Schooling in London
An Overview

by Martin Johnson
Research Fellow, IPPR

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Introduction

London’s schools are different. They are largely better funded than schools in the rest of the country, yet this appears insufficient for them to meet the extraordinary challenges they face. Their pupils are more likely to be excluded or leave schools without qualifications, or poor literacy and numeracy skills. Their teachers are younger, and less experienced, with a higher proportion from overseas than elsewhere. The percentage of London’s children who attend private school is higher than the rest of England, though not higher than might be expected when the social backgrounds of London parents is considered. London’s pupils have the potential access to learning opportunities on their doorstep that schools across England can only envy, but for too many pupils this potential is unrealised. It has a higher proportion of schools and LEAs who are seen (by Ofsted) to be failing, yet also boasts schools so popular that they can virtually single-handedly cause gentrification and rising house prices.

The differences are growing. Inner London’s school population may already be the most diverse of any city in the world. As income inequalities continue to grow across London, class and ethnic tensions are emerging from the city’s classrooms and playgrounds. And as more parents in London exercise school choice and send their children beyond the nearest school, the concept of feeder schools (especially from primary to secondary) has declining relevance.

The quality of schooling in London has implications far beyond the realm of education. As Lord Rogers’ report argues, it is the major tool of urban renewal. The creation of strong communities in London depends on persuading more families to remain; yet the perception of a lack of suitable schools, especially at the secondary level, is the main cause of family flight. The school choices that parents make has a significant impact on traffic. And above all, the regeneration of the most deprived parts of the city depends on a dramatic improvement in these areas’ schools.

London’s schools generate far more publicity than they deserve, thanks to the proliferation of London-based columnists, consultants and political advisers. However, much of this publicity is often misguided and inaccurate, based more on dinner party anecdotes than genuine evidence.

Since the abolition of the ILEA, there has been a dearth of creative, strategic thinking about schooling across the city. Yet without a significant change in the achievement of London’s pupils, it is unlikely that the national targets towards excellence for all children can be realised. London is a special case, and policies and initiatives that work for the rest of the country may have negative consequences in the capital. A decade since the abolition of the ILEA and introduction of Local Management of Schools, it is time for radical thinking to build a whole-city approach to schooling in London.

All of this was the rationale for the decision of the Institute for Public Policy Research, in Spring 2002, to undertake a project on ‘Schooling in London.’ Almost simultaneously, the Government was deciding to prioritise the issue. The early results were the addition of responsibility for London schools to the portfolio of Stephen Twigg, the establishment of a London Challenge Unit within the DfES, and the creation of the post of Commissioner for London Schools. Despite this coincidence, the IPPR project has been conducted independently, and the project conclusions as set out in the following pages are entirely its own. They focus on three main issues: funding, governance, and the most contentious, secondary admissions, while accepting that the work taking place elsewhere on teacher and recruitment is the most important single factor in successful schools in London.
The Social Context

London’s socio-economic structure has an unrivalled range and complexity. The London area is one of the wealthiest places in the world. It has a concentration of millionaires and million pound homes. A relevant factor is the very close juxtaposition of locations of wealth and poverty, so that not only postal districts but electoral wards can be very varied in their social composition. One borough, Tower Hamlets, is also in a league of its own – for child poverty, with a rate of 73.5%, 12% higher than the next borough (Hackney) and 15% higher than the poorest non-London authorities (Liverpool and Knowsley) (Bradshaw 2002 Table 1.8). On the index of additional educational need calculated for primary school funding purposes, nine of the top ten and fourteen of the top twenty authorities are London Boroughs.

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<th>England</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Inner</th>
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<tr>
<td>% of secondary school pupils known to be eligible for FSM</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of households with a gross domestic income over £750 per week</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of secondary school pupils with EAL</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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Table 1: Social Characteristics of Londoners

There are over 52,500 homeless households, with 8,000 of them in bed and breakfast accommodation. More than one in four London children live in households where no-one works, compared with 18% nationally. Unemployment in inner London is 7.2%, compared with 5.2% nationally. Londoners comprise 25% of England’s problem drug users.

In addition to extremes of wealth and poverty, London has an unequalled ethnic diversity. This contains long-established groups from all over the world, current refugees from poverty and persecution including 54,000 asylum seekers, and misfits from Britain and the world. In many of its schools over a hundred languages are spoken, with 275 in total in London schools. Inner London’s population is particularly mobile. In England as a whole, 5.6% of admissions are non-standard (pupils do not start in a school at the ‘normal’ time), but in inner London no fewer than 14.2% are non-standard, and in parts of the city where transience is concentrated the proportion is much higher. A report by Save the Children (Welborn forthcoming) investigates the numbers of children in London who have no school place. Although responses from boroughs were incomplete, a number reported between 25 and 55 pupils each in this position, with the situation changing daily. The main reasons were mobility, refugee and asylum seekers, parental choice, and imbalance in places. Although the majority of boroughs feel pressure on places, there are often places available in schools which parents are unwilling to take up.

The pressure of places is partly due to rising secondary school rolls, in line with a national trend. Nationally, numbers are due to peak in 2004. The London Plan envisages much more substantial growth in the capital, sufficient to require an additional 130 schools over the next fifteen years.

These problems of deprivation and desperation are brought to school by a large proportion of London children. The problems are common across the country – seldom do London schools face issues unknown elsewhere. What makes London different is the volume.
The Performance of London Schools

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<tr>
<td>% of secondary school pupils known to be eligible for FSM</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy rate in secondary schools</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of teachers without QTS in all schools</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% of secondary school teachers under 30 years old</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% per annum teacher turnover rate (all schools)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% of lessons rated as excellent or very good</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% of lessons rated as poor or unsatisfactory</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools’ match of teaching and support staff to curriculum needs: % rated poor or unsatisfactory</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Average secondary class size</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 15 year olds achieving GCSE/GNVQ 5+ A*-C</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 15 year olds achieving GCSE/GNVQ 5+ A*-C in schools within 21-35% FSM band</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 15 year olds achieving GCSE/GNVQ 5+ A*-C in schools with 21% and over FSM (bands 5-7)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 17 year olds in education (f/t or p/t)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% passing advanced vocational qualifications</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: Some Characteristics of London Schools

Source: DfES

The table shows that achievement at Year 11 in London is lower in raw terms than the national average. There is a dramatic distinction between inner and outer London, with the latter doing better than the country as a whole. As argued above, this tells us much about the social composition of the respective areas’ schools, but little about their quality. More useful are the figures relating to free school meals eligibility. Looking at schools in England with more than 20% of pupils eligible (national average 16.9%), 31% of pupils gain good GCSE results. In London 35.3% of that group achieve that level, and in inner London 34.7%. The evidence relating to schools with moderately high levels of eligibility is even more impressive. Where eligibility is between 21% and 35%, 34.1% of pupils attain the standard, but in London the figure is 41.7%, and in inner London a magnificent 47.4%. Since over a quarter of London pupils, and almost a half of inner London pupils, are eligible for free school meals, it could be argued that these figures are an indication of good service to Londoners, and certainly better than average.

At the same time, there is a number of unpopular schools with very low achievement. Their intakes are overwhelmingly disadvantaged. In a city where teacher recruitment and retention is a major inhibition to success, these schools find it impossible to employ sufficient staff.

Speaking at a NUT/NASUWT conference ‘Learning or Leaning? – Lessons to be learned from PISA’ on 30 January 2003, School Standards Minister David Miliband said:

‘...inequality can be a measure of the relative educational opportunities of different groups in the population – or put another way the extent to which educational opportunity is
linked to social class, irrespective of potential. In our country, we suffer both types of inequality. There remains a long tail of underperforming children: 25% leave primary school unable to read, write and count well, 50% leave secondary school without five good GCSEs. And the class gap is profound: a child born into social class one is 32 times more likely to remain in that class as an adult than a child born into social class seven is to rise to social class one.’

This reinsertion of the importance of social class into the debate on achievement allows a much more balanced assessment of the performance of London schools. It is often claimed that London has too many bad schools, and this explains their unpopularity. Yet much of the discourse on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ schools is based on loose thinking and misleading data.

Whatever the KS2 or GCSE results for a school tell us, what they certainly cannot do is offer any evidence as to how any individual child might perform in that school. School effectiveness research over a number of years shows that around 80% of attainment differences are due to individual, home and background factors, rather than the performance of the school (Mortimore 1997). Or, to put it another way, by far the best predictor of a school’s performance is the nature of its intake. Indeed, a technique commonly used by secondary schools to improve their results is to attract a ‘better’ intake (Lupton 2002a). Yet, we hear frequently that one or other grammar school is ‘good’ because it achieves a high percentage of A-C GCSEs, despite the fact that its intake was selected on the basis of being able to achieve just that.

Many conclude that value added data will solve this problem, and this was published for the first time for the 2002 results, showing pupil progress between KS2 and KS3 and between KS3 and GCSE/GNVQ. There are criticisms of the approach being used; small samples of pupils within schools mean that, whilst outlying schools can be identified, the more subtle differences between most schools cannot be fairly judged (Goldstein 2001). The DfES itself points out: ‘at KS3 to GCSE/GNVQ when comparing schools with cohorts of about 50 pupils, differences of up to 4.0 should not be regarded as statistically significant, while for schools with about 100 pupils, differences up to 2.8 should not be regarded as significant.’ (DfES 2001) But value added scores are constructed so that the mean improvement is 100 with most schools falling within the range 97-103, and therefore incapable of being differentiated.

Nonetheless, the performance of London is remarkable. Looking at the average value added between KS3 and GCSE by all the schools in an education authority, only twelve authorities in the country score 100.0 or more. Incredibly, every single one is a London borough. Indeed, the most deprived area in the country, Tower Hamlets is in a league of its own on these results. Its score of 103.7 is a full 1.6 points higher than any other, with Redbridge, Newham, Hackney, Waltham Forest, and Ealing also achieving more than 101.0. Looking at individual schools, no fewer than four of the twelve best value added scores are from Tower Hamlets schools, with two Hackney schools in the next dozen. Whatever the reservations in detail about the concept and methodology of value-added, it might be concluded that given their intakes, London schools on the whole are performing better than any others in the country.

Another feature of the value added tables is the lack of relationship between the results and the reputation or popularity of schools. This is one reason why the ‘good school, bad school’ rhetoric is unhelpful. Parents assumptions about the standard of a school frequently do not reflect the achievements of the school. Another is that it ignores a central finding of school improvement research, that all schools have a mix of strengths and weaknesses, some persistent, some transitory. Unfortunately, this misleading discourse has been reinforced by the Ofsted
inspection process, which despite detailed evaluations of strengths and weaknesses ends with a simple published conclusion.

In London, official support for this popular rhetoric has exacerbated the trend towards market distortion. Parental choice is exercised with high levels of ignorance about the product range. Diversity in a market only works when consumers make diverse choices, but the strong tendency for ‘consumers’ of London secondary schools to choose the same schools creates excess demand at one end of the graph and inadequate demand at the other, without any mechanism tending towards equilibrium. The experience of London secondary schools places in question the whole concept of the quasi-market as a means for whole system improvement.

Secondary Admissions

A Balanced Intake

The major international study by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD 2001) has produced evidence of the impact on performance of the social mix of the intake. It is worth repeating the headline PISA results. They showed UK 15 year olds as amongst the highest achievers within OECD nations in standard literacy, maths and science tests. They also showed that the UK has one of the strongest relationships between pupils’ socio-economic status and test scores. Of the twelve countries scoring above average for literacy, six also manage low levels of inequality in scores, while the UK is one of three with above average inequality.

However, the study also found that the average socio-economic make-up of a school’s intake has a stronger relationship with performance than students’ socio-economic status itself. In other words, the pupil mix is a vital factor. In addition, there is some link between overall achievement and non-selective secondary systems.

A number of school-level factors which affect pupil performance are found to be strongly interrelated to the average socio-economic status of pupils. For example, with regard to learning environment, in the UK in particular schools with a high concentration of pupils from lower socio-economic groups have significantly worse disciplinary climates (OECD 2001:Tbl 8.5 & 8.5a). A 1995 review of research on effective schools identified ‘home-school partnership - parental involvement with their children’s learning’, ‘a learning environment - an orderly atmosphere’ and ‘high expectations all round’ amongst the top ten key ingredients for effective schools (Sammons et al 1995). Schools with a high density of deprived children face greater obstacles in achieving all of these things.

What are the implications for a rational admissions policy? London schools are socially segregated, but the degree varies greatly, due to a number of factors including the presence of grammar schools in some boroughs and adjacent counties, and the admissions policies of individual LEAs (Taylor and Gorard 2003). The grammar school effect should not be underrated, because many of them select from a very wide catchment area across a number of LEAs. There has been no broad consensus from research emanating form the last thirty years on the question of selective or comprehensive education (Crook et al 1999). However, Jesson looked at GCSE results in value-added terms and concluded that that pupils of average ability do better in the non-selective system and in selective areas GCSE performance in the majority of schools (which are non-selective) is actually depressed. That is, selective systems result in lower educational performance (Jesson 2001).
The Secretary of State recently asked the 36 education authorities which still have grammar schools to review their admissions procedures. He told the Select Committee on Education, ‘selection regimes inhibited educational opportunities’ for thousands of young people ‘...I would hope and believe that the authorities will look at their own practice from the point of view of education standards.’

**Recommendation:** Admission by selection according to ability or aptitude must be ended. This would affect all maintained schools, including grammar and specialist.

**Making it Just**

The main factor within current law is the overwhelming priority of parental preference. This is a central requirement of the quasi-market approach to school standards adopted by governments since 1988. One result in London is multiple applications by parents, increasing the bureaucratic load.

Current regulations do not provide for the expression of a range of interests other than parental preference:

- Education is a public service, and as explained below the public as represented by local government has an interest in admissions which is inadequately covered by setting oversubscription criteria for community schools.
- It is becoming clear that London children sometimes want very different outcomes from their parents (Templeton and Hood 2002). Templeton discovered that in primary schools whose pupils dispersed to a large number of secondaries, ‘the process of changing schools has become unacceptably damaging to them’ (p26).

Few of these children found that factors key to all pupils had been satisfied: moving on with friends, to a familiar school, a local school, a good school. There is a case for an independent ‘child-centred’ factor in secondary school admissions. It should reflect the child’s wishes, but also a judgement on the child’s needs, in which the primary school should play a major role.

Since 1991, with the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government has made a commitment to give a child who is capable of forming views ‘the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child’. It cannot be right that the child who is at the centre of the process should formally have no part to play and no rights.

The current admissions system as operating in London does not reflect a balance of interests. It is based on a simple market concept in which the parent is treated as the consumer. Indeed the 1998 Act reinforced this by giving admissions authorities an overriding duty to comply with parents’ declared preferences. The interests of social justice are not served by such a limited perspective. State education is not an individual consumption good, but a public service provided to meet a variety of aims, only some of which relate to individual learners. Others are social and political, relating to social order, social cohesion, the inculcation of democratic and liberal values, and so on. A school admissions system should reflect that variety of aims.

**Principle One: Achieving a socially mixed intake should be a policy ambition.**

The argument is not that parents should have no say in which school their child attends. It is that parental preference should be one of a number of factors to be taken into account. The challenge is to devise a system for London which does that and improves overall parental satisfaction with their children’s educational opportunities. The challenge can be met if government is prepared to take the argument to Londoners. New evidence of schools’ success
should be stressed, importance of choosing school downplayed, the levers of the quasi-market de-emphasised. This context is vital to persuade schools to adopt less selective practices.

**Principle Two: The Government must lead a drive to alter the tone of political and popular discourse about secondary schools in London.**

**Making it Simple**

Within a pattern of very popular and very unpopular schools, where the popular select their pupils, choice means little to many parents in London. A very substantial proportion of admissions is non-standard when there may be no local school with vacancies, or the available school is undersubscribed and already suffers disproportionately from pupil turnover. Parental satisfaction with transfer arrangements is significantly lower in London than in the country generally; around 70% of pupils are placed in the secondary school of first preference compared with 85% nationally (Williams et al. 2001). While the national average percentage of appeals on admissions in 2000/01 was 10.3%, the inner London average was 18.8% and the outer London 21.0% (DfES 2002). It may well be that satisfaction is even lower than these figures indicate. Not only do they obscure cases in which the desired school was not a stated preference because of the small likelihood of success, they do not measure unhappiness about the whole process. This is found drawn out and stressful by the knowledgeable, and confusing and alienating by those who have not learnt how to play the system (Templeton and Hood 2002).

The complexity of the current admissions system arises largely because individual voluntary aided and foundation schools are their own admissions authorities. London has 219 secondary admissions authorities. This particularly affects some outer London boroughs, such as Barnet, Hillingdon, and Bromley, which has 17 secondary schools and 17 admissions authorities since only one of the 17 has remained a community school.

Of course this independence is attractive to some schools, but there is no justification for it in view of the wider policy context of a schools system. Ultimately, a large number of these schools would not voluntarily surrender this right.

**Principle Three: The Government must accept the principle of compulsion on schools in improving the fairness of the system.**

A revised and toughened Admissions Code of Practice came into effect in January 2003, but it will not address the overall problems of intake to London schools. It gives the child no place in the process, gives neither community nor state strong rights to express their interests, does not deal effectively with non-standard admissions, does not attack exaggerated pecking orders, and does nothing to ensure a better social balance in intakes. In particular:

- An estimated 60,000 London pupils cross LEA boundaries to go to school so simplification of the process requires co-ordination between LEAs.
- In London, it is important that all secondary schools offer places to a proportion of applicants who are likely to be mobile. In combination with measures on waiting lists, this would ensure in the most popular schools some casual vacancies become available to high-need pupils.

**Recommendation:** In 2005 the LEA should become the admissions authority for all maintained schools in its area, including Voluntary Aided, foundation, CTCs, and academies.
Recommendation: London local government must agree a single admissions system for the city. The final version of the Code drew back from addressing this problem; it is clear that the complexity of co-ordinating borough schemes would be great. The argument that the Council Tax payers of Borough X are entitled to their own unique oversubscription criteria is weak when compared with the parental stress and system stress of current arrangements. The 33 borough and corporation admission authorities must agree a common scheme. The mechanism by which they can do this is beyond this paper but not beyond the combined skills of London local government.

Consideration should be given to the possible roles of catchment areas, and banding, within this single procedure.

Recommendation: When new schools are being planned, consideration should be given to piloting Year 9 as the age of transfer, so that pupils would attend the same school from 3-14.

Towards Collaboration

Without recognising it, the Government itself has begun to develop mechanisms which could provide a radical solution to the secondary admissions problem. Its root lies in the developing agenda of diversity and collaboration.

The soft end of collaboration is the partnership with neighbours expected of specialist schools and more urgently expected of Advanced schools which will replace Beacons. However, the Government is aware that collaboration has been a weak feature of previous programmes. Even when the 2002 Education Act was drafted, provision was included for collaboration by the development of schools sharing a single governing body or jointly working through a contract, becoming a federation. This is the hard, formally established end of collaboration.

The gains from collaboration are various:
- spread of the best leadership;
- the best pedagogical practice spread by means of working links between staff;
- curriculum offers, particularly at 14-19, co-ordinated, with all pupils being able to take advantage of specialisms at other schools;
- extra-curricular offers co-ordinated. Potentially, this would produce a greater range of opportunities than found in the most elite school. A parent with a musically talented child could send the child to any school in the federation, knowing that she would have access to the federation orchestra, the federation big band, the federation steel band, and more;
- shared responsibility for pupils with special educational needs.

While the Government is very enthusiastic about promoting collaboration, it faces a major difficulty. There is tension between the concepts of collaborative schools and a market in schools. In London, whereas schools in challenging circumstances can immediately see the benefits of joint working, oversubscribed schools which have benefited from the market will be much less enthusiastic. The Government plans to offer financial inducements, notably the substantial Leadership Incentive Grant, but it remains to be seen whether this will be sufficient.
Recommendation: Schools should be encouraged to join federations. In this voluntary phase, the curriculum and extra-curriculum and school improvement benefits would be demonstrated. Both horizontal and vertical pilots should be tried.

It is important to recognise that collaboration must involve sharing in key respects. Schools must share the load with respect to pupils with Statements of SEN, and with the very large numbers in London who need support but are not statemented. The recent Audit Commission report argued that many schools, with more than half an eye on league tables, try to avoid taking such responsibility. Schools which truly integrate pupils with special needs, who involve the whole school in their education, are fulfilling a vital role in developing amongst their pupils, particularly the more advantaged, a better understanding of the varieties within society, a greater tolerance of those varieties, and making a contribution to a more compassionate society. Indeed, this is one of the social outcomes which can only be achieved by means of a comparatively unsegregated intake.

Achieving this balance, and rebuilding the comprehensive commitment, is a necessary aim of an admissions policy. Collaboration on its own cannot alter this balance. Schools within a federation must collaborate, not compete, on admissions.

However, this commitment cannot flourish unless the pressures towards competition rather than collaboration are addressed. The new rhetoric on London schools must follow from a firm decision to back a collaborative rather than a competitive, isolationist model. This must involve review of the presentation or reality of the levers of the quasi-market. If these issues can be addressed, the concept of secondary school federations could make a substantial contribution to increasing opportunity and achievement, particularly for more disadvantaged pupils, in London.

An important component of the market structure is school level data on pupil attainment. In a federation with truly shared responsibilities, pupil outcomes at federation level are the object of attention.

Recommendation: When a group of secondary schools forms a federation, target setting and the publication of pupil attainment data should be only at federation level.

The argument in favour of this proposition is that high achieving schools have relatively little scope for further improvement in results, but could make a large contribution to improvements across the federation, and by this mechanism would have the incentive so to do. A counter argument is that schools with low achievement could hide behind a federation outcome, but of course this is simply another example of the ‘bad school’ fallacy, and ignores the collective pressure for improvement which would drive a federation.

Recommendation: In the longer term, all London secondary schools should form federations.
Recommendation: When a federation is formed, admissions would be to it rather than to its constituent schools.
Recommendation: Within a federation, admissions to the schools would be on the basis of parental preference, child's preference, child's need, and community interests.

Some of the ways in which pupils and their parents could benefit from federations of schools are illustrated in five case studies which are found in the Annexe to this paper.
Governance

The London boroughs have a poor record in working together. The inner London boroughs, which are very small LEAs, would have benefited particularly from economies of scale in partnerships for some functions, but few have been attempted or persisted. However, informal groupings of officers have provided some co-ordination in areas like SEN and personnel. In general, these have not required political agreement, but working together at technical levels.

There is a range of views on the specific functions which require cross-borough co-operation, but no-one suggests that none is necessary in today’s conditions. There is no doubt that most of the veterans of the Inner London Education Authority who abound within the education community regret the losses caused by its abolition in 1990. It was a mechanism of redistribution of resources within inner London; it planned a coherent provision of both schools and post-compulsory education and training, linked schools with further and higher education; it offered unrivalled professional and career development opportunities; it was the national centre of expertise and innovation, with a highly respected inspectorate; and it created an image of excitement which drew in teachers.

Whilst none of the most ardent nostalgics would propose the re-creation of the ILEA, it is easy to make the case that some of these functions need to be planned at a level larger than the borough.

- The co-ordination of secondary admissions has been argued above.
- This paper notes but does not evaluate the role of the five London Learning and Skills Councils in co-ordinating post-compulsory education and training.
- It cannot be right that planning of school places, in a context of long-term growth in pupil numbers, is left to the individual boroughs. This has led to uneven provision and a shortage of secondary places in some parts of the city.
- The duty on LEAs with regard to school improvement requires rationalisation of inspectorate and advisory services; many of the small authorities cannot individually provide the full range of expertise.
- Teacher recruitment and retention strategies must be co-ordinated.

The recent introduction of public assessment of LEAs has helped to produce a change of mood. The London Partnership, for example, was originally formed, with Government backing, to link successful with less successful authorities, with the addition of private sector expertise, in order to transfer good practice. Attempts are now being made to expand the partnership to include all 33.

Another factor has been the latest teacher recruitment and retention crisis, with the most affected authorities seeking to avoid an ultimately negative competition for staff. This is now leading to the proposals now being developed for a pan-London agency for supply staff, with a number of models being considered.

Other recent developments suggesting an increased capacity for partnership include the pan-London agreement leading to the establishment of the London Grid for Learning, and greater co-operation on admissions issues. Nevertheless, the drive for such co-operation continues to come mainly from professional education officers. The Association of London Chief Education Officers is not supported in practice by all 33 chief officers, but has steadily increased in ambition and achievement. However, the challenge for the governance of London schools is to
persuade the political leadership of the boroughs to share decision making on the more sensitive issues, such as admissions, or planning places.

The outer London boroughs have been education authorities since 1964. As we have seen, in many of them, raw academic outcomes are above national average, or even amongst the best. It will not be easy to persuade some of their political leaders that they should accept a diminution of their independence. Many elected Members in the inner London authorities are equally proud of their achievements since taking over responsibility for education. The difficulties are compounded by the variety of political allegiance of the 33; there are Labour, Conservative, and Liberal authorities, as well as some under no overall control. At times, education is the major local political issue. Where sensitive issues become party issues, the difficulty of pan-London co-operation is increased.

The Association for London Government attempts to bring together these disparate political leaderships to produce a single voice for London, particularly on those many issues which are outside the remit of the Mayor. Its success recently in producing a collective response to the consultation on admissions is an indicator of some success. However, the ALG is naturally conscious of the varieties of political positions within its members, and may feel inhibited from espousing pan-London solutions which are not universally supported.

The appointment of a Commissioner for London Schools may be designed, in part, to counteract these difficulties in co-ordination. As an individual, the Commissioner will certainly be persuasive; he will also increase the profile of London schools. He will encourage collaboration between schools, and must take a leading role in implementing our recommendation for a new rhetoric. Other bodies, such as the Government Office for London and the London Development Agency, are playing their parts in this process.

Our assessment is that developments in co-operation are welcome, but proceeding too slowly. The need for joint working is urgent.

**Recommendation: the ALG must take a more dynamic role in securing political support for pan-London working.** The development we recommend in admissions, to move from work to streamline admissions administration to develop a single procedure, involves political decisions and will be a significant test of boroughs’ ability to work collectively.

**Recommendation: Failure would indicate the need for a new pan-London democratic institution to execute this and other functions.**

The Capital Teacher

An area in which pan-London measures are urgent is the staffing crisis. Difficulty in recruiting sufficient teachers is a well known and perennial problem for London schools, and many agencies are concerned with finding ways of dealing with it. There is also little contention about the measures which could be taken. For this reason, it was not a focus of the IPPR project, but it must be clear that a resolution would be the most important contribution to raising achievement in those schools which suffer most.

The Teach First initiative is a very interesting attempt to bring particularly able graduates into teaching in London. Implementation is at an early stage. It should be monitored and its development encouraged if there are signs of success.
Recommendation: London’s teacher employers collectively should launch a new brand, ‘the Capital Teacher’.

This would involve joint working, with a greatly increased urgency, firstly on developing a package of benefits and secondly on marketing them across the country. The recruitment of teachers from across the world is not to be welcomed, however necessary in an emergency. The proposals below are not novel, but are being developed with insufficient urgency. They are not intended to be exhaustive.

- a range of housing support
  There has been particularly high take-up by teachers of the Government’s Starter Home Initiative, and the need for expansion is accepted by the Government. There must be a range of support on offer because it is important to enable mid-career teachers to move to family homes to encourage them to remain in London.

- travel card
  Serving teachers do not favour a free travel card. Only a minority travel to work by public transport, many citing the need to carry large amounts of material as an impediment. Perhaps the response to this argument lies in the Government’s workload reduction strategy, so that teachers increasingly take work home. However, teacher recruiters believe it would be an inducement, perhaps to be used for leisure rather than work. It would certainly be consistent with marketing the Capital Teacher as being able to enjoy the benefits of one of the most vibrant cities in the world.

- child care
  Potential returners to the profession must become a larger source of recruitment, and while a number of measures are necessary, such as the acceptance of flexible hours contracts, child care provision would be an important contribution.

- assured professional and career development
  This item is less generally understood to be an important recruitment incentive, but should be developed. It cannot be offered at the moment because London has lost its edge as the powerhouse of innovation. Joint work to ensure a quality NQT programme for all and the widest range of professional development opportunities should be implemented and publicised. Career advancement can be very rapid in London; this should be marketed.

- sabbaticals
  A guaranteed sabbatical is a form of golden handcuff; it addresses retention needs, which are more important than recruitment. This measure would be expensive, but could well be cost-effective.

Funding

The PISA study shows that of the twelve countries achieving above average literacy standards, England is in a group of three which has above the average range of achievement. The ‘long tail of underachievement’ is often described as a key target of policy. Indeed, it is argued that overall national achievement targets are unattainable unless those currently achieving least make disproportionate progress. Now, the Government has re-introduced the link between deprivation and achievement.
What London’s schools and LEAs can achieve is heavily influenced by the levels of resources they enjoy. While a link between resource increments and higher achievement has not been demonstrated, it is difficult to imagine a focus on low-achieving pupils without additional expenditure. In short, current levels of Additional Educational Needs (AEN) resources have failed to resolve underachievement, so higher levels are required.

During the review of the mechanism by which government distributes education grant to LEAs, the outcomes of which were announced on 5 December 2002, there was considerable work done on the detail of AEN, but little on the proportion of overall expenditure which should be devoted to AEN. The Government commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct research on AEN issues to inform the discussion and has relied heavily on its findings.

The second phase of the PwC study (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2002) investigated the incidence and appropriate proxy indicators of AEN, and the costs of meeting AEN. Its findings were based on questionnaires completed by 3743 schools in 42 local authorities. PwC identified issues both of opportunity costs and ‘unmet need’ in addition to staffing and other resources used, and attempted to quantify these.

Opportunity costs represent staff time spent in dealing with pupils with AEN which prevented them doing other parts of their core work. Typically the cost is that of a teaching assistant who could have undertaken the work with the pupil. Schools were also asked whether their pupils with AEN had some needs which were not being met because of lack of resources. The answer was yes. Almost all schools identified a shortage of teaching assistants, but many other kinds of staff were also specified. The range of costs was very large, with a mean of £1020 but a maximum of £26890. The range led PwC to model a series of caps, and recommended that the cost of unmet needs be capped at £1800. In conclusion, PwC calculated that a single figure for AEN should be £1780, comprising £980 met needs, £300 opportunity costs, and £500 unmet needs (capped). All of these figures are at 2001-02 costs.

In responding to the PwC report, the Government decided that the value of the met needs and opportunity cost elements of the AEN unit should be reduced from £1280 to £960, to recognise that about 25% of the total funding distributed on the basis of deprivation indicators comes from grants, rather than SSA. It also decided to include a factor of one half of the PwC calculation of £500 for unmet needs, which itself had been reduced by a cap. The Government admits:

‘This is a compromise between the opposing views of the most deprived authorities, who would like to see all the unmet needs being funded, and the least deprived authorities who have argued for a minimum AEN unit cost.’ (DfES 2002)

These three judgements, the application of a cap, the cut in respect of specific grants, and the compromise on unmet need, have made a significant difference to the value of the AEN unit, reducing it from £2300 to £1210 at 01-02 spending levels. In order to discover their effects IPPR has remodelled the settlement for 2003-04 with a variety of combinations of assumptions: that unmet needs are uncapped; that unmet needs are funded at 100% rather than 50%; and that no reduction is made in respect of grant income.

The five models each result in an increase in funding to the most deprived local authorities, including many, but not all, of the London boroughs, as well as a number of urban authorities in other parts of the country. Unsurprisingly, the more of these assumptions which are combined, the greater the change in funding for various LEAs. Whereas the Government’s decisions on
funding have resulted in just 11.8% of the Schools Block being allocated on the basis of AEN, reversing those three judgements would have led to that figure rising to 22.4%, a significant redistribution of public resources to some of the most needy.

On average the London Boroughs gain when the weight given to AEN is increased, although the gains are greater in inner London than outer London, with Bexley, Bromley, Havering, Kingston-upon-Thames, Richmond-upon-Thames, and Sutton actually losing. Inner London would receive a mean funding increase of 11.7% on the most redistributive model.

Recommendation: The lack of progress in reducing the national achievement gap suggests an increase in the proportion of funding should be directed at the lowest achieving pupils. The Government missed an opportunity to do this in its recent review of local government finance, but must rectify it at the next review.

Recommendation: In the short-term, despite the problems associated with them, deprivation can be addressed by specific grants, but the targeting must be sure and the funding stream to schools secure. One such should be a mobility grant.

Recommendation: Research should be undertaken on the distributive effects of the Local Management of Schools formula funding mechanism. Although this issue was beyond the scope of the study, there is reason to believe that formula funding at schools level does not have the redistributive effect of the Government’s grant formula. This may be because of the requirement that no less than 80% of the formula must be based on pupil numbers, weighted only by age.

Conclusion

In added-value terms, London’s schools are the best in the country, despite the volume and range of the problems they face. Nevertheless, in real terms, levels of achievement must be raised significantly if national targets and important social goals of reducing the links between class, race and attainment are to be reached. Achieving a more stable and experienced teaching force would be the most significant individual contribution towards these. However, the principles and other recommendations arising from the project should benefit pupils, parents, and Londoners as a whole.

London’s future depends amongst other things on maintaining a sustainable social mix, and moreover a mix of groups who all feel a commitment to London as a community. There is a tendency for some of the more advantaged strata to occupy a different place, and to use different facilities, than the mass of Londoners. This is of course a universal feature of capital cities, and as previously discussed explains the greater take-up of independent education in London than in the country generally.

The task for policymakers is to create the conditions which encourage commitment, in particular to public services. Social justice demands that this is not done at the expense of quality provision for all. The evidence is that London schools offer a better quality of provision than the national average, allowing for the perennial difficulty of retaining sufficient high-quality staff in inner London, and allowing for the high levels of deprivation amongst London children. London local government, together with London Challenge, must ensure that the quality is maximised and available to all.
Then there remains a task for the Government, supported by all parties involved in London schools. There is an ethical appeal to the upper strata of London society. The advantaged have a particular responsibility to be part of society and to help build it. In London, the advantaged have a duty to open their minds to the real quality of education, to realise that it is their self-interest to use local provision, and in everyone’s interest to play a part in continuing improvement of local provision. By embracing the local schools, they can build and strengthen them. By strengthening local schools, they can make a vital contribution to civil society.
Collected Recommendations

Principles
1. The Government must lead a drive to alter the tone of political and popular discourse about secondary schools in London.
2. Achieving a socially mixed intake should be a policy ambition.
3. The Government must accept the principle of compulsion on schools in improving the fairness of the system.

Recommendations
1. Admission by selection according to ability or aptitude must be ended. This would affect all maintained schools, including grammar and specialist.
2. In 2005 the LEA should become the admissions authority for all maintained schools in its area, including Voluntary Aided, foundation, CTCs, and academies.
3. London local government must agree a single admissions system for the city.
4. Consideration should be given to the possible roles of catchment areas, and banding, within this single procedure.
5. Recommendation: When new schools are being planned, consideration should be given to piloting Year 9 as the age of transfer, so that pupils would attend the same school from 3-14.
6. Schools should be encouraged to join federations. In this voluntary phase, the curriculum and extra-curriculum and school improvement benefits would be demonstrated. Both horizontal and vertical pilots should be tried.
7. When a group of secondary schools forms a federation, target setting and the publication of pupil attainment data should be only at federation level.
8. In the longer term, all London secondary schools should form federations.
9. When a federation is formed, admissions would be to it rather than to its constituent schools.
10. Within a federation, admissions to the schools would be on the basis of parental preference, child’s preference, child’s need, and community interests.
11. The ALG must take a more dynamic role in securing political support for pan-London working.
12. Failure would indicate the need for a new pan-London democratic institution to execute this and other functions.
13. London’s teacher employers collectively should launch a new brand, ‘the Capital Teacher’.
14. The lack of progress in reducing the national achievement gap suggests an increase in the proportion of funding should be directed at the lowest achieving pupils. The Government missed an opportunity to do this in its recent review of local government finance, but must rectify it at the next review.
15. In the short-term, despite the problems associated with them, deprivation can be addressed by specific grants, but the targeting must be sure and the funding stream to schools secure. One such should be a mobility grant.
16. Research should be undertaken on the distributive effects of the Local Management of Schools formula funding mechanism.
Annex

Case Studies: Transfer to Federation

Kaleda
lives on the edge of an East London borough. On transfer, she applies to her home federation, which consists of four schools in Hackney, and two in Tower Hamlets, and is given a place. Kaleda’s main objective is to attend a school with her three closest friends, all of whom attended the same primary school. According to school reports, this group of friends were a positive influence on each other’s learning. Kaleda’s parents also desire this, but in addition are enthusiastic that Kaleda can develop her aptitude for both her Urdu and Spanish, both of which were taught at Primary school. Kaleda is placed in a mixed Community school a short bus ride or cycle away from her home, as are her friends. In addition, she is guaranteed an additional four hours a week of language tuition for both Key Stages Three and Four at the specialist language school, which is also part of the Federation.

Freddy
attended three different schools in his borough, and during his primary years was one permanently excluded and received fixed term exclusions on another five occasions. At risk of truancy and disaffection, both Freddy’s parents and the other agencies involved in his care agree that Freddy should attend a school as close as possible to his home, so that good home-school relationships can be fostered. This school is both popular and high achieving, and Freddy would previously not have been in the catchment area. The Federation allocates Freddy a place at this school, together with some time at a local learning support unit, and some hours out of school working in a voluntary organisation. A learning mentor is assigned to Freddy so that his movements can be co-ordinated, and that links are fostered between home and school. The Headteacher of his new school understands that, if problems do arise and an exclusion is necessary, another school in the federation will have the commitment and spare capacity to take on the challenge of this challenging pupil.

Aleesha
is a high achieving pupil who lives in the middle of a South London borough. She takes the entrance exam for a Kent Grammar school, and is accepted. In addition, however, she applies to the borough Federation, and, once accepted, applies to a school in the North of the borough which used to be highly selective, through interviews and other covert means, but now has a far more balanced intake. She is allocated a place at this school and decides not to go to Kent. She spends the time she saves by not commuting to Kent on a gifted and talented programme which is located in what used to be one of the most unpopular schools in the borough.

Jose
is a Colombian refugee, who arrives in London in March, with little previous experience of schooling. For the rest of the year, he is allocated a school as close as possible to his bed and breakfast accommodation. He spends half his time there, and the other half at a centre dedicated to supporting the learning of newly arrived refugees, on the borders of and funded by three different LEAs. In the Summer, he moves elsewhere to permanent accommodation, where he chooses a Catholic school in his home Federation, but still attends the same Centre as before for two days a week. Even though he lives in another borough, all involved in his development agree that his learning will benefit from the continuity that this Centre can offer him.
Amy

and her parents are very enthusiastic about going to one particular school in a Federation five miles from her home. This school has a reputation for high standards of achievement and discipline. She is admitted to this federation, but does not gain a place at her chosen school, rejected through the Federation’s combination of a banding system and catchment area to determine admissions. Her parents do not wish to consider the alternative allocation, although this school is far from failing and, due to the new admissions system, has a similarly mixed intake to every other school in the Federation. Amy’s appeal is unsuccessful, so Amy’s parents find her a place at a nearby independent school. This school is part of the same Federation, working with some of the most disaffected pupils in the area.
References


About the Author
Martin Johnson is Research Fellow in Education at the IPPR. He had over thirty years experience as a teacher, mainly in inner London, specialising in working with secondary pupils with behaviour difficulties. He is the author of ‘Failing School, Failing City’, an account of teaching in the most difficult secondary schools. He was also President of the NASUWT in 2000. Prior to working on ‘Schooling in London’, he collaborated with Joe Hallgarten on the project ‘The Future of the Teaching Profession’. Martin can be contacted at m.johnson@ippr.org

About the Project
Schooling in London was initiated in Spring 2002. Its proposals were announced at a conference on 5 February 2003. Joe Hallgarten and Jodie Reed worked with Martin Johnson on the project.

The following project papers are on the ippr website:
Not Choice But Champion by Martin Johnson
Secondary School Admissions in London by Chris Taylor and Stephen Gorard
Education Funding - Fair Enough? by Martin Johnson
Education Funding Formula: Increasing the AEN Unit Cost by Nicola Morton
Schooling in London, An Overview by Martin Johnson

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