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The **London**



**Challenge**

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# Transforming London Secondary Schools

## Executive Summary





# Executive Summary

## London – the Learning City

1. London's strength depends more than ever on its education system. Just as London is determined to be a world leader in other areas, so it should become the world-leading city for learning and creativity. That means a secondary education system that is not merely good, but excellent – matching the best anywhere. That ambition is the starting point for the London Challenge. It is one that we believe can be achieved within the next five years, with significant visible progress in the next three. When the very best of what is happening now in London's schools becomes the norm; when all London's resources and communities are fully engaged in the task of raising standards – then our aim will be realised.
2. We want a secondary school system in London in which:
  - Every school is good at the basics and strives for excellence in its areas of strength; has a distinct mission and ethos and the autonomy to manage its own affairs; and is committed to working with other schools, colleges and universities to share and extend this excellence.
  - Every pupil is able to achieve their potential.
  - Every parent has real confidence in a choice of local schools which can provide an excellent education.
  - Every teacher feels proud to be part of an education system delivering real excellence to young people.

## 2 London Challenge

3. Since 1997 there has been sustained progress. In tests, the proportion of inner London 11 year olds getting the expected level in English has gone up from 54% in 1997 to 69% in 2002. The proportion of pupils attaining five A\*-C GCSEs has risen to 41% compared to just 11% in 1987. The gap between inner London and the national average has reduced substantially. Some schools with great heads are making rapid progress.
4. But a lot more needs to be done. In inner city London, the choice of where to send your child to secondary school is often the most agonising decision parents have to face. Everyone rightly wants to attend a good school with an achievement culture which reflects the expectations and ambitions of its pupils and staff. In London, the choice is often resolved by going private, moving house or criss-crossing London on hour long journeys. For those who live in areas with several inadequate local schools, the choice is especially painful. For these parents, incremental change is not sufficient. We need to do things differently.
5. We believe that now is the moment to seize and so for the first time we have a Commissioner, Tim Brighouse, whose focus is to work with all the agencies – particularly the boroughs and the schools themselves – to bring about a step change in secondary schools' success. We need to harness the dynamism and innovation in the system to meet the scale of the challenge. We want London to pioneer the creation of the new specialist system, to lead the way in taking advantage of new freedoms for schools and to become a place which responds rapidly to parents' wishes through innovative forms of new provision. This strategy seeks to build on all that is now good in London's schools and on the progress of some of the fastest improving areas of the country. It has three crucial components.

## Transforming Key Areas

6. Some areas of London face very great challenges in improving results. There will be a relentless drive to turn round failure in the most challenged areas, where neighbourhood renewal and joined up policies are essential to make the best of school improvement. We are going to focus on the areas in five boroughs – Islington, Haringey, Southwark, Hackney, Lambeth – where there is much to be done and which include many of the secondary schools facing the greatest challenges. In these areas we seek a genuine transformation.
7. The change we seek is cultural. It is a step change in aspiration and expectation. Everything in this strategy will support that. But in addition, we will target our investment sharply, to make a visible and striking break with the past. We intend to work with local authorities to develop a plan for the future of these areas which will include some or all of the following:
  - Investment in **academies** – independent schools fully funded by the state – focused in significant numbers to transform the landscape of education.
  - Other **new schools** – particularly where many pupils leave an area for their secondary education – with competitions open to all (including parents’ groups, churches and voluntary groups, for example) to determine who will provide the school.
  - Increased **sixth form** provision – including new sixth form colleges and school sixth forms – in places where little is currently available.
  - Targeted use of **‘extended’ schools** – open in the evening and at weekends, providing a full range of services and

## 4 London Challenge

support to students and their families and breaking down barriers to achievement.

- The creation of the **new specialist system**, with every secondary school specialising in an area of strength and together providing a coherent offer to parents.

8. Through these changes, we seek a decisive break with the past and a new future of opportunity and excellence for the young people of these areas.

## The Keys to Success

9. Many London schools serve very deprived communities. Some have over a long period found it hard to develop a strong culture of achievement. For the London Challenge to succeed, we need these most challenged schools to succeed. They are the front line in the attempt to break the link between deprivation and underperformance – the ‘Keys to Success’.
10. Nationally, the Government has said that by 2006, there must be no secondary school where fewer than 25% of young people achieve 5 A\*-C GCSEs. Currently, about 40 schools in London are below this target. They are very varied. Most face considerable challenges, often taking in children who fell behind at primary school. Some have taken considerable steps forward and are improving fast – on ‘value added’ measures, some are scoring well. Still others, despite their best efforts, have not been able to establish a culture of achievement.
11. Each school will have a tailor made support programme and heads with energy, commitment and a record of leadership success. With LEAs and the schools, we will identify the programmes in this strategy that can back rapid improvement:

- For some schools, becoming an **academy** – fully rebuilt and with a committed sponsor.
- For some, a new start will provide the best means of making a rapid and significant step forward.
- For some, **federation** with another school, as a means of providing support and leadership capacity to schools facing real challenges.
- The **Leadership Incentive Grant**, which provides a significant opportunity to ensure that schools have the head and the teachers able to lead subjects and year groups, properly supported, including through a £7.5m package of leadership support.
- For schools where there is a need to strengthen support outside the classroom, the chance to become an **'extended' school**, offering a range of services to students and their families.
- For schools where there is a need to strengthen middle leadership and teaching and learning, the opportunity to employ the highly skilled **'Commissioner's Teachers'** described below.

## A Better Deal for London

12. This targeted work is crucial to the success of the London Challenge. But so too is the work we will undertake for the whole of London.

## A better deal for London students

13. Each London child deserves a personalised education tailored to their needs, with an understanding of the level they are achieving and what they need to do to achieve more, support to develop special talents and extra help to those falling behind. Across London, we want to raise aspirations, engage more young people with the opportunities and the wealth of resources that London provides and make sure that all London students experience the advantages that learning in London can provide.
  - London students will routinely take advantage of a wide range of sporting, cultural and business opportunities, making best use of the capital's rich assets through a new **London Student Pledge**.
  - There will be a dedicated **London Gifted and Talented Centre** as part of a £10m drive to improve provision for gifted and talented young people.
  - There will be **extended 'dawn till dusk' provision** with new opportunities for after-school clubs, extra tutorial support and more school sport.
  - There will be a crackdown on bullying, and all forms of disruption, which create unacceptable barriers to learning, through the **Behaviour Improvement Programme**.
  - There will be a new **London schools website**, giving every parent and pupil all the information they need to choose a secondary school in one place.



## A better deal for London teachers

14. We want London to be recognised, as in many other professions, as the peak of the teaching profession. London's schools have been held together by outstanding teachers and leaders committing their careers to the city's schools. This document therefore sets out a radical strategy for attracting the best heads and teachers to the capital and keeping them there. London schools will increasingly be seen as the most exciting places to teach, with high challenges and professional rewards:
- **Chartered London Teacher status**, for teachers who develop their skills and meet a demanding set of standards, will reward expert teachers who remain teaching in London.
  - A targeted programme will enable the potential future leaders of London's education service to afford family homes through a **mortgage guarantee scheme**.
  - **Teach First** will bring 200 of the brightest and best graduates from our top universities into teaching in its first year – and many more thereafter.
  - London teachers will benefit rapidly from greater support and a **remodelled workforce**, so that they can focus on the core professional tasks that only they can do and are backed by effective support staff within the classroom and outside.
  - Some of London's best teachers will be working in some of its most challenging schools, as part of a new cadre of **London Commissioner's teachers** – advanced skills teachers recruited and rewarded to take on some of London's toughest challenges.

## The London Leader

15. We want to send a clear message to the successful, dynamic heads in London: you will have maximum freedoms required to deliver high standards. The length of the school day, the type of lessons, the pattern of the timetable, partnerships with business, the involvement of parents, the ethos of the school, the recruitment and retention of staff, ways of making good behaviour the norm and bad behaviour unacceptable, use of classroom assistants, the shape of the curriculum – these are all ripe for school by school innovation.
16. Just as we need London's teachers to be leaders of the profession, so we need its school leaders to be amongst the very best in the country. We will:
  - Use the **Leadership Incentive Grant** (LIG) to secure the very best school leadership, supported by strong collaborative arrangements with other schools. LIG will be available to 279 of London's 411 secondary schools – and provides £125,000 per year over 3 years, to incentivise improved leadership, change leadership teams where necessary and develop good heads of subject departments and heads of year.
  - Introduce a **£7.5m package of leadership development** in London – including consultant leaders (expert heads who can work to support other heads), and development for middle managers, where problems of retention have weakened the pool of potential middle leaders.

## The London School

17. We want London to be at the leading edge of the creation of the new specialist system – and to respond to the wishes of parents. That is why we will embark on the biggest secondary school building and improvement programme since the war. We aim to create a diverse range of exciting new schools – each with a distinct ethos, each with a culture of high achievement. Neighbourhoods in the capital that have not had a decent school for decades will see fresh schools starting up, bringing with them new hope for local communities. For every entirely new school, a competition open to all (including parents groups, for example) will determine who should run it. Successful and popular schools will expand.
- Over five years, there will be **at least 20 new schools**, to meet growing demand for places, mostly built in areas where many pupils leave the area to go to secondary school.
  - Over the same period, **at least 30 new academies** – independent schools fully funded by the state – providing new opportunities where existing schools' performance is low.
  - By 2006, **at least 290 specialist schools** in London.
  - Over the next year, **21 'full service' extended schools** – schools providing a full range of services (such as study support, after-school activities, childcare, adult learning and health and social services) to young people and their parents – breaking down the barriers to learning.
  - Over three years, **15-20 new sixth forms or sixth form colleges**, particularly in areas where sixth form provision is not extensive.

- We will launch a **Business Challenge**, to encourage employers and City firms to get behind London schools and ensure that every school is backed by support from a business; and make London's higher education institutions an integral part of the London Challenge – working in partnership with schools to raise aspiration and opportunity.

## Learning and Teaching in London

18. We want to help tackle the major learning challenges that London faces: improving transition between primary and secondary school so that pupils make faster progress at the start of secondary education; and enabling the lowest achieving groups to achieve more. We will:

- **Test a shortened Key Stage 3 (2 rather than 3 years) in 20 London schools** – focusing on improved transition, and seeking to accelerate progress at the start of secondary school.
- Introduce **new support for transition** between primary and secondary school and develop and implement innovative ways to improve the start of secondary school for young people – looking at the curriculum, timetable, buildings and environment of schools.
- Pilot a new **package to raise the attainment of currently low achieving groups** and particularly African-Caribbean and white working class boys; new work to help schools with high levels of pupil turnover; and new catch-up materials for those who fall behind.
- Ensure that London leads the way in the implementation of the 14-19 agenda.

## Supporting Change

19. London's schools receive support from a variety of sources – but particularly from London's 33 LEAs. Because of their small size, some of these authorities can be fragile. We want to help to overcome this fragility and make sure that support for schools is as robust and consistent as possible. We will build a programme designed to promote real and permanent collaboration between LEAs to strengthen their school improvement arrangements; and appoint a group of London Challenge Advisers to ensure that the programme is delivered on the ground.
20. All this amounts to a policy of ever higher standards, better behaviour in the classroom and more choice for parents. In some areas too many parents have opted out of local schools. For them incremental change is no longer sufficient. Parents will return only if they see significant and radical change.
21. We believe in collective provision and popular public services in which every hard-working family in London has a stake. That requires us to tackle disadvantage, to achieve equity, and progressively higher standards to increase excellence. The only route to excellence and equality today in secondary education is radical reform.
22. Crucial to this effort are London's teachers. Their daily efforts and skills change children's life chances. Their work will shape London's future – and the London Challenge represents our determination to get behind their efforts.





[www.teachernet.gov.uk/london](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/london)

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