

# KEY FINDINGS

This report shares the findings from the pilot of **Belonging Matters**, a new whole-school programme developed by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to strengthen pupils' sense of belonging. The pilot was independently evaluated by researchers at Goldsmiths, University of London, and generously funded by the Kusuma Trust.

The results are very encouraging, especially given the short timeframe. Belonging Matters is already showing clear impact, and the progress speaks for itself.

In just one academic year, 10 diverse London schools, including primary, secondary, special and alternative provision settings, transformed how children, families, and staff experience school life. The programme showed that when schools put belonging at their core, change happens fast:



**Pupils feel more connected and valued:** The proportion who said they truly belonged at school rose from 65% to 71%. More children reported being happy to be part of their school community, respected by teachers, and supported by peers.



**Safety and trust increased:** Pupils feeling unsafe dropped from 27% to 19%, and more now have a trusted adult to turn to when they need help.



**SEND inclusion improved:** Pupils with SEND, who started from a more negative baseline, saw some of the biggest gains, reporting greater acceptance, support, and inclusion in activities.



**Parents and carers noticed the difference:** Families spoke of stronger trust, closer relationships with schools, and more opportunities to engage in school life.



**Staff grew in confidence and skills:** Over 400 staff received training, with nearly 100% saying they now feel equipped to create inclusive environments where every child can thrive.



**Whole-school culture shifted:** Practical, low-cost strategies, from breakfast clubs and peer mentoring to buddy systems and visible leadership, transformed the daily experience of children, families, and staff.



**Impact was felt everywhere:** Attendance improved, behaviour issues reduced, staff morale lifted, and more pupils took pride in their school identity.



As one teacher reflected: "Every day I notice thoughtful things staff do to help pupils develop a sense of belonging." Another said "Everyone takes responsibility in ensuring that we welcome everyone."



Belonging Matters has proven that when schools focus on belonging, they don't just improve wellbeing, they unlock the potential of the entire school community. And all of this was achieved in just one school year, imagine the impact if every school put belonging at the heart of their community.