

# London's Violence Reduction Unit

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# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER

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Since 2018/19, London has seen a 14% rise in suspensions and a 106% 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.

The Charter prioritises education that is fair and accessible to all. Children's rights and teachers' experiences are at the heart of the Charter.

It 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.

Partnership and collaboration are key.



# RESEARCH: UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Between November 2023 and January 2024 we asked

**“What really matters to help students feel a sense of belonging and safety at school?”**

We heard from:



**32**

London boroughs



**3473**

student surveys



**179**

educator surveys



**145**

parent/  
carer surveys



**87**

students in focus groups



**19**

school leader interviews



**38**

primary schools



**25**

secondary schools



**13**

PRUs and APs

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# RESEARCH FINDINGS

*Do you feel a sense of belonging at school?*

- **66%** of primary-aged students and **56%** of secondary-aged students – ‘yes, usually’ or ‘yes’
- **27%** of secondary-aged students and **24%** of primary-aged students – ‘yes a bit’ or ‘I don’t know.’
- **5%** of primary-aged students, **8%** of secondary-aged students – ‘no’
- **4%** did not want to answer

*What stops you feeling a sense of belonging and safety?*

- **44%** of secondary-aged students and **39%** of primary-aged students – **feeling under pressure**
- **36%** of primary-aged students and **27%** of secondary-aged students – **not feeling able to be myself in school**
- **43%** of primary-aged students and **30%** of secondary-aged students – **worrying about bullying (or unkind behaviour)**
- **28%** of secondary-aged students – **teachers not understanding me**

*What helps you feel safe in school?*

- **69%** of primary-aged students – **teachers being respectful to all students**
- **67%** of primary-aged students – **knowing teachers will stop all kinds of bullying or unkind behaviour**
- **67%** of secondary-aged students – **no threat of physical violence at school**
- **67%** of primary-aged students and **53%** of secondary-aged students – **having school rules that are fair**
- **59%** of primary-aged students – **teachers accepting me for who I am**



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# FOCUS GROUPS

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"in our school, we're really good at including people and we have loads of people from different countries and backgrounds and teachers talk to us a lot about that and I think it just really helps."

PRIMARY-AGED STUDENT

"if you're not treated with the same level of respect, how are you going to form positive relationships with everyone."

SECONDARY-AGED STUDENT

"I feel like they care more about what I'm wearing than what's going on and why so worried about my jacket?"

SECONDARY-AGED STUDENT

"I think there's a larger range of types of people than what schools expect."

SECONDARY-AGED STUDENT

"a lot of people are just kind of constantly scared the whole time, they don't really feel safe in themselves because they're taught that, the grade is going to be the thing that determines their entire future."

SECONDARY-AGED STUDENT

"some teachers are really good at picking up on if you're upset or uncomfortable... and come up and check on you."

PRIMARY-AGED STUDENT

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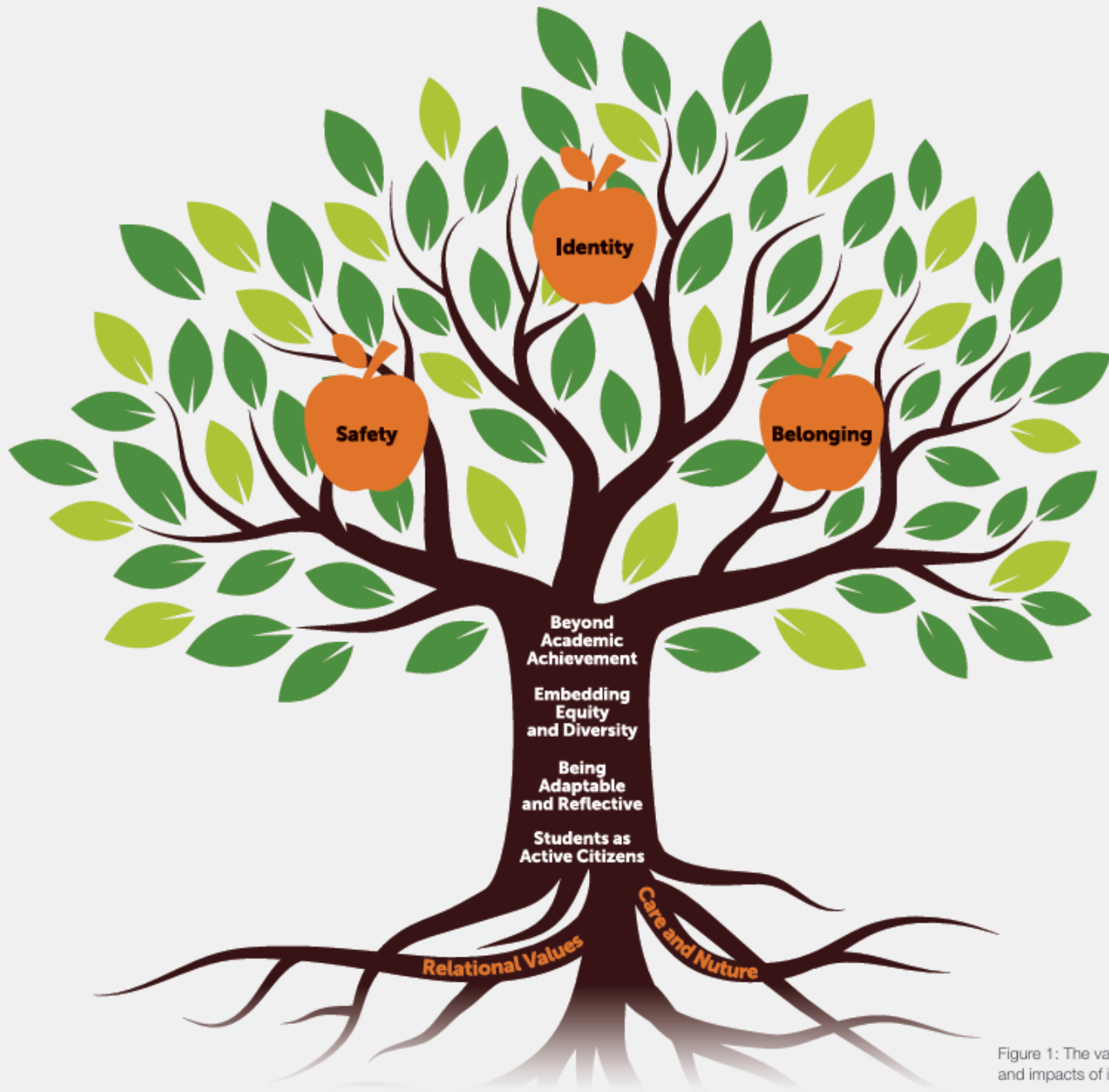


Figure 1: The values, principles and impacts of inclusion

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**A sense of belonging, safety and identity**

**from the four guiding principles**

**underpinned by relational values and care and nurture.**

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# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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❖ **Embedding Equity and Diversity**

❖ **Students as Active Citizens**

❖ **Being Adaptable and Reflective**

❖ **Beyond Academic Achievement**

- Our role is not to tell schools, boroughs or trusts what to do – it's to influence and promote change.
- That means working in partnership to promote the guiding principles to support greater inclusion across schools and services in London.

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# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## ❖ Embedding Equity and Diversity

- 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;
- creating opportunities to explore and value our differences, challenging stereotypes, racism and discrimination and taking action to ensure that they are tackled.



# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## ❖ Students as Active Citizens

- creating a sense of shared responsibility for the whole school community. It involves working together with young people, school staff, families and local communities on issues that matter to them;
- requires adults listening to and acting on the views of young people and the community;
- young people shaping and actively participating to the life of the school, such as, policies which impact on them;
- ensuring that groups/committees fully represent the school community.

# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## ❖ **Being Adaptable and Reflective**

- supportive culture where staff are empowered and enabled to innovate, experiment and refine their practices to meet the diverse needs of all;
- adjusting routines to suit learners' needs, for instance through movement breaks;
- offering different curriculum pathways to better meet the needs of all young people, keeping a focus on positive outcomes, such as achievement.

# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## ❖ **Beyond Academic Achievement**

- enabling young people to achieve by giving them opportunities to flourish;
- having high expectations for all young people and celebrating their successes;
- removing barriers to ensure that opportunities and experiences can be accessed by all;
- 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.



# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: OUR ASK OF YOU

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**Embedding Equity  
and Diversity**



**Being Adaptable  
and Reflective**



**Beyond Academic  
Achievement**



**Students as  
Active Citizens**

## For local authorities

- adopt the guiding principles and use them to support your policies and practice
- set up a Child Rights Schools Steering Group to promote children's rights across the borough, including take up of the offer of Rights Respecting Schools Awards from UNICEF
- work with VRU and your schools to share promising practice

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# LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER: OUR ASK OF YOU

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**Embedding Equity  
and Diversity**



**Being Adaptable  
and Reflective**



**Beyond Academic  
Achievement**



**Students as  
Active Citizens**

For schools

- adopt the guiding principles and use them to support your policies and practice
- consider taking up the offer of free access to Rights Respecting Schools Awards with UNICEF
- work with VRU and your borough to share promising practice

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**Embedding Equity  
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**Being Adaptable  
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**Beyond Academic  
Achievement**



**Students as  
Active Citizens**

For young people

- work with your school using the guiding principles to develop a Charter for your school community
- engage positively with your school to explore ways in which you can influence the life of the school;
- learn more about participation and your rights as set out in UNCRC.

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# SHINING A LIGHT ON PROMISING PRACTICE

The Charter celebrates inclusion already flourishing in many schools across London.

Sharing examples through social media  
#LondonsInclusionCharter

We want to increase the reach of Promising Practice to enable more schools to be able to share their work under each of the guiding principles.

## London's Inclusion Charter

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### Spotlight on Ark Schools

#### Focusing on improving inclusion

**About us:** Ark Schools is a multi-academy trust operating a network of 39 schools in London, Birmingham, Portsmouth, and Hastings. Ark is committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of background or prior attainment, achieves highly enough to have real choices at age 18. 43% of Ark's students are eligible for free school meals, 16% are SEND and 46% are EAL.

**The need:** The post-covid climate has created a 'perfect storm' for schools, exacerbating challenges around poor mental health, attendance, behaviour and undiagnosed SEND Needs. **Establishing a new role:** Ark Schools established a new central role in September 2022, a Director of Pastoral and Inclusion. This role has brought together the areas of attendance, behaviour, SEND, safeguarding, mental health and Personal Development under one strategic umbrella for the first time as a network.

**Developing a team:** Creating this role has meant that a wider Pastoral and Inclusion team could be formed with the pre-existing Head of Safeguarding and Head of Inclusion roles. As such, the network has been able to provide a model for schools as to how to triangulate inclusion work, acknowledging these key areas of school provision fundamentally interact and impact on one another and should not be seen in isolation.

**Creating a Personal Development framework:** A core part of the network's drive on attendance and behaviour has been supporting schools in prioritising the development of the whole child, providing opportunities for all students that build a sense of safety, purpose, joy and belonging. In order to maintain our focus on this work, the network made the decision to elevate Personal Development as a strategic objective. A key part of this work has been developing a Personal Development framework, which has allowed schools to situate and assess their current provision for students beyond the academic. The framework mandates our foundational expectations for Personal Development provision, and provides guiding resources and support for schools to implement successfully.

#### The work so far:

##### Leadership

- Created learning networks for Secondary Vice Principals with responsibility for Pastoral and Inclusion, Senior Mental Health Leads, Extra-curricular leads and Personal Development leads. These networks meet regularly to receive update training and share practice. This is in addition to the SENCo and DSL learning networks that already existed.

##### Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Facilitated training for all DSLs and DDSLs in the network on Trauma Informed Practice through Trauma Informed Schools UK.
- Established a MAT partnership with Place2Be the leading children's mental health charity that works directly with schools and students in supporting a whole school approach. Place2Be facilitated our key note session and training at the annual Network Day in October 2023, delivering training to all Ark staff on developmental trauma and emotional regulation.
- Ensured that every school in the network has a Senior Mental Health Lead who receive termly training from Place2Be on topics such as Emotionally Based School Avoidance, SEMH, and LGBTQ+ and mental health.

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# WHAT NEXT: FOUNDATIONS OF SUPPORT

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- **Children's Rights:**
  - Boroughs are setting up their Child Rights Schools Steering Groups and more schools are registering for UNICEF's RRSA - free for 4 years.
- **Investing in inclusive practices:**
  - The VRU currently invests in programmes to support improving inclusive practices (Inclusive and Nurturing Schools; Difference Matters).
  - We want to encourage and support further investment in inclusive practices, working alongside local authorities including investing in the professional learning of staff.

# WHAT NEXT: FOUNDATIONS OF SUPPORT

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- **Learning Partnerships:**

- To continue sharing promising practice and supporting partnerships the VRU will be facilitating networks of learning
- The VRU recognise schools cannot do this work alone and will continue to support and invest in wider partnerships to support schools (PRU/AP Mentoring, Stronger Futures, Talk Matters, and the Parent Carer Champion Network).

- **Research and impact:**

- Full research report and a strategic guide for boroughs and school leaders will be published by the University of Bath.
- Facilitating an inclusion research network for research partners.

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