
Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee 24 February 2015

Report of the Narrowing the Gap Scrutiny Task Group

Narrowing the Gap Scrutiny Review – Final Report

Summary

1. This report presents the findings from the recently completed Narrowing the Gap scrutiny review.

Background to 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.

Background to Pupil Premium

3. Pupil Premium is a government initiative designed to target resources on those pupils deemed to be from a disadvantaged background. Specifically the pupil premium money is provided for those pupils who have been on free school meals (FSM) as any point over the past 6 years or those pupils who have been looked after continuously for at least 6 months. For the year 2014/2015 the pupil premium had a value of £935 per eligible pupil in secondary education and £1300 per eligible pupil in primary education. The government have not dictated how the pupil premium money should be spent, but what is clear is that the money should be used to promote strategies which narrow the gap in attainment between the highest and lowest achieving pupils.
4. Ofsted Guidance for schools:

'Never confuse eligibility for the Pupil Premium with low ability, focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest levels. Thoroughly analyse which pupils are underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics, and why. Draw on research evidence (such as the Sutton Trust toolkit⁴) and evidence from their own and others' experience to allocate the funding to the activities that are most likely to have an impact on improving achievement. Understand the importance of ensuring that all day-to-day teaching meets the needs of each learner, rather than relying on interventions to compensate for teaching that is less than good. Allocate the best teachers to teach intervention groups to improve mathematics and English, or employ new teachers who have a good track record in raising attainment in those subjects. Use achievement data frequently to check whether interventions or techniques are working and make adjustments accordingly, rather than just using the data retrospectively to see if something had worked. Make sure that support staff, particularly teaching assistants, are highly trained and understand their role in helping pupils to achieve. Systematically focus on giving pupils clear, useful feedback about their work, and ways that they could improve it. Ensure that a designated senior leader has a clear overview of how the funding is being allocated and the difference it is making to the outcomes for pupils. Ensure that class and subject teachers know which pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium so that they can take responsibility for accelerating their progress.'

5. Government policy changes to Key Stage 4 performance tables made in September 2013 mean that only a pupil's first entry for any qualification now counts in a school's published data. Therefore making direct comparisons in absolute attainment with previous years can be difficult and misleading. However, the gap between the attainment of pupil premium students and non-pupil premium students is still a valid one.
6. Narrowing the Gap: The York Context
In York as is the case nationally there is a strong link between poverty and underachievement. Nationally this has led to increased scrutiny of the outcomes of disadvantaged children through the introduction of the pupil premium.
7. In 2013, there were 172 Y6 pupils in receipt of free school meals in York, spread across 41 of the 51 primary schools in the city. Some schools had higher numbers of these pupils e.g. Clifton Green (14 in 2013) and Hob Moor (10), but most York schools had much lower numbers. In 2013, 12 schools had only 1 such pupil, and a further nine only 2 or 3. This wide distribution presents a barrier to schools seeing the issue as a

'group' issue rather than the difficulties experienced by a particular pupil. There is a similar spread across other year groups in the primary sector.

8. In York at the end of Primary and Secondary schooling there are about 300 children eligible for the pupil premium. The distribution of the pupil premium cohort varies across the city and this has created pockets of disadvantage.
9. In an effort to close the attainment gap between that cohort and their peers, a project was undertaken to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the cohort through sharing and interrogating school performance and social care data to gain an understanding of the potential barriers to progress for individual pupils. This resulted in an accurate profile of the York 300 cohort in the current Year 5 – see Annex A.
10. In November 2014 the Committee considered the 2014 school outcome data and the profile data on the York 300 cohort which compared their performance against that of their peers. The outcome data showed that progress in narrowing the gap had been made in some key stages, but was not consistent across all key stages. Gaps had narrowed in Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, but had widened in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4.
11. For the profile analysis York schools had been divided into geographical and attainment cluster groups, 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. It also suggested that the current work to narrow the gap was inconsistent and gaps may be narrowing due to fluctuations in the contextual profile of cohorts rather than the impact of the actions taken.
12. Members questioned why some York schools and school clusters 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.
13. With this in mind, the Committee chose to proceed with the review and agreed the following review remit:

Aim

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

Objectives

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

14. The Committee set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf and agreed the review was to be completed in time for the review draft final report to be presented at the next formal committee meeting in January 2015.

Consultation

15. A number of the Task Group members attended a 'Narrowing the Gap' conference on 9 December 2014. Led by Sir John Dunsford, the conference brought together school representatives and partners to share information and examples of best practice, and focussed on what schools needed to do to further improve their efforts and use of the pupil premium.
16. As part of the review, the Task Group also visited a number of York Schools – see paragraphs 36 – 39 and 42.

Information Gathered

17. Objective (i/a) - Good practice from other Local Authorities achieving narrower gaps
Best Start Lancashire is a school based initiative delivered through children's centres to provide additional early support for children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and their families between the ages of 4

and 7 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2). The resource (£5 million) to enable this innovative programme was implemented in 2011/14 and was targeted at children eligible for FSM.

18. In 2011/12, there were 6869 eligible pupils in the target year groups in Lancashire primary schools, and in 2012/13 there are 7,363 eligible pupils. Children's centres have been allocated £250 per FSM pupil as an additional resource to provide an increased early support offer for schools in their reach area.
19. Key intended outcomes for pupils eligible for Free School Meals were:
 - Improved levels of attendance at school
 - Improved attainment in speaking and listening and reading skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - Improved levels of reading at the end of Key Stage 1
 - A reduction in referrals to children's social care that require no further action
20. Impact data for 2013 shows a rise in GLD¹, increases in the number of Y1 pupils passing the phonic screening check and children attaining 2C in reading at the end of KS1. Also attendance has improved.
21. The **RADY Project** in Wirral is based around KS3 target setting in secondary schools i.e. the children involved are the Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts (those children who would complete KS4 in 2016 and 2017). A total of 1287 pupils are currently involved.
22. The vast majority of schools set targets that are, to a greater or lesser extent, based on prior attainment. This includes targets that reference FFT² estimates and targets based on all pupils making three levels progress in English and maths. The net result of this is that there is a built-in gap in the targets - the targets for FSM children are systematically lower than those of non-FSM children. This is because FSM children on average leave KS2 with lower results than non-FSM children.

¹ GLD = Good Level of Development (the benchmark for Early Years Foundation Stage, children at the end of the reception year in school)

² FFT estimates = Fischer Family Trust estimates – schools use this to set targets for their pupils.

23. As part of the project, the schools made a commitment to set equality targets and ensure they focus intervention swiftly on those pupils falling behind the inspirational target. Once the targets are set, it is probable that FSM children will feature more prominently in the underachieving group than they would otherwise have been. Therefore any intervention targeted at underachieving pupils will naturally make its way to disadvantaged children more often than in previous years. This is a key principle behind the RADY methodology. RADY does not provide intervention—its aim is to provide precision information on which pupils are most in need of extra support at the time it is likely to have the greatest impact.
24. The **Progress Centre at Stantonbury Campus School** in Milton Keynes provides a range of programmes developed in response to the particular needs of Pupil Premium students. Launched fully in September 2013, the programmes fall in to two categories – Academic Intervention and Support Intervention. The Progress Centre team consists of a Manager and three outreach workers each focussing on a different area for improvement – achievement, attainment and family support. The Progress Centre also co-ordinates opportunities for inspirational and enrichment activities and trips, as well as offering financial support to those pupils who require it in order to participate in other school activities.
25. Since its soft launch in April 2013, more than 600 pupils have engaged with The Progress Centre’s services or programmes. From April – July 2013, 27 Year 11 pupils were provided access to six hours of academic tutoring in either English or maths. From this cohort, 60% achieved three or more levels of progress from their GCSE results.
26. In the last two years, attainment by pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has risen by 22%, with 36% of pupils achieving five A* – Cs in English and maths. In the same period, the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils has narrowed to 19%; a 9% improvement.
27. Pupil Premium 2014 Awards
The Task Group received information on the Pupil Premium 2014 award winners, with detailed case studies from 4 winners – two primary schools and two secondary schools (one of each were national winners and the other two were regional winners) – see Annex B.

28. Pupil Premium Conference

The conference in early December 2014 was well attended by representatives of York schools. Those attending were encouraged to share their strategies for raising the attainment of pupil premium eligible students, and detailed a number of measures that they felt were helping to make a difference e.g. improving attendance, using data to frequently track the impact of actions on improving progress, reducing class sizes, alternative teaching methods, raising aspirations of pupils, parents and teachers/staff, engaging parents and raising their expectations.

29. Attendees were talked through a step by step strategic planning process:

- ✓ • Identify barriers to learning for PP pupils
- ✓ • Decide your desired outcomes
- ✓ • Identify success criteria for each outcome
- ✓ • Choose your PP strategies
- ✓ • Implement strategies with in-depth training
- ✓ • Evaluate strategies regularly
- ✓ • Tell the story – create an audit trail

30. Attention was also drawn to a teaching and learning toolkit provided by the Education Endowment Foundation which offers an accessible summary of educational research, providing guidance for teachers and schools on how to use their resources to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The Toolkit currently covers 34 topics, each summarised in terms of their average impact on attainment, the strength of the evidence supporting them and their cost – see:

<http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/>

31. The effect of poor teaching on student progress was also identified, suggesting that spending pupil premium on quality teaching was key. Finally, the conference highlighted the good work being undertaken by two York schools – **Milthorpe & Westfield**, whose case studies presented two different approaches. Milthorpe focuses on the need to fully evaluate data before, during and after setting measurable targets, and Westfield bases its approach of addressing all the needs of a PP pupil and supporting their family to ensure the best possible outcomes.

32. At the conference reference was also made to the excellent work being undertaken at **Roundhay School** in Leeds. During the schools most recent OFSTED inspection, it was observed that *“Roundhay School is all about its students. Staff ensure that each one, regardless of background or ability, is given every opportunity to shine”* (Ofsted, Nov 2013). This comment captured the philosophy adopted at Roundhay School and is

the reason why over the last 4 years, gaps in achievement are, on the whole, narrowing.

33. As a result of their success Roundhay School was invited, by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, to become a **Pupil Premium Review centre** so that their good practice can be shared with other schools. Further information can be found at:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/pupilpremiumreviews>
34. In late January 2015 a member of the Task Group (Cllr Fitzpatrick) visited the school to learn more about their good practice – see Annex C.
35. Objective (i/b) - York schools whose outturn data shows an established trend of narrowing the gap
The Task Group considered the initiatives/strategies being undertaken by two York schools (Woodthorpe and New Earswick) whose outturn data shows an established trend of narrowing the gap, – see Annexes D & E –see page 7 onwards of the Woodthorpe report and the table on page 1 of the New Earswick report. Similar information on other York Schools can be viewed via each school’s website.
36. The Task Group also visited a number of York schools in order to gauge the uptake of the best practice approach presented at the Pupil Premium Conference, and to gather information on the initiatives schools are implementing, how they are using their pupil premium, the specific barriers they are facing, and who is leading on narrowing the gap.
37. Taking account of the information in Annex F which details the outcomes of KS1, KS2 and KS4 pupils in schools across the city, the Task Group chose to visit the following schools:
 - Archbishop Holgate’s School
 - Badger Hill Primary School
 - Carr Infant School
 - Clifton & Rawcliffe Primary School
 - Fulford School
 - Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School
38. For illustration purposes, the information in Annex F is separated to show schools with more than 5 FSM pupils in a cohort, and in the case of KS1, those schools with fewer than 5 FSM pupils in a cohort as well. It also identifies those schools who attended the conference, together with their feedback on the conference.

39. To aid them in their visits, the Task Group agreed a number of opening questions:

- How long have you been the designated PP lead?
- How much time are you able to allocate to this role and how do you use this time?
- What has the impact of your role been on narrowing the gap?
- Which strategies have worked best in your school?
- What hasn't worked so well?
- How frequently do you evaluate strategies?
- Which, if any, of the Education Endowment Fund toolkit strategies have you utilised effectively?
- Over the last three years, have you changed your approach as a school?
- What has informed your decision making?
- How has the demographic changed in terms of numbers of pupil premium eligibility?
- Pupil Premium Conference – what did your school take away from this day if you attended?
- If your school did not attend, have you accessed the materials from this day?

Analysis

40. Having considered all of the best practice information from elsewhere (as detailed in paragraphs 17 - 27 above and in Annexes B & C) the Task Group were pleased to note that schools in York are utilising similar methods to support their pupil premium students to narrow the gap and achieve favourable outcomes.
41. They were also pleased to see the commitment to this work as evidenced by those York schools who attended the Pupil Premium Conference in December 2014. They also noted the different approaches taken by the York schools used as case studies at the Conference.
42. Furthermore, the Task Group were pleased to note how keen schools were to be involved in the scrutiny review and they were made very welcome on their school visits. Each school attended evidenced their approach to identifying appropriate strategies to help narrow the gap for individual children i.e. bespoke interventions. They were frank in their discussions about what had not worked so well and what the barriers

were. They also provided detailed information on how pupil premium was managed in their school.

Review Conclusions

43. Building on the good practice already established by York schools working together, the Task Group recognised that school to school support will be key in the future as Local Authority resources further reduce.
44. The Task Group agreed that the use of pastoral support workers (non teaching staff) to engage in home school liaison and in-school support was particularly effective.
45. Furthermore, evidence showed that where a multi-agency approach had been taken, pastoral interventions to narrow the gap had been more successful, as it helped to identify the wider needs of the family. The Task Group agreed this needs to be further developed in York to ensure best practice in multi-agency working across all schools.
46. In regard to the established clusters, the Task Group acknowledged the benefits that cluster working brings and were keen to see them continue with their action plans for narrowing the gap. They would also encourage schools to maintain their dialogue at cluster group meetings on how best to use their pupil premium money, as it will help them to identify opportunities to work holistically/collectively on interventions.
47. To maximise the benefits of educational continuity, the Task Group agreed that York's clusters should continue to develop an all through approach i.e. 0-19 to support smooth transitions (as witnessed at Roundhay). Noting the forthcoming introduction of early years pupil premium which comes on board in September 2015, the Task Group noted the opportunity this would provide for primary schools to link up with pre-school providers to ensure the best starts for disadvantaged pupils.
48. The Task Group recognised that the introduction of FSM for all at KS1 may inhibit the ability of schools to access their entire pupil premium funding entitlement. They therefore agreed that schools should continue to work with the Local Authority to ensure all those who are entitled are identified and encouraged to apply.

49. The Task Group noted the lack of consistency in outcomes and agreed that schools should focus on the impact of the strategies they implement in order for vulnerable students to make measurable progress and for their schools to achieve a narrowing of the gap.
50. Overall, the Task Group agreed that no single intervention could provide a complete solution to the complex educational issues in any school and it is therefore a multi-faceted approach that offers the best opportunity for pupils to succeed. They also recognised that whilst good work is going on in all York schools, there may be times where either low numbers or exceptional circumstance within a particular cohort, skew the results. They would therefore encourage all schools to develop resilience and to continue in their determination to narrow the gap.

Review Recommendations

51. In light of their work on this review, the Task Group identified the following draft recommendations for this Committee's consideration:
 - i) A virtual network for schools to be set up, to share best practice and feedback on the impact of the strategies used, encourage and assist in school to school support, and cluster working.
 - ii) A holistic approach to using pupil premium money should be encouraged, including school readiness projects in pre-school settings
 - iii) To continue to develop multi-agency working to assist with the narrowing the gap agenda.
 - iv) Schools to continue to build strong partnership working between home and school.
 - v) Continued encouragement and support to be given to parents of all FSM KS1 pupils, to ensure schools receive full entitlement to pupil premium funding.
 - vi) For the Local Authority to work with schools to publicise the importance of eligible families registering for pupil premium in KS1.
 - vii) That the recommendations above be used to form the basis of a citywide strategy.

Associated Implications & Risk Management

52. **HR** - There are no HR implications associated with the recommendations above. The team are already focusing on supporting schools to narrow the gap and the recommendations will help to focus their work around specific actions.
53. **Financial** - There are no significant financial implications resulting from the recommendations, and the cost of any proposed actions can be contained within existing LA and school budgets.
54. There are no Legal or other implications associated with the recommendations above, and no associated risks have been identified.

Council Plan 2011-15

55. The review of this scrutiny topic supports the Council's priority to protect vulnerable people.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report

All

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Online only

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

Annex B – Information on Pupil Premium 2014 Award Winners

Annex C – Information on Roundhay School, Leeds

Annex D – Woodthorpe Primary School – Pupil Premium Expenditure Report

Annex E – New Earswick Primary School – Pupil Premium Impact & Spend Summary

Annex F – Outcomes of York’s KS1, KS2 and KS3 pupils and Conference Feedback

Abbreviations:

DfE – Department of Education

GLD - Good Level of Development

FSM – Free School Meals

FFT - Fischer Family Trust

KS – Key Stages