LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER

- ✓ Embedding Equity and Diversity
- ✓ Students as Active Citizens
- ✓ Being Adapatable and Reflective
- ✓ Beyond Academic Achievement

London's Inclusion Charter

We know that children and young people are safer in school. That is why driving up attendance and playing our part in tackling rising suspensions, absenteeism and exclusions is at the heart of the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) prevention work.

Since 2018/19, London has seen a 14 per cent rise in suspensions and a 106 per cent increase in persistent absenteeism. This has led to the equivalent of 1,430 children each day having lost learning in 2021/22 - up 71 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels in 18/19.*

Evidence shows there is a correlation between children with a history of either suspension or exclusion from school and violence. An Ofsted report on knife crime showed that children excluded from school are twice as likely to carry a knife, while data also highlights that almost one in two of the prison population were excluded as children*.

We need to make a London-wide aspiration and commitment for change for the benefit of young people to keep them safe and to support them to thrive in school. This must be backed up by investment to support schools and the promotion of good practice already happening across the capital.

This is a big ambition that no one agency can achieve on its own.

This is why the VRU, set up by the Mayor of London, has led a partnership approach to develop London's Inclusion Charter. It is informed by the voices of young people, schools, parents and carers, local authorities and education specialists through research and discussions.

We are inviting local authorities, schools and all education settings, and young people, to sign up to the Charter and promote and embed its four principles of inclusion.

- ✓ **The Charter** prioritises education that is fully inclusive, fair and available to all. It's what we heard from headteachers, education professionals, young people, parents and carers and local authorities, when we began this journey at a VRU conference in July 2022.

- ✓ **The Charter** recognises that teachers, school staff, governors and trustees want the very best for the children and young people in their care and the Charter will work to empower and enable all those involved in the education of London's children and young people.

- ✓ **The Charter** promotes and invests in inclusive practices. It will tackle stark disproportionalities and work with schools to embed anti-racism across education. Children's rights and the experience of teachers is at its heart.

- ✓ **The Charter** shines a light on promising practice and celebrates inclusion already flourishing in many parts of London. By working in partnership with schools and local authorities already demonstrating inclusive practice, we will all work to increase young people's sense of belonging and safety so that they can thrive.

- ✓ **The Charter** is backed up by investment in staff and schools, building on the professional commitment and dedication to supporting children and young people following the challenges presented by the pandemic. This includes £1.4 million investment to provide a universal offer of UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award programme free to all state-funded schools and education settings in London.

- ✓ **The Charter** is a partnership approach with young people and schools, developed to further embed inclusive and accessible education and to prevent escalation points in behaviour.

- ✓ **The Charter** seeks to help tackle the causes of all forms of exclusion, including suspension, managed moves, and rising levels of absenteeism, through a set of agreed guiding principles around inclusion.

> The Charter should not be seen as advocating for a zero-tolerance approach to exclusion or suspension as there will be times when it is necessary for the safety of children and staff. Headteachers and schools must have the right to decide.

The Charter's four principles:

Embedding Equity and Diversity

Students as Active Citizens

Being Adaptable and Reflective

Beyond Academic Achievement

These were informed by VRU research, carried out by the University of Bath, which captured the views of nearly 4,000 school children, parents and school staff across London.

We are asking you to:

We are inviting local authorities, young people, schools and all education settings to sign-up to support the inclusive principles in London's Inclusion Charter.

THAT MEANS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES:

- ⊘ Adopting the four guiding principles of London's Inclusion Charter.

- ⊘ Work with schools so they take up the free offer of support through UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award. You can do that here.

- ⊘ Creating a Child Rights Schools Steering Group and network with other boroughs.

THAT MEANS FOR SCHOOLS AND ALL EDUCATION SETTINGS IN LONDON:

- ⊘ Adopting the four guiding principles of London's Inclusion Charter.

- ⊘ Working with your local authority to take up the free offer of support through UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award.

- ⊘ Work with the VRU to demonstrate and showcase inclusive practice.

THAT MEANS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:

- ⊘ Learning more about participation in school and your rights.

- ⊘ Create a charter based on our four guiding principles that works in your school or setting.

- ⊘ Watch our video by the VRU's Young People's Action Group to learn how they went about creating their own Charter. You can watch that here.

What the VRU commits to do:

PUTTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FIRST:

- ⊘ Education is key to a child's development, forming the basis of their ability to hone communication skills, develop critical thinking, and empower them later in life. The right to education is entrenched in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: without the opportunity to learn, children are more likely to be trapped in cycles of poor health, poverty, and exploitation (UNICEF).

- ⊘ The VRU has invested £1.4 million in a new partnership with UNICEF UK to ensure that from February 2024, the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) will be free for all state-funded education settings in London for the next four years. This will include new schools as well as schools already engaging with RRSA. UNICEF UK will provide a team of professional advisers who will work with local authorities across London to provide support and advice.

- ⊘ Through the Charter, access to all the RRSA resources from UNICEF UK will be free. You can learn more and apply here.

ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES:

- ⊘ Enabling schools and their staff to embed inclusive practices is essential in meeting the needs of every child in their community.

- ⊘ We will continue to support boroughs, learning partnerships and Multi-Academy Trusts to apply for funding in evidence-based inclusive practices in schools.

- ⊘ You can learn about working with the VRU and future funding opportunities here.

SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS:

- ⊘ We all know that schools cannot be expected to do this work on their own. Partnership and collaboration are key. Many community and third sector organisations already work closely with their local schools and are valued members of school communities.

- ⊘ The VRU will bring boroughs together, to enable schools to share, learn and develop through events and networks that spotlight, and promote inclusive approaches. We will work with boroughs to develop a process which is accessible, aligns to the priorities and has measurable impact.

- ⊘ You can find more about how to access examples of promising practice here and through the hashtag **#LondonInclusionCharter** on social media channels.

Our four guiding principles of inclusion

1 Embedding Equity and Diversity

This is about integrating approaches to ensure students from all backgrounds feel welcome and valued in school, taking into account different cultures, faiths, abilities, aptitudes, attainment levels, gender identifications and neurodiversity. Recognising the disproportionate impact of exclusion on communities in London, this principle involves creating opportunities to explore and value our differences, challenging stereotypes, racism and discrimination and taking action to ensure that they are tackled.

Examples include:
- ☑ *External events for families and the community, such as celebrating world cultures and spiritual festivities.*
- ☑ *Curriculum topics such as learning about highly successful dyslexic figures, women who changed the world, black authors.*
- ☑ *Taking time to discuss difference in learning styles, recognising and encouraging students to value their unique strengths and those of others.*
- ☑ *Developing neuro-inclusive school practices to ensure the needs of all are supported and met.*

2 Students as Active Citizens

This is about collaborating to create a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for the whole school community. It involves working together with young people, school staff, families and local communities on issues that matter to them.

This principle requires adults listening to young people and the community, before taking concrete actions to respond to these issues in shaping school policies, activities and the learning environment. It is about young people shaping and actively participating in the life of the school. Ensuring that pupil, parent and community representation groups fully reflect the community is also key.

Examples include:
- ☑ *Forums to hear young people's views on matters such as school uniform, trips, use of school spaces and policies.*
- ☑ *Feeding back on actions taken, such as 'you asked for…we did,' displays and noticeboards.*
- ☑ *Student responsibility opportunities, such as Parent Governor Association groups, eco-committees, student council, or peer mentors.*

3 Being Adaptable and Reflective

This is about creating a supportive culture where educators are empowered and enabled to innovate, experiment and refine their practices to meet the diverse needs of all. Enabling staff to continually reflect on and adapt their practice and provision ensures that young people can access opportunities to realise their goals.

This involves developing reflective and adaptable school systems and practices in relation to learning, behaviour, or the way that school staff communicate with students, families and each other. It's also one way in which schools can ensure that equity and diversity are embedded, by making adjustments to support specific young people.

Examples include:
- ☑ *Fostering a culture where staff feel safe to test and trial new teaching approaches through offering professional development training.*
- ☑ *Adjusting routines to suit learners' needs, for instance through movement breaks.*
- ☑ *Offering different curriculum pathways which better meet the needs of all young people, keeping a focus on positive outcomes, such as achievement.*

4 Beyond Academic Achievement

This is about enabling young people to achieve by giving them opportunities to flourish. This means providing experiences to develop all their skills, talents and abilities, be they academic, creative, physical, or interpersonal. It's not just about what happens in lessons, but also the activities the school offers outside of lessons and the opportunities for stimulating trips and experiences.

It is also about having high expectations for all young people, supporting them to form high but realistic expectations of themselves and to know and value both their strengths and weaknesses.

Examples include:
- ✓ *Prioritising trips, activities and speakers that enable students to experience new places and viewpoints.*
- ✓ *Removing barriers (be they physical, social or economic) to ensure that opportunities and experiences can be accessed by all.*
- ✓ *Celebrating the successes of all young people.*
- ✓ *Monitoring and tracking engagement to ensure they are maximising the benefit, including vulnerable groups such as young carers, looked after children and those from particular ethnic groups.*

You can learn more about the research carried out by University of Bath here.

Our research with the University of Bath highlighted that the spirit in which the principles are implemented is of critical importance. Participants recognised that schools' engagement with the four principles could be on a continuum, with a tokenistic acknowledgement at one end and a more holistic, whole-school approach at the other.

VRU | MAYOR OF LONDON
VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

Suspensions data: Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England, Autumn term 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)
Absenteeism data: Pupil absence in schools in England, Autumn and spring term 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)
Ofsted report: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916668/Knife_crime_safeguarding_children_and_young_peop
IPPR report on prison population: https://www.ippr.org/media-office/excluded-school-children-more-than-twice-as-likely-to-have-unqualified-teachers-new-analysis-shows#:~:text=One%20in%20two%20prison%20inmates,year's%20cohort%20of%20excluded%20pupils