrowed from 4 months in 2022 to 2.5 months in 2024.

Goal 2: Rooting schools at the heart of their communities

The work to develop **Building Back Stronger** focused on the critical role schools play in building a more place-based approach across their local community, particularly in bringing people, services and community resources together. Camden has a wealth of vibrant community-led resources and there is a good-quality support offer of services from the Council and its partners in health, the police, and the voluntary and community sectors. Schools need to be able to access these better and to signpost them in a more personalised way to parents.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Improve information and guidance to schools and families to clarify the 0 to 25 pathways for support, enabling a better shared understanding of how to navigate the system for both professionals and service users
- Bring together a range of services in a team around schools, empowering and establishing the school as a gateway to support, help and guidance
- Grow the skills of school staff to work with more vulnerable children, including strengthening the links between family support workers employed by schools and early help services.

A **Team Around the School** approach, focusing on identifying and supporting children and families where children have moderately high absence rates has been piloting in 2 schools. Staff from the school, Early Help services, school attendance officers, and the Family Hubs meet every 2 weeks to discuss the support needs of specific children and families. The project has provided schools with a better understanding of the services available for families in the borough and in one of the schools, has achieved a 2.5% reduction in absence across the school term. Further discovery work will be undertaken in the coming year to test the approach in different contexts.

Parenting support is a key strand of the Family Hub offer. The parenting team have been delivering parenting courses in local Primary schools with very positive engagement from families. Additionally, the Family Hub Locality Leaders are engaging with Primary schools in their locality, ensuring that services are promoted effectively for families.

The **Family Information Service** is now available through the families.camden.gov.uk website which includes a wealth of information about services for Camden families. The 'look and feel' of the Family Information Service pages will be updated in the coming months to better reflect the Family Hub branding.

Work is underway to join up the work of Family and Youth Hubs. Camden has a network of **Youth Hubs**, some in-house and some provided by the voluntary sector, that provide safe places for young people to meet, seek advice and guidance and access support. Rather than compromise this valuable specialist resource by integrating within Family Hubs for children of all ages, we are retaining our discreet youth services but working to join up the offers for families so that there is 'no wrong front door' and families can access information about support services from wherever is most convenient. Staff are working together to collaborate, share resources and develop shared projects.

Goal 3: Parents as prime partners in their children's learning

Building Back Stronger recognises that when parents are involved in their education, children do better on a wide range of measures. Activities have been undertaken to encourage, support and strengthen that involvement.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Work with parents and schools to develop a structured programme of opportunities for parents to know more about how best to support their children's learning
- Support parents to develop a good home learning environment from the early years onwards
- Ensure every parent has the opportunity to acquire basic digital skills, as well access to a device and connectivity so they can use them.

Camden Council's **Family Learning Team**, with its focus on early intervention and prevention, has continued to target our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families and communities, with the aim of improving life chances, raising children's attainment and closing the disadvantage gap. Family Maths and English courses, for example, provide excellent opportunities for parents to learn how their children are taught and enable them to better support their children at home. In addition, Family Learning programmes address skills and

confidence gaps in parents, allowing them to develop a platform into further learning and employment.

Many students take their first steps back into the world of employment by engaging with Family Learning. 86.7% of students in 2024/25 were female. Programmes delivered to parents, carers and children included initiatives such as the BookTrust programme, the Story Sacks Programme, Family Learning in the Early Years and the Winch Community project. Schools play an important role in these programmes, with classes run in local primary schools, libraries, children's centres and community venues across Camden.

Our provision aims to bring together adults of all ages and backgrounds and to support them in pursuing interests, addressing needs, gaining useful skills, improving their health, or learning how to more effectively support their children who may be struggling at school. In 2025, we continued our focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and will continue to do so in 2026. We delivered our annual **Deaf Day event** for families in partnership with Frank Barnes School and The British Library. Over 200 Families came and engaged with a range of learning activities. 757 adult students were taught in Family Learning in 2024/2025.

In today's digital world it is important to support parents to increase their basic digital skills. Our actions this last year have included provision of a free course to help parents develop their understanding of and competency in **digital literacy skills**. These opportunities are very well-received when taken up, and we are exploring ways to improve participation rates. **Camden's Adult Community Learning Creche** service expanded significantly at the start of the academic year 2024/25, and it now services Family Hubs and some NHS provision in Camden. This provides an additional avenue for our support work for families around physical and emotional wellbeing.

A Fair Start: Next Steps

In 2025–26, we will strengthen early years provision by expanding the **Camden Kids Talk** programme to nine additional schools and piloting the '**Little Steps, Big Success**' summer transition programme to help children start reception ready to learn. We will embed consistent EYFS practice across all provider types through termly joint improvement events and targeted advisory visits, alongside a unified approach to early reading via the Nursery Phonics Working Party. Locality-based partnerships will be deepened through **Family Hub networks**, improving referrals and early intervention. Finally, we will roll out health and wellbeing training for early years staff and develop shared principles for smooth transitions from nursery to Key Stage 1.

Ambition 2 An Excellent School Experience

Our ambition is that by 2030 we will ensure that all young people leave Camden schools as knowledgeable, intellectually curious and collaborative learners who drive change for social good, with skills and achievements in a broad range of areas, including outstanding academic performance; and, through a relentless focus on inclusion and equity, we will improve the learning and outcomes of children from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups so there is no gap between them and national averages.

We are proud of our schools in Camden, and they perform well measured against the public accountability framework. All our schools have been found to be providing a good or outstanding quality of education by Ofsted and overall exam outcomes are above national averages. Their leaders are inspiring and the people working in them are committed and passionate. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, children from poorer homes continue to perform less well than those from homes with more obvious advantages and there are differences between groups of pupils. *Building Back Stronger* therefore set out a programme of work to ensure that **all children have an excellent school experience**. This work continues to have a challenging context:

- London demographics are causing continuing falling school rolls Economic inequality and the legacy of the pandemic threaten to widen the attainment gap between better off and more disadvantaged children
- The labour market for teachers, head teachers and support staff presents particular difficulties
- There has been a significant increase in demand for SEND support, particularly since the pandemic, as the number of children with very complex needs has grown considerably.

The world of work is also changing rapidly through the growth of AI and other new technologies. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for Camden to be at the forefront of educational innovation given the wealth of tech businesses and resources in the borough.

When we published *Building Back Stronger*, we set out ten Goals to help achieve our Ambition of An Excellent School Experience but in 2023 added an eleventh Goal: Improving school attendance.

Goal 4: A good local school place for every child

Building Back Stronger highlighted the financial insecurity of schools with falling rolls and the risks this presented to staffing and the quality of education. The strategy highlighted an increasing need for schools to consider a range of strategic collaborative arrangements, including federating to ensure their future.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Develop training for school governors and headteachers on promoting collaboration, proactive scenario planning and new organisational models

- Expand the scope of Camden Learning’s annual standards’ meetings with schools to address future planning for collaboration
- Ensure all schools are supported to produce an action plan addressing viability and collaboration opportunities, rooted in Camden’s School Places Plan agreed by the Council

One of our four foundations for success – a collaborating and federating system – is rooted in a belief that schools are stronger and more effective if they work in partnership, and so too is our local education system. This means that more children and young people can thrive in any of our schools in Camden.

As in many parts of the country, schools in Camden are continuing to experience the challenges of **falling pupil rolls**, with the financial and staffing insecurity that invariably generates. Our updated forecast data continues to show suppressed birth rates within London and Camden, alongside the continued effect of reductions in families moving into Camden. Alongside this, the Council, in common with most authorities, has seen an increase in both the number and the acuity of need for pupils with SEND, putting significant pressure on our High Needs Funding Block and seeing an increase in pupils educated outside Camden in non-maintained independent provision.

These factors have created a level of anticipated surplus provision and significant pressure on schools’ and Council budgets that requires both a strategic and coordinated response to ensure the sustainability of our education offer. To address this, the Council, in collaboration with Camden Learning, established a comprehensive **School Sufficiency Programme** in July 2025, with the aim of securing a balanced, high-quality, and inclusive education system for the future. It combines governance, data intelligence, and targeted intervention, with a focus on three key areas – Admissions, School Finance and Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND). Preventing schools from becoming financially vulnerable, and thus subject to unplanned change, is important in maintaining strong, safe and open communities. In September 2025, all Camden schools were issued with a school sufficiency dashboard that set out relative areas of risk against these three priorities. A graduated support offer was initiated, with external financial advisers, additional SEND advisers providing additional guidance and support for schools with higher levels of risk.

Camden’s **School Place Planning Group** has had a key role in tracking and analysing school- and borough-level data, reviewing progress and emerging issues, and making recommendations on actions required, which since July 2025 also includes receiving regular updates on the School Sufficiency Programme. The Group now meets termly and involves headteachers, chairs of governors and both Church of England and Catholic Diocese representatives.

Working in partnership is one of the most effective ways to address these pressures so schools can maintain their quality and viability. We have seen many positive partnerships across schools this past year. These have ranged from sharing ideas and practice through to structural collaborations, with shared staff, leadership and governance. Different types of partnership are appropriate and deliver benefits in different situations. Schools are, and will continue to be, part of multiple partnerships.

We have continued to raise awareness of the benefits offered through partnership working by providing data, information and guidance, by organising development and training sessions for headteachers and governors, and by helping schools to broker and build partnerships. By the end of the school year 2024/5, we saw an increase in the number of school partnerships led by an executive headteacher, with 45% of Camden schools now in a form of partnership with another school:

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

A good school place for every child also means a good quality physical environment, which means that we must ensure that our education buildings and estate are well looked after and maintained. Through our **Schools Capital Board**, which brings together services which are key to school buildings, we have now completed a full survey of the entire Camden school estate, including condition surveys and capacity and utilisation analyses, key financial factors and individual school-level information. The next step will be to commence the scoping and design stages of our school assets capital programme, starting from the beginning of 2026. This will be prepared and reviewed in conjunction with the school sufficiency programme to ensure strategic alignment.

Goal 5: Every child reading by 7 (ECR7)

When we developed our strategy, we realised that we needed to focus more on the 20% of our children who still do not reach the expected levels in reading and writing by 11. Research indicates that only one in eight children who do not reach these levels by 11 achieves at least four good GCSE results at 16. While current results indicate we have a good overall performance in Primary years benchmarked against both London and national statistics, we did not want to accept that so many children, many with low family incomes, would start secondary school unable to access the full curriculum. We therefore identified a challengingly ambitious target – that every child should be a reader by the age of 7.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Revisit the evidence about effective approaches to the teaching of reading, with a focus on support for and monitoring of implementation within schools.
- Organise a Camden campaign to encourage a love of reading and a community of readers involving a broad range of partners, for example business as well as libraries .
- Build on success in reading with a major initiative to ensure Camden children can speak and write with clarity and confidence by 11.T

Camden Learning continues to drive forward the borough-wide ambition of **Every Child Reading by 7**, with a strong focus on improving early reading outcomes through targeted support, professional development, and inclusive practice. Over the past year sixteen primary schools with the lowest phonics and Key Stage 1 performance have engaged consistently in tailored support to strengthen reading provision. This has included 15 well-attended Professional Development sessions covering reading pedagogy from Early Years through to Year 7, alongside bespoke one-to-one support requested by schools.

Camden Learning has worked closely with school Literacy Leaders, Early Years Leaders, and SENCOs, in partnership with organisations such as Bookmark and Coram Beanstalk, to build a borough-wide network of expertise and collaboration. A key strand of this work has been challenging the misconception that some pupils with SEND should not be taught phonics. Camden Learning has actively supported SENCOs and teaching assistants to advocate for every child's right to learn to decode, focusing on adapting teaching methods rather than excluding pupils from phonics instruction.

Schools are now reporting improvements in assessment, phonics tracking, and targeted support strategies. There is a noticeable rise in expectations, with reading increasingly embedded across the curriculum and a growing emphasis on reading for pleasure. This collective effort is helping to ensure that more Camden children are on track to become confident readers by age seven. **Camden ranked 6th out of 153 local authorities in England for phonics outcomes in 2025**, improving year on year for the last 3 years, with **outcomes for disadvantaged pupils ranked 2nd out of 153 local authorities** and the achievement gap narrowed to 9%, compared to a national gap of 17%.

Building on this success, Camden Learning is now extending its focus to ensure children can speak and write with clarity and confidence by age 11. A borough-wide oracy and debating project, led by Eleanor Palmer School and involving several Camden schools, is enhancing teacher pedagogy around spoken language. The initiative is helping pupils develop debate skills, build confidence, and foster positive attitudes towards public speaking, with progress being tracked across literacy outcomes.

In parallel, the *Developing Communication and Language Teaching and Learning in Early Years and Year 1* programme—led by Torriano School and supported by schools including Richard Cobden, Netley, Edith Neville, and Brecknock—is working to close the vocabulary gap and create language-rich environments, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

These initiatives are already showing impact, with successful inter-school debating and public-speaking competitions held in partnership with South Hampstead's Debate Hub. Camden Learning's commitment to early literacy, inclusive practice, and high expectations continues to shape a borough where every child is supported to read, speak, and write with confidence.

Goal 6: Knowledgeable and skilled leaders and teachers who love working and learning in Camden

Building Back Stronger sets out our commitment to building a system which will inspire a strong sense of pride and belonging in all our children and young people and the staff who work with them. We want our schools to be exceptional centres of high-quality teaching and learning where all our children thrive. All those working in our schools should enjoy their

jobs, have the knowledge and skills to do them well and feel appreciated for all they do for the children in our schools. An excellent workforce requires excellent professional learning and development, and that endeavour continues to be an important focus for Camden Learning.

In the strategy we pledged to:

- Embed a culture of school-led development by initiating and supporting a range of collaborations within and across schools to develop the quality of teaching and increase its impact on learning.
- Develop a distinctive and structured Camden offer of high-quality professional learning opportunities bespoke to individual schools and across schools.
- Make sure that our improvement work with schools is grounded in research and evidence-informed practice.
- Develop a sustainable model that enables schools to support staff wellbeing.

In the last year Camden Learning launched a refreshed **Professional Development offer** for teachers, school leaders and support staff, having listened to schools' priorities and feedback. Our analysis of attendee responses to our professional development sessions demonstrates a well-received, high-impact offer: 97.1% said the professional learning objectives were clearly defined and met, and 96.6% found the learning useful in their work.

The offer includes an **Early Career Framework support**, enriched local programmes alongside statutory induction, and a suite of leadership development opportunities, from middle-leadership training to National Professional Qualifications and system-leadership coaching. Our offer emphasises evidence-informed practice, networking, and bespoke support, ensuring Camden educators at every career stage have access to high-quality, collaborative professional development. In the academic year 2025-26, Camden Learning began a new partnership with UCL delivering the **Early Career Teacher Entitlement (ECTE)**. The new structure requires a wider team of facilitators whom we have recruited from our middle leaders in school, the majority of whom have completed a **National Professional Qualification (NPQ)** with us.

Camden Learning has also partnered with UCL to deliver a **National Professional Qualification (NPQ)** programme with a 50% increase in take-up and 67 candidates due to start an NPQ this academic year. Camden Learning will offer the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders (NPQSL) and NPQSEN again, as well as an inaugural National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) group. The final NPQSL cohort with the previous Lead Provider all passed, sustaining our 100% pass rate over 7 cohorts.

We have Developed and expanded communities of learning through our **School-Led Learning Hubs** including those for SEND and Primary Maths, providing collaborative spaces for research, resource development, and school-to-school visits. This has included an **Adaptive Teaching and Inclusive Pedagogy Hub**, led by Parliament Hill School, with teachers attending from 8 Camden Secondary settings. The hub focused on evidence-informed adaptive teaching strategies. Teachers engaged in collaborative dialogue, modelled strategies, and accessed shared resources. **KS5 Chemistry and Physics Networks, in collaboration with Francis Crick Institute and North London Science Learning Partnership**, again ran successfully with 9 secondary schools represented and positive feedback from colleagues that the sessions better equipped them for the delivery of KS5 teaching.

The Headteachers of all Camden maintained schools have been offered professional **executive coaching** as part of their membership of Camden Learning with 31 headteachers accessing the offer during the last year. 80% reported a significant or moderate improvement in their personal resilience because of coaching, with 80% reporting that their decision-making process was now more effective. This emphasises our commitment to supporting school staff at each stage of their career pathway.

Goal 7: An inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening curriculum in all our schools

Building Back Stronger emphasises the value of a broad and balanced curriculum designed to develop the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable children to thrive in the 21st century. The strategy highlights the role of the curriculum in bridging equity gaps and the importance of ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Give active support to schools in developing an inclusive, inspiring, creative and horizon-broadening curriculum, in line with our definition of the purposes of education.
- Share the work underway in some schools who use the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to inspire others about their potential for transformational change.
- Establish an initiative for students to work more creatively beyond their school walls by creating experiential opportunities to learn about the world of work or social action, including volunteering.
- Explore the possibility of a research project on creativity in schools with an academic partner.
- Identify good practice in incorporating specific life skills in the curriculum, for example, managing personal finances and share across schools.

To date the **Inspiring Inclusion** programme has supported 479 Camden pupils through intensive mentoring and reached over 1,100 via workshops and career events. During the last year 51 mentees from racially minoritised backgrounds have started mentoring across the six schools, representing 47–55% progress toward targets in some schools, with overall delivery on track against the National Lottery goal of 90 mentees. All six schools have engaged with high-profile career opportunities for students, though workshops are scheduled for the next term. Core Professional Development (CPD) sessions co-designed by young people are now planned for delivery in the coming year, and Youth Voice sessions are scheduled to ensure that young people's perspectives inform programme development.

Camden Learning has run termly **Secondary & Primary Subject Networks** for Art, Music, PE and Design and Technology led by both Camden and external experts and the majority of schools represented at meetings. Most of our **Secondary Subject Network** leads are now

run by middle leaders from within Camden schools, with some networks run by specialists. Last year the sessions attracted attendance of 74%, the highest to date. Feedback from attendees about the quality of the sessions was universally positive and frequently confirmed that useful work had been done on raising achievement.

In 20224-25 we facilitated a successful **Mentoring and Support for Curriculum Leaders** initiative across four primary schools led by Christ Church Primary, providing tailored support to new and inexperienced curriculum leaders across Camden. The initiative built leadership capacity, improved subject knowledge, and boosted confidence, resulting in enhanced curriculum provision for pupils. Participants reported that they valued the practical, non-judgemental peer-to-peer approach, which fostered professional relationships and accelerated improvements in practice.

In April 2025, **Camden Music** ran a spectacular showcase of talent as over 1,800 children and young people from Camden's primary, secondary, and special schools participated in the Camden Schools' Music Festival at the iconic Royal Albert Hall. Over the year, 3,600 pupils took part in Camden Music activities and during the last year our Music Service ran 41 musical groups and ensembles, including two new Steel Bands, the Camden Youth Orchestra, Early Years Music Making, and Voyagers, our inclusive music ensemble. This also included:

- 1,750 pupils in 31 schools beginning their musical journey through our Whole-Class Ensemble Teaching programme.
- 1,141 students receiving instrumental or vocal lessons in school with a Camden Music tutor.
- 698 students joining out-of-school activities to sing, learn an instrument or play in a group.

In the coming year we are planning a second Camden-wide Art Biennale event, as well as a research report capturing how Camden schools successfully meet the aims of our enrichment pledge. The new national curriculum is anticipated to include greater emphasis on arts, life skills and managing personal finances, so ensuring that Camden schools are well placed to deliver this curriculum will also be a focus in the coming year.

Goal 8: Harnessing technology to improve learning, schools and our local system

This strategic goal addresses the digital divide between better off and disadvantaged families, which came into such stark relief during the pandemic. Unequal access to devices, connectivity, space to study, and access to adults with the time and skills to support children in their learning all contribute to widened inequalities. This goal also looks to grow teachers' skills and confidence in planning and providing remote learning, and in using digital technology as an enabler of learning.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- **Develop Camden's potential for children learning together across schools, localities and even countries.**

- Use Camden's connections with tech industries to support learning, develop career opportunities and stimulate innovation.
- Use technology to help break down the barriers to learning, through stimulating thinking and action about more imaginative models of inclusion.

Camden Learning has continued to provide high-quality materials, training and support to ensure an inspiring **computing curriculum** to our primary schools through our Camden Learning Centre offer (CLC). This has included the Service-Level Agreement offer for schools which targets schools' current needs, centred around physical computing and 'learning by doing', utilising up-to-date, age-appropriate and inclusive educational equipment. Sessions develop students' digital literacy and physical computing skills, and support teacher development. Sessions are held in school or at the London AI Campus, where the service is based. Scoping has begun to pilot industry speakers presenting CLC sessions to integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics (STEAM) careers into the primary computing curriculum delivery.

A cross-organisational working group composed of local expert school leaders, Camden Council and Camden Learning teams are collaborating on the delivery of the refreshed **Digital Learning plan**, which focuses on 'three pillars' of Digital Leadership, Digital Learner and Digital Foundations. Recent achievements include a strengthened CPD offer, focused on AI and digital skills and centred around online and in-person learning opportunities; the collation of best practice case studies in the use of AI from across primary, secondary and special schools; and the development and dissemination of a model AI policy. A series of three "digital tools at teatime"/after-school online sessions on practical uses of AI for teachers were led by EdTech expert from Parliament Hill, Joysy John. Survey results demonstrated the sessions were well attended and highly rated in terms of usefulness for teachers. The London AI Campus has also become a hub for teachers and Camden's education leaders. Sessions have included: an AI in Education Department for Education pilot; Educate Ventures training on AI; and Google for Education's Gemini & AI Bootcamp. These have provided teachers with hands-on experience of using AI tools to enhance teaching, learning, and efficiency.

At the **London AI Campus**, a collaboration between Google, Camden Learning and Camden Council, a remarkable year was completed, with the rollout of its flagship AI Connect programme, after-school sessions through its Opportunity Centre and expansion of its CPD offer. For AI Connect, the first cohort of 30 students from across Camden's ten secondary schools completed their first year, with outstanding student feedback and high, maintained student participation. Highlights have included completing the No Black Boxes project, which explores AI through a robotics project led by neuroscience researchers from University College London's (UCL) Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, as well as a visit to the UCL East Computing Department and meeting a range of speakers including Google's Vice President. Students also reported forming positive and constructive relationships with their professional mentors, drawn from STEAM employers including Google, Google DeepMind, AstraZeneca and Springer Nature. A second cohort were welcomed in November 2025. See Goal 13 for further information on the Opportunity Centre.

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

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

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Improve transition into schools, between phases and settings, beginning with a focused and well-researched initiative on primary to secondary.
- Improve support for pupils admitted in-year or in-phase.
- Integrate the Transition to Adulthood initiative into the 16+ curriculum to support students' health and wellbeing as they transition to further or higher education, training or work.

During 2024–25, Camden Learning has focused on strengthening Year 6 to Year 7 transition processes through collaborative reviews with primary headteachers, secondary transition leads, and key staff. The data transfer system was refined to better align with secondary school needs, reduce workload for primaries through pre-populated fields, and introduce RAG ratings for clarity, alongside enhanced confidential data sharing for vulnerable pupils. We have also updated our **“Wave Goodbye, Say Hello” guidance**, which was distributed to schools and parents, promoting best practice and supporting families. In the coming year we will review the impact of the updated processes with schools, refreshing transition guidance with new case studies and research from other boroughs, exploring digital formats, and delivering a dedicated transition professional development session for schools in March 2026.

We helped schools prepare Year 6 pupils for a smooth transition to Key Stage 3 by running two events for Year 6 teachers: a **‘New to Year 6 day’** and a **‘KS2 SATs focus day’** on English and maths. In 2025, 73% of pupils in Camden achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. This is a 1ppt increase on 2024 and well above 2025 national results (62%) and 5% above the London results (68%) placing Camden Key Stage 2 outcomes 8th nationally and in the highest 5% in the country.

Camden Learning has also piloted approaches to improving **oracy and metacognition in Year 7**, led by Parliament Hill School with participation from Acland Burghley School, focusing on how school staff can improve disadvantaged students' confidence in speaking, enhancing their metacognitive awareness, increasing classroom engagement, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Project Health Resilience (PHR), a health literacy programme designed to empower young people aged 16-19 to understand and access healthcare, was delivered in 2023/24 in Camden along with 7 other London Boroughs. 11 sessions on vaccinations and screening were delivered to 155 pupils (29 from Camden) across 8 settings from 5 London Boroughs. The programme has undergone an evaluation by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), which showed that PHR improves trust in healthcare professionals, confidence in accessing healthcare, and awareness of different health services among young people. Moving forwards, the programme is partnering with Raise Camden; a taskforce launched by Camden Council and the Institute of Health Equity, to help tackle child poverty and health inequities.

Goal 10: Children's health and well-being are supported through the ethos, curriculum and practices of school life

Building Back Stronger identified the growth in mental health problems in children and their parents. Schools continue to identify this as a major issue. Linking mental and physical health, the strategy aimed to make real impact in this area of work, by supporting schools who wanted to build health and well-being approaches into the ethos, curriculum and practices of school life. We also make the link between this area of work and the avoidance of exclusions and improvements to attendance, given the links between mental health problems, behaviour difficulties and school refusal.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Build the improvement of health and wellbeing, especially mental health, into educational renewal through joint working across health and education, building on our trauma informed work.
- Continue to provide and further develop mental and healthy lifestyle improvement programmes including targeted interventions, for pupils in most need.
- Develop approaches to food in school which link up with boroughwide work on food poverty and health, including obesity prevention.

The Health Improvement team based in the Health and Wellbeing Department provides direct support to school through a comprehensive offer of health, wellbeing and mental health support. Schools continue to take part in **Camden's Healthy Schools programme** aligned to Healthy Schools London. 71% of Camden schools were engaged in Healthy Schools at the end of the summer term of 2025. The Greater London Authority (GLA) has been refreshing the programme for a September 2025 launch and in preparation Camden has adapted our tool to reflect local priorities and streamline paperwork and process. The new approach has been piloted with 4 Camden schools, all of which progressed to Silver awards and are working towards Gold.

Mental health remains a priority for schools. We delivered staff workshops in 10 settings (including primary, secondary, Early Years, and governor training) on topics like trauma-informed approaches, staff wellbeing, and children's resilience. Alongside this, 28 parent/carer workshops were held in 17 schools, reaching 270 parents, to ensure consistency between school and home. Pupils also took part in 28 workshops on friendships, resilience, and stress management across 13 schools, with 888 pupils attending. Feedback from staff, parents, and pupils was very positive, highlighting the practical strategies as particularly helpful.

The **Wellbeing Champions programme** continues to run, with 132 pupils across 7 primary schools undertaking training to support mental health and wellbeing and design and deliver wellbeing initiatives in their school. School staff engage in termly Mental Health Network and training events with 66 staff attending and future topics and areas for development identified. 9 schools opted into the anonymised staff wellbeing survey for the 2024-2025 academic year (7 primaries, 2 secondaries). After receiving their individualised reports, each setting was offered support to help make improvements to their whole school approach to mental health and staff wellbeing.

Camden's pioneering **Trauma-Informed Practice** (TIPiC) approach to supporting the wellbeing of children and young people – led by Camden's Educational Psychology Service – is increasingly embedded across Camden schools. 38 schools in Camden have been involved, with many also requesting refresher training. Universal 'top up' training is rolled out three times a year for all school practitioners and continues to be free. TIPiC training is included in the ECT (early career teachers) training. All of this ensures sustainability across Camden. TIPiC now has a community strand and an early years strand, both showing high engagement and clear impact. Pre- and post-training staff skills checklists continue to show an increase in knowledge and confidence across all areas following the initial training, and long-term data show sustained, systemic impact. Deep-dive case studies of three schools, participating in 2024/2025, revealed themes of them using the TIPiC framework to nurture more resilient, compassionate, and connected communities. Notable common impacts include enhanced staff cohesion and improved consistency in behaviour.

Families for Life, a multi-component, healthy eating and physical activity programme, and Family Kitchen healthy cooking programmes continue to be popular with families with 20 programmes running, attended by a total of 172 primary aged pupils from 80 families. Pre- and post-evaluation results showed over half of the children (54%) reporting an increase in fruit consumption and 46% reporting an increase in vegetable consumption after the programme.

The Street Tag app-based **physical activity challenge** was launched in Camden in 2024. 13 schools, including three secondaries, participated in two 8-week seasons between May 2024 and Feb 2025. 235 users took over 52 million steps, travelling a combined 43,360 miles. 32% of users who engaged in both seasons increased their activity levels from 'fairly active' (doing less than 30 mins per week) to 'active' (doing more than 30 mins per day). Schools are also offered PE support through termly PE network meetings with 55 PE leads engaging from 14 schools. In March 2025, Camden hosted its first **Active Girls Festival** with over 250 pupils from 10 primary schools taking part in fun activities to inspire girls to try new sports and set up active groups in their schools. 91% said they would recommend the event to a friend. As a result, 7 school-based active girls' groups joined the new Camden Active Girls network. Two primary schools received funding and support to run weekly girls-only multisport clubs for Year 5 pupils, led by an inspirational female coach. Feedback showed 67% of pupils reported greater enjoyment of physical activity and increased confidence in trying new sports.

The Health Improvement Team re-launched the **Food in Schools Network** in March 2024, holding three meetings with 18 staff from 14 schools. In Summer 2025, these were combined with the Design Technology network to boost attendance. Through the network, 15 schools received funding for classroom cooking equipment. Additionally, 55 Waitrose Cookery School sessions reached over 1,300 pupils from 33 schools. A separate **Food Growing network** ran two meetings in 2024 with 24 attendees from 14 schools, leading to partnerships with community gardeners and tailored support. The Mill Lane Community Garden was created with five raised beds, including one for a local primary school and one for the community. The garden centre will run quarterly sessions for students, focusing on SEND pupils. OmVed Gardens continued its partnership with a local school, delivering 34 outdoor education sessions to 180 pupils on topics like seeds, compost, edible gardens, and nature.

Goal 11: Improving school attendance

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

Our pledge is to:

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

In 2024-25 we have enhanced data and insight for schools providing bespoke attendance data booklets for each school, enabling benchmarking and identification of priority cohorts and also strengthened professional networks and training, including regular **attendance network meetings** bringing school leaders together to review trends and share best practice, supported by dedicated training for attendance officers and leads. This has been supported by a monthly newsletter and a comprehensive range of resources to schools to support their practice.

Targeted campaigns and pupil engagement initiatives have included the borough-wide ‘Every School Day Counts’ campaign and a pupil-led attendance video project and **peer mentor program** with Fitzrovia Youth in Action, reaching over 220 young people and raising awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.

Three **School Inclusion Support Officers** have been deployed to visit each maintained school at least once a term (more frequently for schools with the greatest attendance challenges) and assist schools to identify the most appropriate support for those pupils at the highest risk of non-attendance. Multi-agency work has taken place involving Camden Learning, Early Help, Public Health and Children Social Care to pilot a **‘team around the school’** approach to address barriers for pupils with 10–20% absence, fostering closer collaboration between schools and family support services.

In 2024-25 the focus on attendance delivered improvements, with 22 of our 38 primary schools now being above national average, compared to just 10 in 2023/24. Of the remaining primary schools, eight were less than 1% below national average in 2024/25 (compared to 18 in 2023/24). Overall attendance at five secondary schools was above national average in 2024/25 (compared to four in 2023/24) and there was one school at less than 1% below national average (compared to two in 2023/24). Four of our secondary schools remain more than 1% below national average, and they remain a priority for additional targeted support. Ensuring better school attendance will continue to be a priority in the coming year.

Goal 12: Ambitious, inclusive schools

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

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Recruit and develop headteachers and governors as leaders of social justice.
- Increase the diversity of governors to better reflect the school population.
- Establish an initiative to accelerate Black and Global Majority leadership progression in schools and keep under tight review.
- Develop the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum, particularly as it relates to healthy relationships and sex education, and address important issues such as gender-based violence and transitioning.
- Develop a new SEND strategy which focuses on making our local provision the right provision in a coherent, connected system, building knowledge, expertise and capacity to meet increasing need and identifying early and acting early to support children and their parents.

Camden Learning has promoted the voices of Black and Global Majority Heritage school governors through case studies, leadership showcases, and representation in borough-wide forums. This has included supporting the **Global Majority Governors' Network** developed in partnership with Islington Council to host sessions on anti-racist leadership, neurodiversity, and inclusive governance, fostering peer support and shared learning. We have recruited governors at events and settings such as the Windrush celebration, Camden Melas, and secondary school transition fairs to increase applications from underrepresented groups. We have also undertaken our **governors' annual diversity survey**, now in its fourth year, and participation continues to improve. While White British governors remain overrepresented (60% against 35.4% borough population), there has been a modest increase in representation among first-time governors from Global Majority backgrounds. In the last year a cohort of 13 young adults (aged 18–30) were recruited to sit on Camden school governing boards as **Young Governor Associate Members** to address age imbalances and bring fresh perspectives to school leadership.

There have been proactive steps to address under-representation in school senior leadership roles by launching the **Black, Global Majority Heritage (BGMH) Educators Network**. This initiative provides mentoring and shadowing opportunities with school leaders, creates a supportive community for BGMH staff, and demystifies pathways to leadership. Through network events featuring inspiring keynote speakers, the programme empowers educators to advance into leadership roles while fostering belonging and representation. By embedding diversity into workforce planning and leadership development, Camden Learning is building a pipeline of future leaders who reflect the communities they serve.

The **Camden Pathways Programme (CPP)** that is commissioned by all Camden Secondary Schools provides a high-quality alternative KS4 route for students at risk of permanent exclusion, offering tailored vocational and academic placements that re-engage learners and support progression into post-16 education. In 2024–25, 28 students accessed placements, with none ending due to behaviour or suspension despite many being at high risk of

exclusion in mainstream settings. All Year 11 students successfully transitioned to post-16 destinations.

Close work with partners including The Winch, SYDR, and Future First has delivered the **Inspiring Inclusion Programme** that is aimed at reducing exclusions and addressing systemic disproportionality across six Camden secondary schools. Through this, mentoring services have been embedded within school life, enabling mentors to respond flexibly to referrals and provide tailored support to young people at risk of exclusion. To date the **Inspiring Inclusion** programme has supported 479 Camden pupils through intensive mentoring and reached over 1,100 via workshops and career events. During the last year 51 mentees from racially minoritised backgrounds have started mentoring across the six schools. All six schools have engaged with high-profile career opportunities for students. These collaborative efforts have strengthened trust between schools and community partners and improved responsiveness to young people's needs.

Camden's Local Area **SEND Strategy 2022–27** sets out a clear vision for improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families by creating a coherent, connected system with the right local provision. Strong governance now underpins delivery, with annual implementation plans, bi-monthly reporting to the SEND Inclusion Board, and oversight from the Education Strategy Board. In 2024, extensive evidence gathering—including a Self-Evaluation, a Scrutiny Committee review, and a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment—helped identify strengths and areas for improvement. This informed the development of four delivery pillars: empowering families through collaborative support; achieving excellence in SEND; developing high-quality provision and services; and strengthening mainstream inclusion. These priorities guide ongoing work to build knowledge, expertise, and capacity to meet increasing need and ensure early identification and intervention.

In early 2025, Camden redesigned its SEND and Inclusion Service with £1.3m investment to bring services closer to communities and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. New roles now lead family engagement through focus groups, school roadshows, and Young Inspectors' reviews of EHCP coproduction. Each school now has a dedicated SEN Case Officer for termly planning, and leadership meets regularly with SENDIASS and the Parent Carer Forum to address concerns early. The refreshed **Local Offer website** launched in late 2024 and continues to grow in use. Rising autism diagnoses have increased demand on diagnostic pathways, supported by £625k annual investment from the ICB. To strengthen mainstream inclusion, a borough-wide **Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit** was developed, and £4.7m invested in SEND capital works across 32 schools. Work is also underway to ensure sufficient specialist provision through the School Sufficiency Programme, with a SEND and AP Commissioning Plan consultation scheduled for early 2026.

Goal 13: Opportunity Centres to facilitate learning beyond the school day

Building Back Stronger recognised the wide gulf between those who have good housing, IT equipment and connectivity and those who do not when it comes to a child's ability to learn beyond the school day.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Develop a school-led network of high technology learning venues – **Opportunity Centres** – across the borough – operating in the evenings, at weekends and in the holidays – to provide access in the first instance, for secondary age students to: learning and technology (including digital learning programmes); small-group tutoring; good information, advice and guidance; and enrichment activities.
- Explore the potential of Opportunity Centres as places parents can come to use devices or Wi-Fi or to attend more formal learning programmes, including those which help them support their children’s learning.
- Consider the feasibility of primary school engagement earlier than anticipated.

Two **School-Based Opportunity Centres** are currently being trialled at Acland Burghley and La Sainte Union schools. They have delivered a mix of academic and enrichment activities during term time and holidays, offering out-of-hours interventions, 1:1 tuition and targeted support. These Opportunity Centres deliver programmes in music, physical activity, creative arts, and food and nutrition, making use of the schools’ cookery and technology workshop facilities. Provision also includes homework support, online tutoring, and GCSE revision sessions. Attendance has been strong, particularly among disadvantaged students, with Acland Burghley reporting up to 74% of attendees for some session being pupils in receipt of free school meals. LSU has seen consistent engagement in academic support, though leisure activities are more popular with non-disadvantaged students. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with users valuing the sociable, well-resourced environment, ease of access, and support from staff. Holiday revision sessions are especially appreciated by older students. However, attendance drops during darker months, and Saturday sessions remain underused.

Two further ‘test and learn’ centres have launched in 2025. The Euston Skills Centre, piloted as the **Camden Career Club**, has focused on careers enrichment for Years 9–11. Activities include taster sessions and short courses, with input from nine local businesses. While feedback has been excellent, dropout rates were high (averaging 70%), highlighting the importance of strong school engagement and timing around exams and cultural events.

The **London AI Campus**, developed in partnership with Google, began piloting an Opportunity Centre in April 2025. Initial sessions targeted sixth-form students and have since expanded to welcome students from Key Stages 3 and 4. Sessions have focused on skills-development workshops and masterclass sessions and maximising wider STEAM relationships. Launch activities included an AI careers session in partnership with local business, Zappi, and a session on AI and music, led by a Google staff member working on YouTube. A three-part masterclass series called Experience AI launched in June for Key Stage 3 students, with 27 students attending from across four Camden schools (Camden School for Girls, Acland Burghley, Parliament Hill and William Ellis).

Across all four centres, academic-focused provision has shown the greatest impact for disadvantaged students. Leisure activities, while engaging, are less effective in reaching this group. The centres have demonstrated strong potential to support learning recovery, improve engagement, and offer meaningful enrichment. However, coordination between sites, especially around careers guidance, remains an area for development.

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

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

In the strategy, we pledged to develop and trial a 'Camden School Report Card' for each school, as a new system which:

- Recognises the value of the breadth of the education children experience.
- Incentivises rather than disincentivises inclusion, recognising schools' achievements with pupils who do not show up well on exam league tables or who arrive in school with a more challenging journey ahead of them, such as refugees.
- Recognises success in improving children and young people's health and wellbeing.
- Takes into account the views of young people, parents and teachers.
- Understands the importance of young people's contribution to the community and opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

During the development of Building Back Stronger, parents and governors told us they wanted much fuller information about local schools, including more about the breadth of the education children experience. Camden schools have been supported to explore models of school accountability which capture the voices of children and parents, as well as employees' experiences in schools. A Developer Group of 15 school leaders attended 7 workshops to develop a model '**Camden school report**'. The group agreed the report card's key components and then discussed the model with groups of parents across schools to reach a format for a prototype, which gives each school a unique profile and gives parents the means to look beneath the data and explore the richness of offer in the Camden school system.

The prototype 'Camden school report' was trialled by a wider cross-section of schools in the spring term 2024, and during the last year has now been rolled out across the borough **with every Camden school now having their own online school report**. These were reviewed and updated in Autumn 2025, having been publicised through Camden admissions booklets and events. You can see them [here](#).

An Excellent School Experience: Next Steps

Our focus for 2025–26 is on school-led improvement and collaboration. We will launch **cluster-based models** to share strong practice on attendance, transition, and KS3 oracy, supported by a revised Collaborative School Support and Intervention Strategy. Professional development will be enhanced through a borough-wide CPD framework, refreshed Primary and Secondary Hubs, and **targeted SEND support**. We will continue to drive improvements in early reading through the Every Child Reading by 7 (ECR7) strategy, extend work on oracy and reading progression to age 11, and strengthen transition guidance for Year 6–7. Schools will also benefit from initiatives to broaden the curriculum, including the 2026 **Camden Art Biennale**, music partnerships, and expanded PSHE (personal, social, health and economic)

networks. Digital innovation will be advanced through the refreshed Camden **Schools Digital Learning Plan**, tackling the digital divide and supporting AI-enabled learning.

Ambition 3 Flourishing Lives

Our ambition is that by 2030, all young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will move into adulthood as confident lifelong learners, able to relate well to others, drive change for social good and making progress towards fulfilling lives in work, training or education.

We know that preparing young people for life beyond school requires more than academic success. It means equipping them with the skills, confidence and opportunities to thrive in a rapidly changing world. This includes access to high-quality post-16 education, meaningful work experience, and strong careers guidance, alongside opportunities to develop leadership, creativity and social responsibility. Camden's rich cultural, scientific and business landscape offers unparalleled potential for young people to connect learning with real-world experiences. Our ambition for Flourishing Lives builds on this, with five priorities:

- Building a generation of changemakers with impact in their communities
- A post-16 education system that benefits all students
- Greater access for young people to education, work and opportunity
- Better information, advice and guidance to support learning and job choices
- A Camden 'Life Futures Plan' for every young person at 16+.

Goal 15: A generation of changemakers with impact in their communities

Equipping young people to be changemakers is a key aspect of Building Back Stronger. Academic attainment is important but so too is experience, quality, inclusion, and active citizenship. These all underline the importance of relationships and developing the skills of collaboration.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Work with schools, employers and community and voluntary organisations to stimulate ways of designing experiential opportunities for young people's engagement in work, social action or volunteering.
- Use research and local best practice, to stimulate schools and youth groups to create opportunities for young people to work together on the concerns facing them and their communities.
- Collaborate with the Youth Council and local youth groups to run an initiative designed to make change happen by developing young people's local leadership skills.
- Use Camden's Climate Crisis Campaign as a focus for young people's engagement and activism.

A local approach to encouraging Camden schools to engage with the **Rights-Respecting Schools** (RRS) initiative has significantly raised the profile of children's rights across Camden schools. Following a successful launch event, Camden Learning established termly

networks for primary and secondary schools to share progress, resources, and practical strategies. In total, 30 schools have registered for RRS during the last year. These efforts are fostering a culture where children understand and advocate for their rights, with early evidence of positive impact on pupil empowerment and staff engagement.

The **Future Leaders Camden Programme** delivered a year-long development programme for 100 Year 12 students from diverse and representative backgrounds, equipping them with leadership skills, confidence, and academic ambition. Activities included weekly workshops, mentoring, enrichment visits to institutions such as Oxford University and the Houses of Parliament, specialist career and apprenticeship sessions, and a guest speaker series featuring prominent leaders. Participants also led social action projects to promote equality and community engagement. Impact was significant: 96% felt more prepared to take up positions of power, 98% reported raised educational aspirations, and 91% felt empowered to advocate for diversity and inclusion. Additionally, 78% are now more likely to apply to competitive universities or apprenticeships, and 96% would recommend the programme to peers—demonstrating its success in fostering future leaders and tackling inequality in Camden. In October 2025, a new cohort of 100 students from all 10 Camden secondary schools were recruited for the in-person programme and 201 for the online strand, with a focus on under-represented students.

See also, goal 20: Young people are empowered to play their part in tackling the climate crisis.

Goal 16: A post-16 education system that benefits all students

Our strategy recognised the pressing need to improve the quality, breadth and take-up of post-16 education in Camden. It also articulated our belief that all young people would benefit from a dialogue about their future plans which is recorded in an engaging way. Initially, this 'Life Futures Plan' for every young person at 16+ was presented as a separate Goal in the strategy but experience during 2023 showed it was inextricably linked into our plans and aspirations for strengthening young people's experiences of the system. We have therefore subsumed the Life Futures Plan into the bigger Goal. These Plans already exist for children who are looked after and for those with Education, Health and Care Plans, but we committed to extending this process to all young people.

In the strategy, we pledged to

- Establish a new post-16 partnership to develop a coherent and more inclusive sixth-form system for Camden, rationalise provision and improve the non-A level offer.
- Give greater priority to developing technical and vocational education, including T Levels.
- Develop links with Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, exploring a borough-wide 'Flying High' scheme.
- Liaise with Capital City College Group so that local further education (FE) provision aligns with the ambitions of this strategy.

- Work with schools, other providers and young people themselves to develop and pilot a format and process for developing a 'Life Futures Plan' for every young person at age 16.

During 2024/25, Camden Learning has worked with our secondary schools, Capital City College Group and other Camden providers to further strengthen post-16 education and training in the borough. The **Post-16 Partnership Board** has continued to lead on the work, with an implementation group reporting to it made up of our secondary schools' sixth form leaders, nominated by their headteachers.

The Post-16 Partnership Board judged borough-wide rationalisation of A-level courses geographically impractical and so put its efforts into further prioritising the strengthening of **technical and vocational education** through the Camden T Level curriculum. As a result, 2024/25 saw LaSWAP, Haverstock School and Maria Fidelis deliver T Levels for the first time, complementing the offer already in place from Capital City College at the King's Cross campus. The schools commenced provision of five T Levels from Laboratory Science to Media, Broadcast and Production. That included 12 Haverstock School students successfully completing their 45-day Management and Administration T Level industry placements, translating classroom learning into practical STEAM experience. This first year was supported by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and Camden Learning coordination of a T Level Network, made up of these schools and others looking to begin their T Level journey.

The **Head Start into Higher Education Programme**, launched in 2023 with Inner Circle Education Trust, supports care-experienced young people to overcome barriers to university. Thirty participants have received tailored guidance, enrichment activities, and up to £1,000 annually for education and career goals. Impact is strong: all Level 3 learners in Years 13 and 14 have applied to university and received offers, and 86% of the wider cohort are on track academically. An independent evaluation highlights the value of holistic, stigma-aware support and will inform next steps, including strengthening cohort identity and introducing individual support plans. Learning from Year One will inform next steps, including strengthening cohort identity and introducing individual support plans.

We have also launched the **[Camden Next Steps Post-16 website](#)** which has improved access to information and guidance for students and families. The site helps students explore and understand the full range of options available after Year 11. It provides clear, up-to-date information on Key Stage 5 pathways, outlining what each route involves, where it is offered in the borough, and how to apply. It also includes practical advice on preparing for university, employment and managing finances.

Capital City College Group's senior leadership involvement in the Post-16 Partnership Board has continued to strengthen links between our school sixth forms and Camden's FE college campus. This has enabled the college to contribute to the new **[Camden Next Steps Post-16 website](#)**, reflecting both mainstream and specialist SEND provision, and help shape the development of the new post-16 education and training strategy.

Post-16 destinations remain a strength, with **86% of students progressing to higher education or training within two years**, significantly above the national average. These results reflect Camden's commitment to sustaining high-quality provision and expanding pathways, including T Levels and vocational routes, to meet diverse learner needs. Looking

ahead, **Camden Learning is prioritising the development of future skills and inclusion.** Plans include expanding technical and vocational routes further, strengthening links with industry through the STEAM programme, and embedding consistent approaches to the teaching and learning of English and maths for those who do not achieve Level 2 in these vital subjects. Our aim is to eliminate the “forgotten third”, while considering the proposed national changes set out in the recent Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper and the report from the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

Looking forward, the next stage of this work has begun with a sub-group of the Post-16 Partnership Board developing a strategy for 2025 to 2030. It will be signed off by the Post-16 Partnership Board in January 2026 and will aim to ensure: that all young people in Camden aged 16-17 are in education, employment or training; we halve the proportion of young people aged 18-24 who are not in education, employment or training; there will be no learner without Level 2 English and Maths by age 19; and that we become the borough of choice for post-16 education and training, with top 25% progress for academic and technical/vocational subjects.

Goal 17: Greater access for young people to education, work and opportunity

Building Back Stronger recognised that young people were amongst the groups hardest hit by the pandemic in terms of employment. We need to do far more to support them to access skills and opportunities, including greater knowledge about existing initiatives, such as Good Work Camden.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Link with employers to give young people work experience opportunities especially through the STEAM initiative and in local growth areas such as health and the digital, scientific and creative industries.
- Increase the number of apprenticeships for young people, not only by stimulating greater interest from local business and public services but also increasing awareness and understanding of the opportunities with staff in schools, young people and their families.
- Encourage more opportunities at 14-19 that would provide not only a balanced education but also greater exposure to the workplace and the development of employability skills.
- Raise awareness of the importance of local employment programmes being inclusive enough to the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Camden STEAM achieved its most successful year, nearly doubling school engagement from 26 to 51 and delivering 13,891 student engagements compared to 6,526 the previous year. Over 70 employers signed the **STEAM pledge**, and more than 200 **STEAM Ambassadors** supported students through mentoring, career events, and projects. Highlights included workplace visits to Google for Year 5 students and new visits for Year 4 pupils to GSK’s (a biopharma company) Orangery, where over 300 students explored sustainable urban farming. Special schools also increased participation, working with partners such as the Francis Crick Institute and the Roundhouse.

Employer-led **apprenticeship information sessions** continued to raise awareness, including a Google-hosted event attended by 80 Camden students, where 78% reported increased interest in pursuing apprenticeships. Employers such as Arup, British Library, and St George's also contributed to these sessions. Mid-2025 saw the start of a scoping exercise for a Camden STEAM Apprenticeship Programme, designed to increase access to vocational pathways and improve understanding among schools, students, and families.

The **STEAM Work Experience programme** delivered its most successful work experience week yet, mobilising 426 placements across 30 employer teams, including new opportunities in Camden Council's Health and Legal departments and UCL's Faculty of Medical Science. The programme prioritised inclusion, with 41% of participants eligible for Free School Meals and 75% from Global Majority backgrounds. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 99% of students reporting improved professional skills and 87% feeling more confident about future careers. T Level placements also expanded, with all 12 Haverstock students completing 45-day industry placements with employers such as ITV, Havas, and the Francis Crick Institute.

Camden STEAM reinforced its commitment to inclusion by involving three **special schools** in projects with partners such as the Roundhouse and Francis Crick Institute. A tailored work experience pilot supported **care-experienced students** during STEAM Work Experience Week, ensuring translation support and accommodations were in place. This collaborative approach between schools, employers, and Camden teams provided valuable insights into designing inclusive work experience models.

In 2025–26, we will scale up work experience placements to over 550, broaden T Level opportunities across more schools, and launch the STEAM Apprenticeship pilot to create high-quality vocational pathways. Employer partnerships will be strengthened through borough-wide STEAM challenges, additional mentoring, and new sustainability-focused projects. Inclusive practices will be embedded across all programmes, with bespoke placements for SEND and care-experienced students and guidance for employers on accessibility. These actions will ensure Camden continues to deliver ambitious, inclusive opportunities that prepare young people for future careers.

Goal 18: Better information, advice and guidance to support learning and job choices which lead to economic opportunity

In developing our strategy, a common concern raised by young people, parents and employers was the extent, quality and objectivity of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) offered in secondary schools and beyond. Schools themselves told us they could not afford to buy in as much IAG as their students need, and few could afford to employ their own specialists. For example, although the Gatsby Benchmarks have led to an improvement in careers guidance programmes in the secondary sector, schools still say that they lack current specialist knowledge and understanding, for example, about apprenticeships. A range of interesting and valuable activities have been undertaken this past year that support students in making job choices, but we know we continue to need to develop a stronger, more coherent approach to careers education.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Develop greater awareness in primary schools of the world of work.

- Give every student in a Camden school the opportunity to have a mentor or support from a role model.
- Work with schools, Camden’s Connexions and Careers Service and STEAM to share what works in providing high-quality IAG and how digital technology can be used to improve the offer.

In 2024–25, Camden made good progress in introducing primary pupils to the world of work. Engagement with primary schools through STEAM activities rose sharply, with 36 of 38 schools participating compared to 16 the previous year. A highlight was the Camden **Primary Careers Day** in June 2025, where over 200 students from 24 schools explored hands-on workshops and interactive stalls led by more than 20 STEAM employers, including UCL, Wayve, Central Saint Martins, Archio, Highline, and Morgan Sindall.

Opportunities for **mentoring and role models** expanded through the continued funding of the Future Leaders programme and the launch of AI Connect at the London AI Campus, pairing 30 students with professional mentors. STEAM Ambassadors also provided diverse role models, with standout events such as International Women’s Day webinars reaching over 780 students across five primary schools. Female ambassadors from AstraZeneca, Mace, and St George’s PLC shared career journeys and answered questions, inspiring pupils from Year 1 to Year 6.

Camden STEAM and Connexions continued to collaborate closely to ensure schools receive high-quality careers information, with the Camden Careers Forum acting as a key platform for sharing best practice. Digital engagement was strengthened through virtual events and webinars, responding to school feedback for flexible formats. Emerging initiatives include the Girls in Robotics Competition led by King’s College London and sponsored by Google, and participation in the Black Curriculum National Ambassador programme starting in early 2026.

In 2025–26, we will build on these successes by embedding careers awareness across all primary schools, expanding mentoring opportunities through Future Leaders and AI Connect, and increasing the diversity of role models through STEAM Ambassadors and new partnerships. Digital innovation will remain a priority, with more virtual events and interactive resources to support schools. Camden Careers Forum will continue to drive collaboration and share best practice, while new initiatives such as Girls in Robotics and the Black Curriculum programme will strengthen inclusion and representation in careers education.

Goal 19: A Life Future Plan for every young person at 16+

In 2024–25, Camden Learning piloted the **Life Futures Plan (LFP)** initiative in two schools—Hampstead (Year 8) and Haverstock (Year 10)—to test approaches for supporting students in planning their future pathways. The pilots introduced structured sessions to help students reflect on aspirations, values, interests, and set goals, culminating in a draft plan outlining education, training, and career ideas. Feedback from students and staff highlighted the value of starting awareness and aspiration-building early, while recognising that detailed goal setting and career-specific planning is more effective at Key Stage 4. Around 70% of Year 10 students completed most sections of their plan, compared to 20% of Year 8 students, with older students demonstrating stronger engagement and understanding of

SMART goal setting. Both schools reported that the process encouraged students to think more broadly about their futures and provided a foundation for personalised guidance.

The pilots confirmed the importance of making life futures planning a longitudinal process, starting with horizon widening and aspiration building in Year 8 and evolving into personalised planning by Year 10–11. Key recommendations include integrating LFP into careers education rather than as a standalone activity, developing a consistent template that captures achievements and experiences across key stages, and exploring digital tools or AI to support plan development. Next steps for 2025–26 include refining the LFP model with careers leads, agreeing a borough-wide approach, and ultimately rolling out a process across all Camden secondary schools, ensuring it is inclusive for SEND and disadvantaged students.

Goal 20: Young people are empowered to play their part in tackling the climate crisis

While work to address the climate crisis was threaded through Building Back Stronger, it became clear that this has risen even higher up the agenda and the work within the area of education is especially crucial. We therefore identified it as a separate Goal and development priority.

In the strategy, we pledged to:

- Provide guidance for schools to develop their work in tackling climate change across the curriculum and through student agency, including using the Camden School Climate Charter
- Enable schools to deliver funded climate-action projects by connecting businesses with schools through the Climate Connectors project.
- Deliver events to raise students' awareness of the climate crisis and the action they can take
- Work with the STEAM team to develop and promote information about careers in sustainability and green technology
- Encourage schools to involve school council and environmental champions in school policies on climate control, including recycling.

The **Climate Connectors programme** has been a key enabler of school-led climate projects. Since December 2023, we have delivered two Green Dragons' Den events involving 14 schools. The initiative has helped to seed fund 20 climate projects, including installing green walls and ponds, improving recycling facilities, and adding resilience measures such as solar film to keep classrooms cool. These projects were made possible through more than £9,000 of funding from Camden Climate Alliance businesses. As part of the Connectors programme's Green Dragons' Den events, we offer workshops that equip participants with practical knowledge and skills to address the climate crisis including seed bombs and a sewing workshop for repairing clothes.

On Valentine's Day 2025, we hosted the **Love Your Climate youth summit**, bringing together 80 students from 7 secondary schools. The event raised awareness of the climate crisis, shared updates on the council's progress, and invited feedback from students on what actions they would like to see in the council's next Climate Action Plans. We have also delivered two events to promote green careers and opportunities in sustainability. This includes a careers fair in April 2024 as part of King's Cross' annual **Earthfest**, and a **Green Futures event** in March 2025 in partnership with London Clean Air. The March event

featured workshops, talks and a green careers fair designed to introduce young people to opportunities in the sustainability sector.

During the last year Camden has developed a 12-month programme of fun and interactive assemblies, workshops and events to raise awareness about the health impacts of indoor and outdoor air pollution. Pupils from Brecknock and Torriano Primary Schools were selected, following Camden's 2024 Schools Takeover Event, to write, perform in and produce a series of short films to raise awareness about air pollution caused by burning wood and candles at home. [Why are grown-ups burning wood? Camden schoolchildren raise awareness of air pollution](#). As a result, 5,200 individual pupils participated, with 550 of those pupils participating in two or more different projects. 58 assemblies, workshops and events were hosted across 30 schools, and the project website, news articles and social media posts were viewed more than 5,000 times. Pupils, staff, school leaders, governors, parents and the wider community learned about the personal and collective actions we can take to reduce air pollution's harmful impacts. See the [Full project report](#).

Flourishing Lives: Next Steps

In 2025–26, we will further expand opportunities for young people to thrive beyond the classroom. This includes scaling the **STEAM Work Experience programme** to 550 placements, increasing T Level industry placements, and piloting a STEAM Apprenticeship Programme. We will strengthen careers guidance through a refreshed Connexions offer and promote green careers via the Camden Climate Alliance. Opportunity Centres will continue to grow, offering enrichment, tutoring, and digital learning, while the **Future Leaders** social action programme and AI Connect projects will empower students to lead change in their communities. Climate action will remain a priority, with schools supported to implement the **Camden School Climate Charter**, deliver funded projects through Climate Connectors, and engage pupils in borough-wide sustainability events.