

By: Philippa Cracknell, Policy Research Officer
To: KS2 Attainment Select Committee,
Subject: Educational Attainment in areas of Deprivation Topic Review

Summary: To discuss and agree Terms of Reference, proposed scope and general approach for the review.

1. Introduction – for information

1.1 Levels of attainment at KS2 are a national and local priority. Progress in Kent KS2 results as a whole has been below national average for many years. Currently 17% of schools¹ (64 schools) are below the 55% floor target of achieving L4+ in English and Maths combined. Many of these schools have a high IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) or Free School Meal (FSM) indicator, but not all. In reviewing KS2 results in Kent it is also possible to show those schools who have made continuous improvement over three years and schools with declining trends of attainment over the same period at KS2. There are a number of schools where the KS2 results have been declining for three years though are not performing below the national floor target. This is a significant group as in the main these schools do not have high FSM or a high IMD.

1.2 National research has shown a clear impact and link between deprivation and educational attainment and identified many factors which contribute to the differential in achievement. Tackling disadvantage and understanding how to change the cycle is a 'Bold steps for Kent' priority and the narrowing the gap agenda is embedded in the CFE directorate. Priority 1 of the Kent Children and Young People's Plan is *'to reduce the impact of poverty (generational and situational) on children's lives by tackling the underlying causes and mitigating the effects.'* As one of the actions to achieve that objective, Kent County Council is committed to achieving Outcome 1B(3): *'to narrow the educational attainment gap between the children and young people eligible for Free School Meals and their peers.'* Evidence shows there is a gap between the achievement levels of those young people living in the most and least deprived areas of the county. Performance in Kent against National Indicator 102 for KS2 shows a % Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving Level 4+ including English and Maths of 28% in 2010, compared nationally to a gap of 21%.²

1.3 Investigating the reasons for variations at KS2 will add value and be of real benefit in targeting the work to improve attainment for all children in Kent. Understanding the factors that contribute to differential attainment and thereby increase the challenges for schools is important. Understanding these factors will enable a focus on those measures that are required, in addition to typical school and community resources, which might mitigate the effects of disadvantage and therefore improve attainment. This focus would sit firmly in both the narrowing the gap and improving attainment levels agenda.

¹ 17% of schools below floor target, out of 377 schools (although there are 417 mainstream KS2 schools altogether.). This is due to exclusion criteria not including schools who boycotted SATs, schools with fewer than 11 pupils on roll at end of KS2, includes mainstream schools only as per NI definition. As a percentage of the full 417 it would be 15.3 %.

² Data for 2010 does not include schools who boycotted the KS2 tests

1.4 The Select Committee conducting this review will need to remain focused and retain its impetus throughout. The membership of the Select Committee is detailed below.

Mr Chris Wells (Chairman designate, Conservative)
Mrs Penny Cole (Conservative)
Mr Michael Northey (Conservative)
Richard Parry (Conservative)
Mr Kit Smith (Conservative)
Mr Mike Whiting (Conservative)
Mr Martin Vye (Liberal Democrat)
Vacant (TBC)

2. Proposed Terms of Reference – for agreement

It is critical that the Terms of reference and scope of the review is fully developed and agreed at this stage. The draft terms of reference are:

To examine the reasons for variations in KS2 performance of all Kent schools with a focus to those schools in areas of deprivation.

Purpose and objective of review:

- a) To examine levels of attainment at KS2 by reviewing the performance of all schools at a district level. This will include the identification of schools in areas of deprivation in each district. These schools will have the highest levels of FSM and IMD. It will also include a review of those schools with 2 or more years below the national floor target of 55% for combined English and Maths and those schools with a 3 year declining or improving trend.
- b) To gain an understanding of the nationally agreed factors that contribute to differential achievement in deprived areas and how those factors impact on children's individual attainment and on overall school performance.
- c) To explore what measures have been put in place in schools and their surrounding communities to mitigate the effects of disadvantage or low attainment and consider their effectiveness. To explore the factors that have enabled some schools within individual districts to have broken the link between deprivation and poor attainment.
- d) To propose any additional action the Select Committee believes would be helpful in raising attainment either across Kent generally or in individual districts.

3. Scope – for agreement

3.1 This review will need to consider a number of issues, and the breadth and complexity of the review will require a clear and focused approach. The review should examine the Key Stage 2 attainment levels and performance of schools at a district level focusing on those with high IMD/high FSM indicators; and schools with poor progress or either a continuous improving trend or a downward trend in attainment levels.

3.2 a) KS2 attainment

- National research on impact and link between deprivation and education; the key characteristics of a successful school
- Levels of attainment of pupils and of performance by schools in Kent broken down by District and reviewed against the national picture
- Differential levels of attainment of schools in disadvantaged areas
- The attainment gap between FSM and Non FSM pupils
- Early years data on entry to reception and by the end of EY Foundation stage.
- Contextual background Information by school and district.

3.3 b) Factors contributing to differential achievement

- Understanding the barriers to achievement and raising attainment in deprived areas and identifying factors which may contribute to variations in performance at KS2,
- Involvement of Childrens services and impact on school
- Young peoples expectations, aspirations and views
- Quality of teaching – recruitment and retention,
- Quality of leadership
- Aspirations of teachers, leaders and governors

3.4 c) Effectiveness of measures put in place.

- Action taken by Schools to raise levels of attainment for pupils in disadvantaged areas.
- Action taken by School Improvement teams to support the schools.
- The effectiveness of out of school support in helping schools to raise the levels of attainment
- The systems in place in school to track school pupil progress and implement early intervention strategies
- interventions put in place and how effective these are
- Levels of absenteeism, exclusions etc at primary school and strategies in place to increase pupil participation
- Parental links
- Role of School Governance in raising attainment and skills of governors
- The role of the wider children's services – preventative agenda

3.5 Detailed Study group to support review.

The review will focus on KS2 Attainment data and a detailed study group of schools, comprising of

- a) schools representing each district with high FSM and high IMD indicators.
- b) schools within each district with a 3 year record of continuing improvement, with high IMD and High FSM indicators
- c) schools with a 3 year declining trend though performing above the national floor targets
- d) schools with 2 or more years below the national floor target of 55%

4.0 Other work ongoing of relevance – for information

There are two other focussed pieces of work around KS2 during the early part of this review.

* The DfE has launched a consultation on Assessment practices at the end of KS2. This has been raised by Mrs.Hohler to a Level 3 review and therefore KCC will be signing off the submission. This is currently being consulted on and drafted. The submission date is February 17th 2011.

* There is also a research proposal in place with Canterbury Christchurch University to explore the underlying reasons for Kent's underperformance at KS2. This has been commissioned by the learning group and is expected to be complete by July 2011.

5.0 General Approach – for information

A three phased approach to this review is proposed.

5.1 Phase one: Set up and background research – Feb/March/April

The initial phase will focus on

- Desk top research
- set up of review – finalise timetable, Invite stakeholders to participate; arrange introductory Briefing, hearings, focus groups, informal meetings and visits etc.
- analyse KS2 Attainment data. Identify study group. (propose committee meet in March to discuss)
- publicise the review as appropriate
- Establish reading list and research summary of useful documents. Prepare Briefing Notes and information packs.
- Identify suggested questions/themes to be posed to witnesses and request written information required (where applicable) in advance of meetings
- Invite stakeholders unable to attend in person to express their views to the Select Committee in writing.

5.2 Phase Two: Gathering Evidence – End of May/June /July (Sept)

Information will be gathered in a variety of ways including

- Introductory Briefing
- Meetings of Select Committee with key stakeholders, focus groups
- Briefings and visits to key sites
- Identifying additional evidence required
- Consider research report by Christchurch University
- Written information. Written evidence received will be shared with the Committee at key points throughout the review.

It is envisaged that for some of the proposed visits the committee may need to work as smaller groups of supported Rapporteurs and some meetings may need to be closed sessions as appropriate.

5.3 Phase Three: Finalisation of recommendations and formal sign off processes – Sept/Oct/Dec

- Reading evidence, consider Christchurch Research report,
- Discuss evidence and agree areas of recommendation, report writing
- Meeting of Select Committee with stakeholders to discuss evidence, draft report and recommendations

6 Review programme: Briefings/hearings/stakeholders – for agreement

6.1 Preparation and Informal Briefing

Information packs containing research summaries, briefing notes etc will be sent to members in phase 1 of the review. This is a key aspect to help ensure the committee can get the most from the review and build understanding of factors that contribute to differential achievement in deprived areas.

It is proposed that an informal briefing be held at the beginning of the review. The purpose of which is to gain a good understanding of the current issues, levels of KS2 attainment, progress measures and more detail of the study group of schools. A briefing paper may be drafted in support. This session will also include a discussion of some of the key background papers in a debate session.

6.2 Key Stakeholders

As part of the review the Select Committee may need to undertake a series of visits, briefings, informal meetings, hearings and also seek written evidence. The Hearings will usually be in half day blocks and are normally open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session. The Committee will need to be flexible in how different stakeholders are engaged. It may for example be beneficial to meet with a focus group of heads or undertake visits with a smaller number of members reporting back to the committee.

Suggested stakeholders who could be invited to meet or share their views with the Committee are:

- Director of School Improvement and Standards
- Sue Rogers – Head of standards and School Improvement
- School Improvement Service
- Management Information Unit – data reports and analysis
- Attendance and Behaviour Support Service – Chris Berry and Director of Specialist School Services
- Managers and Chairs of Operations Manager Groups (OMGs)
- District Heads, Standards and School Improvement
- Headteachers (individuals, focus groups)
- Governors
- Teachers
- Parents
- Children (see note below)
- Preventative service managers.
- Academics - known writers on school improvement and deprivation such as Michael Fullan, John West Burnam and Alma Harris (background papers)

(This list is a starting point and changes may be needed).

Engaging with Children/Young people from study group of schools

To inform the review the committee may wish to consult with/ gain the views of children from schools within the study group on for instance 'How is school helping you to learn?' and 'What else? How could school help you to get better at learning?'. The method may be by survey, written submission, workshops or participation activities that can be arranged within the timescales of the review with advice and in liaison with District Heads.

Focus Groups

The Committee may wish to consider the opportunity of engaging with a focus group of parents, governors or particular schools from the study group as part of the review process (Meeting with group of Heads on district basis /or Heads from schools identified from the study group based on analysis of levels of attainment data). For example schools with

- high FSM and high IMD indicators.
- a 3 year record of continuing improvement, with high IMD and High FSM indicators
- a 3 year declining trend though performing above the national floor targets

Visits

The Committee may decide to visit specific schools identified from the study group. It is suggested that visits are carried out by two to three Members (supported by an officer) and that Members report back to the committee. Each visit could begin with a briefing by the District Head, followed by a discussion with the District Head and Head teacher. It is envisaged that visits would be grouped together where possible.

Written information

It would be beneficial to invite the following stakeholders to share their views in writing:

- Stakeholders attending hearings (prior to or after hearings as appropriate)
- Stakeholders invited but unable to attend/take part in oral hearings/focus groups will be invited to submit written information.

6.3 Authorisation

It is proposed that the Chairman and Mr Vye (LD spokesperson) be authorised to agree the finer detail on behalf of the committee. The Committee will be kept fully informed and it is anticipated that there will be a meeting in March to discuss the proposed study group.

7.0 Proposed Draft Timetable (this is draft and is subject to change)

7 Feb/March/April (Easter break, Royal Wedding)	Research/Set up/Preparation Background research. Summary of research documents. Information packs for members. Set up Informal Briefing, Hearings, witnesses, Visits, focus groups Written evidence sought where applicable. Briefing Papers
Mid May/June/Mid July (sept)	Evidence gathering - Informal Briefing, Hearings and Visits etc Informal Briefing (May) Dates to be confirmed
End of July/beginning of August	Recommendations: Meeting of Select Committee to discuss report framework, areas of recommendation and conclusion.
Sept	Research Officer to finalise research and prepare report
By 30 Sept - 3 Oct	1 st draft to Select Committee
10-21 Oct	Report considered + agreed by Select Committee - costing of recs
By 24 Oct	Report published to CFE and partners (2 weeks)
Wk of 31 Oct (1 wk) Wk of 7Nov (2wk)	Stakeholder meeting: Meeting of Select Committee to share report with Cabinet member, CFE and partners. CFE/partners to comment. Select Committee agree any changes/amendments.
TBC 4 Nov ? 25 Nov 5 Dec 6 Dec 15 Dec (or later)	Formal Processes Report considered by LD POSC Papers with CMT Report published to Cabinet Report considered by Cabinet Report published to County Council Report to County Council
Monitoring	<u>Action Plan</u> 3 months after Cabinet/County Council directorate to agree action plan and share with POSC <u>Evaluate impact and response.</u> 12 months after considered by Cabinet re convene Select Committee to update

8. **Project Risks:**

- Allotted times for Hearings/meetings are subject to the availability of witnesses, and will need to be reviewed if necessary.
- Children/ young people workshop: will be important to seek advice from the directorate, and to tailor any event to ensure young people are at ease and feel able to share own views and not views think expected. Liaise with district managers and participation by right KCFN/SILK.
- Need clear definition of terminology, progress measures etc. This will be addressed at the informal briefing session.

- Potential difficulties in ability to meet with some harder to reach groups, only accessing those already involved in school – e.g. parents/parent governors. Seek advice from District Heads.
- Potential for duplication with research work by Christchurch University, and research fatigue if same people are contacted. Have requested copy of brief and methodology.
- Review needs to remain focussed.
- Period of change and restructure could have impact on review and ongoing availability of contacts within the organisation.

9. Publicity Requirements:

As appropriate to highlight review in accordance with Select Committee Publicity protocols, update links on webpages on www.kent.gov.uk and consider press release.

Recommendation:

To agree the Terms of Reference, scope and general approach to the review of educational attainment

And

Mr Wells and Mr Vye be authorised to agree the development of the programme on behalf of the Committee, with the committee being kept informed

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