

Report of the Director of Children Services, Education and Skills

**Update on Implementation of ‘Narrowing the Gap’ Scrutiny Review
Recommendations**

Summary

1. This report provides an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previously 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.
3. The Committee set up a Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf. The review was completed in January 2015 and the resulting recommendations were approved by the Executive in June 2015 – to see the review final report go to:
<http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13414&path=13028,13029>

Performance Update

4. York continues to perform well against key national attainment indicators at the end of key stages. However, this high performance against key attainment indicators continues to mask the under performance of disadvantaged pupils in the city.

5. The size of our disadvantaged cohort (defined nationally as those eligible for free school meals and those looked after) is proportionality much smaller than the national average across all key stages, however, over time the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has remained wider than the national average.
6. This has led to a city wide focus on the importance of narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and whilst there have been some improvements for example in the Early Years the gap has narrowed consistently between 2013 and 2015; performance across key stages and between individual schools remains inconsistent. In particular the gap remains significantly wider than the national average in Key Stage 4.
7. The data in the following tables shows that, based on the outcomes in 2015:
 - The gap is closing at Early Years FS in the Good Level of Development measure:

Early Years FS	Pupil Premium Gap
GLD 2013	-29%
GLD 2014	-21%
GLD 2015	-17%

- In Key Stage 1 Phonic assessment:

Key Stage 1	Pupil Premium Gap
Phonics 2013	-20%
Phonics 2014	-18%
Phonics 2015	-14%

- Also in Reading, Writing and Mathematics:

Key Stage 1 (L2B+)	Pupil Premium Gap
Reading 2013	-22%
Reading 2014	-22%

Reading 2015	-14%
Writing 2013	-30%
Writing 2014	-28%
Writing 2015	-19%
Maths 2013	-22%
Maths 2014	-21%
Maths 2015	-16%

8. At Key Stage 2, the gap has remained static or narrowed slightly but risen a little in Maths 2015 whilst still maintaining a positive trend:

RWM L4+	Pupil Premium Gap	National Gap
KS2 2013	-26%	-19%
KS2 2014	-18%	-18%
KS2 2015	-18%	tbc

9. At Key Stage 4 the gap widened in 2014, we are currently awaiting the 2015 data but the gap is likely to have widened again in 2015.

5A*-C including English & Mathematics	Pupil Premium Gap	National Gap
Key Stage 4 2013	32%	-26%
Key Stage 4 2014	39%	-27%
Key Stage 4 2015	Available December 2015	tbc

10. York is not complacent about the need to close the gap in performance for disadvantaged pupils and this has led to a city wide focus on this issue. During 2014-15 there has been cross party scrutiny of the work schools are doing to narrow the gap and a task group of the Learning

and Culture scrutiny committee published their report in February 2015. The report contained the following recommendations:

- i) A virtual network for schools should 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 Free School Meals (FSM) Key Stage 1 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 Key Stage 1.
- vii) That the recommendations above be used to form the basis of a citywide strategy.

Implementation of the Recommendations

11. A sign of a truly great education system is the way it promotes and creates equality of opportunity for all children. In York we have achieved many successes in terms of our performance against national attainment indicators at the end of key stages and improvements in the percentage of pupils who are able to attend good and better schools. However, the performance of our most disadvantaged children has been an area for improvement for a number of years and both the gap between their attainment and progress, particularly in English and mathematics, has remained wider than the national average across all key stages.
12. In 2014 we began to look at developing a more accurate understanding of the potential barriers to learning for these children by looking in greater detail at the prior performance of disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 6. This was shared with schools through the York 300 analysis produced by Hannah McNamee. This analysis provided a useful insight in to the characteristics of the York 300 cohort. This analysis told us that:

- the York 300 pupils were more likely to be identified as Special Educational Needs (SEN) than their peers
 - their primary special educational need was more likely to be linked to their social, emotional and behavioural development than their peers
 - they had higher levels of persistent absence than their peers
 - levels of exclusions were higher than for their peers
 - 12 (3.4%) of the 350 pupils in the Pilot cohort had experience of the care system. Approximately 0.6% of children and young people in York are looked after, highlighting an over-representation in the Pilot cohort
 - 23 (6.6%) of the 350 pupils had a current and/or existing Child Protection Plan. Again, this is an over-representation when compared to the York population (0.4%)
 - 36% of the York 300 cohort attend schools in the West Cluster
 - 65 of the pupils in the current Year 6 were identified with 4 or more of 10 risk factors which contribute to poor outcomes
 - 74% of the 65 are being educated in the West, North East or East clusters (in January 2014), indicating a higher concentration than seen in the York 300 cohort as a whole
13. This profile information has been communicated to schools and remained a focus during all central CPD and conversations with schools throughout 2014/15.
 14. There was a very well attended Headteacher conference in December 2014 led by Sir John Dunford, the National Pupil Premium Champion where schools heard about successful approaches from Sir John and their peers, discussed priorities and identified key strategies for moving forward. This was followed up by a presentation at the Senior Leaders conference in June 2015 from Roundhay School who are a National Support School and a National College Pupil Premium Review centre.
 15. The work to develop a virtual network to share best practice has begun through work taking place in the geographical school clusters. Clusters have been asked to identify cluster based actions to narrow the gap in their cluster improvement plans. As part of the city's narrowing the gap strategy each cluster has been asked to identify a lead school for narrowing the gap which will be involved in a national research project (see Annex 1). The cluster lead schools will form a city wide virtual

network during 2015-16 to share learning from the project through the development of case studies.

16. The evidence from international and national research shows that early and integrated interventions have the greatest success in permanently closing gaps and accelerating progress for disadvantaged children. The characteristics of the York 300 cohort show that their potential barriers to learning require integrated interventions which reach beyond the school, but that schools have a key role to play as they are more likely to have more regular interactions with disadvantaged children and their families than other agencies and partners. Therefore developing an approach which looks to develop the teams around clusters to support our closing the gap strategy will be crucial to developing sustainable citywide capacity to close the gap. Various pieces of work across the city are beginning to develop this approach. This work includes the development of a new children's centre offer at Haxby Road, the 'World Class Clifton' project and the family focus work with York High School.
17. During 2014-15 several schools have had external pupil premium reviews recommended by Ofsted. In York we have two head teachers, one primary and one secondary, who are accredited Pupil Premium reviewers. Common findings from these reviews suggest that schools should focus sharply on deploying the best teachers to deliver interventions for this vulnerable group of learners.
18. Schools have a wealth of information available to them to identify pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium, including FFT Aspire, which now includes a pupil termly tracker detailing all school moves, and also an "alerts" facility which pulls together census information such as FSM eligibility, SEN status, school moves and attendance – this tracker will support schools to build an accurate picture of barriers to learning and enable them to target interventions and support more effectively.
19. During 2015-16 the Pathfinder Teaching School Alliance has been commissioned to offer continuing professional development for head teachers, senior leaders and classroom practitioners to lead strategically, monitor progress closely and change pedagogical approaches swiftly to enable them to learn from one another and ensure that there is a greater impact on this key priority area.
20. Analysis of the performance 2014-15 York 300 cohort has provided us with a robust set of benchmark data on which to track the progress of the pupils as they enter secondary education. Each secondary school has been provided with pupil level data about the Key Stage 2 performance

of pupils identified in the York 300 cohort. This provides a baseline for future tracking of this cohort. The 2015 Key Stage 2 outcomes data shows that there were improvements pupil progress, this was particularly marked in writing where the gap between the York 300 and non York 300 pupils was 1.1% for the percentage of pupils achieving 3 levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Overall the gap between the York 300 cohort and the non York 300 cohort was significantly narrower for the percentages achieving expected and better than expected progress than for attainment in 2015. This is important given that the current Ofsted inspection framework places greater emphasis on progress rather than attainment.

21. In developing an effective closing the gap strategy in York we are focusing on the following key principles:

- we will work together to improve the identification of disadvantaged children and families and ensure that the take up of the Pupil Premium has been maximised across all key stages, but particularly in early years and Key Stage 1
- clusters will develop closing the gap strategies which focus on the needs of disadvantaged children in their localities
- we will work together to improve transition and transfer ensuring that disadvantaged children and their families are supported to improve their engagement with education and learning and are able to realise their ambitions
- we will work together to monitor the impact of interventions on the progress of disadvantaged children and share information at cluster and city level to inform the targeting of additional support
- we will develop a city pledge to guarantee that all partners will commit to working together to ensure that disadvantaged children in York have the best possible start in life and are able to live their dreams

Options

22. Having considered the update information provided above, Members may choose to:

- i) Sign off any recommendations considered to be fully implemented and request a further update on the implementation of the recommendations in six months time
- iii) Sign off all the review recommendations and agree that further updates on the impact of actions being taken to narrow the gap be

provided via the regular Schools Outturn Data reports received by the Committee.

Recommendation

23. Improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils remains the key priority for York therefore it is recommended that elected members continue to receive regular updates on the impact of actions being taken to narrow the gap.

Reason: To support the Committee in achieving its remit, in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: None

Abbreviations:

FSM – Free School Meals

SEN – Special Educational Needs

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

FFT – Fischer Family Trust

GLD – Good Level of Development

FS – Foundation Stage

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills