
**Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny
Committee**

19 November 2014

Report of the Director of Children Services, Education and Skills

**Scoping Report on Proposed Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in
York**

Summary

1. This report explores the feasibility of the committee undertaking a scrutiny of actions taken to narrow gaps in attainment and progress in York.

Background to Proposed Review

2. In July 2014, the Committee received a feasibility report on a proposed scrutiny topic on 'Narrowing the Gap' in York. The Assistant Director of Education & Skills informed Members that by the age of 19, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged young people (as defined by them being in receipt of Free School Meals at age 15) and their peers in York, were amongst the widest anywhere in the country. She felt a review would help to own this as a collective issue to help improve national performance indicators and narrow the gaps in attainment.
3. It was also confirmed that Officers had been working to establish an accurate profile of the York 300 cohort and had chosen to do a pilot scheme using 350 pupils in the 2013/14 Year 5 group. As those Children would move into Year 6 in September 2014 and sit their Key Stage 2 (KS2) tests in summer 2015, it would enable officers to retrieve a faster return on the work undertaken with those pupils and help identify any barriers by analysing their attainment at KS2. Following the July scrutiny meeting additional analysis of the York 300 cohort took place which compared the performance of the York 300 against that of their peers. A copy of the updated report is included as Annex 1.
4. York schools had been divided into geographical and attainment cluster groups for analysis, to provide schools with information on how to improve their intervention work. Whilst the results varied from school to

school, it appeared those with a smaller number of disadvantaged pupils were struggling to close the gaps, possibly due to funding issues.

5. Members also received information on a narrowing the gap conference to be held in October 2014 to enable schools and partners to work together, share information and examples of best practice.
6. Members questioned why some clusters and schools in York had narrower gaps and what could be learnt from their practice, and how those schools with small numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium might use that premium more effectively to narrow the gap. They also agreed it would be useful to look at good practice by other Local Authorities achieving narrower gaps, including early years.
7. With this in mind, the Committee agreed in principle that the topic was suitable for scrutiny review and requested a review scoping report in November 2014 once the school outturn data became available.

Update on the York Context from 2014 school outturn data

8. The 2014 outcomes data shows that progress in narrowing the gap has been made in some key stages, but is not consistent across all key stages.
9. Gaps have narrowed in Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, but have widened in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4. This may suggest that currently work to narrow the gap is inconsistent and gaps may narrow due to fluctuations in the contextual profile of cohorts rather than the impact of actions taken.
10. Analysis of data at school level shows that a number of schools are narrowing the gap consistently over time and it would be useful to focus on the specific actions they are taking in order to identify what makes the greatest difference in narrowing gaps in attainment and progress. This can then be used to inform strategies to narrow the gap in Key Stages 1 and 4.

Review Remit Proposals

11. Based on the outturn data, the following review remit is proposed:

Aim

To identify and disseminate best practice guidance on narrowing the gap to York Schools.

Objectives

- i. To examine:
 - The actions taken by identified schools whose outturn data shows an established trend of narrowing the gap
 - The use of the pupil premium to narrow gaps in attainment and progress in those schools which are consistently narrowing the gap
 - Good practice from other Local Authorities achieving narrower gaps, including early years.
- ii. To draft some guidance proposals for dissemination through York Schools

Recommendations

12. The Committee are recommended to:
- a) Agree a remit for this review, as suggested in paragraph 11 above
 - b) Set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf
 - c) Agree a strict timeframe for completion of the review

Reason: To carry out the review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols and conclude the review before the start of the forthcoming purdah period.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex 1 – York 300 Analysis Update: Pilot Cohort Compared with Peers