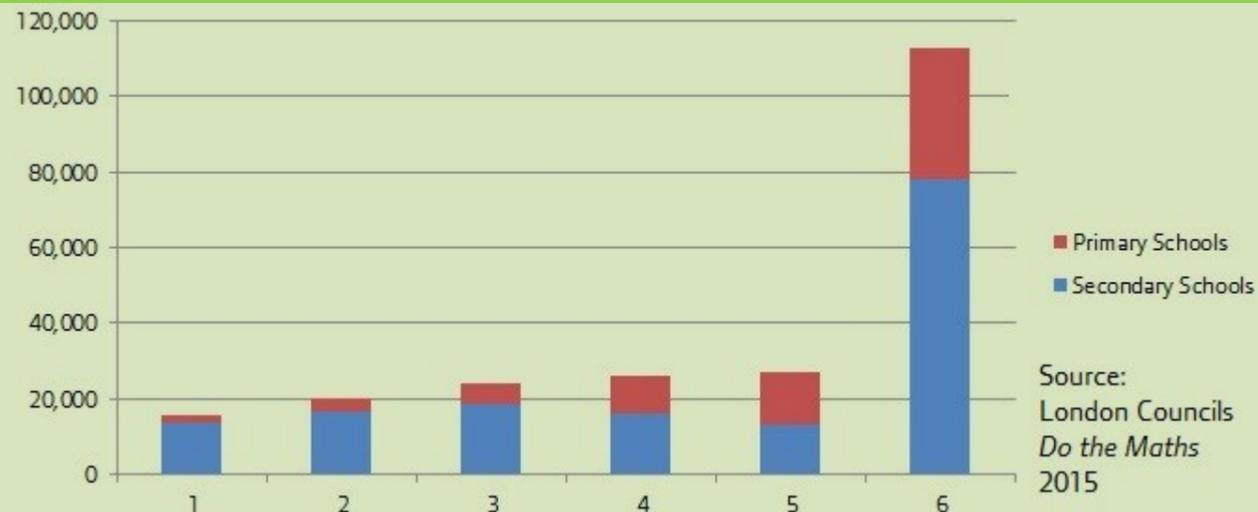


London's education under Boris Johnson

Increase in school place shortages 2015/16 to 2019/20



£59,106

Average student debt in London after university

Over 100,000

Shortfall in the number of school places

Less than half

Number of apprenticeships delivered against manifesto promise

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THE COST OF BORIS

Failing the young:
A lost generation

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Failing the young: A lost generation

With some of the world's best universities, museums and a capital immersed in culture, London should be awash with opportunities for young people. In reality, for many it's a tough time to be a young Londoner.

Despite the opportunities on our doorstep the capital struggles with youth unemployment higher than the national average, significant levels of youth under-employment, a growing skills gap, a school places crisis, and spiralling living costs which are hitting young Londoners hardest. This is particularly true when it comes to the anxiety over finding an affordable place to live.

In spite of his recognition that "London's future growth depends on its young people", London Mayor Boris Johnson has consistently failed young Londoners over his term in office.

Primary school places crisis

The failure that is the most obvious is the growing pressure on primary school places. The shortage, identified years ago, has continued to grow and is now extending to secondary education. A problem which has long been ignored by the Mayor. It's a toxic mix if not addressed, with rapid population growth leading to a swelling of school student numbers at a time of dwindling local government resources. Despite the challenge, leadership from City Hall working with the boroughs to find solutions, has been unashamedly absent.

Thanks to years of progress, reform and the successes of the 'London Challenge' between 2003 and 2011, the capital's schools became some of the best in the country. That progress is now in jeopardy as the Mayor treads water, failing to act on this most predictable of crises.

Every London borough is feeling the pressure. London Councils calculate over 100,000 new places are needed when primary schools are included – all needed before 2018.

Ignoring the future skills needs of London

The picture is made worse and confused as a result of the free school free-for-all, a policy the Mayor wholeheartedly champions even though a patchwork of new school proposals popping up across the capital is not the way to plan strategically. The future education and skills base upon which London and the national economy will be built needs to be coordinated, but Mayor Johnson seems happy to wash his hands of the problem. Instead he focuses his efforts on supporting already successful schools and ignoring unfairness, lack of resources and wider school place pressures.

London Councils calculate over 100,000 new primary and secondary school places are needed before 2018.

After promising to create 250,000 new apprenticeships in 2012 Boris Johnson is well off track with only 117,530 so far

Apprenticeship promises broken

The demand for apprenticeships is nothing new, that's why Mayor Johnson raised expectations, pledging to create 250,000 apprenticeships by 2016. With only a year to go he's well off track with just 117,530 so far. At this rate it looks increasingly likely the Mayor will be lucky to achieve little over half his 250,000 target by the time he leaves office.

Even if you are one of the lucky few who manage to get an apprenticeship the daily anxieties continue. Young apprentices still have to balance an especially low minimum wage of £2.73 per hour with the high cost of living and travel to work costs, despite no guarantee of a full time job at the end.

If we are to see the revolution in apprenticeships many people hope for, we need them to be high quality, reasonably paid and widely available. Without more Government action to make that happen, like Johnson's apprenticeship programme, the potential will only ever be half realised.

Huge rise in university fees

Take the alternative route, via university, and you'll find funding declining, the cap on tuition fees removed and maintenance grants soon abolished for Londoners from low income backgrounds. In all, the next generation of young people coming to study in London are likely to rack up an overall debt of £59,106 before interest as a result of attending one of our world class universities.

Despite knowing they are the future, Mayor Johnson breaks his commitment to young people without a thought of the impact either on their lives or on the future success of London.

Young people need a Mayor who believes in them and who provides them with the guidance, support and opportunities required to turn them into the next skilled workers, entrepreneurs, artists and leaders.

With the increasing focus on further devolution to London, the Mayoralty has opportunities. The Mayor could choose to lobby for funding from the Skills Funding Agency to invest in creating future London jobs. The Mayor could choose to help coordinate and assist the boroughs with strategic school place creation, safeguarding the future of our schools for young Londoners. The Mayor could choose to invest in an apprenticeships programme focused on results not rhetoric. Instead, too often Mayor Johnson has taken the path of least resistance, letting opportunities pass him by and dodging the tough decisions.

Move beyond schooling and young people face the dual challenges of vastly inflated living costs and an uphill struggle to break onto the career ladder. The competition for apprenticeships, hailed as a key way to lower youth unemployment, illustrates the scale of the problem. The latest figures show that 17 people chase each and every apprenticeship in the capital, with demand far outstripping supply. Until this imbalance is corrected many will continue to miss out.

