



Education: A Place Based Approach

Area-based Education Partnerships (AEPs)

Area-based education partnerships (AEPs) fill a hole in the current system by bringing coherence to all the schools in a locality. Schools do not need to change status in order to work together in the interests of all local children, but they do need a mechanism through which to collaborate and increase capacity.

AEPs work by offering a carrot rather than wielding a stick. They are formed by groups of schools coming together to share best practice, provide challenge and support with robust self-assessment in a mutually supportive, teacher-lead network. They can encourage efficiencies by helping schools to collaborate to provide essential services and avoid duplication. Partnerships can be based on local authority areas but are led by schools and head teachers, ensuring practical relevance as well as professional credibility.

Features of effective partnerships:

- Collective moral purpose and vision linked to place and community
- A clear model of change, using professional power and skills, and aligned to evidence
- An inclusive culture of openness, trust and mutual accountability
- Good planning, quality assurance and business development
- Capacity building for a self-improving system



Area-based Education Partnerships (AEPs)

There are a number of other existing models operating effectively in urban and rural areas across the country:

Birmingham Education Partnership

Geographically based primary and secondary consortia provide bespoke support to schools. A range of integrated services are offered to local schools through 'hubs' for wellbeing, careers guidance and cultural opportunities.

Surrey Education Service

Maximises schools' income by offering a free school meals eligibility checking service. It also co-ordinates support for schools with arrivals from outside the UK, such as Ukrainian refugees.

Herts for Learning

In addition to school improvement and SEND services, the AEP organises conferences on topics such as disadvantage and technology and purchases school resources in order to take advantage of economies of scale not available to individual schools or small MATs.

Learn Sheffield

Offer includes governor training, SEND support and business support for schools as well as range of school improvement services and help with projects that can be costly to schools, such as website design. It has been contracted to tackle youth violence in the city.



Our Population and our children

- ❑ **Camden's population is currently 279,500**
- ❑ **Camden is a young borough** with larger number of young adults rather than children, due to a large university cohort.

Profile of our children

- ❑ **37.7% of children in our schools** are eligible for FSM
- ❑ **37.2% of children in Camden are living in households in relative poverty**, after adjusting for housing costs (2019/20 data)
- ❑ **49% of all children under 16 living in Camden** are from minority ethnic groups
- ❑ **55% of children** in primary schools have English as an additional language alongside 45% in secondary schools against national averages of 21% and 17% (2020/21)
- ❑ **Children in Camden schools speak** 160 different languages and dialects

Our Schools

- ❑ **All but 4 Camden schools are maintained.** We have a strong collaborative approach with Dioceses and standalone academies.
- ❑ **97% of schools graded Good or better**, with Primaries all good or better, 41% of Primary schools are Outstanding, compared to 17% nationally.
- ❑ **There were 17 inspections last year**, 7 so far this year all Good or better.
- ❑ **There are two schools** currently with a Requires Improvement grade.
- ❑ **Special schools** have continued strong provision (including those with provision up to age 25). Two graded outstanding in successive inspections last year (Frank Barnes and Swiss Cottage).
- ❑ **14 new Heads or Heads of school took up post since April 2023.** The majority being internal movement within schools.



A Place Based Approach

- ❑ **The current education system in Camden is characterised by high levels of cooperation and collaborative working** between schools, a strong sense of place and low levels of academisation, enabled through Camden Learning.
- ❑ **Camden Learning is a schools-led and area-based partnership** set up for the benefit of children and schools. Formed in 2017, it is a joint enterprise between Camden Learning, Camden schools and Camden Council.
- ❑ **In *Building Back Stronger, Camden's Education Strategy to 2030***, Camden made building a strong *place-based system* one of its four foundations for achieving its vision.
- ❑ In the words of the strategy *“We believe that schools work better if they know and are embedded in their local community. We see schools as part of the glue that holds communities together and helps develop mutual support and solidarity across communities...”*



Our Foundations for Success

- ❑ **A strong place-based system:** that understands and reflects local demographics, histories and values.
- ❑ **An ambitious inclusive system:** that breaks down the barriers to learning by calling out and addressing inequalities; making sure children and young people feel a strong sense of belonging to school and community so that no one is left behind.
- ❑ **A collaborative and federating system:** where we use collaboration to motivate, learn and achieve better, taking collective responsibility for all our children, working together in partnerships, including federations, so they are served well.
- ❑ **Think, test and learn:** a system where we are constantly developing ideas and new approaches, learning from research and staying at the leading edge of new and effective practice in education by trialling new ways of working.



Challenges we face

- ❑ As with many other inner-London authorities, Camden have encountered challenges regarding falling pupil rolls.
- ❑ This has largely been due to declining birth rates and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, as well as broader socio-economic factors.
- ❑ This has resulted in the Council taking a pro-active approach to ensure the sustainability of schools, resulting in reductions in PAN and having to close four Primary Schools to-date.
- ❑ In response to the challenges, and to ensure that schools can provide good quality education, the Council and Camden Learning are committed to developing a collaborative and federated school model, whilst ensuring that the individual identities of schools remain intact.



Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- ❑ Camden has a long history of taking proactive action to ensure that children and young people with SEND can have their needs met locally so they get ‘the right support at the right time’ within their local communities, in mainstream schools.
- ❑ In 2023, the Cluster Inclusion Forums (CIFs) that were piloted over the previous academic year have become a locally agreed strategy.
- ❑ The clusters consider requests from all schools seeking to deliver interventions over and above what is ordinarily available, and collectively determine who has exceptional needs, and what funding will be agreed through an Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG).
- ❑ SENDCos from all Camden schools participate in **five Cluster Inclusion Forums** across the borough, together with senior SEN Officers, Educational Psychologists, Early Help managers, and this may include other health and care professionals. The Cluster Inclusion Forums meet each half term to consider requests for an ENG.
- ❑ CPD opportunities have been built through the cluster process, and provided a budget for additional CPD, action research, and special projects within each cluster.



Camden STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)

Camden is home to world-leading organisations in the tech, scientific and creative industries. Our STEAM programme ensures that these are not just places young people walk past on their way to school, but places where they gain inspiration and opportunity.

The STEAM Hub brings teachers and employers together to co-design curriculum projects rooted in local challenges –for example, a project to reimagine a local high street, working with the engineers, architects and artists involved in the real project. This embeds authentic industry expertise in the curriculum and provides a meaningful way for young people to have a voice in shaping their local area.



Camden STEAM builds strong relationships between Camden schools and the many employers signed up to the STEAM Pledge, ranging from Google, Facebook and the Francis Crick Institute to Ted Baker, UCL and Central Saint Martins.



Employers develop bespoke career activities for Camden's young people including summer business challenges, mentoring, and virtual work experience.



Opportunities: Opportunity Centres

Opportunity Centres to facilitate learning beyond the school day

In close collaboration with schools, we will develop a proposal for a school-led network of high technology learning venues across the borough operating at evenings, weekends and holidays to provide:

- ❑ **In the first instance, access for secondary age students to learning, targeted at those who most need it** but with wide access, but we need to consider further the interest from primary schools evident through consultation
- ❑ **Access to technology, digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI) learning programmes** designed for students individualised and personalised use, particularly in subject areas, such as mathematics and languages, where many of our students need to develop their skills
- ❑ **Small group tutoring**, especially for those who need it most
- ❑ **Access to good information, advice and guidance** about the world of work and opportunities
- ❑ **Signposting** to a range of other services.

