

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - PUPIL PREMIUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Pupil Premium held in the Swale 1 - Sessions House on Monday, 20 November 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mrs P T Cole, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Mr J P McInroy, Dr L Sullivan and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT:

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny), Mrs K Goldsmith (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny), Mrs C Wade (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs J Medhurst (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

13. Stephen Mellors (School Effectiveness Partner) and Carole Farrer (School Effectiveness Partner) - Essex County Council
(Item 1)

1. The Chairman welcomed the Select Committee members and two guest speakers and invited all those present to introduce themselves.
2. Mr Mellors spoke to a two page handout entitled-The Essex Toolkit, an approach to maximising the use of the pupil premium funding, which is appended to these minutes.
3. He also referred to a glossy pamphlet entitled Tackling Educational disadvantage: A Toolkit for Essex Schools.
4. Mr Mellors was invited to expand on his personal biography and informed members that he would be leaving the Local Authority to work for HMI at the end of term. In his current role he has responsibility for disadvantaged pupils.
5. After consultation with Head Teachers it became clear a Toolkit to aid maximisation of pupil premium was required. The Tender process resulted in the National Education Trust being commissioned to develop the Toolkit in consultation with Essex County Council. Authors: Marc Rowland, Jo Moore and Dr Tony Ashmore.
6. How Head Teacher's used the Toolkit was not prescriptive, it was intended to promote challenge and enhance good practice. No one strategy worked for all children, each school needed to take account of its own culture, leadership etc.to maximise intervention.
7. Mr Mellors emphasised leadership was key. Pressure on budgets meant spending to achieve excellent practitioners was essential and children on pupil premium benefitted most from being taught by highest quality teaching.

8. Leadership was key! Often disadvantaged do not have a backup plan and Leaders needed to be relentless in pursuit of ambition and highest outcomes for those in most need-Establishing a culture of possibilities, not barriers with a collective sense of mission, pervading through the whole school and reflected in all staff.

9. An example of best practice could be seen in a Clacton school, situated in a very deprived area where the Headteacher had recognised the best advocates were carers/parents and had engaged them in improving better outcomes and higher self-esteem.

10. Understanding barriers and targeting activities included recognising the importance of early language acquisition; being accessible to all parents; any interventions being blended with highest quality teaching; recognition of characteristics of learners who underachieve and target activities through a well thought out curriculum; engaging the voice of pupils and others.

11. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability needed to be long term and sustainable with acceptance that important lessons can be learnt when things don't work. Effective monitoring should be used to find out what worked and what didn't work, then changes made in practice. This helps to focus the responsibility for pupil premium is everybody's.

12. Essex Toolkit was rolled out to schools, initially with two free conferences, for Head Teachers and Governors. The first invited speakers from the Educational Endowment Fund and included group seminars provided by Teaching School Alliances who were commissioned to investigate effective engagement with careers and parents.

13. The second focused on developing metacognitive approaches to learning, which resulted in a number of schools signing up for the action research Project - ReflectED.

14. Mr Mellors concluded by saying achievement for disadvantaged pupils was a key priority for the Local Authority and everybody should champion the needs of pupil premium in a school led improvement strategy.

15. Q. Was the Essex Toolkit based on the Sutton Toolkit?

16. A. It was different-Mr Mellors felt that the Essex Toolkit was quite wordy for Head Teachers but contained some important questions for school leaders and not the Sutton Trust information. This information is useful in deciding which strategies have high impact and for least cost.

17. Q. What was the take up in schools?

18. The aim was for every school targeted on data through colleagues, groups of schools and partnerships to use it.

19. Q. Cost?

20. A. Free. It is very accessible, user friendly and at No cost to the user.

21. Q. Academy/Free school accessible?

22. A. Essex includes all schools, the Toolkit champions' children and families of all Essex pupils, trying to overlap issues with SEND in schools and identify any benefit to both areas.

23. Q. How many use it?
24. A. All schools are aware, some use specific sections to maximise best use of pupil premium funding.
25. Q. Some London Boroughs were successful in closing the gap between Primary and Secondary education, but Shire counties had less funding?
26. A. London Boroughs were previously funded at a higher level, and appeared to have an interesting use of Pupil Premium. The population make up in London is different to those in Shire counties. A Secondary school in Harlow had recognised a lack of parental support and the school had therefore identified the need for 24 hour support in every aspect of secondary age pupils, thus closing the gap.
27. Q. How could engagement at home be encouraged?
28. A. Some schools provide homework clubs and a suitable place to study outside hours to assist chaotic home life-staff may require payment, but others support the initiative for the good of the pupils and school as a whole. Leadership is Key.
29. Q What was the priority spend for Pupil Premium funds-quality staff tended to be more expensive, small, rural schools had particular challenges, less access than cluster of schools?
30. A. Key was well trained staff, initial partnerships could be school lead, then schools needed to support themselves, partnership models enhanced shared skills etc.
31. Q. Looked After Children (LAC)
32. A. Essex have virtual Head Teachers who have ownership of the pupil premium and work with individual schools. These children fall under the responsibility of the Authority and must be tracked closely.
33. Q. Is this not just another “hoop” to jump through for Head Teachers?
34. A. Essex think there is a benefit to one person having the rigor to protect the child’s best interests and schools must be proactive in accessing the funds.
35. Q. How is the long term benefit of Pupil Premium children communicated to primary Head Teachers? How can the cycle be broken so that the same children do not go on to have their own children who return as Pupil premium? Need to break the cycle.
36. A. The only information available post-secondary age are the statistics for NEET. There is a definite need for better tracking between phases, currently primary and secondary are separate, but expectations are for the “whole” child. A vision is needed for how these children end up in society, in order to break the cycle of poor generational learnt behaviours.
37. Q. How can one class teacher with a number of disadvantaged pupils find time?
38. A. Teacher training can be too narrow a focus-class teachers can remove barriers to learning e.g. before/after school clubs and funds can be diverted to assist. Strong Leadership and support is Key.
39. Q. marking is expensive-takes teacher time?

40. A. Feedback is key, best practice is for teachers to mark Pupil Premium children's books first when fresher, the pupils needing feedback most are the less able -an example of how systems used can be more productive at no extra cost.

41. Q. How/Do you develop bespoke strategies for each school, is there support from the Council?

42. A. EEF give strategies, pamphlets such as "what works in Key stage1", partnerships share expertise and build case studies. Partnerships sign post good practise. Peer to peer support is encouraged.

43. Q. Do you target Toolkit use based on data?

44. A. The Authority tracks school data and RAG rates it, so they know who is performing well. Over time look at progress and discuss in a none threatening way with Head Teachers and Governors. Encourage close tracking of PP Funds, use of smart processes and systems to assist peer review of own disadvantage work to employ good practice and seek improved outcomes.

45. Q. Copyright of Essex CC glossy pamphlet?

46. A. Please contact us.

47. The Chair thanked the speakers for their excellent and informative contribution to the Committee meeting and praised the high quality content of the presentation.

14. Carl Roberts (Headmaster) - The Malling School)
(Item 2)

1) Mr Roberts introduced himself and advised that The Malling School was situated in an area of high social deprivation; currently the PP was above the national average, sitting around 30%. He explained that The Malling School was a non-selective mainstream school and that often disadvantaged pupils in such schools do not match the attainment of their non PP mainstream peers nationally but do make significant progress from their starting points. He advised that the attainment gap may not have closed, so the performance of the school may not be considered effective if not for consideration of the progress made and the wider impact of the intervention provided. This would be evidenced through pupil level PP tracking, Progress 8 performance and case studies rather than just attainment measures.

2) QUESTION
Where is the school situated?

ANSWER
East Malling – 9 miles from Maidstone in a small rural community.

3) QUESTION
30% PP ?

ANSWER
Yes and many more pupils are technically eligible but do not take it up – it could be as high as 40/50%

4) QUESTION

Are these families chased?

ANSWER

There is a stigma attached – it is harder in secondary school to convince parents than in primary schools. If you look at data (EVER 6)– around 50% PP are ever 6 children - it is necessary to reclaim when moving from primary to secondary school.

5) QUESTION

Do you think free school meals is the right criteria?

ANSWER

I know there are many that do not claim – children are missing out.

6) QUESTION

Do you take all the PP funding as a pool or allocate it to individual children?

ANSWER

As a pool - a budget is written which states how the money is to be spent. A PP review takes place at the end of each academic year. The data is then analysed and then the most effective strategies are worked out– how these children make this progress with these particular interventions. We look at individual students and shape interventions around the cohort.

7) QUESTION

How do you consider progress is measured against academic attainment?

ANSWER

You can't just use academic attainment, year 11 academic attainment is better for non PP pupils than PP pupils but PP pupils did better on progress from KS2. Unfortunately, DFE view is that you don't get a job based purely on progress and therefore the gap needs to narrow. PP Pupils enter secondary school behind those non PP, so incredibly frustrating being judged on attainment levels only.

8) QUESTION

In your view /experience what are the most effective headings?

ANSWER

Firstly, high quality teaching and small class sizes, some PP funding goes towards reducing class sizes particularly in English and Maths.

Secondly, pastoral care, it is necessary to somehow influence what goes on outside school too, attendance etc./wraparound care, homework clubs etc. It has to work for every child not just PP pupils; the funding has to be used efficiently.

9) QUESTION

Is the funding enough?

ANSWER

Never! We spend double what is received.

10) QUESTION

You have a Grammar stream – how many disadvantaged pupils go into that?

ANSWER

For those pupils that access the Grammar stream, this is based upon prior attainment and there are three criteria:- SATs, Cognitive ability testing and those pupils that were close to passing the Kent Test. In this County it is proven that those children from a middle class background are more likely to perform better in the Kent Test. However, there is also ongoing internal testing that takes place once at The Malling School and where potential is seen then children would be moved into the Grammar stream.

11) QUESTION

I see that from your web site you managed to reduce gap to zero in 2012/2013 – why?

ANSWER

It is a reflection of the cohort rather than anything else, sometimes a handful of children in a cohort could make a difference, really it is pure chance and cohort dependent.

12) QUESTION

Your intake comes from a variety of local primary schools, has you heard/seen statistics from primary schools and is it your view that PP is working in primary schools?

ANSWER

There is really good work taking place in primary schools and PP funding is used to good effect but there continues to be a gap between primary and secondary - PP is not as effective as could be in closing the gap.

13) QUESTION

You agree?

ANSWER

If you are going to make a difference need to do it early on - ie 0 -2 years , social care in pre-school and nurseries – very early years.

14) QUESTION

Your school is in an area of high deprivation, does PP have an impact? And how do you track this?

ANSWER

Yes there is a limited impact in secondary school phase, it is difficult to close the gap and funding needs to be earlier. With regard to tracking, each intervention is analysed on progress. Mr Roberts agreed to send the Committee a copy of his tracking document – looking at costings – low cost/high impact.

15) QUESTION

Do you use a tool kit?

ANSWER

Yes where appropriate in particular circumstances.

16) QUESTION

Can you tell us about the Tydeman Centre and the post 16 curriculum? And expand on the difficulty of the situation with a lack of aspiration among parents but the school only being only ¾ mile from the very affluent Kings Hill?

ANSWER

Yes the PP for current year 7 is actually only 9% but over all year groups it is 35-40% but now there has been a success in attracting families from the Kings Hill area.

The Tydeman Centre is a speech and language unit, all pupils have an EHCP and arrive with low prior attainment but leave above average. There is a very good pupil to teacher ratio with classes of 9 pupils with up to 3 adults in the classroom. The best way to improve is to decrease class sizes and then excellent progress is made. It is interesting to note that there are not many PP children.

With regard to post 16 progress Mr Roberts explained that three years ago the school made a decision to move away from A levels and to introduce the International Baccalaureate programme. The IB has a philosophy of developing key skills and attributes and cultivating successful, confident and well-rounded young people. All children in 2017 either gained their first choice university place a good job or a high level apprenticeship. It had been noted previously that children lacked aspiration and confidence, they were never going to achieve.

17) QUESTION

Can you tell us about SEN and PP?

ANSWER

Most schools would pick up regardless of PP or not. Often there are hidden SEN issues, children with behavioural issues regarded as naughty etc. when there are underlying SEN issues. Middle class children much more likely to be identified. Most likely to be identified at primary school but can still be picked up at secondary level.

18) QUESTION

There is low PP at The Tydeman Centre. There is an average 13% PP at all schools and Special schools only 3% PP. Have these children slipped through the net? Do you think they are placed in the wrong setting? ie if in mainstream schooling are they not so likely to be identified?

ANSWER

Yes this could be the case, many of our disadvantaged children don't get identified or parents are unable to navigate the system.

19) QUESTION

Children identified as PP could be missing out?

ANSWER

At the Tydeman Centre there is a funding of around £13,000 per pupil whereas pupils in receipt of PP funding get around £4,500 plus £900 PP funding.

20) QUESTION

The deprived/disadvantaged can't fight the system?

ANSWER

Yes some families from disadvantaged backgrounds are struggling to put food on the table and simply don't have the time to fight for support and don't have finances to obtain private assessments and reports.

21) QUESTION

If you had a pupil in this situation would you use PP funding to carry out assessments?

ANSWER

No, it takes time but wouldn't need funding to obtain a statutory assessment.

22) QUESTION

The gap between PP within a Grammar/High school is far wider?

ANSWER

You can increase funding but it is always going to be harder for parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

23) QUESTION

How does the IB impact? And what is the correlation?

ANSWER

Looking at judging the PP, it is important not to just look at the academic qualification. Everyone was successful in either gaining their first choice university place, had a positive education, training and employment. Also a comparison needs to be made between those children at 16 years of age to 18years. Mr Roberts advised the Committee of a recent trip to Italy he had taken IB students on. It was the first time many had been abroad, they were lacking in confidence. During the trip they were leading groups around Milan, using the tube and purchasing tickets with confidence. He explained that the skills and confidence gained was very difficult to measure, it had nothing to do with exam results. The IB learner profile is 10 skills **every** lesson.

24) QUESTION

We have established that less affluent parents are likely to have their children labelled as naughty whilst middle class parents push to obtain support. Can KCC do anything to remedy this?

ANSWER

This is a generalisation, however in my experience middle class families are likely to have children diagnosed with autism and dyslexia or social, emotional and mental health whilst children from a disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to go undiagnosed and be labelled as “naughty” children who “haven’t been bought up properly”. Therefore schools sometimes manager the behaviour without asking what is the underlying reason for this behaviour.

KCC SEN Department are very good. However, parents need information and support where needs are identified, help required in understanding their rights and what avenues are open to them. Possibly in Children’s Centres?

25) QUESTION

If extra funding were available for EHCP would this make a difference?

ANSWER

Need to be careful not to give too many statutory assessments but I see children that are disadvantaged arriving at secondary school having not received the support they should be entitled to at primary school.

An additional email was sent to the committee on the 27th November with the requested document detailing analysis of PP spend at The Malling School and a message as follows:

A justification often offered for the grammar school system is that such a system enables children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have access to an academic education. Indeed this has recently been given as justification by the Conservative government for changing legislation to enable the opening of more grammar schools. Our experience in Kent is that fewer children entitled to the Pupil Premium attend grammar schools than non-selective schools.

If we believe that the selective system can promote equality then we must find ways of getting more disadvantaged children into grammar schools. One way of doing this would be to allow primary schools to spend Pupil Premium money on employing tutors to coach pupils to pass the Kent Test, thus giving them the same advantages that better off families currently enjoy. This is currently not allowed by KCC and guidance to head teachers is clear that they must not coach pupils for the Kent Test.

You may think employing tutors would be a waste of money as the Kent Test is supposed to be tutor proof. If this is genuinely the case then I would ask what is being done about the thousands of private tutors across Kent who are claiming to be able to help children pass the Kent Test? Either the test is not tutor proof or the tutors are operating fraudulent businesses!

15. Rosemary Hafeez (Associate Director for School Standards and Performance - Achieving for Children) - Richmond Upon Thames Borough Council
(Item 3)

(1) The Chairman welcomed Rosemary Hafeez to the meeting and invited her to introduce herself.

(2) Rosemary Hafeez said that she was the Associate Director for School Standards and Performance, Achieving for Children (AfC), which was a Community Interest Company owned by the London Boroughs of Kingston and Richmond since 2014. This Company had been expanded during the summer of 2017 by the inclusion of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.

(3) The Company had been set up after Kingston had failed its Safeguarding Inspection. The two Boroughs' combined budget was approximately £100m with some 1,000 members of staff. School Improvement was in the region of 1% of these figures.

(4) Rosemary Hafeez said that most of AfC's work took place in the Children's Social Care field. It also provided Education Services such as Early Years, Admissions and Commissioning as well as the "School Performance Alliance for Richmond and Kingston", usually known as "SPA(RK)."

(5) Rosemary Hafeez that SPA(RK) provided Governor Services, an assigned School Improvement Partner (SIP) (which included support for the Pupil Premium) a wide range of networks and in-school bespoke support.

(6) Rosemary Hafeez then turned to the work undertaken on the Pupil Premium. The strategy took the form of half-termly sessions with Head Teachers, focussing on school improvement rather than on budgets, buildings and safeguarding. She led the sessions on the School Improvement Forum which usually ran between 0830 and 1200 and usually included some schools presenting to the others.

(7) SPA(RK) aimed to support schools to improve provision, raise standards and narrow the attainment gap. It offered premium membership, which was taken up by 85% of the schools. This entitled them to receive four strands of support: an assigned school improvement partner (SIP); governor support; a wide range of Best Practice networks; and in-school bespoke support. At least 90% of the schools bought onto at least one of these strands.

(8) Rosemary Hafeez provided graphs which set out SPA(RK)'s impact in both Kingston and Richmond Boroughs between 2014 and 2017. These graphs tracked progress in a number of areas since the AfC's creation, and demonstrated the gap in attainment between PPG and non-PPG pupils. Her analysis is set out below:

(a) "Good level of development": In Kingston there was all round improvement, with the gap in attainment narrowing each year much smaller than the national average. In Richmond the gap had narrowed significantly in 2016 and had remained constant in 2017.

(b) "Phonics (Year 1)": The gap in attainment had narrowed in 2016 when there had been a strong focus in this area, but had widened again in 2017. In consequence, there would be an increased focus in 2018.

(c) "Expected Standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics (RWM)": The attainment gap had narrowed in Kingston at KS1 and in Richmond at KS2.

(d) "English Baccalaureate": there was a small gap in both Kingston and Richmond which had grown slightly in the former in 2017. The attainment gap in both areas was smaller than the national gap.

(9) One concern that had been raised by some Educationalists during the moderation process was that over-concentration on disadvantaged children could lead to the "Golem Effect" where lower expectations placed upon individuals by teachers or moderators could itself lead to poorer performance. There had been a change to the moderation system in response to this concern. There was now a small team of Lead Moderators supported by a broader team of Team Moderators.

(10) Rosemary Hafeez moved on to set out details of the AfC Strategies for Premium Pupils. These were set year by year, adding to those which were already being progressed. A very significant aspect of the 2014/15 Strategy was a project aimed at helping all schools to identify eligible children who had not registered for funding. This had been supported by a local radio campaign. Schools had been encouraged to use the

service provided by AfC to check for potential eligibility with the DWP. Support had also been provided by the Education Endowment Foundation which provided funding to 300 schools in the UK in order to raise standards in the weakest schools and combat the attainment gap between PPG and non-PPG pupils. Twenty four schools in the Boroughs of Richmond and Kingston were part of a current three year project.

(11) The Early Years Advisor worked with schools and settings to develop strategies focused on engaging *hard to reach families*. This was part of an approach which sought to make accessibility to the service similar to the ease with which people could access a shop.

(12) Rosemary Hafeez said that she gave termly presentations to School Governors and that bespoke training was also made available to them. Head Teachers were invited to the half-termly School Improvement Forum meetings.

(13) SPA(RK) banded schools according to the proportion of FSM pupils attending. The overall proportion of FSM children was between 19 and 20% in primary schools, with an even higher proportion in high schools. The schools in each band with the highest achievement by FSM pupils constituted the yardstick against which all the other schools were compared. These successful schools had also produced a report following a brainstorming session, which was shared with all schools. At the lower end of the scale, those primary schools with the lowest PPG outcomes were offered the opportunity of a free audit.

(14) Rosemary Hafeez said that the 2015/16 Strategy had complemented its predecessor through the inclusion of PPG targets for Reception, Y1 Phonics, KS1, KS2 and KS4. The audit tool was updated to include national successful practice. Many schools began to use their SIP Partner to advise their Governors on management objectives. Visits had also been organised to schools in deprived areas outside the two boroughs where PPG management was very effective. One of these visits had been to a school in Hounslow.

(15) Rosemary Hafeez said that the Strategy for 2016/17 had included an in-depth analysis of data on PPG exclusions and attendance. This had revealed that children with special educational needs statements were over-represented to the extent that 100% of Year 6 absenteeism in the Spring and Summer Terms in 2015 had been disadvantaged children. Meanwhile, those schools which did not buy into the SPA(RK) package continued to receive a risk-analysis audit whose outcome was reported to the Governors.

(16) Rosemary Hafeez then said that 2016/17 had also seen the creation of professional development modules for 8 blocks, enabling updated audit and review. These were:

- a) Whole school ethos of attainment for all;
- b) Addressing behaviour and attendance;
- c) High quality teaching for all;
- d) Meeting individual learning needs;
- e) Deploying staff effectively;
- f) Data driven response to evidence;
- g) Clear responsive leadership; and
- h) Engaging with parents and carers.

Schools were only asked to pick two or three of these blocks for the audit offered. The preferred audit method was for a member of the SPA(RK) Team to talk to the parents

(often informally outside the school gates) and also to school staff about professional development. They would also observe the pupils' interaction in lessons and where they sat in lessons. Typically, disadvantaged children found themselves either at the back of the class or around the edges. These audits had also identified best Practice. One of the schools audited had won a Pupil Premium award because of the results it had achieved results by linking every single disadvantaged child to a senior pupil.

(17) A workshop for the most successful primary and secondary schools had been organised as part of the 2016/17 Strategy. This had discussed the experience of the previous three years and identified 10 tips per block as well as weblinks to research that the other schools could access.

(18) Rosemary Hafeez then described the most recent developments that had taken place as part of the 2017/18 Strategy. An attempt had been made to recruit a Lead PPG Champion. She wanted this role to be filled by someone from within the boroughs. There had been no takers for this role during the Autumn Term, so she would undertake a further trawl in January 2018. The Lead Champion would be tasked with the creation of a PPG Champion network. Meanwhile, funding was being sought in partnership with the Secondary School Alliance for a project to reduce the attainment gap at KS4.

(19) Rosemary Hafeez concluded her presentation by addressing the question of the best way to ensure that effective strategies and interventions were undertaken. She said that the greatest impact came from taking an unrelenting approach. If this happened, it only needed a small number of staff to achieve success. Every stratagem had aimed to help all schools to be good for all the pupils by supporting all their pupils' weaknesses. Richmond had seen a higher number of outstanding schools whilst Kingston had seen a higher number achieving judged good by Ofsted. There had also been strong early progress in supporting *English as an additional language* Pupils, aiming to overcome the problem where statistically Afro-Caribbean pupils had underachieved on a year-by-year basis. Another essential component was that the Strategy created a professional development environment which enabled school staff to have the opportunity to flourish.

(20) In response to questions, Rosemary Hafeez said that:-

(a) There were only 5 primary academies in the two boroughs, whilst only 3 secondary schools were non-academies. The Academies nearly all bought into the service.

(b) Attendance strategies had been developed using the carrot and stick approach. Attendance awards were given (either to the pupils or the parents). The most successful work consisted of changing mind sets through the use of nurture teams. Support staff made contact with and related to the children and their families, often using post cards to stay in touch. This helped to develop a relationship which was essential if the family needed to be contacted in order to respond effectively to a problem that had arisen.

(c) Headteachers and classteachers had often been unaware of the identities of PPG pupils before 2014, despite the funding that was available for both PPG and SEN pupils (double if they qualified for both). This had been corrected using a number of tools.

(d) Teachers were encouraged to mark the homework of disadvantaged pupils before the others. Those teachers who had initially shown reluctance to engage with the pupils had received a spur through having their success in this field recorded in their performance management record. Further encouragement was offered by the Lead Practitioners convincing their colleagues of the importance of this work.

(e) Virtual School pupils were supported by a Lead Headteacher who had three Assistant Headteachers below her. Outreach Workers also played a crucial role by for example, on one occasion accompanying a pupil to school. The student had been embarrassed by this experience and had quickly taken steps to ensure that he attended school without support. The Headteacher had targeted the completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) before moving on to develop their quality. Richmond's Virtual School had recognised as an example of best practice in the recent safeguarding inspection.

(f) One school had successfully linked every disadvantaged child to a senior leader, as their mentor. If the number of disadvantaged pupils had been higher in this school, it would be impossible to provide support in the same way. At one stage, Richmond and Kingston had experienced one of the largest KS4 attainment gaps in London. To counter this, AfC had used the Fisher Family Trust package for schools, and had encouraged schools to aim for the high targets within it. Funding support had also been provided by the EU to reduce the number of LAC and disadvantaged pupils who were not in education, employment or training after the age of 16. AfC was also involved with the *London South Aimhigher* programme.

(g) In order to achieve a successful partnership, it was essential to have a good relationship between officers and schools and also between the schools themselves.

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The Essex Toolkit – an approach to maximising the use of the pupil premium funding.

Starting points/Background

Like many Local Authorities, Essex LA had identified through its data intelligence systems that the gap in performance at all key stages between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils was significant. Significant monies had come into schools through the pupil premium funding mechanism and it was not clear how this funding was being used to improve outcomes and raise achievement for disadvantaged pupils. After consultation with headteachers requests were made to develop a toolkit to help understand how funding could be best used to support outcomes. A tender process was held and the National Education Trust was commissioned to develop a toolkit for Essex schools.

The work was led by Marc Rowland, who worked for the Trust and was also a leading expert for the use of pupil premium funding through his involvement with school and authorities around the country.

The Toolkit

The initial steps taken by NET were to carry out a survey amongst schools, meet with school groups and visit a range of schools particularly identified by the LA. Investigations were also carried out into school websites and published information.

The result was the publication of the Essex Toolkit. The toolkit represents a whole school systemic approach to good practice, identifying key components which are regarded as the active ingredients. The design of the toolkit lends itself to school leaders challenging their practice against a number of key questions so that the culture, identification of barriers, monitoring and understanding of accountability are targeted at ensuring the funding has maximum impact. It also provides some advice and examples of good practice to help support schools. One key message that we try to get across is the pupil premium funding should be used primarily to ensure disadvantaged pupils have access to the highest quality teaching. Money alone does not transform outcomes it is about well embedded approaches and whole school understanding and ambition.

Leadership, culture and values

Excellent leadership is at the heart of effective practice. Where leadership is vulnerable then it is the most vulnerable in our schools who suffer the most. Often disadvantaged do not have a backup plan. Leaders need to be relentless in their pursuit of ambition and highest outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. In the effective schools, leaders ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are a thread through all their planning and tracking. Leaders will not be afraid to tackle under performance but ensure that the highest expectations are systemic in their schools. This means establishing a culture of possibilities not barriers; have a collective sense of mission which pervades through the school and reflected in all staff;

builds capacity amongst all its leaders in monitoring and evaluating impact; expects only the best from all; engages all the stakeholders and partners, including parents; understands the range of approaches which not only support academic achievement but also metacognition so that learners develop strategies when things don't work.

'It takes an 'every second counts culture' in which each person knows and 'feels' their role and the absolute importance of it; where everyone is striving to be a little better than they were the day before; where they are gladly held to account and where everyone can succeed.'

Primary School Headteacher

Understanding barriers and targeted activities

Most effective schools understand how socio-economic disadvantaged impacts upon outcomes. Therefore they constantly probe and do not limit actions to just 'first-face' interventions. In my experience there are several areas where schools need to question to check that are tackling the barriers to outcomes.

Firstly, having systems for checking that help and support is provided at the earliest opportunity. Effective schools recognise that early language acquisition is key to academic success. Many of our vulnerable pupils experience limited access to language which impacts upon both communication and processing skills. Targeted early screening and use of strategies known to work can accelerate children's oracy.

Secondly, a deep understanding of children and their families which helps to identify wider needs and support. Schools sometimes use the language of 'hard to reach parents' but are they unwittingly a 'hard to reach school' because of the processes and procedures that make them inaccessible to some parents.

Thirdly, access to the highest quality teaching the school can offer and not delegated to less well trained personnel. The premium should be used to provide opportunities for developing teachers' knowledge and skills so that first quality teaching is of the highest quality. Interventions may be used but they are integrated into a provision of good teaching.

Fourthly, barriers may be multiple and schools need to get beyond the pupil premium label and consider the characteristics of learners that are underachieving. This will help in the targeting of activities to promote progress. A high quality and well thought out curriculum looks to promote the wide range of skills that will help pupils succeed in life.

Engaging the voice of pupils and contributions of others is important to help understand and clarify the barriers. Testing school's published strategy statements provides an insight into their understanding of their rationale for the use of funding because it should link to the barriers it has identified. Barriers should not be just limited to a close the gap mentality but also the barriers that result from being disadvantaged. This may also include the

opportunity to develop cultural capital. The skills and knowledge required to participate successfully in our communities. Pupils may continue to have barriers but can enjoy success through high quality teaching and provision. It is always important to remember that disadvantaged pupils themselves do have high aspirations but low expectations of achieving them. It is the role of school leaders to recognise and where possible remove the barriers through use of the funding.

Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Effective monitoring is finding out whether what you did works and not trying to prove it works. Important lessons can be learnt when things don't work. The monitoring should be frequent so that where required changes can be made in practice and approaches and it should engage a wide range of sources and contributors. This helps to focus the responsibility for pupil premium pupils is everybody's. Sharp evaluation is supported through clear success criteria which avoids poor proxies for impact such as 'pupils enjoyed' or 'teacher confidence'. However, there are numerous success criteria that are wider than just relying on outcomes at the end of key stage data and are still useful in tackling educational disadvantaged such as better attendance or better behaviour for learning.

An effective pupil premium strategy starts at meeting pupils' needs and not overly concentrating on the end of key stage outcomes. This is because a strategy needs to be long term and sustainable this will ultimately deliver better outcomes. It is important that schools adopt an approach of using what works and has been tested in their own settings. Use of any strategies need to ensure that schools themselves are programme ready and that it fits its own rationale. Not only should internal checking be carried out but also external peer reviews contribute to ensuring best impact even where outcomes for disadvantaged learners are strong. Information should be clear and accessible to parents. Finally, accountability should be focused upon the outcomes and destinations of disadvantaged pupils.

Essex experience

The toolkit has been rolled out to schools in a number of ways. Two conferences were held which were free for schools to attend. The first focused upon the Toolkit as well as inviting speakers from the Educational Endowment Fund. This conference also included group seminars provided by Teaching School Alliances who had been commissioned to look at effective engagement with parents/carers. The second conference gave greater focus to developing metacognitive approaches to learning. As a result a number of schools have signed up for an action research project 'ReflectED' which will evaluate approaches within the classroom that make a difference in helping learning to learn skills of pupils. Some tailored work has been provided for schools to help them with a particular focus on their work with disadvantaged pupils.

School Improvement now focuses upon a school led system. As part of this tools are being developed to help partnerships and clusters carry out their own peer reviews of pupil premium strategies.

The latest unvalidated information for 2017 shows that the difference has been diminished at the end of primary key stages, including EYFS. There appears to be more work to be done at key stage 4.

Whilst I continue to carry the title of Pupil Premium Champion, it is important that all my colleagues are skilled in challenging schools around disadvantaged pupils. Achievement for disadvantaged pupils remains one of our key priorities as a LA. Through our teams support of the School Led Improvement System, helping schools become empowered working with disadvantaged pupils and accountable for their outcomes.