

# Being the Best:

## The Future of London's Schools



**LONDON  
COUNCILS**

# A successful partnership

London's schools have the best record for improvements in England. Between 2005/06 and 2010/11, the year-on-year percentage of pupils in London gaining 5 or more A\* - C grades including English and Maths at GCSE increased by 3% per year across London – going from 45.8% in 2005/06 to 61% in 2010/11. A 2011 report by Centre Forum showed that while, outside London, 44 per cent of children eligible for free school meals are in the bottom quartile of GCSE results, in London the equivalent figure is only 28%. These improvements have been achieved through local partnerships, of schools working with schools, and of local authorities working with parents throughout the capital.

As the new system develops, the importance of Academies and Free Schools will grow. It is already clear that a range of other challenges will subsequently emerge. So far the DfE has been able to use its powers to ensure that the numbers of Academies and Free Schools expand rapidly and also respond to parental aspirations.

However, the last year has exposed an increase in delivery problems for Free Schools – especially finding suitable sites. As the programme expands DfE will be increasingly unable to provide the level of support needed by parents wishing to set up Free Schools.

There is a limit to the scale on which central government can manage contracts with all schools directly from Whitehall. Central government's ability to offer parents the assurance they need becomes more strained with each new Academy. It will not be possible for DfE to meet its responsibilities once the majority of London's 2,200 schools are either Academies or Free Schools.

## The new London challenge

The education system is changing dramatically across England as government reform takes hold. The rise in the number of Academies and Free Schools is creating an autonomous schools sector and the traditional council role of providing direct support to local schools is declining. Yet local government retains more than 200 legal duties to support children and ensure they receive best possible education. Communities cannot thrive if their children do not succeed in school; so boroughs will act when education does not meet aspiration. London boroughs are now shaping the role they should play to meet this challenge within the new schools system.

In London, local government has a particular challenge in delivering its statutory responsibility to provide sufficient school places. A huge number of new schools are required to meet the growing shortage of school places; now reported to reach over 90,000 by 2015/16.

A new approach characterised by facilitation and support will be needed. Greater emphasis will be placed on championing the aspirations of children and parents. London local government is already well advanced in this approach, in part because this strategy underpinned much of the collaborative work to drive up performance in the London Challenge, launched in 2003. Now, a more systematic reform of this approach is needed to enable all children and schools to thrive in this new environment.

Local government has a vital role to play in ensuring that the aspirations behind reform are met as the system matures. London Councils has consulted widely within London local government to understand the challenges of the new regime and to identify innovation in London boroughs that helps to make the new system work best for all children.



## MIND THE GAP

LONDON SCHOOL PLACES  
SHORTAGE IS ON TRACK FOR  
**90,000**  
by 2015/16

# The London offer



## Enabling continued school improvement, by:

- Enabling local authorities to issue early warning notices to Academies, in the same way they can with maintained schools
- Establishing education improvement partnerships throughout London
- Using the Londonwide Sector Led Improvement programme to support all councils in adopting new approaches for working with schools to accelerate improvement.

## Meet the growing demand for school places, by:

- A change in government policy to put new school applicants in touch with London boroughs at the earliest chance
- Identifying and promoting innovative practice in maximising space for learning and the creative use of sites, including bringing private sector expertise on board, where appropriate
- Mapping empty buildings that have the potential to be transformed into schools
- Offering advice and support to broker relationships with new Academies and Free School applicants, informed by knowledge of viable sites, development costs and parental demand.

## Make the education system more accessible to parents and the local community, by:

- Ensuring Academies share the same data and statistical returns with local authorities at the same time that they make them available to the Department for Education
- Making a commitment to all parents that, wherever they live in London, there is a visible mechanism for influence in the local school system
- Investigating the viability and value of an online hub giving London parents detailed information about all schools in London
- Making schools accountable for the onward destination of their pupils
- Giving local authorities the powers to order a financial audit or investigation for Academies, as they can currently with maintained schools.

## Increase engagement of community governors in all schools, by:

- Ensuring that all schools funded by the state have at least one governor appointed by the local authority on behalf of the wider community
- Radically improving the quality, diversity and skills of governors, by:
  - recruiting more widely from all Londoners
  - offering training and support for new and existing governors
  - guaranteeing governors high standards of working with local agencies
- Backed up by a London boroughs public pledge on standards of support to governors.

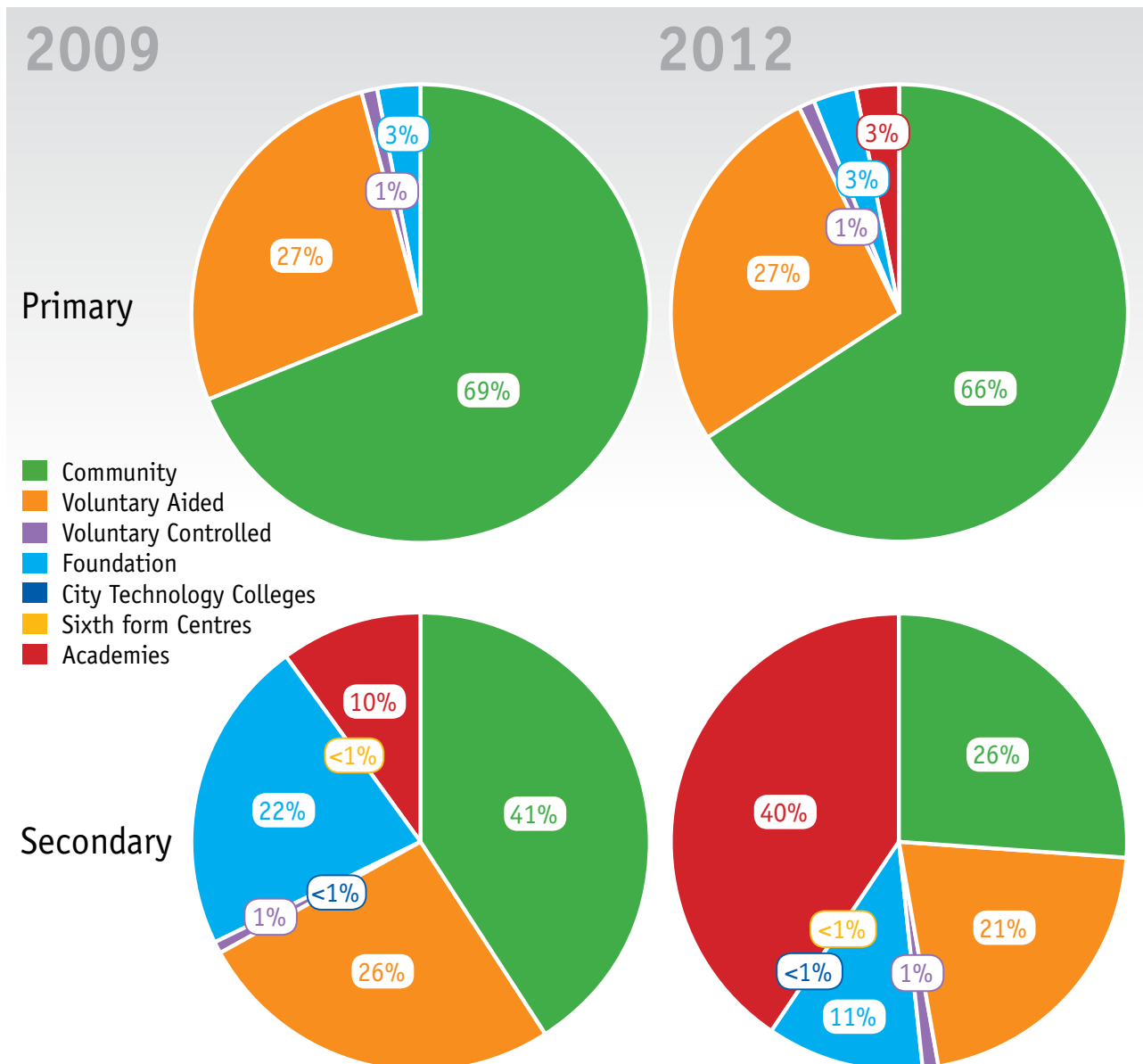
## Support vulnerable children to achieve positive outcomes, by:

- Providing Fair Access Panels with the power to issue a direction to an Academy to admit a hard-to-place pupil, as they currently do with maintained schools
- Continuing to deliver a broad range of children's services in line with their statutory duties.





## London Schools % by the type of school



Maintained schools are funded by central government via the local authority, and do not charge fees to students. The categories of maintained school are: community, community special, foundation (including trust), foundation special (including trust), voluntary aided and voluntary controlled.



### Being the best

Since taking over responsibility for the capital's schools, London's boroughs, working with local partnerships of schools and parents, have seen a dramatic improvement in results. London schools are now the best performing in the country, with higher proportions of their pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* - C and more schools above the floor standard than any other region.

### Scientists of the future

The capital's schools also have one of the highest proportions (67.6 per cent) of pupils taking sciences at GCSE, of whom 76.9 per cent gained a GCSE at Grade C or above.