

CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION
EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-29
(Draft - June 2024)

FOREWORD

Education is often seen as the cornerstone of a thriving society. It cultivates the next generation of innovators, shapes our cultural identity, and fuels economic prosperity. Within this national framework, London emerges as a vibrant hub for educational excellence. Home to a diverse mix of schools, world-renowned universities, and an incredibly diverse student body, London is uniquely positioned to champion the future of education.

Much has already been said about the City of London being unique in terms of us acknowledging our historic roots whilst driving towards the future. Nowhere is this truer than in the education realm. We are immensely proud of all learners within the City of London Corporation ‘Family of Schools’, whether enrolled at our maintained school, at one of the City of London Academy Trust schools, at one of our independent schools, or as a pupil in our virtual school. Our admiration and support of these fine young people and their dedicated teachers is assured.

Apprenticeships were created in the medieval City to ensure that the wealth generating professions and trades maintained their standards and sustainability. In the 21st century City we are growing our breadth of top-class apprenticeships, particularly targeted at young people and adults who may have experienced some form of disadvantage.

As an educator myself, I commend this strategy. It’s vision, ambition and inclusive priority will ensure that world class education grows through the City’s influence, both locally, nationally, and beyond for learners and their educators. This strategy compliments the City of London Corporation’s Corporate Strategy 2024-2029, honouring our fine educational tradition and positioning our learners with every advantage that we can influence for successful, content and productive futures.

Naresh Sonpar – Chair of the Education Board

INTRODUCTION

The City of London Corporation looks after the City of London (‘the City’ or ‘Square Mile’) on behalf of all who live, study, work, and visit, providing modern, efficient, and high-quality local services and policing for all. We have a long history, a unique constitution, our own Lord Mayor, and a dedicated police service keeping the City safe. Our independent and non-partisan political voice and convening power, enables us to promote the interests of people and organisations across London and the UK and play a valued role on the world-stage.

Today the Square Mile is the proud home to 8,600 residents, 614,500 workers, 24,000 businesses and over 100 livery companies and guilds. Additionally, a number of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions (including City, University of London, Gresham College and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama) operate within the Square Mile, as well as numerous training providers, and a number of world-renowned creative and cultural institutions (such as the Museum of London and the Barbican). We support this rich landscape through our dedication to *‘a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK’*.

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to improving social mobility – this being the extent to which people have the same chances to do well in life, regardless of their background. A key outcome of our Corporate Plan 2024-29 is the provision of excellent services that *‘help people live*

healthy, independent lives, and achieve their ambitions'. A vital component of this is our commitment to supporting schools, outstanding education, and lifelong learning.

Another outcome within our Corporate Plan is our desire to *'help build diverse, engaged communities*'. Aligning with this, a drive to continuously improve Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in learning settings will be the foundation for all activity borne of this strategy. EDI efforts in education settings focus on the fundamental right of all learners to access equitable educational experiences. This involves creating environments free from all forms of discrimination where every learner, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, race, disability, ethnicity, birthplace, or other circumstance beyond their control, feels acknowledged, safe and supported to thrive and reach their full potential.

We believe that our commitment to improving educational EDI can play a pivotal role in creating positive life outcomes for more learners – especially those facing the most challenge. This will ultimately contribute to a fairer, more prosperous society that benefits from richer diversity of thought. It is our ambition that at all times, *all* learners are acknowledged and supported, to give them the best chance to flourish.

Our Corporate Plan also illustrates our commitment to *'act as a leader on environmental sustainability*'. To reflect this in our education efforts, Environmental & Outdoor Learning (EOL) will be a priority area, especially with regard to topics such as climate action, sustainability, and green skills. To do this we will support initiatives such as nature immersion experiences, sustainability awareness programmes and green careers development opportunities which will encourage green leadership and environmental stewardship in learners.

With all of these outcomes acting as a bedrock, this strategy illustrates how we will extend and enrich education experiences by creatively leveraging our unique combination of assets and resources. We will utilise the funding, networks, knowledge, influence, expertise, and experience available to us to help more learners realise their full potential – regardless of their background, identity, or ability.

CONTEXT

In England today, learners and education organisations continue to face many challenges. Long-term problems including funding constraints, growing socio-economic disparities and the widening attainment gap have been amplified by events such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. All of this is reflected in and around London with learning organisations trying to navigate a complex mix of interconnected problems such as poor mental health in learners, low attendance and a growing skills gap. These challenges affect many of the education organisations and learners we are connected to.

The City Corporation is a major provider and funder of education. We have Local Authority education duties in the Square Mile, maintain one primary school, support ten Early Years settings, are a proprietor of four independent schools, and act as the sole sponsor of academies managed by the City of London Academies Trust (CoLAT). In its entirety, this group of schools is called the **'Family of Schools'**.

Beyond school-age education, the **Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES)** delivers the City Corporation's statutory Adult Community Learning (ACL) services. ASES also delivers our Apprentice

Programme which recruits apprentices at the City Corporation and brokers and delivers apprenticeships for local businesses and residents in the Square Mile and beyond.

This strategy will leverage our links to the Square Mile’s world-class business community, learning and cultural institutions, and environmental assets. Our ambition is that this, along with our philanthropic commitments, will offer learners unique educational enrichment that expands their opportunities to progress, and inspires an appetite for excellence, creativity, and innovation.

For this strategy to deliver meaningful impact, it must look beyond today’s educational landscape and account for the critical factors of the near future. Perhaps the most significant topic in this regard is the transformative impact emerging technologies will have on education. For example, sophisticated tools that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to analyse student performance and then recommend tailored content and targeted interventions are emerging to help both educators and learners. When effectively utilised, such technologies can enhance learning outcomes by improving operational efficiency, and enabling personalised, adaptive, and inclusive educational experiences.

Alongside technology, other factors such as the development of future-proof personal skills, our responses to local and global environmental issues, and the universal benefits of EDI are just a few examples of other topics that will grow in significance in the near future. This strategy will therefore continue to acknowledge the landscape of tomorrow to help learners prepare for it today.

Delivery of this strategy is a cross-Corporation endeavour. Strategic oversight, including monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will be conducted by the City of London Corporation’s Education Board, with day to-day operational oversight delivered by the Education Strategy Unit (ESU). The ESU sits within the City Corporation’s Department of Community & Children’s Services and supports its aim to ensure *‘people of all ages and backgrounds are prepared to flourish in a rapidly changing world’*. City Corporation departments that will be key in delivery of this strategy are:

- Town Clerk & Chief Executive
- Department of Community & Children’s Services
- Environment Department
- Innovation & Growth

OUR VISION

We believe all learners – especially those facing the most challenge - are entitled to an education which helps them to achieve their best academically and helps them develop and flourish as people. We define this as the development of academic excellence, cultural knowledge, work-readiness, and a lifelong love of learning.

To deliver against this belief, we extend and enrich education for ‘City-linked’ learners to offer them world-class education experiences and help them secure better life outcomes. This work is driven by our vision for education:

‘Helping learners to flourish in a rapidly changing world by supporting outstanding education, encouraging lifelong learning and driving upward social mobility’.

OUR STRATEGY

Fundamentally, education at all stages and all levels should support learners in developing skills and knowledge that will help them access new opportunities and move forward in life. However, today's education landscape is incredibly complex, with a wide range of inter-connected factors influencing education outcomes. The City Corporation is uniquely positioned to help educators navigate this complexity through our ability to fund, influence and facilitate unique educational initiatives across this range of factors. These initiatives, driven by research and innovation, will help educators enrich what they are doing right now, and anticipate what will be of value in the future. So, to summarise our strategy...

'We will create exceptional education experiences for City-linked learners by creatively leveraging our unique array of assets and resources'.

To create a framework for this intention, we have processed the data, knowledge, insights and concerns collected through extensive stakeholder engagement and sector research. Using these learnings as a foundation, we will support our pledges to champion outstanding education, promote lifelong learning and support upward social mobility by focusing on the following priorities:



● 'SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE'

Context:

The City of London Corporation defines educational excellence as a combination of academic attainment, achievement, and personal growth - a foundation for holistic development. High attainment remains a crucial component for success in many spheres and the City Corporation remains passionate in its commitment to support academic excellence in City-linked learning settings. Alongside attainment we will continue to promote the importance of achievement as a valuable way to track progress and motivate pupils who are less academically inclined.

Research increasingly tells us however, that focusing on academic attainment and achievement alone will not meaningfully prepare learners to be work-ready *and* world-ready. The identification and development of personal skills and competencies is now a critical factor in improving career opportunities, and equipping learners to navigate life in a constantly changing world. For this reason, the City Corporation will increase its drive to support the integration of skills and personal development in all learning experiences.

Importantly, educational excellence is dependent on teaching excellence. Outstanding teaching and learning can cater for a more diverse mix of learners, foster engagement and improve comprehension, helping to build knowledge and skills, whilst also inspiring curiosity, creativity and a broader love of learning.

Supporting the development of education, educators and learning experiences, especially where it involves innovation, creativity and strengthened EDI practise, will be central in our drive for educational excellence. We will continue to build on current activity - which includes funding to broaden teacher CPD opportunities, widen access to higher education, and provide bespoke pastoral support for learners facing significant challenge - through our unique City Premium Grant programme.

Actions (What we will do):

- Strengthen existing synergies and collaboration by revitalising the concept of the City Family of Schools, reviving the sense of benefit for member schools, reintroducing a shared ethos, and encouraging more sharing of skills, knowledge, and resources.
- Help support innovative practice and EdTech adoption across City-linked learning environments by working with educators to identify and introduce digital tools, skills, resources, and approaches that they believe will add value.
- Continue to improve education experiences, learning outcomes and future pathways for learners across the Family of Schools by improving how effectively the City Premium Grant is deployed, and encouraging schools to align funded activity with our strategic priorities.
- Offer learners unique, enriching off-site experiences by leveraging our access to the City Corporation's physical assets and venues, such as the Guildhall, our open spaces, our markets, and cultural institutions.

- Through research and collaboration we will connect City-linked educators with leading-edge thinking, practices and opportunities that support innovation in education.

Key Outcomes (What we will achieve):

- Collaborative work across the Family of Schools is boosted, with multiple lines of dialogue between the schools as well as the City Corporation, to maximise the sharing of skills, knowledge, and resources.
- City-linked learning settings keep pace with technology, resulting in improved efficiency, effectiveness, and learner engagement
- Learners across the Family of Schools - especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – see the benefit of the City Corporation’s financial support, and experience an education that is enriched and extended by our innovative funding
- More learners engage with the City Corporation's places and spaces through unique enrichment opportunities which offer the chance to build their skills and knowledge, as well as their social and cultural capital.
- City-linked educators are aware of, have access to, and regularly consider how they might engage with opportunities, tools and practices that will make their learning experiences leading-edge.

Key Measures:

Educators tell us that education experiences for their learners are being enhanced by the additional opportunities and initiatives being provided by the City of London Corporation.

Number of improvement-focused tools or initiatives facilitated or funded by the City of London Corporation annually.

● 'PROMOTING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT'

Context:

The pairing of academic education with personal development is crucial for the overall growth of individuals both personally and professionally. Personal development involves the building of principles and values such as respect, responsibility, and citizenship, as well as the development of skills and competencies like financial literacy and autonomy. Central to this are Fusion Skills (commonly known as Key Skills, Core Skills, or Transferable Skills) - a mix of creative, social, and interpersonal competencies as well as cognitive skills such as decision making, critical thinking and problem-solving. Fusion Skills have been identified as a set of skills that are highly likely to support success in tomorrow's world, especially with respect to the workplace.

Research tells us that access to personal development opportunities varies substantially - particularly among underrepresented groups. The City Corporation believes that personal development is an essential component of a holistic education and should be available to all learners – especially those challenged by disadvantage. We can and will play an important role in making this a reality for more learners. Our current work with Bloomberg, which supports the development of fundamental financial skills is just one example of how we are already responding to this challenge. We will continue to support a number of key initiatives designed to help learners focus on their personal development and increase our drive to see this acknowledged in all City-linked learning settings.

Actions (What we will do):

- Via partners, service providers and specialist platforms, offer City-linked educators curriculum-linked opportunities and tools which will accelerate the development of life skills and competencies in their learners, giving them a valuable edge.
- Create a new event/s designed to promote the development of interpersonal skills and social capital for secondary-age learners - including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND.
- Establish a dialogue between the City Corporation and learners across the Family of Schools by hosting input sessions that give learners the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on activity the ESU is planning.
- Work with outdoor learning and cultural partners to pilot or expand programmes and experiences for learners and educators that use creativity, culture, and natural environments as vehicles for the development of personal skills and competencies.

Key Outcomes (What we will achieve):

- City-linked educators have more structured ways to help learners develop their personal skills and competencies, build their self-confidence, and feel world-ready.

- Learners see first-hand the value of building their personal skills from an early age, are motivated to think critically and explicitly about their own skills and competencies, and get the opportunity to build richer peer networks.
- Participants have the opportunity to interact with a professional organisation and feed their thoughts into planned activities and develop key skills (e.g. communication and critical thinking) through their interactions with us and each other.
- Culture, creativity, sports, and the natural environment are used as vehicles to improve the personal skills and competencies of learners.

Key Measures:

Learners tell us engaging with our tools or initiatives has further motivated them to invest in their personal development.

Number of personal development initiatives facilitated or funded by the City of London Corporation annually, in receipt of positive participant evaluation increases annually.

● 'REINFORCING SAFETY, HEALTH & WELLBEING'

Context:

Good physical and mental health, combined with positive learning environments and effective safeguarding provide the foundation for learners to thrive and develop. These responsibilities are critical aspects of a duty of care for learners and form the basis of our focus on Safety, Health, and Wellbeing. Learners continue to face challenges in these areas, especially with regard to their mental health, and this can affect their education in many ways. Studies by Public Health England and the Education Policy Institute emphasise the link between health, wellbeing, and educational outcomes. Their findings highlight the fact that learners' physical and mental health significantly influences their academic achievement. Improved health and wellbeing positively impact attendance rates, concentration levels, cognitive abilities, and social-emotional development, thereby enhancing learning outcomes.

Schools play a crucial role in supporting the health and wellbeing of pupils, and those that promote learner wellbeing through work such as mental health support, sporting activity, and healthy eating interventions observe improved educational attainment among their learners. Evidence also suggests that exposure to natural environments can benefit the mental health and wellbeing of learners. For this reason, we believe that Environmental and Outdoor Learning can play an important role in this area.

From our current commitment to fund bespoke mental health support and counselling for learners, to a focus on broader research and development, the City Corporation will continue to acknowledge safety, health, and wellbeing as critical aspects of effective education. We will maintain our commitment to promoting and facilitating exemplary safeguarding practise throughout all City-linked learning settings and continue to support efforts that will improve mental and physical health. This will be achieved through specialist programmes, creative endeavours, sporting opportunities, innovative interventions, and a bold new drive around Environmental and Outdoor Learning.

Actions (What we will do):

- In consultation with Heads of Sport across the Family of Schools, establish a 'City Schools Sports Tournament', launched by a high-profile sports influencer, which brings the Family of Schools together around a series of sporting competitions designed to celebrate the value of physical activity and healthy living.
- Deliver a suite of online sessions that offer extra guidance to parents and carers, helping them better support pupils/their children across a range of areas, including exam preparation, risky behaviours, and support with SEND.
- Expand our commitment to exceptional safeguarding by extending our safeguarding training offer to Members and external partners.
- Identify and curate EOL specialists to help City-linked educators deliver more curriculum-linked learning in natural environments to benefit the health and wellbeing of learners -

especially those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key Outcomes (What we will achieve):

- A large number of pupils across the Family of Schools convene around sporting activity, celebrating healthy lifestyles and building their peer networks and social capital in the process.
- Parents and carers feel better informed and equipped to navigate the different aspects of their child's education journey.
- All City-linked learning settings are offered extra support to uphold excellent safeguarding practise.
- Teachers are better equipped to create opportunities where the health and wellbeing of learners can be positively impacted by natural environments.

Key Measures:

Educators tell us that they feel the safety, health and wellbeing of their learners is benefitting from the additional support being provided by the City of London corporation.

The number of health, safety and wellbeing activities and initiatives facilitated or funded by the City of London Corporation, with positive participant evaluation, increases year-on-year.

● 'IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY'

Context:

Education already plays a key role in preparing individuals for the workforce, but *maximising* the connection between education and employability is often a challenge for educators as it requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond standard classroom practice.

It must also encompass the development of Fusion Skills such as problem-solving, communication, resilience, and adaptability—essential qualities sought by employers. Alongside this, education experiences should build an appetite for lifelong learning and ongoing development—essential components to succeed in the constantly changing workplace of the future. Finally, education should play a central role in exposing learners to the world of work, and where possible, connecting them with employers. This better equips learners to navigate the complexities of the workplace, enhancing their prospects for meaningful employment and future career progression.

The City Corporation is uniquely positioned to provide learners with a world-leading offer in this respect. Along with an increase in our drive to see skills development acknowledged in more learning environments, we will utilise our long-standing networks with employers in the Square Mile and beyond to connect learners with a wide range of workplace opportunities. These will include apprenticeships, work experience, volunteering, continued professional development, informal learning, traineeships, internships, supported internships, work placements, 'direct to employment' programmes, mentoring and university pathways. Whilst we already connect thousands of learners with opportunities and employers in the Square Mile each year by organising the London Careers Festival, we will build on this success with new, adjacent initiatives.

Actions (What we will do):

- Better leverage the City Corporation's links with employers to contribute to the 'London Bridge the Gap' initiative currently being driven by the City of London Academies Trust, to help all learners – including those with SEND, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – understand the landscape of careers and development opportunities in the Square Mile, access world-class careers pathways, and gain professional connections.
- Better support learners leaving the Family of Schools, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are interested in innovation and entrepreneurship by working collaboratively with our Small Business Research + Enterprise Centre.
- Map the landscape of Green Careers to offer learners a comprehensive overview and signpost them to careers pathways and green career development opportunities.
- Refresh and relaunch FindFusion, positioning the platform as a knowledge hub that helps educators understand what Fusion Skills are, why they are so important to employers, and how they can help their learners to develop them.

Key Outcomes (What we will achieve):

- Learners facing the most challenge have a strong grasp of careers options, are aware of high-quality City-based development opportunities including mentoring and apprenticeships, and build connections with professionals and practitioners.
- Learners leaving the Family of Schools who are aspiring entrepreneurs are aware of and motivated to engage with the business support services available to them via the City Corporation.
- Learners of all ages are more compelled by and inspired to develop green employability skills and are connected with Green Careers pathways.
- Users of FindFusion understand the value of Fusion Skills in the context of employability and have excellent awareness of development opportunities for their learners.

Key Measures:

Learners tell us participation in our initiatives has improved their confidence in engaging with the world of work.

Number of career development opportunities with which we connect learners increases annually.

● 'EMBRACING CULTURE, CREATIVITY & THE ARTS'

Context:

Access to cultural and creative learning nurtures imagination and creativity, and significantly contributes to the development of skills, knowledge, and well-being in learners. Moreover, research emphasises the growing importance of creative skills such as problem-solving and innovation in the future workplace. Despite the acknowledged value of arts subjects however, there is a noted lack of recognition for arts education within the congested state education system. Aligning with this issue, it is often the case that learners have limited access to arts and culture.

The City is home to a wide range of high-quality cultural venues and inspiring spaces, within historically and culturally significant geographical areas. This presents a unique educational resource that can enrich the learning of children, young people, and adults.

We will unlock the potential in both of these areas. Although we already fund a wide range of bespoke, creative learning projects in the Square Mile, we will build stronger links with, and provide better access to more cultural venues and creative communities. This will in turn help us support high quality cultural and creative learning experiences both within learning settings, and also within the inspiring cultural and creative communities we are connected to.

Actions (What we will do):

- Engage the City's creative communities and highlight the range of cultural and creative experiences available to City-linked learners, inspiring them to appreciate the arts and culture, explore their creative potential and consider creative careers.
- Strengthen knowledge and skills across our cultural and creative learning partners so they are more confident when working with learners who experience significant barriers to learning such as those with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Support creative CPD training that equips non-arts secondary teachers to use creativity to enhance learning across the curriculum.
- Increase the breadth and depth of cultural and creative learning experiences available through our cultural and creative partners by funding unique programmes, encouraging them to work collaboratively, and consistently strengthening the list of partners we work with.

Key outcomes (What we will achieve):

- City-linked learners are familiar with a wide range of creative opportunities and better informed if considering creative careers.
- Learners from all backgrounds feel comfortable and respected when engaging in partner-led cultural and creative learning experiences and are more likely to access the City's

cultural and creative spaces.

- Educator recipients of cultural and creative training create more compelling learning experiences which positively impact learner engagement.
- There is a richer variety of opportunities for learners facing disadvantage to explore their creativity and build their cultural capital.

Key Measures:

Learners tell us participation in our initiatives has enhanced their exposure to the arts and culture.

Learner participant numbers for arts and culture initiatives funded or facilitated by the City of London Corporation increases year-on-year.

IMPLEMENTATION & DELIVERY

This strategy will be implemented each year through the development of an annual delivery plan which will outline the lead actions for that year, along with the associated costs, timings, and impact measures we will put in place. Reporting against each annual plan will occur regularly, with measurement ongoing and an annual end-of-year review undertaken through the Education Board Committee.

Actions will be delivered by the ESU, at times in partnership with City Corporation colleagues from other departments and external organisations as necessary. Actions will see a phased delivery through the five-year duration of the strategy to acknowledge the financial and human resources available.

Dialogues with stakeholders will be maintained throughout to ensure there is opportunity for incremental improvement, iteration, and ongoing co-design for relevant initiatives.

If necessary, this strategy will be adapted to acknowledge any legislative change, national or international priorities that may significantly affect planned activity. This strategy supports the delivery of key outcomes in the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2024 -29, and the Department of Community and Children's Services Business Plan and Children and Young People's Partnership Plan.