



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee

Report to the Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee

Title:	Narrowing the Gap update
Committee date:	5 th June 2015
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Cabinet Member sign-off:	Mike Appleyard

Purpose of Agenda Item

Information: Report on recommendations contained in the Narrowing the Gap report to the Select Committee, published 14th March 2014

Background

This follows the Cabinet response dated 17th March, under Lead Cabinet Member Mike Appleyard

Summary

Seven of the twelve recommendations were designated to Amanda Taylor-Hopkins as Responsible Officer. This agenda item is to report on progress made in each and they are numbered as in the original Narrowing the Gap document.

2. The Early Years Curriculum:

Promotion of EY has been a top priority, with strong support for the curriculum and early learning goals from the outset. As noted in the Standards Report, there is the county-wide Early Language Development Programme, and a Narrowing the Gap project for settings and children's centres which is aimed at developing parental engagement and the home learning environment.

(a) Strong support for the curriculum and early learning goals

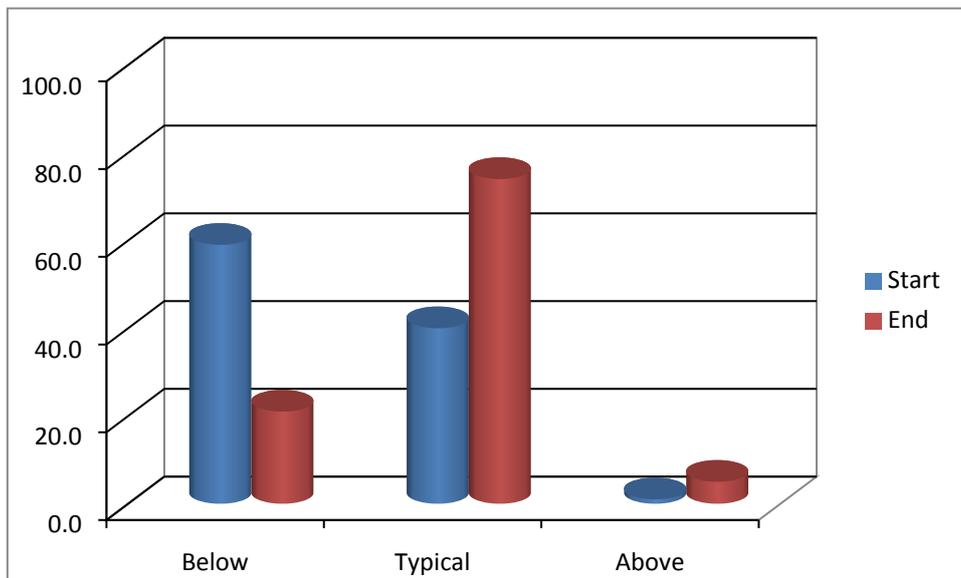


- From 2014 a sharper focus on assessment has been introduced into consultant support to ensure robust assessment systems in schools and settings and accurate assessment of children’s achievement. For example, supporting settings with baseline assessment, monitoring progress, analysing cohort data and moderation of assessment judgements in schools and settings.
- Assessment training and moderation for the EYFS Profile has been delivered in 100% of schools in 2014 and 2015. As a result assessment is more secure, reliable and robust.

(b) Early Language Development Programme

These charts represent data gathered at the start and end of the Early Language Development Programme, for a sample of targeted children. The data indicates an increased number of children working within the level typical for the age and a reduced number of children working below the level typical for their age in each aspect of communication and language development by the end of the programme.

Communication and Language skills: % of children



Next steps

ELDP has now been provided to children’s centres and their reach area settings across the whole of Buckinghamshire. Next steps are to provide additional ELDP training and follow up support to embed practice as required.

(c) Narrowing the Gap project for settings and children's centres which is aimed at developing parental engagement and the home learning environment

The project is underway with a focus on vulnerable 2 year olds. Data for early education funding for 2 year olds in settings is used to deploy resources to develop quality provision. 25 settings and children's centres with highest number of vulnerable 2 year olds are engaged in the project. Although in its early stages we are beginning to see some evidence of impact. For example:

- Systems to record the developmental stage of each child in the prime areas have been introduced in some settings. The system can be used to identify children at risk of delay and used to measure the progress of the funded 2year olds.
- Events targeted at Dads have given positive messages around the importance of sharing books, stories and rhymes with young children. Parents leave with some confidence as to how they can support their children at home.

There is a focus on EY within the Children's Partnership Team at BCC; liaison between this Team and the BLT takes place via the Child and Family Poverty Champions Forum. There is a variety of projects aimed at engaging parents of children under 5, for example, the Chesham and Wycombe Wellbeing projects which aim to bring universal services into Children's Centres to increase accessibility but also to encourage parents, particularly young single parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, to begin engaging with educational professionals and supporting their children's learning. Service providers, for example, the Job Centre, are seeking permission from parents to pass their details to Children's Centres so that professionals can initiate contact with them. The specific objective is to encourage more parents to take their children to EY provides so that they can benefit from the curriculum being supported by BCC. Pam Curtis of the Children's Partnership Team, and Lara Virgo of the BLT are exploring opportunities to link projects such as these, to schools so that support continues through Reception and KS1.

7. High Achieving, Economically Disadvantaged:

Primary schools have become increasingly aware of underperformance in Pupil Premium groups, and recognise that within the groups there are some high ability pupils with low expectations, who do not choose to access the Selective School sector. This is being tackled through a Gifted and Talented Network for teachers, CPD for schools, and projects at school and liaison group level.

The BLT is offering schools the opportunity to have Pupil Premium reviews; one specific area of focus within these reviews is on pupils making more than expected progress, both to support those who are behind their peers to close gaps, but also to provide stretch and challenge for more able learners. Messages around Pupil Premium spending being focused primarily on academic attainment for all pupils, including the most able, are being

communicated through site meetings, CPD opportunities, and through the review process. In addition to this, there is a specific focus on raising aspirations for pupils from communities with higher levels of deprivation. One aspect of Phase 2 of the Wycombe Challenge will provide opportunities for pupils, parents and teachers to participate in workshops and conferences aimed at fostering ambition and self-belief, and offering pupils a “window” into opportunities which may as yet be unfamiliar to them.

8. Analysis and Challenge Toolkit for Schools:

Analysis of progress made by disadvantaged pupils will be more challenging as the universal system of national curriculum levels is replaced by other processes. The BLT is developing an assessment toolkit that will link to the SIMS system, and which will allow detailed tracking of all pupils, including those in disadvantaged groups. Through the Schools Bulletin, headteachers are kept aware of the latest research and advice from the Sutton Trust and other organisations.

Whilst NC Levels and APS measures of progress will no longer be in use, the various commercial assessment packages structure the assessment of learning in KS 1-3 in a linear fashion so that the rate of progress will still be evident, for example, through the “Learning Ladder”. Currently there is much emphasis of accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils as demonstrated through the use of APS. Within Assessment Without Levels, it will continue to be emphasised and expected that vulnerable pupils’ rate of progress is analysed and that they are supported to increase the rate at which they master various aspects of the curriculum in order to close gaps. There is an advantage to this in that closing the gaps will be linked directly with mastery of specific skills and knowledge, as well as through numerical data; this will create an invaluable opportunity for teachers to plan even more clearly on the basis of prior attainment which is of fundamental importance when differentiating teaching and learning to be inclusive of the full range of pupil needs and to close attainment gaps.

9. Researching and Evaluating what works:

In the secondary phase, 20 schools have been involved in the delivery of action research, with the seminars exploring progress data. The full impact will be revealed in the summer exam results. In the Wycombe area, Phase 1 of the Challenge Project has funded interventions in all schools, with the expectation that each school or cluster-based project will be reported upon by the end of July 2015, in order to identify the most effective actions for raising the progress of disadvantaged children.

The appointment of an Adviser for Vulnerable Groups in January 2015 has had a significant impact in bringing considerable energy and expertise to bear on Narrowing the Gap. As a central point for evaluating projects and disseminating advice, she has ensured that schools maintain a clear focus on what activities should be undertaken and why.

Visits to schools taking part in this phase of the project will begin in June to monitor the progress being made, and to ensure that interventions are of a high standard, conforming to the brief (which was based on the findings of the Sutton Trust).

There is a specific emphasis within the Pupil Premium reviews in challenging schools to use the evidence bases available, such as the Educational Endowment Foundation and the Greg Brooks research – “What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties”, to inform and justify their spending of Pupil Premium funding. There is also a clear emphasis within the review on exploring how interventions supported through Pupil Premium funding are set up with specific objective, tracked, and evaluated and adapted so that schools are encouraged to work dynamically with the resources available to them to ensure best value for money and secure outcomes for those pupils.

Advisers from the BLT are supporting schools where necessary with this, including:

- support with the development of whole-school provision mapping to assess the effectiveness of interventions,
- support with assessment (including use of standardised testing to identify specific gaps in basic skills),
- support with selecting and implementing high quality intervention,
- support with online reporting and impact statements.

The number of schools which are now good or outstanding has increased . More PP pupils being better taught as a result, and the Gap should naturally reduce as a consequence. For schools to get good or outstanding PP group must be making at least recommended progress, and this is helping our higher achieving schools to focus on the performance of their PP groups.

RAY support – key focus on raising attainment and progress of all groups including the PP groups . Data conversations and presentation of analysis for Ofsted have been tightly focused by schools, assisted by BLT officers, and have specific reference to PP groups and the Gap. Raising standards for PP has been addressed in all RAY conference sessions, and highlighted as a way for Red/Amber/Yellow schools to improve their performance. Good practice has been shared regarding successful narrowing of gaps from specific schools eg Lane End Primary, Stokenchurch school, Carrington Junior.

10. NtG Reports to Governing Bodies:

Governors get regular reports through the BLT Headteacher's Report to Governors and we have also included monitoring the impact of Pupil Premium spend in the Terms of Reference for the Teaching and Learning Committee:

To provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning, and promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development :

- Governors will receive and evaluate reports on curriculum initiatives, standards of behaviour and the impact of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
- Governors will receive and evaluate reports on learning and progress of all pupils and groups of pupils including information on how pupil premium is used and its impact
- Governors will keep all relevant policies under review; they will monitor and report back on the implementation and effectiveness of policies, and where appropriate, make recommendations for change to the full Governing Body to consider.

Reports will be provided to Governors at the end of this term, identifying the key successes of projects arising from the Secondary NTG project, the Wycombe Standards Project, and the funding provided for Liaison Group projects.

11. Lead Governor for Narrowing the Gap:

Governing Bodies will continue to be advised to appoint a designated NtG governor, through leadership briefings, Governor Zone website, and the advice of the clerk. Records indicate that 100 schools have a designated NtG governor, while other schools take this role as a component of existing committee responsibilities.

The impact of this increased level of discussion, monitoring and accountability, there is now much more clarity about the way in which PP funding is applied, how effective different strategies may be, and the measurable impact of work at the level of the individual pupil.

There have been specific Governor CPD events to ensure that Pupil Premium governors' knowledge and understanding is up to date, that they are able to use data from RAISE Online and internal tracking data to gain an understanding of the performance of disadvantaged pupils at their schools, and that they are supported in developing a repertoire of questions to hold the Head Teacher to account for the use of Pupil Premium and to assess whether it is being spent appropriately and effectively.

The Pupil Premium reviews include interviews with Pupil Premium governors and part of the assessment of the review focuses on how well the Head Teacher is being held to account for the use of Pupil Premium funding, and how well the Pupil Premium governor understands how funding is being spent, and what the measureable impact of Pupil Premium spending is.

12. NtG Training for School Leaders:

The Secondary NtG project has involved headteachers and senior leaders, and has resulted in wider use of intervention strategies to support Pupil Premium students. In the primary phase, there has been CPD and bespoke support for headteachers to develop suitable strategies at school level.

The Primary NtG project has identified over 20 schools where the 3-yr gap is greater than national, where the 2014 APS Gap was greater than national, and where the APS for disadvantaged pupils was greater than national. This therefore identifies schools where there is relative or absolute underperformance by the disadvantaged pupils. The schools involved range from good to special measures in Ofsted judgements, and the project therefore targets some schools that would otherwise escape the net of support for RI and I categories, and covers the whole of the county. This project has been fully planned, and will begin in September 2015. The specific remit will be to raise performance, narrow the Gap, and ensure that senior leaders are fully aware of issues and solutions.

School leaders and appropriate staff have been offered EAL networks, and EAL training has been delivered across the county – bespoke sessions in schools and in CPD sessions to develop EAL practice. In all sessions, PP county data has been shared and discussed. There has been a focus on closing PP gaps for pupils with EAL, particularly those of Pakistani heritage. Addressing language acquisition gaps supports better progress and attainment of the PP children with EAL.

The Data Dashboard available to SIM/SIA colleagues when working with school leaders has details of the performance of PP groups, and the RAISEonline format also has considerable data on the outcomes of this group. These data sources are central to the detailed conversations held between BLT and individual schools, so that the school leaders are held to account for the relative and absolute performance of individual pupils and groups of pupils. Challenging questions asked about the gaps and high expectations set for both LA MA and HA (highlighting the more able PP). All RI and I schools are held to account via focus meetings – PP being a significant focus to both the BLT and schools.

This work has been widely developed, and has included a number of presentations at the RAY conference, courses for Head Teachers and Pupil Premium Coordinators, CPD and staff meetings in school, and advisory support for senior leaders.

Feedback for this training has been overwhelmingly positive, as evidenced by CPD response forms, and there have been requests from schools represented at these events for BLT support in implementing the strategies advised. As an example of CPD provided, Mind the Gap session was delivered on 17th March.

There will be a Pupil Premium Conference – free, BLT-funded to schools, on 3rd June with a national leader Dr John Dunford speaking. This event is particularly aimed at school leaders.

As a result of support in schools where the Gap has been an issue, there are specific examples of where an emphasis on support for the school has produced results:

Carrington Junior . RI to now good , closed the PP gaps and also took part in PP challenge last year (not this academic year).

Manor Farm Junior - first pupil premium review school outcomes looking good.

Beechview - Adviser did some fab work , mentioned in HMI report as good work re pupil premium.

Lane End Primary - also part of last year's PP challenge and previous a RAY school, high no of PP children.

Key issues

Summarising key points from the Standards Report:

Phonics: Pupil Premium children have improved, but the other children have improved faster in 2014.

Key Stage 1: The Gap has reduced in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, but remains larger than national levels.

Key Stage 2: In terms of achieving L4+, the Gap closed slightly in 2014, but in detail the group with the largest gap are the more able disadvantaged pupils who fail to make 'more than expected progress'.

Key Stage 4: Overall, students were 14% above national levels, but the FSM (Pupil Premium) group was 3% below equivalent groups nationally, leading to a 17% gap. GCSE outcomes dropped sharply for Pupil Premium students in 2014, as they were disproportionately affected by changes in the exam system, and the Gap widened by 7%.

In 2015 this is unlikely to be repeated. The Pupil Premium groups having the widest gaps in progress in secondary schools are those entering with Level 4a+, i.e. the most able of the disadvantaged group.

We therefore see that the Gap first develops at an early stage, but worsens as the pupils move through the school system. Therefore, attention should be focussed at entry into the system (preventative) and also later in the secondary sector (remedial).