

Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee 22 July 2014
Report of the Director of Children Services, Education & Skills

Narrowing the Gap in York – Scoping Report for Possible Scrutiny Review

Summary

1. This report is providing a suggested scope for the committee's scrutiny of the actions taken to narrow gaps in attainment and progress in York.

Narrowing the Gap: The York Context

2. By the age of 19, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged young people (as defined by them being in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) at age 15) and their peers in York is amongst the widest anywhere in the country (worst 10% of all LA areas on all 3 key performance indicators).
3. The gap is evident in Early Years and widens throughout compulsory education, post-16 participation and beyond. By the ages of 16 and 19, our system delivers outstanding outcomes for the cohort as a whole, but fails a significant proportion of young people, including those who are disadvantaged or who have other vulnerabilities such as Special Educational Needs (SEN). Given that outcomes for the whole cohort lower down the age range are closer, or even below, national averages there are significant challenges ahead.
4. 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.
5. In York at the end of Primary and Secondary schooling there are about 300 children eligible for the pupil premium an age group cohort.
6. We know that the distribution of the pupil premium cohort varies across the city and this has created pockets of disadvantage.

7. Analysis of our outcomes data shows that schools that have the highest percentage of disadvantaged pupils are narrowing the gap. Schools with the lowest numbers of disadvantaged pupils have the widest gaps and these gaps are not narrowing over time.
8. If we are to close the attainment gap we need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the cohort and to identify which strategies are working for children and young people with similar characteristics and in similar contexts across the country (or worldwide) so that they can be adapted for use here in York.

The York 300 Project

9. The concept of the York 300 Project came from an initial scoping of the way we could take a more focused approach to narrowing attainment and achievement gaps in York, given that our gaps remain wider than national for the FSM and SEN cohorts. We felt that key to closing the gaps would be to develop a more sophisticated profile for 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.
10. Work has taken place to establish an accurate profile of the York 300 cohort in the current Year 5 which is being used to inform the next steps in the York 300 project – see Annex A.

Options for Review

11. The suggested the focus of a scrutiny review would be to identify:
 - i. Good Practice from other Local Authorities with narrow gaps
 - ii. Why do some clusters and schools in York have narrower gaps, and what can be learnt from their practice?
 - iii. How schools with small numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium can use the premium more effectively to narrow the gap.

Recommendations

12. Having considered the information provided in this scoping report, the Committee are recommended to agree whether or not to proceed with a review based on the suggested focus outlined in paragraph 11 above.

13. If a decision is taken to proceed the Committee are asked to agree:

- A Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf
- A timeframe for completing the review

Reason: To progress the work of the Committee in line with Scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Report Approved **Date** 8 July 2014

Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report

All

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A – ‘York 300’ Pilot Cohort Analysis

Report Abbreviations:

FSM – Free School Meals

LA – Local Authority

SEN - Special Educational Needs