

Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 9 October 2013	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: CAB 036/134
Report of: Cllr Amy Whitelock, Scrutiny Lead for Childrens, Schools and Families Corporate Director: Robert McCulloch-Graham Originating officer(s) Louise Russell, Service Head, Corporate Strategy and Equality; Sarah Barr, Senior Strategy Policy and Performance Officer		Title: Raising Post-16 Educational Attainment – Report of the scrutiny review group Wards Affected: All	

Lead Member	Cllr Oliur Rahman
Community Plan Theme	A Prosperous Community
Strategic Priority	Improve educational attainment and aspiration

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report contains the findings and recommendations of a scrutiny review into post-16 educational attainment, which has been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report also includes a proposed action plan for responding to those recommendations.

2. **DECISIONS REQUIRED**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note the review report and agree the action plan in response to the recommendations.

3. **REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 3.1 Post-16 educational attainment was chosen as a priority issue for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2013-14 because of evidence that shows that many young people in Tower Hamlets are not achieving their full potential at this level. Raising attainment at post-16 is a priority for the Mayor and the Education Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate and it was felt strongly that a scrutiny review could make a valuable contribution to the work on this agenda.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the proposed recommendations are strategic, measurable and attainable. A timetable for delivering the recommendations has also been agreed by officers at the most senior levels of the organisation. The action plan is outlined in appendix 2.
- 4.2 To agree some, but not all recommendations.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The key aim of the review was to explore why post-16 results (AS and A2 Levels) are below average, particularly when considered against performance at GCSE. The review group also sought to understand the barriers which prevent better attainment, and ultimately how the council and its partners could further support schools and young people to increase overall performance at this level. Also, the review group were keen to look at participation in higher education, and young people's aspirations for employment, as one of the factors which influences their post-16 choices and attainment.

6. BODY OF REPORT

- 6.1 The report of the scrutiny working group and the action plan for implementing the recommendations are contained in Appendices 1 and 2.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 This report describes the findings and recommendations of a scrutiny review into post-16 educational attainment.
- 7.2 The Council's funding from central government has reduced since 2010-11 and continues to reduce over the next five years as identified in the Council's Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 7.3 This will therefore affect any recommendations agreed and any additional costs that arise from the recommendations must be contained within current directorate revenue budgets, specifically: recommendations R1 funding the development of academic literacy and R9 investing for training for higher education advisor roles in schools.
- 7.4 In the event that the Council agrees further action in response to this report's recommendations then officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made.

8. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the Executive to provide a response.

8.2 The report of the scrutiny review group proposes a range of measures to raise post-16 educational attainment. The Council has a general duty under section 13 of the Education Act 1996, so far as its powers permit, to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing (relevantly) that efficient secondary education and further education are available to meet the needs of the population in Tower Hamlets. When exercising its functions related to the provision of education, the Council is required by section 13A of the Education Act 1996 to do so with a view to –

- (a) promoting high standards,
- (b) ensuring fair access to opportunities for education and training, and
- (c) promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person to whom its responsibilities extend (i.e. persons under the age of 20 and persons aged 20 or over but under 25 who are subject to learning difficulty assessment)

8.3 The borough's maintained schools have statutory responsibilities and budgets in relation to some of the matters the subject of recommendation. The Council's ability to intervene in the management of schools is circumscribed by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

8.4 When considering its approach to post-16 attainment, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 Raising post-16 attainment is key to expanding the options available to young people when they leave education – either by going on to higher education or into employment. Improving the prospects of young people is an important way of reducing economic inequality within the borough.

10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

10.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report or its recommendations.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no direct crime and disorder reduction implications arising from this report or its recommendations.

13. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

13.1 There are no direct efficiency implications arising from this report or its recommendations.

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Raising Post-16 Educational Attainment – report of the scrutiny review group

Appendix 2 - scrutiny review action plans

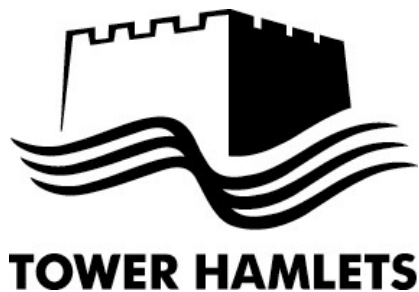
**Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012
List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of “background papers”	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
None	N/A

Appendix 1

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review Group Report

Raising Post-16 Educational Attainment



London Borough of Tower Hamlets
July 2013

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- 1. Introduction**
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD – CLLR AMY WHITELOCK

Improving post-16 attainment is critical to ensuring all young people in Tower Hamlets are able to achieve their potential and take advantage of the higher education and career opportunities on our doorstep and beyond. Yet despite significant progress in GCSE attainment, this has not been matched by our post-16 results, which remain persistently below the national average. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt strongly that this merited further investigation as unless this is addressed, we risk failing our young people. I am very grateful to my colleagues and the parent governors who served on the review group and to council officers, teachers, former and current students, and external contributors, all of whose insights and experience were invaluable.

The review group observed two main findings. Firstly, it is particularly at the higher grades A*-B where we fall well below the national average, with students who achieve As at GCSE tending to underperform at A Level. We were concerned that it seems higher ability students are not being well served post-16, with potentially huge impacts on their subsequent life choices. Secondly, the range of subjects and destinations chosen for higher education is limited, with the vast majority opting to stay close to home to study and only 14% attending Russell Group universities, compared to 21% nationally. While we acknowledge the pressures on students due to both the rising cost of university and family commitments, and that depending on career goals different types of universities may be more appropriate, it is crucial that all students are encouraged to think broadly about their futures and explore different options, so they can make independent choices that are right for them.

The factors behind these overall findings are a complex combination – including the challenge posed to students and teachers by the jump between GCSE and A Level; academic literacy issues; students not necessarily picking the best subjects for them; the complexity of the post-16 landscape and choices on offer; parental influence, cultural context and aspiration. However, we were particularly impressed by good practice we heard about from some of our schools and in neighbouring Hackney and Camden. In Hackney, a strong focus on driving up teaching quality has led to huge improvements in post-16 attainment – in 2012 they had 12 Oxbridge offers compared to 2 in Tower Hamlets. In Camden, investment in an independent higher education advisor has ensured students are able to make more informed choices about higher education and career options, with 50% of students attending universities outside of London, compared to just 17% in Tower Hamlets.

Our main conclusions are that there are three main success criteria for driving up post-16 attainment: independent advice and guidance for students, high teaching quality to support and stretch students, and strong parental engagement – all of which should aim to facilitate high aspirations among our young people. This report makes recommendations for the council and schools on all these areas, which we hope will be adopted. But if we are to see transformational change, as we achieved with GCSE results before, we also need a big drive across the community – from the council and councillors, to parents, community groups, schools and 6th forms – which both supports students to succeed post-16 and broadens their horizons so they are equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities open to them.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Post-16 educational attainment was chosen as a priority issue for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2013-14 because of evidence that many young people in Tower Hamlets are not achieving their full potential at this level, in stark contrast to recent progress at GCSE level. Raising attainment at post-16 is also a priority for the Mayor and the Education Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate and it was felt strongly that a scrutiny review could make a valuable contribution to the work on this agenda.
- 1.2 In recent years, Tower Hamlets has seen a significant improvement in GCSE achievement, following a sustained period of focus and investment. Results are now consistently above the national average and in line with regional figures. However, this progress is not reflected in post-16 results where the borough continues to lag behind national averages.
- 1.3 The key aim of the review was to explore why post-16 results (AS and A2 Levels) are below average, particularly when considered against performance at GCSE. The review group also sought to understand the barriers which prevent better attainment, and ultimately how the council and its partners could further support schools and young people to increase overall performance at this level. Also, the review group were keen to look at participation in higher education and young people's aspirations for employment, as factors which influence their post-16 choices and attainment.
- 1.4 Tower Hamlets currently has an employment rate of 61.6%, this is below the national (70.7%), and regional (68.9%) rates. Youth unemployment in Tower Hamlets, measured as the 18 to 24 years Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant rate is 6.8%, compared to 5.7% regionally. Youth unemployment is therefore a significant concern in Tower Hamlets, and another key priority for the Mayor. It was vital and timely that this review looked at the barriers preventing young people reaching their potential in terms of post-16 attainment, higher education and therefore their future employment. Youth unemployment more broadly was considered through a separate scrutiny review led by Cllr Jackson.
- 1.5 This review was undertaken through four evidence gathering sessions:
 - The first session began with a detailed presentation from the Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate on performance at post-16, based on analysis undertaken within the directorate. The presentation provided an excellent introduction to the key issues and more detail on performance statistics at post-16, enabling the review group to refine and agree the scope for the rest of the review.
 - The second session concentrated on the external factors affecting educational attainment and aspirations for higher education. These included parental engagement, the transition to independent learning and support to access Russell Group universities. It considered post-16 performance in other London authorities, drawing out examples of best practice.
 - The third session took place at Central Foundation Girls School in their new sixth form centre. This session gave the working group an opportunity

to listen to the views and experiences of current year 12 and 13 students as well as teaching staff. This was followed by a round table discussion with all Heads of sixth form providers.

- The final session was an opportunity to discuss all the findings so far and agree the review group's final recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

National context

- 2.1 There has been significant national interest in recent years in raising post-16 participation in education and training and improving attainment. The current Government has published proposals to make structural changes to address the causes of underachievement and low attainment. For example *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010* raised concerns about the relevance and standard of qualifications in the UK and proposed a reform of GCSE and A-Levels. These changes would be far-reaching and their likely impact on attainment in Tower Hamlets is yet to be fully assessed. We know that changes which prevent students from multiple re-sits for modular courses will directly affect results, as would the introduction of a linear A-Level system and an increasing focus on "traditional" academic subjects.
- 2.2 The Government has also set out a new framework for widening participation in higher education. *The Higher Education White Paper 2011* sets out the differences in participation in higher education depending on where a person lives:
- "Fewer than one in five young people from the most disadvantaged areas enter higher education compared to more than one in two for the most advantaged areas".¹*
- To meet this objective of widening participation, universities will be required to undertake 'widening participation strategic assessments'.
- 2.3 Furthermore, measures put in place by the previous Government to extend the school leaving age will shortly come into effect. As of summer 2013, all young people in England will be required to continue education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. Data will be available to show the proportion of students continuing education in school, further education, sixth form college or a higher education institution, as well as those doing an apprenticeship or other work-based learning.

Local context

- 2.4 The council has a clear vision to create a Tower Hamlets in which everyone, regardless of their background and circumstances, has the aspiration and opportunity to achieve their full potential. Raising educational attainment and increasing employment and skills are key Mayoral priorities and emphasise the importance of enabling young people to have the best start in life.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31384/11-944-higher-education-students-at-heart-of-system.pdf

- 2.5 In recent years, continued improvements in GCSE results have resulted in attainment levels that are now above national averages. In 2012, 61.8% of pupils achieved five A*- C grades. This compared to a national average of 59.4%.²
- 2.6 However, the same improvement has not been seen in post-16 examination results, including A-Levels, with results persistently below national averages. This is a key issue for the young people of the borough as evidence shows that higher educational attainment is clearly linked to higher earning potential and lower risk of unemployment. Closing the attainment gap at post-16 is central to developing young people's future opportunities. This review contributes to the understanding of post-16 attainment by considering how best to improve educational attainment, broaden participation to higher education and ultimately improve young people's life chances.

3. ANALYSIS OF POST-16 PERFORMANCE AND DESTINATIONS

3.1 Post-16 attainment and current performance

- 3.1.1 No single data source currently exists for post-16 attainment results; however, a reasonable analysis of attainment at these levels can be done by bringing together a number of datasets. These include Department for Education (DfE) data, which covers only the 18 year old cohort, and borough level data for 17-19 year olds. Taken together, this information provides a sufficient picture of post-16 attainment, although the limitations of the sources of data being used should be kept in mind.
- 3.1.2 Department for Education data show that the proportion of students achieving 3 or more A-Levels at A*-E grades is 47% compared to a national average of 52%.³ When considering the higher grades, only 2% of students achieve 3 A-Levels at AAB in 'facilitating subjects',⁴ compared to a national average of 5%. The average point score per A-Level student in Tower Hamlets is 622 (CCC), compared to 736 (BBB) in England.⁵ Members were particularly concerned to note that in 2012 only 37% of Tower Hamlets students achieved A*-B grades compared to 53% nationally.
- 3.1.3 Table 1 below shows how Tower Hamlets results compare with those of neighbouring London boroughs and national averages. Table 2 shows data on individual sixth forms and Tower Hamlets College. The results vary by institution, partly because the newer 6th form providers have less experience of providing post-16 study, which emphasis the need for support for teaching at post-16 (see below).

²<http://data.london.gov.uk/datastore/package/gcse-results-gender-and-location-educational-institution-borough>

³ This does not include vocational qualifications: for example if a student had taken 2 A Levels and a BTEC, only their A Level results would be captured.

⁴These are subjects considered to leave open a wide range of options for university study, if studied at Advanced Level: English Literature, History, Geography, Maths, Further Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Language (Modern and Classical)

⁵<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/>

Table 1: Department for Education Performance Data – January 2013

How we compare with neighbouring boroughs	% of KS5 students achieving 3 A levels at AAB in facilitating subjects	% of A level students achieving 3 A levels at AAB in facilitating subjects	% of KS5 students achieving 3 or more A levels at A*-E	% of KS5 students achieving 2 or more A levels at A*-E	% of KS5 students achieving at least 1 A level at A*-E	Average point score per A level student	Average point score per A level entry
LB Tower Hamlets	2.00%	3.10%	46.80%	58.60%	65.70%	622.3	198.4
LB Newham	1.8%	3.4%	33.4%	46.5%	50.8%	595.9	199.9
LB Waltham Forest	1.2%	2.1%	47.1%	57.1%	59.7%	671.5	192.7
LB Hackney	2.2%	3.6%	47.9%	56.8%	61.9	649.7	198.7
LB Greenwich	1.9%	2.7%	41.3%	59.5%	70.3	573.6	198.8
LB Islington	1.7%	3.3%	40.5%	50.1%	52.5%	658.7	204.9
LB Barking and Dagenham	1.5%	2.8%	33%	44.3%	53.2%	597.8	198.9
National	4.8%	7.4%	52.3%	60.7%	65.2%	736.2	210.2

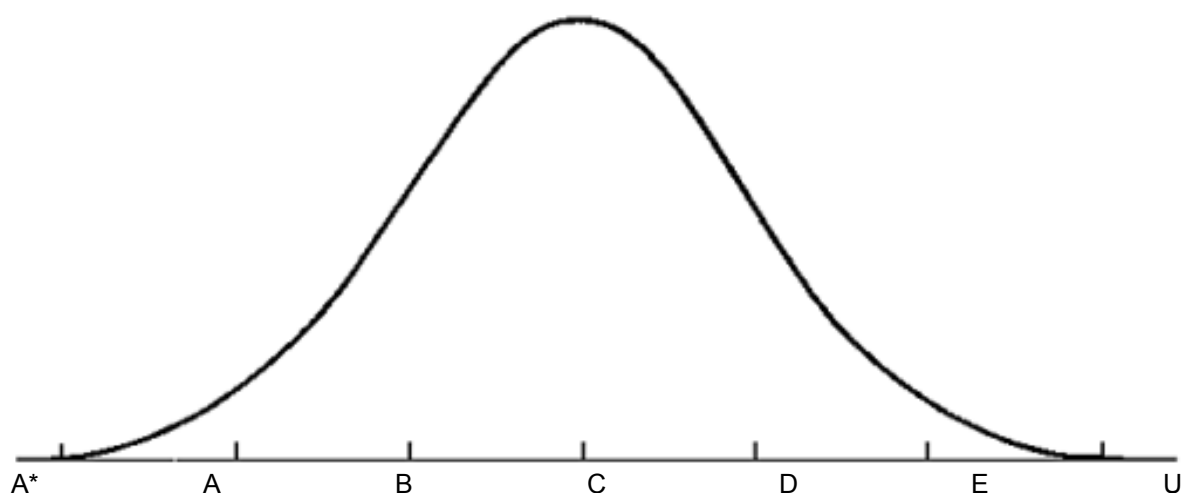
Notes: KS5 includes all Level 3 courses – A-Levels, Applied A-Levels, BTECS, and International Baccalaureate. Points score are derived from QCA standards where A=270, B=240, C=210, D=180, and E=150

Table 2: Department for Education Performance Data – January 2013: Sixth Forms and Tower Hamlets College ⁶

Tower Hamlets Schools and the College	% of KS5 students achieving 3 A levels at AAB in facilitating subjects	% of A level students achieving 3 A levels at AAB in facilitating subjects	% of KS5 students achieving 3 or more A levels at A*-E	% of KS5 students achieving 2 or more A levels at A*-E	% of KS5 students achieving at least 1 A level at A*-E	Average point score per A level student	Average point score per A level entry
LB Tower Hamlets	2.00%	3.10%	46.80%	58.60%	65.70%	622.3	198.4
Bishop Challoner	0	0	60%	64%	68%	682.3	208.6
Cambridge Heath	2%	4%	33%	41%	49%	565.3	194.1
Central Foundation	1%	2%	53%	60%	63%	700	210.6
George Greens	0	0	14%	41%	43%	462.8	188.9
Mulberry	2%	2%	79%	84%	92%	689.1	209.7
Raines	2%	3%	48%	70%	84%	601.6	202.4
Sir John Cass	5%	6%	55%	68%	77%	648.5	203.7
Tower Hamlets College	2%	3%	33%	49%	56%	552.1	179.8

Notes: KS5 includes all Level 3 courses – A-Levels, Applied A-Levels, BTECS, and International Baccalaureate. Points score are derived from QCA standards where A=270, B=240, C=210, D=180, and E=150

Figure 1: National distribution curve for A-Level outcomes, non-selective schools



3.1.4 Figure 1 shows the standard distribution curve for exam results, i.e. those which would be typically expected in non-selective schools nationally. If we

⁶ It should be noted that George Greens sixth form students take International Baccalaureate so this is not measured in the Department for Education performance tables above.

compare this to the distribution curve for Tower Hamlets A2 results (Figure 2), the trend line more or less matches the standard distribution. However, the distribution curve for AS results (Figure 3) does not match the standard. The right hand 'tail' of the trend line in Figure 3 is higher than the average distribution, meaning there are greater than expected number of students receiving lower grades, Es and Us. This trend disappears at A2, results are at the expected levels, suggesting low achievers have dropped out or switched subjects. Members were particularly concerned to note that 25% of boys are dropping out between Y12 and Y13.

3.1.5 It can therefore be seen that whilst A2 results are in line with expectations, AS results are below expectations; more Tower Hamlets students are underperforming at AS level, relative to their GCSE performance. This could be because students on the wrong course for them either fail or drop out. Equally, AS Levels can act as a filter and some students either start again, switch courses or change subjects.

3.1.6 While Tower Hamlets students perform in line with a normal distribution at A2 Level, ideally the peak of the curve would be more towards the left, as this would mean our results were above national average and students were excelling at the higher grades.

Figure 2: Distribution curve for A2 grades, Tower Hamlets:

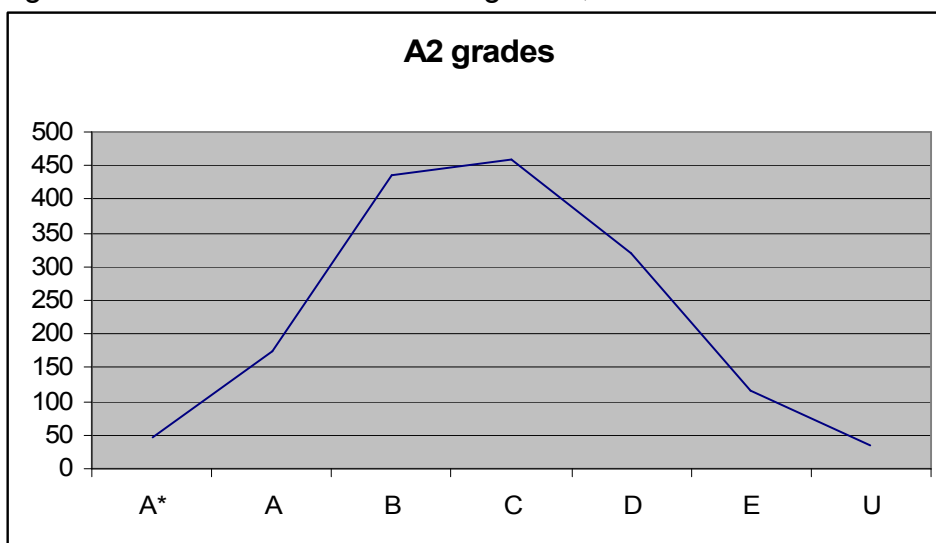
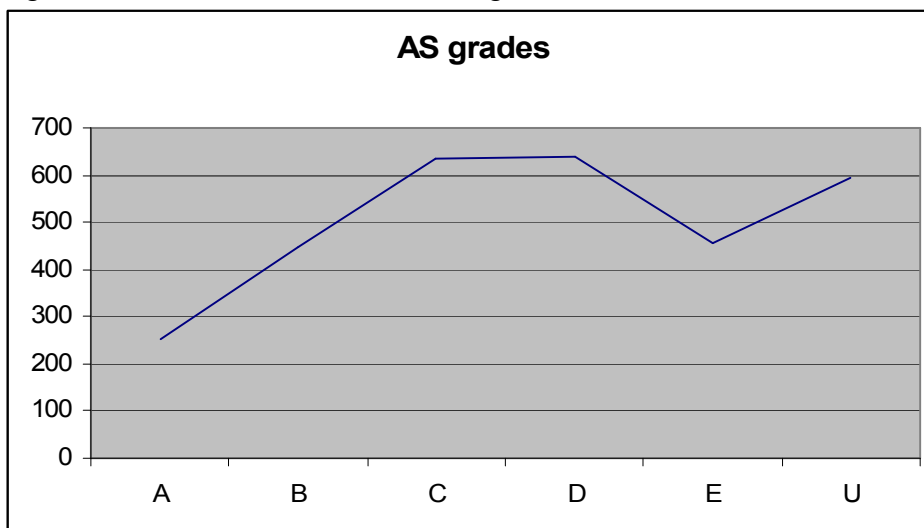


Figure 3: Distribution curve for AS grades, Tower Hamlets



- 3.1.7 As well as Department for Education data, the council and schools use the Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS). ALPS data reports provide detailed analysis of performance by student and subject, benchmarked against the national standards and taking into account student performance in previous exams. Educational institutions are encouraged to use this information to inform strategic planning and to raise student attainment by setting aspirational yet realistic target grades.
- 3.1.8 Table 3 shows that the number of students undertaking A-Levels is gradually increasing. Participation by students who achieved higher grades at GCSE is also increasing annually, though the overall performance score has declined since 2010. Worryingly, this group are underperforming at A-Level relative to their GCSE scores. For example, if student X achieves A grades overall at GCSE they earn a point score of 7.0. The ALPS data shows X's expected UCAS points is 368 (equivalent of AAA), but in Tower Hamlets, on average, student X would achieve only 324 points (equivalent of ABB). This is indicated in blue in Table 3, representing underperformance. Members were especially concerned that students at the top level are not performing as well as expected based on their GCSEs results, given the huge impact this has on further education and career options. Potential reasons for this were discussed including subject choice, higher level language skills and the ease with which they succeeded at GCSE compared to the leap to A Level study.
- 3.1.9 Analysis of ALPS data by the council's Learning and Achievement service identified three distinct groups in terms of post-16 attainment:
- Very high achieving GCSE students who *underperform* at A-Levels when considered against their expected grades. This is those with an average point score of 7.0 (grade A) or above.
 - Average achieving GCSE students who perform satisfactorily when considered against their expected grades. This is students with average point score between 5.5 and 6.7 (grades C to B).
 - Lower grade GCSE students who perform strongly when considered against their expected grades. Students with an average point score of 4.0 (grades D) and below are in this group. They perform strongest of all the attainment groups, relative to their GCSE results.

Members felt it was positive that lower grade students are being supported to exceed expectations, but were worried that this is not happening at all levels.

Table 3: ALPS data chart: Expected UCAS points target based on GCSE performance

GCSE score	QCA score	UCAS pts target	2009 [†]			2010 [*]			2011 [*]			2012		
			Student numbers	UCAS pts scored	Alps grade	Student numbers	UCAS pts scored	Alps grade	Student numbers	UCAS pts scored	Alps grade	Student numbers	UCAS pts scored	Alps grade
7.5-8.0	55.0-<58.0	445.52	3	373.33	6	6	376.67	7	6	406.67	6	9	355.56	8
7.0-<7.5	52.0-<55.0	368.33	13	335.38	5	22	376.36	3	33	350.30	5	38	324.74	7
6.7-<7.0	50.2-<52.0	331.67	18	273.33	7	20	311.00	5	33	296.97	6	35	296.57	6
6.4-<6.7	48.4-<50.2	304.00	26	296.15	4	25	296.80	4	37	276.22	6	43	280.93	5
6.1-<6.4	46.6-<48.4	277.50	40	248.50	6	39	283.59	3	53	255.85	5	56	259.29	5
5.8-<6.1	44.8-<46.6	255.00	51	240.00	5	44	243.64	4	68	246.18	4	61	236.39	5
5.5-<5.8	43.0-<44.8	233.33	52	224.62	4	52	248.46	3	58	225.86	4	67	221.49	5
5.2-<5.5	41.2-<43.0	212.50	42	225.71	3	52	222.31	3	68	204.12	4	68	209.71	4
4.7-<5.2	38.2-<41.2	190.00	75	188.00	4	63	190.79	3	69	193.04	3	70	176.86	5
4.0-<4.7	34.0-<38.2	166.67	48	162.50	4	41	175.12	3	41	183.90	3	30	175.33	3
0.0-<4.0	10.0-<34.0	160.00	14	138.57	5	8	170.00	3	8	212.50	2	6	163.33	3

Notes: Red shading indicates good performance against target, black shows performance is satisfactory, and blue shading indicates under performance against target points.

3.2 Higher education destinations

3.2.1 In 2012 64.8% of students who completed A-Levels or equivalent qualifications went to university, 0.4 percentage points higher than the national average of 64.2%. However only 0.2% of students were accepted to Oxbridge, compared to a national average of 1.3%. 14% of Tower Hamlets students were accepted into a Russell Group university, 7 percentage points lower than the national level of 21%. Members were keen to explore whether this was due to grades, aspiration or choices, or a combination thereof.

3.2.2 The majority of students in 2012 who went onto university joined the following institutions: University of Westminster (102) Greenwich University (94), University of East London (71) Queen Mary University of London (69), London South Bank University (45), Goldsmiths University of London (37), London Metropolitan University (33), City University (27), Kings College London (160), Kingston University (15) and The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (12). In terms of subjects studied at university, the most popular subject was Business (100), followed by Law (39), Sociology (39) and Computing (38).

3.2.3 In 2012, 83% of students remained in London for higher education as can be seen above. Very small proportions, around 7% to 8% from each sixth form, go to universities outside London. Compared to previous years this figure appears to be unchanged or declining, which may be as a result of the rising costs associated with higher education as well as other factors such as wishing to live at home or family commitments.

3.2.4. Members discussed the results data and the analysis undertaken by Learning and Achievement. They identified a number of areas for improvement, which they thought the rest of the review should focus on.

- Why students who achieve top grades at GCSE are underperforming at A Level.
- The apparent difficulties in the transition from GCSE to A Level
- Whether and how students make appropriate subject choices at A Level.
- Progression of students onto higher education, particularly the top universities and a broader range of subjects.

3.2.5 The next section looks in more detail at each of these areas. It also captures the opinions and experiences of current and past post-16 students and examples of best practice from educational institutions both inside and outside Tower Hamlets which the members heard in their evidence gathering sessions.

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The leap from GCSE to A-Level and ‘interventionitis’

4.1.1 The working group were keen to understand the experience of students transitioning from GCSE to A-Level. This was identified as an issue in the data analysis, by Heads of Sixth Forms and current students. It was discussed in some detail when the review group visited Central Foundation Girls School.

4.1.2 At Central Foundation members heard from the Headteacher, the Deputy Head of Sixth Form and current students on some of the key issues affecting the transition from GCSE to A-Level, and why some students find it difficult. These were mainly around academic literacy and independent study. The group also heard that some students use year 12 as a ‘correctional’ year, retaking GCSEs and starting AS levels, not completing their A Levels until year 14. This can be positive as it enables students who need extra support to complete their post-16 education in school.

4.1.3 Members also heard from CFGS and Hackney Learning Trust that the transition to post-16 education can be a challenge for teachers as well as students, as it requires a different method of tuition to prepare students for independent study and the high academic standards required. This is discussed in more detail in the section below on teaching quality.

Academic literacy

4.1.4 The review group heard that having strong English language skills and a broad vocabulary, or ‘academic literacy’ is much more important at A Level compared to GCSE. Subjects are assessed through longer essays and examinations and a good to excellent level of literacy, evidence of wider learning and reading is expected and examined. The level of competence required will vary depending on the subjects being studied.

4.1.5 Almost three quarters (74%) of Tower Hamlets pupils have a first language other than English⁷, and the borough has a relatively high proportion of residents who use a main language other than English, 34%, compared to

⁷http://towernet/Intranet/staff_services/business_planning/corporate_research_unit/corporate_research_briefings.aspx

22% in London and 8% in England. Furthermore, in 2010, Tower Hamlets Child Poverty Needs Assessment⁸ found that nearly half of the population had language needs.

- 4.1.6 Students at Central Foundation echoed this, saying that they found they needed support with essay writing, and that the reading material and its volume was challenging for some subjects. The Headteacher felt that the issue of academic literacy was particularly prevalent in their sixth form where 81% of students were of Bangladeshi origin, with many speaking Bengali at home. Students are therefore not exposed to the words and phrases needed to get the top grades at A Level, as they do not have this vocabulary reinforced either through conversations or through the media consumed at home. Teachers also pointed out that Sylheti, the main language of many students, is not a written language which can make written work even more challenging for students.
- 4.1.7 Members were interested to hear about a project to improve the academic writing skills of students on A Level courses and to enable more grades A and B to be achieved, through the provision of one-to-one tuition. Evaluation of the project showed both positive feedback from students and teachers and improvements in results, with targeted students achieving higher grades than the borough average at both A2 and AS Level. The project also worked with teachers to support them to develop skills to improve academic literacy.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the council funds and supports the development of academic literacy, by providing one to one tuition for students and support for teachers which schools can access

Independent study

- 4.1.8 The group heard from students and sixth form staff that many students find it a big jump between GCSEs and A Level and don't adjust to the need for independent study. Some don't use their 'free' or 'independent study' time productively, or don't know how to study independently effectively. These are skills that they have not necessarily developed at GCSE.
- 4.1.9 To address this, the Central Foundation students had set up their own study group to help each other with difficulties they were having in a particular subject. Sir John Cass sixth form has developed an incentive programme to encourage students to study in specific allocated areas (such as the library) during their free periods. Attendance is checked and signed off in the student's diary by teaching staff. This has encouraged students to manage their time better and use their free periods for learning and revision. A similar initiative members heard about was a Learning Passport which sets out tasks that students can do with prizes attached, which builds their independent study skills and promotes healthy peer competition. Existing borough-wide programmes such as the Mayor's Education Award and the Aim Higher Scheme could be used to similar effect, with payments contingent on learning and independent study, not just general attendance.

⁸<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=d7bda100-561d-4a04-9c04-c8a278173a16&version=-1>

4.1.10 Teachers also raised that many students face practical challenges to undertaking the independent study required for A Level. Many live in overcrowded homes where there is literally no space to study. A culture of intense study is easier when parents have also been to university, which often is not the case. Many students may have family or caring responsibilities, and some 6th formers are married. Members heard how Central Foundation have tried to address some of these challenges by providing study space at school and encouraging its use beyond school hours, which their students reported was really valued as they can focus on study without home distractions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That schools teach independent study skills and that the council promotes and facilitates best practice in approaches to incentivise learning and independent study

'Interventionitis'

- 4.1.11 Central Foundation teaching staff attributed some of the difficulties of transition between GCSE and A level to 'interventionitis'. This was described as an unintended consequence of the significant support students receive from teachers at GCSE. Whilst clearly enabling students to do well at GCSE, for some it has stopped them developing independent study skills and limited their awareness of the importance of wider learning and study. They are then ill-prepared for the challenge of A Levels. While some students make the transition well, the phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the first term of year 12 as students adjust to the new teaching and learning regime.
- 4.1.12 To address this issue Central Foundation has created 'Raising Standards' groups which band students into *Excel*, *Accelerate* and *Transform* categories. A tailored teaching approach and programme of support is developed for students in each band to help them succeed and develop their study skills. The review group considered this to be good practice that the council could further develop and disseminate to other schools.
- 4.1.13 The review group discussed how best to reduce the adverse impact of 'interventionitis' while maintaining the support that was obviously working well for GCSE students. They heard that support programmes which 'scaffold' students in the first term of year 12 term was crucial, as are mechanisms which identify and monitor students who are at risk of falling behind or dropping out. Schools should also encourage students to set up peer learning groups and make productive use of study periods, incentivising students if necessary, as discussed above.
- 4.1.14 Members also heard about the summer induction post-GCSE that Central Foundation runs, which enables students to get a taster of the level required at AS Level through real classes and set homework, and also gives the school an indication of their skills and needs. Initiatives run by Queen Mary university were also cited as good practice, such as one to one mentoring by university students and masterclasses targeted at those who are at or just below the grades needed for Queen Mary, which are currently operating at capacity.
- 4.1.15 It was concluded that there are various effective measures that the council could promote to support schools in helping students manage the step into

year 12 and avoid 'interventionitis'. The council can promote best practice from inside and outside Tower Hamlets. It can also help schools better target and evidence the benefits of such support through access to ALPS data. This would help schools set targets and develop individualised learning plans for students.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the council supports all sixth forms to use ALPS data effectively in their planning, to target support to Year 12 students.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the council encourages the development of Raising Post-16 Attainment programmes in all sixth forms by sharing best practice examples inside and outside Tower Hamlets and by exploring how to expand the support offered to schools by partners such as Queen Mary University.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That schools adopt initiatives such as summer learning to ensure students are equipped for the transition to post-16 study.

4.2 Aspirations for higher education

- 4.2.1 Aspirations for, and access to, good quality higher education were identified by the review group as fundamental to increasing post-16 attainment and broadening the horizons and future opportunities of young people. Given the lower percentage of Tower Hamlets students progressing onto Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, as identified above, the group were keen to explore how young people could best be encouraged and supported to access these universities. While such universities will not be appropriate for every student, depending on their subject choice and career goals, members felt strongly that all students should be supported to understand and access the full range of opportunities available to them. Members were concerned that this is not necessarily the case currently, given 2 Tower Hamlets gained a place at Oxbridge in 2012, compared to 12 in neighbouring Hackney, an area with similar socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic challenges.
- 4.2.2 The review group also felt quite strongly that leaving home and attending a university somewhere other than east London was often an important part of the university experience and were keen to understand why so many Tower Hamlets students stayed in London to study and whether more students could be encouraged to attend universities further afield, if appropriate for them. Teaching staff raised that attending university closer to home also impacts on the drop out rate, as it can be easier to stop attending if the subject or the environment is challenging and family duties can affect study time.
- 4.2.3 Reasons why students choose to stay closer to home to attend university were discussed by Central Foundation 6th formers, teaching staff and through anecdotal evidence. Home pressures and family commitments, fears about finance due to the cost of university fees, low aspiration and cultural context all play a part. Members heard about students given places at Oxford and even Imperial College in London who were reluctant to attend due to the distance from home and their parents' worries. A former student talked about

how cultural background can impact on choices about destination, for example when parents worry about students becoming involved in religiously or culturally inappropriate activities through university life.

- 4.2.4 The Central Foundation students spoke very positively about the opportunities they'd had to attend subject taster sessions and visit different universities, particularly those outside London. They said they would like the opportunity to do more of these visits, although in the discussion with Heads of 6th form, some staff raised concerns about the number of visits, and time out of school, some students end up going on. The few weeks after AS level exams, before the end of Year 12 were identified as a good time for students to do these visits and focus on their higher education choices. Members also heard about Mulberry school funding trips for parents to universities further afield, which has led to students achieving the most university offers outside of London ever. These kinds of initiatives should be expanded to ensure parents are also aware of and reassured about the opportunities available outside London.
- 4.2.5 The students also said they would like wider variety and better quality in the work experience and internship opportunities available to them. Specifically, they would like more 'aspirational' placements which better aligned with the subjects they were studying and their goals for higher education and employment. They cited an example of a project at City of London Girls School they'd been involved in where extra-curricular projects were linked to subjects being studied. These projects were considered by the students as strong examples of extra-curricular activities they could include on their personal statements when applying for university. Teachers at Central Foundation also raised concerns that the predominantly low level work experience placements on offer undermined their attempts to encourage their students to think ambitiously about their own future careers, in turn having an impact on their post-16 choices and attainment.
- 4.2.6 The Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership (EBP) is responsible for coordinating secondary school work experience placements. They also organise placements for post-16 students but this is a limited area of their work. Less than 10% of their placements annually are with Canary Wharf or City corporate businesses and where these are secured it is nearly always through a family friend or relative. The EBP are aware that stronger relationships need to be brokered with Canary Wharf and the City Fringe to open up access to Level 3 & 4 work placements and internships. Members also heard from Central Foundation students that they would like opportunities to access work experience in medical and legal settings.
- 4.2.7 The Mayor of Tower Hamlets currently funds the Aim Higher Programme. The objectives of this programme are to support post-16 students to achieve top grades and access the best universities. It comprises three strands of work: achievement activities, interventions, and information, advice and guidance. The achievement activities include a debating competition, Eton summer school and an Oxbridge project.⁹ Interventions include one to one mentoring

⁹http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/1-50/17_schools/schools_working_with_universit.aspx

by Queen Mary University and University of East London undergraduates as well as subject specific teaching support. Finally, four personal advisers are interviewing all year 11 students (prospective year 12s) to support them with their university subject choices and progression routes.

4.2.8 The group heard from Queen Mary University about the support services they offer to local students, which focus on three approaches: raising aspirations at primary age; improving attainment through support for teaching and lending facilities eg labs and art studios; information and advice for young people. A relatively high proportion of their students come from east London. They currently run a partnership project with St Pauls Way School to raise student aspirations and support and encourage them to continue onto higher education. Professors and post-graduates from the university support post-16 teaching staff at the school to increase the quality of teaching and provide subject specific advice. The university emphasised that support and interventions as early as primary school were necessary, in addition to getting to students at year 9 when they make GCSE choices. Queen Mary felt they have good relationships with some schools but there could be a danger not all schools in Tower Hamlets are benefitting.

4.2.9 In relation to increasing access to Oxbridge and Russell Group universities, the review group thought that all students should be given appropriate information, support and encouragement to explore applying to such universities, including those outside of London. The welcomed any opportunities for students to attend summer courses and master classes in partnership with different universities and relevant alumni networks. For example, both Oxford and Cambridge have schemes targeted at widening access, including fairs, summer activities and targeted local initiatives across the UK. Members heard that in Tower Hamlets an Oxbridge Fair was to be held in July, which it was hoped would be annual in future and combined with overnight visits for parents and students. Oxbridge graduates from Tower Hamlets are also informally supporting students with their applications and interview preparation and this could be encouraged more widely. Many Russell Group universities have been strengthening their alumni networks, maintaining contact with former students and developing comprehensive alumni databases. These developments suggest the potential to bringing together a Tower Hamlets alumni network to improve outreach work within the borough, develop links between local students and a broad range of universities and provide role models or mentoring by linking up former and prospective students from Tower Hamlets.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That the council sustains and expands the Oxbridge and Russell Group partnerships, through developing an alumni network and improving links with individual universities.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That Aim Higher funding is reinvested in higher education visits for students and parents, following a review by the council into which type of visits have been most well received and most successful, in terms of the impact on choices and mindset.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the council works with the EBP and local businesses, including Canary Wharf and public services, to increase the number of higher level work experience opportunities and explore their role in addressing the challenge of post-16 attainment and career aspiration.

4.3 Information, advice and guidance

4.3.1 Members were keen to understand the information, advice and guidance available to support young people to make their A-Level subject and higher education choices. Current students, local sixth form staff and colleagues from other London boroughs all spoke about this, providing ideas to the review group on how it can be improved in Tower Hamlets. This was thought to be particularly crucial, given the complexity of the post-16 and higher education landscape and in light of the concerns about whether students are equipped to make their own independent choices in terms of subjects and destinations.

Choosing the right subjects and provider

4.3.2 The group heard that lots of students, particularly those who have done well at GCSE, are keen to study science and maths at A Level, but then perform poorly at these subjects relative to their GCSE grades. However, when some of these students switched to social sciences or humanities subjects they performed very well. In many instances, students, having done well at GCSE, felt they should be taking science subjects so they could go on to study medicine or engineering, yet they have less aptitude for those subjects compared with social sciences or humanities. These choices were also informed by family attitudes towards the prestige of medical careers. However, students who stick with their initial choices are less likely to achieve high grades and therefore unlikely to secure places to study medicine.

4.3.3 Sixth form staff emphasised the importance of having discussions with students early on regarding their A-Level subjects choices and making them aware of how their choices might impact their choice of subject at university if they intended to participate in higher education. Teachers are often having to deal with the consequences of choices made during year 9 for GCSE options and students echoed this, with some saying they regretted not taking certain subjects at GCSE, such as languages, and others saying not doing a particular subject was hindering their university choices. Some schools reported they found it easier to advise students who achieve lower grades at GCSE on subject choices, indicating which subjects they might find more challenging based on their GCSE performance. Central Foundation give students the opportunity to attend A-Level 'taster classes' in their chosen subjects in the summer term after their GCSE exams. Students said they found this useful in terms of knowing what to expect and confirming whether it was the right subject for them, while teaching staff find it an effective way to gauge how much support students might need in the first term of sixth form.

4.3.4 The group also heard anecdotal evidence that a number of students choose to study outside the borough at post-16. Parents reported that Tower Hamlets schools results, support programmes and extra-curricular activities didn't

seem as good as those of some providers in other areas, or at least, Tower Hamlets schools weren't as good at marketing themselves – their websites, materials and open days weren't as impressive. This perception is concerning given the new post-16 provision that is opening in the borough. The review group concluded that local post-16 provision could be promoted more by the council; reporting positive news stories to attract interest from Tower Hamlets parents and students. The council could also support schools to improve their marketing materials to help students and parents make informed decisions.

Higher education advice

- 4.3.5 The group heard from a higher education advisor based at LaSwap Sixth Form in Camden about the role he plays in advising students on their higher education choices. LaSwap is a consortium of four schools with over 30 years of experience providing post-16 education. In the previous academic year, 90% of their students applied to university, and 84% were successful, which is well above the national average of 70%. LaSwap employs a higher education advisor because they believe that teachers or even careers advisors are not sufficiently expert to advise young people on higher education. The focus is on presenting higher education as a positive choice and encouraging people to follow what they want to do and keep their options open, given 70% of graduate jobs are for any degree discipline. LaSwap has a self-referral system which allows students to access unlimited higher education and careers advice, information and support. The self-referral element is considered to be an important feature giving students choice and independence, so they can make the appropriate decisions for them.
- 4.3.6 50% of students at LaSwap attended universities outside London compared to 17% in Tower Hamlets. Currently only two schools in Tower Hamlets have dedicated higher education advisors. Although higher education advisors are a cost to the school, effective use of their expertise and the linkages with universities they could create could be excellent value for money and members felt the council should support this given the Mayor's stated commitment to promoting post-16 attainment and higher education. Members heard that funding locally for higher education advice is currently only for students at risk, and there was appetite among teachers for this to be expanded so it is more universal.

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the council invests in permanent support for higher education advisor roles, through

- training for school staff
- recruitment of two independent higher education advisors who can go into schools to support students to make informed choices
- facilitating mentoring to support students who wish to make choices not in line with parents' preferences

RECOMMENDATION 10: That the council improves information to support informed choice, by producing a handbook for students and parents explaining the range of choices available at post-16 and higher education, which is available in different languages and in formats, such as through video and social media.

4.4 Teaching quality

- 4.4.1 The review group heard from Hackney Learning Trust about the recent significant improvements they have made in their A-Level results. Their previous performance at post-16 was very low and their key objective was to raise achievement and enable students to continue their post-16 education in the borough. In 2007 their average point score per student was near the bottom of the national league table, while in 2013 it is above the inner London average. They put their transformational success since 2007 down to a focus on improving teaching quality, which is critical for high attainment.
- 4.4.2 All secondary schools in Hackney now have sixth forms and the council has established a co-operative model which promotes best practice sharing between sixth forms and colleges. This includes a termly post-16 network for sixth form head teachers and college managers; annual subject networks (moving to termly) which harness peer learning to support improvements in teaching; revision classes available to all Hackney post-16 students which are delivered by the best teachers in the borough for each subject; joint links with higher education institutions including Oxbridge and 19 other universities. Hackney Learning Trust is also aiming for each sixth form and college to have a subject specialism, and a partnership relationship with a good university. ALPS data is used to set aspirational targets and challenge schools where poor teaching is having an impact on grades, supported by coaching and training for teachers.
- 4.4.3 Members heard of a similar focus on supporting and improving the quality of teaching at Central Foundation, where the subjects with a pattern of under-achievement were identified and then solutions were developed through working collaboratively with teachers. Members concluded that quality of teaching is a key factor in improving post-16 attainment, so teachers are able to manage the jump from GCSE, support independent study and stretch the most able students.

RECOMMENDATION 11: That the council works with Heads of sixth forms and Tower Hamlets College to develop a co-operative model which increases support for teaching to high attainment, by adopting best practice from Hackney including:

- **Borough revision classes delivered by the best teachers**
- **Subject networks to support teachers**

RECOMMENDATION 12: That the council uses ALPS data to link up schools that are performing well and poorly in a particular subject, to promote peer support to improve teaching quality

4.5 Parental engagement

- 4.5.1 The importance of good and timely parental engagement was raised throughout the review. Parental involvement has a significant influence on educational achievement, which continues into adolescence and young adulthood. High parental involvement is associated with better exam results at 16 in Maths and English, compared to young people whose parents show no

interest. Moreover, research from the Institute for Education shows that home learning activities undertaken by parents are more important for a person's intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income.¹⁰

- 4.5.2 Involvement from parents takes two forms; parents' involvement in the life of the school, and their involvement in supporting the young person at home. There are barriers which can prevent parents from engagement with school and with learning at home. Work commitments are a common barrier, although this is counter balanced by the benefits for families of parents being in work. Family pressures, such as caring responsibilities, can also limit how much time parents have to support their child's learning. Language and literacy can also impact on parental involvement, in two ways: whether parents feel confident to get involved with the life of the school and support their child at home, and in communicating with the school and teachers about their child. Members also heard that the complexity of the education system and parents' having a poor prior experience of school themselves can make parents reluctant to be involved, particularly when their children are older.
- 4.5.3 The review group heard that early parental engagement was vital – both early on and then throughout their child's education, and early in the decision-making process around transition to GCSE, post-16 and higher education. There are services in Tower Hamlets which parents can access such as The Parent's Advice Centre – which offers advice and support to parents, carers and young people with special educational needs (SEN) – and the Family Information Service – which provides referral and signposting for parents of all 0-19 year olds – as well as engagement activities provided by schools. However, members were concerned to hear that many parental engagement services have been deleted as this is no longer linked to Ofsted inspections, so schools do not always prioritise it. The fact that at year 7 parents are keen to be engaged but by year 9 teaching staff tend to report parents will not come into school was another cause for concern and members questioned whether the existing parental engagement offer from the council is meeting parents' needs effectively.
- 4.5.4 The group heard from the council's parent engagement service that parental engagement levels in Tower Hamlets are strong at Key Stage 1 (children aged between 5 and 7 years) with a high proportion of parents engaged and visible to the school. At Key Stage 2 (children aged between 7 and 11 years) there is good engagement in terms of attending meetings but there is a reduction in overall visibility. In Key Stage 3 (child aged between 11 and 14 years), it becomes more difficult to maintain meaningful relationships with parents and some students reported they would prefer it if their parents were not involved. At Key Stage 4 (children aged between 14 and 16 years) and beyond, while parents may still attend parents evenings, this is in far fewer numbers compared to younger age groups and very little broader engagement occurs with parents, partly due to fewer informal opportunities but also the reduction in connections over time. Parents have said that one driver for them to get involved and become active in the school and their

¹⁰<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/impact-of-parental-involvement-2.pdf>

child's education is hearing that other parents are and that peer support is helpful. Parent Governor positions are also an effective way to increase parental involvement and members highlighted that there is often strong interest in governor positions, so parents who are unsuccessful in these posts could be supported to be involved in other ways, for example through parent teacher associations (PTAs). Parental awareness raising events could also be held in conjunction with parents' evenings or academic review days to incentivise attendance. These should take place from year 8 in Key Stage 3 right through to end of Key Stage 4.

4.5.5 The group heard from a local resident who had attended Bow School, Tower Hamlets College and then gone onto the University of Cambridge. He argued that more should be done to ensure parents understand the value and importance of post-16 and higher education. In his experience family influence was important to him feeling supported and empowered to study at university, but he had to work hard to convince them of the merits of leaving home to study and he felt not all students would achieve this in their families.

4.5.6 The review group concluded that parental engagement was a central factor for improving young people's attainment and aspirations for higher education. It is necessary to support and encourage parents to be more involved in the life of their children's school. Also, keeping parents informed and involved throughout post-16 education can help guide and support the young person. The group thought that events for students and parents, held at the school throughout key stages 3 and 4, with involvement from higher education advisers could be effective, as could more communication materials for parents which set out the benefits of higher education, and how parents can support their children's learning. Furthermore, schools should seek to understand why parental involvement starts to decline after Key Stage 2 and develop approaches to maintain engagement with parents. Members were concerned to note only 25% of secondary schools currently take up the council's parental engagement service, compared to 75% of primaries and felt strongly the reasons for this needed to be explored by the council to ensure the offer meets the needs of parents and schools.

RECOMMENDATION 13: That the council conducts scoping work to better understand parents' and children's aspirations for post-16 study, to inform communications support it can provide to schools to market themselves as a provider of choice to parents and students

RECOMMENDATION 14: That the council conducts a review of its parental engagement and advice services to understand

- **Why schools are not purchasing the offer**
- **How to improve parental engagement at year 9 with a focus on decisions, subjects and careers**
- **How to capitalise on the number of parents unsuccessful at becoming school governors to develop other methods of engagement through PTAs etc**

RECOMMENDATION 15: That schools provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school through parent network groups, parent governor positions and volunteering roles.

RECOMMENDATION 16: That all schools run sessions for parents to raise awareness and knowledge of higher education.

5 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 For ease of reference, this section groups the recommendations by theme.

Supporting the transition to post-16

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the council funds and supports the development of academic literacy, by providing one to one tuition for students and support for teachers which schools can access

RECOMMENDATION 2: That schools teach independent study skills and that the council promotes and facilitates best practice in approaches to incentivise learning and independent study

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the council supports all sixth forms to use ALPS data effectively in their planning, to target support to Year 12 students.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the council encourages the development of Raising Post-16 Attainment programmes in all sixth forms by sharing best practice examples inside and outside Tower Hamlets and by exploring how to expand the support offered to schools by partners such as Queen Mary university.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That schools adopt initiatives such as summer learning to ensure students are equipped for the transition to post-16 study.

Independent information and advice

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the council invests in permanent support for higher education advisor roles, through

- training for school staff
- recruitment of two independent higher education advisors who can go into schools to support students to make informed choices
- facilitating mentoring to support students who wish to make choices not in line with parents' preferences

RECOMMENDATION 10: That the council improves information to support informed choice, by producing a handbook for students and parents explaining the range of choices available at post-16 and higher education, which is available in different languages and in formats, such as through video and social media.

Teaching quality

RECOMMENDATION 11: That the council works with Heads of sixth forms and Tower Hamlets College to develop a co-operative model which increases support for teaching to high attainment, by adopting best practice from Hackney including:

- Borough revision classes delivered by the best teachers
- Subject networks to support teachers

RECOMMENDATION 12: That the council uses ALPS data to link up schools that are performing well and poorly in a particular subject, to promote peer support to improve teaching quality

Parental engagement

RECOMMENDATION 13: That the council conducts scoping work to better understand parents' and children's aspirations for post-16 study, to inform communications support it can provide to schools to market themselves as a provider of choice to parents and students

RECOMMENDATION 14: That the council conducts a review of its parental engagement and advice services to understand

- Why schools are not purchasing the offer
- How to improve parental engagement at year 9 with a focus on decisions, subjects and careers
- How to capitalise on the number of parents unsuccessful at becoming school governors to develop other methods of engagement through PTAs etc

RECOMMENDATION 15: That schools provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school through parent network groups, parent governor positions and volunteering roles.

RECOMMENDATION 16: That all schools run sessions for parents to raise awareness and knowledge of higher education.

Raising aspiration

RECOMMENDATION 6: That the council sustains and expands the Oxbridge and Russell Group partnerships, through developing an alumni network and improving links with individual universities.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That Aim Higher funding is reinvested in higher education visits for students and parents, following a review by the council into which type of visits have been most well received and most successful, in terms of the impact on choices and mindset.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the council works with the EBP and local businesses, including Canary Wharf and public services, to increase the number of higher level work experience opportunities and explore their role in addressing the challenge of post-16 attainment and career aspiration

Appendix 2: Scrutiny review action plan

SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN – Post-16 Educational Attainment			
Recommendation	Response / Comments / Action	Responsibility	Date
R1: That the council funds and supports the development of academic literacy, by providing one to one tuition for students and support for teachers which schools can access	<p>Already in place:</p> <p>§ Pauline Roberts has run the academic literacy scheme the evaluation of this is very positive</p> <p>Further action:</p> <p>§ To fund and continue with the work that Pauline Roberts has piloted over the last 2 years.</p> <p>§ To explore why more girls than boys attend the scheme</p>	Jane Connolly, Pauline Roberts	Start a new group of students in September 2013
R2: That schools teach independent study skills and that the council promotes and facilitates best practice in approaches to incentivise learning and independent study	<p>Already in place</p> <p>§ Schools have different models of teaching independent study and best practice is shared at HoS forum – for example Targeted Intervention Groups, commitment interviews. This is going to become even more important with linear A levels.</p> <p>§ Schools have varied induction programmes for L3 study</p> <p>§ Some schools use bursary and MEA to incentivise independent study</p> <p>Further Action</p> <p>§ Focus on putting examples and models of independent learning into schools via HoS forum, website</p> <p>§ Encourage all schools to use MEA to encourage independent study</p> <p>§ Further develop induction programmes through more taster lessons and early development of study skills</p>	<p>Heads of Sixths</p> <p>Council to facilitate a HoS website for sharing resources</p>	2013-2014
R3: That the council supports all sixth forms to use ALPS data effectively in their planning, to	<p>Already in place</p> <p>§ We currently pay for schools' ALPS subscription and this gives access to a lot of ALPS support. For example</p>	Tim Williams Heads of Sixths	Hos Forum in September

SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN – Post-16 Educational Attainment

Recommendation	Response / Comments / Action	Responsibility	Date
<p>target support to Year 12 students.</p>	<p>ALPS will talk through data prior to an Ofsted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § ALPS data forms part of the data analysis carried out by the LA § Best ALPS subject practice is shared with schools to help develop links § Other data sources are used – Learning Plus UK, 6th from PANDA – these give further levels of analysis, for example retentions rates, course completion. § All HoS have a Ofsted data list so that they can keep their data up to date <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Give examples of how ALPS can be used to improve performance via HoS forum and 6th form conference held annually § Analysis of travel to learn ALPS data to inform IAG § Improve data use and analysis for L1 and L2 courses 		
<p>R4: That the council encourages the development of Raising Post-16 Attainment programmes in all sixth forms by sharing best practice examples inside and outside Tower Hamlets and by exploring how to expand the support offered to schools by partners such as Queen Mary university.</p>	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § We've developed the Heads of Sixths forum as one to share good practice and sessions have been held on IAG and changes to post 16. § We work with QM, UEL and Sussex on a borough level and schools have many other links with HEIs <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Develop a section of the website to materials on line that teachers can then use. § The Special Projects Officer is working with partner universities and work is developing in this area further. § Instigate an annual conference with HE partners 	<p>Tim Williams Caroline Newte Hardie Heads of Sixths or academic mentors Council to facilitate a HoS website for sharing resources</p>	<p>December 2013</p>

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	§ Schools establish lead teachers for HE – see R9		
R5: That schools adopt initiatives such as summer learning to ensure students are equipped for the transition to post-16 study.	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Schools already do a lot of activities around transition to post 16. They could explore more timetabling possibilities around this § Schools are sent a regular information sheet on post 16 issues and policy changes <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Share ideas and best practice more widely § Help schools use data quickly and effectively for transition § Develop scaffolding ideas in schools to structure early year 12 teaching 	Schools Tim Williams	In time for Summer induction
R6: That the council sustains and expands the Oxbridge and Russell Group partnerships, through developing an alumni network and improving links with individual universities.	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § All schools have an alumni network – some more formal than others. These are often Facebook groups. § We are also working with the primary sector on this so that the Oxbridge/Russell link becomes long term and part of the culture of Tower Hamlets. <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Further develop alumni groups to get them in school helping or advising current students § Make sure that activities at primary level are known about and used at secondary level 	Schools	2013 - 2014
R7: That Aim Higher funding is reinvested in higher education visits for students and parents, following a review by the council	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Aim higher money has been given to each school and used for: university visits, visiting speakers, summer schools, parents HE visits, taster days. 	Caroline Newte Hardie Tim Williams	2013-2014

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into which type of visits have been most well received and most successful, in terms of the impact on choices and mindset.	<p>Further action</p> <p>§ Impact reviewed and application for further funding</p>		
R8: That the council works with the EBP and local businesses, including Canary Wharf and public services, to increase the number of higher level work experience opportunities and explore their role in addressing the challenge of post-16 attainment and career aspiration.	<p>Already in place</p> <p>§ The Council uses its procurement contracts to develop apprenticeships</p> <p>§ Schools have links with local businesses</p> <p>Further action</p> <p>§ Work with Businesses through the EBP to provide a greater range of high quality work experience</p> <p>§ Expand the remit of the apprenticeship task group to look at wider employment experience opportunities</p>	<p>EBP Council</p>	<p>May 2014</p>
<p>R9: That the council invests in permanent support for higher education advisor roles, through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training for school staff • recruitment of two independent higher education advisors who can go into schools to support students to make informed choices • facilitating mentoring to support students who wish to make choices not in line with parents' preferences 	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have 10 places at the London South Bank University Higher Education Advisors course. 5 of these places have gone to school and advisor staff and 5 to careers staff. 2 schools already have academic mentors so this will mean that each school will have access to a specialist advisor. • Several schools are working with the HE advisor from Camden • Schools have HE advice sessions for parents <p>Further action</p> <p>§ The advisors course will be completed by December 2013 and this should see a further improvement in the quality of advice offered to students about HE</p>	<p>Tim Williams and Alan Davidson to coordinate LSBU course</p> <p>Schools</p>	<p>Sept 2013</p>

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	§ HE advice sessions to include case studies of students who have chosen different or untypical subjects § Funding would be required to appoint LA HE advisers		
R10: That the council improves information to support informed choice, by producing a handbook for students and parents explaining the range of choices available at post-16 and higher education, which is available in different languages and in formats, such as through video and social media.	<p>Already in place</p> § Schools publish sixth form handbooks detailing their courses and place on their websites	<p>Tim Williams, Tina Sode, Steve Grocott</p>	<p>Summer 2014</p>
	<p>Further action</p> § Explore the possibilities of a LA generic handbook/online presence § Also having a Facebook and Twitter presence is the way to go but this may require policy changes		
R11: That the council works with Heads of sixth forms and Tower Hamlets College to develop a co-operative model which increases support for teaching to high attainment, by adopting best practice from Hackney including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough revision classes delivered by the best teachers • Subject networks to support 	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work with THC at different forums – 14-19 Partnership, Heads of Sixths, SFE planning • Schools already take part in university provided revision classes <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further explore possibilities of borough revision classes • Development of an e-community subject network 	<p>Schools</p>	<p>March 2014</p>

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teachers			
R12: That the council uses ALPS data to link up schools that are performing well and poorly in a particular subject, to promote peer support to improve teaching quality	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See R3 • Schools are beginning to link through exploring best practice list possibilities <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop subject networks 	Tim Williams to report on the ALPS data and publicise high performing subjects.	Autumn 2013
R13: That the council conducts scoping work to better understand parents' and children's aspirations for post-16 study, to inform communications support it can provide to schools to market themselves as a provider of choice to parents and students	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the recent Parents Conference we had an FE input and this was well received. Parents had workshop activities on post 16 and a frequently asked questions information sheet • We are also aiming to build on the work at Bow School as this launches its sixth form • All schools have an FE open day/evening <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sessions at the Parents conference – to include advice on different levels = L1, L2, L3 and apprenticeships • More opportunities for parents to gain first hand understanding of university education • Analysis and key messages disseminated from travel to study research 	Tim Williams Caroline Newte Hardie Tina Sode	January 2014
R14: That the council conducts a review of its parental engagement and advice services to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why schools are not 	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual parent conference • Schools have GCSE information evenings for year 9 students 	Parents engagement team Schools	

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<p>purchasing the offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to improve parental engagement at year 9 with a focus on decisions, subjects and careers • How to capitalise on the number of parents unsuccessful at becoming school governors to develop other methods of engagement through PTAs etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many schools take year 9 students on HE visits <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight employment pathways at yr 9 parents evenings • Develop FE input at the Parents Conference • Work with the Parental Engagement team to reach parents and encourage involvement in education 		<p>2013-2014</p>
<p>R15: That schools provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school through parent network groups, parent governor positions and volunteering roles.</p>	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have various activities for parents, especially for younger year groups <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore best practice and expand to older year groups • Encourage headteachers and governors to understand the benefits of parental engagement in secondary schools 	<p>Schools</p>	<p>2013-2014</p>
<p>R16: That all schools run sessions for parents to raise awareness and knowledge of higher education.</p>	<p>Already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have HE advice sessions for parents <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore a handbook of HE key terms etc for parents together with TH student case studies • Publicise positive student University experiences 	<p>Schools Tim Williams Caroline Newte Hardie</p>	<p>2013 - 2014</p>