

London • Black Country • Greater Manchester

# City Challenge



For World  
Class  
Education



department for  
education and skills

Following the success of the London Challenge programme, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has recently announced additional support for improving outcomes for young people in the Black Country and Greater Manchester through a focused City Challenge strategy, and continued support for the London Challenge programme in the capital.

City Challenge will be a three year programme, delivered in partnership with all those working in education in the three city-regions, and backed by significant additional investment. The programme will be launched in 2008.

City Challenge aims to crack the associated cycle of disadvantage and educational underachievement in the Black Country, Greater Manchester and London. Building on improvements already underway, by 2011 the main outcomes of the programme will be:

- A sharp drop in underperforming schools, particularly focusing on English and Maths
- More outstanding schools
- Significant improvements in educational outcomes for disadvantaged children

The programme will be tailored to local needs, using some of the proven approaches adopted in the capital over the last five years, the London Challenge. London Challenge has backed solutions which respond to the local and unique challenges the capital faces. City Challenge will respond in the same way to the local challenges faced by the Black Country and Greater Manchester and will use the best learning from the London model.

## What is the London Challenge?

Led by Lord Adonis as Minister for London Schools, and Tim Brighouse as Chief Adviser for London Schools, the London Challenge was set up in 2003 as a five-year programme to turn round London's major school problems. It fills a strategic gap for London, whose 33 Boroughs find it difficult on their own to solve London-wide problems like excessive teacher turnover and pupil mobility. It puts a sharp spotlight on the chronic low performance of secondary schools serving poorer families and on city-wide issues of underachievement. It mobilises the best resources in London – experienced headteachers, Advanced Skills teachers, access to out-of-school opportunities for deprived pupils, the networks of specialist schools, etc – to support the schools that cannot easily take advantage of them. It puts together the many central reforms – Building Schools for the Future, Academies, workforce reform, extended schools, 14–19 reform, into coherent programmes that work across London.

London Challenge is a partnership between central government, local government, schools and other key players in London. There is much sharing of data and intelligence about common issues, survey evidence about the views of pupils and parents, and best practice. Through the London Councils and the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, local authorities identify London-wide problems and develop shared solutions to them, sometimes with funding and practical support from the Department for Education and Skills.

The London Challenge programme will be continuing for a further three years up to 2011. Consultation is underway to agree plans for this next phase.

## **What will the City Challenge mean in practice?**

Led by a City Challenge Minister and local Commissioners for Education, and delivered in partnership with the Government Offices, local authorities, schools, the National Strategy and other educational stakeholders, the City Challenge will be a three-year programme to turn around major school problems faced by the Black Country and Greater Manchester. The main features of the programme will include:

### **1. Intensive support for underperforming schools**

In London, this has meant support for 70 secondary schools in challenging circumstances. Each school gets intensive support from expert advisers, and a tailored package aimed at raising standards and building capacity for sustained improvement. Work with individual schools is supported by multi-school contracts with some providers of services on English as an Additional Language, student coaching and mentoring, behaviour, subject teaching and other common problems. London Challenge has also accelerated the Academies programme. More recently London Challenge started working intensively with primary schools in 2006. It offers funding to 60 primary schools in 8 local authorities on the lines of the secondary programme, and a team of consultant leaders working with other primary schools.

### **2. A city-wide leadership strategy led by school leaders for school leaders**

The leadership strategy will include consultant leaders for primary and secondary schools, and holistic support for weak schools across their whole leadership teams. Succession planning will be an integral part of the strategy.

### **3. A tailored package of support for disadvantaged students**

Working in partnership with the Black Country and Greater Manchester, we will identify barriers to learning for deprived students in the area and develop bespoke support programmes for them. This is likely to include teachers' professional development, including work on teaching and learning practice, pupil mentoring, and the Gifted and Talented programmes.

### **4. A data-rich approach to solving local issues and sharing learning**

This will include a Families of Schools publication for each area – a data tool to enable schools to benchmark themselves against like schools and identify similar schools with whom to learn and share best practice. There will also be a thorough analysis of key issues across the Black Country and Greater Manchester such as mobility and teacher supply.

### **5. Local solutions to local issues**

Support for issues that need city-wide answers. In the capital this has included a London admissions system, the London Grid for Learning, a London-wide quality system for supply teachers, places planning, School Improvement Partners, a London-wide prospectus of 14-19 offers and of summer activities.

### **6. A strategy to secure choice and diversity of education for families and modern learning environments fit for the 21st century**

Making use to the opportunities provided by the major investment in rebuilding schools, Academies, federations and Trusts.

## What has the impact been in London?

Ofsted published a report on “Improvements in London schools 2000-2006” (available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)) in November 2006. It said:

- “London schools have improved dramatically. There is much to celebrate
- The investment in London Challenge, now £40 million annually, has helped schools and local authorities
- Despite these very significant improvements, work remains to be done to ensure London provides outstanding education
- The successes to date demand that careful consideration is given to the risks when London Challenge ends in 2008
- The lessons learned from London Challenge could influence school improvement in England.”

Ofsted reported that London schools are now securing higher ratings in inspections for overall effectiveness, teaching and leadership than schools elsewhere. They said of London Challenge that there has been “a particularly successful combination of political leverage through the Minister for London Schools and the Chief Adviser; other well respected and experienced expert advisers; and access to a wide range of suitable resources. This is a model which may merit consideration in other vulnerable areas”.

The latest key stage 4 results show:

- Almost 1 in 3 London schools (1 26) achieved outstanding results of 70% or above 5 A\* to C in 2006, twice the number in 2001
- London schools are ahead of the national average for the third year running for 5A\*-C all subjects, and are ahead of the national average including English and Maths

- Attainment gaps for pupils from more deprived families, and from minority ethnic groups that tend to underachieve, have narrowed faster in London than elsewhere
- Results in Inner London continue to improve faster than anywhere else in the country. 54% of pupils in inner London and 61% in outer London achieved 5 A\*-C all subjects (an increase of 4ppts for both). This inner London figure compares to 32% in 2001 – a massive 22ppt increase.
- All but 1 London LA is now achieving over 45%. In 1997 2/3rds of LAs were achieving under 40%.
- There are now no London schools below the national floor target of 25%. 95 were failing to achieve over 25% in 1997 and 63 in 2001.

In addition to this there are now:

- 16,300 more pupils are obtaining 5 good GCSEs (A\*-C) compared to 1997.
- 14,100 more pupils are obtaining 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths compared to 1997.
- 14,200 more pupils are obtaining A\*-C grades in GCSE English compared to 1997.
- 15,300 more pupils are obtaining A\*-C grades in GCSE Maths compared to 1997.
- 14,300 more pupils are obtaining A\*-C grades in both English and Maths compared to 1997