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## **Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee**

**Title:** Narrowing the Gap –  
*Narrowing the attainment gap between economically and socially disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Buckinghamshire*

**Committee date:** 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014

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**Report signed off by Cabinet Member:** Mike Appleyard, Education and Skills

**Electoral divisions affected:** All

### **Purpose of Agenda Item**

This Report is for Information and aims to provide an update on the status of the twelve Recommendations as set out in the Narrowing the Gap Report published on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014 by the Select Committee.

### **Background**

The Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee conducted an in-depth Inquiry in Narrowing the Gap in 2013, to investigate the high attainment gap in Buckinghamshire and to develop proposals to the Buckinghamshire County Council, the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and to local schools to help narrow the gap and raise attainment for economically deprived children in Buckinghamshire. This Inquiry was carried out by a Narrowing the Gap Inquiry working party of the Select Committee.

The Select Committee engaged with all schools in Buckinghamshire through the Bucks Association of Head Teachers (BASH) and the Primary Executive Board, as well as through an invitation to submit evidence to the Inquiry through a questionnaire survey on how schools are narrowing the gap.



Members of the Select Committee have visited schools to talk to school leaders and see some of the activities first hand, including visits to the Disraeli School and Children's Centre to Cressex Community School in Buckinghamshire. Members also visited Morpeth School in Tower Hamlets to find out about how they have raised achievement for economically deprived pupils.

### **Summary**

A summary of the Primary Narrowing the Gap Project can be found at Appendix A and a summary of the Secondary Narrowing the Gap project at Appendix B.

The recommendations following the Inquiry were welcomed by the Council's cabinet and serve as a useful reflection and challenge to the local authority and the school community to help towards boosting educational attainment and outcomes for the most deprived children in Buckinghamshire and thereby, narrow the gap. The recommendations in the Report are as follows:

### **Recommendation One: Targeting Economically Disadvantaged Communities**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member ask the Bucks Learning Trust to explore the feasibility of establishing Learning Development Centres to offer targeted learning opportunities for parents and children. These centres should be located in areas accessible to economically disadvantaged families.

*This is a commissioning responsibility which remains with the County Council. We will seek to understand what approach is used at Learning Development Centres to see whether it is already available within the County. We will then consider a local response utilising existing resources*

### **Update**

The Council transferred to the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust the Matrix Centre project in High Wycombe based at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club. The centre focuses on Pupil Premium pupils and provides 6 week interventions based on Numeracy, Literacy and social development activities. The outcomes of the Centre are very positive. Eight hundred students accessed a variety of programmes in 2013-14. 88.3% of Year 6 students who attended the Matrix Centre achieved 2+ levels of progress in reading, 90% in writing and 92.7% in maths.

The Trust are looking into the viability of developing a programme in Aylesbury which will target Pupil Premium pupils in Aylesbury with a similar programme that will link to catch up opportunities for Pupil Premium pupils and their families. 98% of parents said they were pleased with their child's experience with the Matrix Centre. Pupil Premium pupils receive out of school learning opportunities to allow them to access high quality learning support linked closely to needs as identified by the schools. Impact will continue to be measured from each pupils starting point.

## **Recommendation Two: The Early Years Curriculum**

In order to promote the Early Years Curriculum, we recommend that the Council pro-actively supports the implementation of Development Matters, Early Years Outcomes, and the new Early Learning Goals for all Early Years providers in Buckinghamshire

### **Update**

The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust's Early Years Foundation Stage(EYFS) team and workforce development have actively promoted the curriculum and the implementation of the new early learning goals. This has been developed through one to one support for settings and through a wide range of Continuous Professional Development. A focus on early identification in particular with those families with low socio economic status has been a key driver in all the work so far. The Learning Trust have a planned focussed project about to start which aims to work collaboratively with EYFS providers to enhance the quality of support for disadvantaged families.

This work has resulted in improved performance. The percentage of children reaching a good level of development has improved from 55% in 2013 and 64% in 2014.

Buckinghamshire's Statistical neighbour rank, was 5<sup>th</sup> in 2013 and is still 5<sup>th</sup> in 2014. The Authority's National rank was 39<sup>th</sup> in 2013 and 30<sup>th</sup> out of 152 in 2014. The Inequality Gap has closed; it was 32.6% in 2013 but is 28.7% in 2014. The Statistical neighbour rank, was 9<sup>th</sup> in 2013 and is 7<sup>th</sup> in 2014. Buckinghamshire's National rank for this measure was 42<sup>nd</sup> in 2013, but is an improved 30<sup>th</sup> in 2014.

## **Recommendation Three: Children's Centres Review**

We recommend that the planned review of Buckinghamshire Children's Centres focus on a) accessibility and take-up of services by deprived parents and children, b) the location of centres in their role as early intervention hubs, and c) the links between schools and centres.

### **Update**

The Cabinet Member remains committed to Children's Centres and Early Years has a high priority. The review has been completed and the Council is proceeding to tendering for providers of Children's Centres. From September 2014 the following Centres have been developed into Early Years Excellence Hubs and we are monitoring their development and performance

Coldharbour (Aylesbury)

Elmhurst (Aylesbury)

Newtown (Chesham)

Millbrook (High Wycombe)

Terriers (High Wycombe)

## Bowerdean (High Wycombe)

### **Recommendation Four: An Early Years Pupil Premium**

We recommend that the Schools Forum review the Funding Formula with the objective of targeting additional funding at the children of families from the most deprived backgrounds, in order to assist early years providers to achieve the Government's Early Years Outcomes and the 17 Early Learning Goals.

*The Council has protected funding for early years with the support of the Schools Forum. We have recently agreed a cut to the School's budget to offset cuts from central Government. We already fund for deprivation and we will review, with the Schools' Forum, whether a pupil premium approach will be more effective*

### **Update**

The Government consultation on Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and funding for two-year-olds was published on 25 June 2014. It sought views on the extension of the pupil premium into the early years, in order to better support the early education of disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds. It asked questions on the mechanics of extending the premium, including checking eligibility; holding providers accountable for the use of the funding; and examples of good practice in supporting disadvantaged children. It also asked for views on managing the first year of participation funding for the early education entitlement for two-year-olds in 2015-16.

The consultation was positively received and the Early Years Pupil Premium will be implemented nationally

Implementation of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP): In order to ensure that the whole system is ready for the introduction of the EYPP in April 2015, the Government will implement it from January 2015 in a representative group of local authorities. This will give the Government the opportunity to ensure that systems for funding and for checking eligibility are working smoothly ahead of the introduction of the EYPP in April 2015. The Government will produce short guidance for local authorities on how to implement the EYPP later this year.

Early years pupil premium allocations for 2015 to 2016: Buckinghamshire was allocated £221,329 to fund 768 eligible children

### **Recommendation Five: Improving Literacy**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member undertake a review on how to improve the performance of phonics and to consider methods to achieve higher levels of literacy for deprived pupils at early years and primary school levels

*The Council is responsible for overall standards in our schools and is committed to ensuring that we maintain and build on our successes. We consider that phonics should be taught as part of a range of strategies to support literacy within our schools in line with the Rose Review findings. We will not commission a separate review but undertake to report on the strategic conversations the Service Director is holding with a range of schools on literacy (including the teaching of phonics) to develop the future commissioning of the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust in this area.*

### **Update**

The Service Director for Learning, Skills and Prevention has actively sought the views of Head-teachers from a range of schools in regards of the phonics screening. Through this, Headteacher forums and Liaison Groups, schools have given their views on challenges they face and ways of sharing good practise. This information will be used to steer the BLTs Phonics Project.

Our termly data review has highlighted 29 schools who have not met the expected standard in the Year 1 Phonics Check.(74%) by 10% or more. The Local Authority has written to each of these schools informing them that they will be part of a “*Driving Improvement in Phonics Project*” run by the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. Each school will receive funding for the Headteacher and one member of staff to attend ‘*The Road to Success with the Phonics Screening Check*’ in November. Following this they will receive targeted support by BLT Officers who will help create an action plan with clear outcomes.

### **Recommendation Six: The Role of Parents in Education**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member develop a programme to engage and further involve parents in the education of their children, with a particular focus on supporting parents of the most vulnerable children.

*The Cabinet Member is committed to ensuring that the Council supports parents in supporting their vulnerable children in education. Funding is used already to support this work in Buckinghamshire and, therefore, I do not believe we need to develop a new programme.*

### **Recommendation Seven: High Achieving Economically Disadvantaged**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member encourage Buckinghamshire primary schools to provide targeted learning support in order to enable high achieving pupils from deprived background to access grammar schools.

*The Cabinet member is committed to ensuring that high achieving children who are economically disadvantaged perform well in all school settings not just Grammar Schools. The Council has commissioned the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust to pilot targeted learning support for children with high prior attainment to ensure they reach their potential*

### **Update**

The Learning Trust has established a pilot project running through Sir William Borlase Grammar School. The project is working with Primary Schools to identify high achieving Pupil Premium pupils and work with them to ensure they reach their full potential and standards expected for Grammar School entrance. If this project is successful it will be rolled out over the year to cover Aylesbury and High Wycombe

The impact will be monitored over the Year. Key indicators will be progress from starting points. Targeted children will be monitored in Year 6 and the percentage of children achieving above expected levels will be reported.

### **Recommendation Eight: An Analysis and Challenge Toolkit for Schools**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member ask the Bucks Learning Trust to develop guidance and online toolkits for schools on:

- project identification and assessment of educational programmes and interventions targeted at the needs of pupils most in need, and
- an evaluation framework template as a practical tool for assessing the impact of narrowing the gap projects.

*The Cabinet Member supports the use of evidence bases, but does not consider it appropriate to develop new guidance and on-line toolkits and will ask the Learning Trust to enable on-line access to existing tools from the Sutton Trust and other organisations*

#### **Update**

This is available on a Website to support schools and leaders launched at [pupilpremium.learningtrust.net](http://pupilpremium.learningtrust.net) A questionnaire will be sent out in the Autumn term to evaluate how Leaders are using the site. All schools who have participated in focus Narrowing the Gap work are aware and now familiar with the Sutton Trust research.

### **Recommendation Nine: Researching and Evaluating what Works**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member apply to the Education Endowment Foundation for funding to undertake an independent peer review of narrowing the gap projects in Buckinghamshire and that this report be shared for best practice

*We will ask Buckinghamshire Learning Trust to apply for funding*

#### **Update**

This will be applied for in January 2015, once the Secondary project is underway to allow maximum impact.

### **Recommendation Ten: Narrowing the Gap Reports to Governing Bodies**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member ask the Bucks Learning Trust to develop guidance for schools on the roles of governors in developing and implementing narrowing the gap projects, and evaluation of the effects of the Pupil Premium. This should include quarterly/annual reports on these topics to governing body meetings.

### Update

Written guidance for leaders and Governors on effective use of Pupil Premium has been produced and sent to Schools. Governors use this guidance to support their roles in schools. 'Narrowing the Gap' is high profile in all training and is referred to at all Governing Body training events resulting in increased awareness.

### **Recommendation Eleven: Lead Governor for Narrowing the Gap**

In order to raise the profile of narrowing the gap within schools, we recommend that school governing bodies consider appointing a lead governor with special responsibility for narrowing the gap and Pupil Premium.

### Update

Buckinghamshire Governor Services published a list of 'Top ten questions' for leaders. Governors are encouraged to use these questions to support and challenge school leadership. The template of the Head teacher report to governors has been amended to include a section on Pupil Premium. This area is also included as a standing item on all LA governing body agendas. Clerks are directed to minute evidence of impact. The Buckinghamshire data dashboard has been amended to include gap analysis data. This is made available to the Governing Body to support and challenge school leaders further and questions.

### Top 10 Questions to ask about Pupil Premium

1. What is the PP gap in your school? (for En+Ma, Rdg, Wri, Ma?)
2. How does this compare with National? How has this changed over time?  
How are you tracking the changes?
3. Who are the PP pupils in your school? How many? Boys/girls by year group?  
What is the overlap with other groups – EAL, BME, G&T etc?
4. How much PP funding do you get? Can you detail how it is used? Who decides how it will be spent? Is it used to support pupils other than PP?
5. What do you do to encourage parents/carers to claim Free School Meals (even if they don't use the meal)? Do they understand how much money can benefit the school and their child?
6. Does your school website meet the requirements for reporting on Pupil Premium?
7. How are Governors involved in monitoring Pupil Premium?
8. What interventions/actions have you used to narrow the gap? What was their impact? How did you measure it? What is the most effective strategy you have used to reduce the PP gap?
9. Do class teachers know who the PP pupils are in their class? Do teachers have PP targets as part of their performance management? What support do teachers receive in order to address PP gaps?
10. Do you have Pupil Premium pupils who achieve national expectations but who ought to be achieving more highly? What could you / do you do for them?

### **Recommendation Twelve: Narrowing the Gap Training for School Leaders**

We recommend that the Cabinet Member ask the Bucks Learning Trust to enhance training opportunities for school leaders on maximising narrowing the gap projects and Pupil Premium including strategic overview, project identification and budget allocation, mid-term review, and evaluation and assessment.

#### **Update**

All Buckinghamshire Learning Trust CPD courses reference Pupil Premium and identify how best to raise achievement. There is now an increased offer of NtG governor training. This includes training on monitoring the progress of Pupil Premium pupils. Bespoke packages are also offered to Governing Bodies whose schools data suggest that this is an area of priority. Governing Bodies are invited to participate in the Primary and Secondary Narrowing the gap projects. A website to support schools and leaders has been launched at [pupilpremium.learningtrust.net](http://pupilpremium.learningtrust.net)

#### **Resource implications**

NtG projects are funded by a grant given to the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust by the Local Authority.

#### **Next steps**

*To continue work with schools on the Narrowing the Gap Primary and Secondary Projects*

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#### ***Background Papers***

*Narrowing the Gap Report – March 2014*  
[\*BucksNarrowing GapReport FINAL 2014.pdf\*](#)



## Appendix A

### Primary Update

#### Buckinghamshire Premium Challenge a joint project between HMI, Teaching Schools, School Leaders and Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.

#### **‘No Excuses: High Expectations for All.’**

In January 2014 we launched a short time-targeted project to help narrow the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Buckinghamshire Primary schools. The Pilot is to run until July 2014.

#### **Aims:**

- To raise the achievement of our most disadvantaged pupils.
- To create a network of leaders who develop expertise in and enthusiasm for effective practice in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- To draw on best practice and research based interventions to reduce the achievement gap in Buckinghamshire.

#### **School selection**

Schools were invited to be involved; 17 schools were selected based on the following criteria:

- Inclusion on a list held by HMI of the lowest performing 45 schools in Buckinghamshire using the measure of FSM6 reaching Level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics and with more than three pupils in the cohort;
- VA for disadvantaged pupils below 98.5 in 2013;
- Disadvantaged pupils at EYFS, KS1 or KS2 performing significantly below their peers.

The project provides funded support from a named National or Local Leader in Education for four half-day visits. Back up is provided by the Pupil Premium Team and HMI, in addition schools are invited to attend a midway meeting with HMI and a best conference in July.

Many of the schools involved are currently judged to be a good or better schools, this Pilot provides an opportunity to focus on effective ways of improving outcomes for this particular group of pupils. The intention is that lessons learnt will be made available to all Buckinghamshire Primary schools.

Each participating school has made a commitment to:

- Share data with professionals involved with the project;
- Name individual FSM6 pupils to be targeted in every year group to improve their outcomes;
- Professional openness, honesty and generosity;
- Confidentiality;
- Willingness to review and adapt practice for disadvantaged pupils.

#### **Actions taken**

- 12 Local and National Leaders signed up to be involved in the project. They committed to visit a named school for four-half day visits, attend the Launch and Best Practice Conference in July and attend a scheduled follow up meeting for NLEs and LLEs after every school visit.

- Training delivered to NLEs and LLEs. This includes an overview of the project and actions to complete on visit one. Mike Sheridan, Senior HMI and Lead on Narrowing the Gap in the SE attended to speak to the group and support the Pilot.
- Launch for invited schools and NLEs and LLEs. Contribution from the Pupil Premium Team, Mike Sheridan and Chris Raeside HMI and Teaching Schools.
- Representatives from the Pilot invited by HMI to attend a conference in London and show case the work in Buckinghamshire. Sir Michael Wilshaw praises the Buckinghamshire Premium Challenge Project in his key note speech.
- NLEs and LLEs make their first visit to schools and complete the Premium Challenge Booklet and return a copy to the Headteacher and a named Pupil Premium team member.
- NLEs and LLEs meet with the Pupil Premium Team to review progress to date and plan for visit two. It is agreed that visit two will include a sharper focus on tracking, naming FSM6 pupils in each year group to meet at least expected progress (preferably more than expected progress) and evaluating the impact of interventions.
- Pupil Premium Team, evaluated contact notes and followed up individually with NLEs, LLEs and schools.
- Mid-point evaluations to be completed at a briefing meeting. Schools and a governor representative invited to attend 10 -12, NLEs and LLEs to attend 1.30 – 3.30. Session to be led by the Buckinghamshire Pupil Premium Team, Chris Reaside HMI invited to talk to both groups about evidence, tracking, role of governors and best practice.
- EYFS booklet printed and a copy sent to all Primary schools, additional copies made available for down-load on [pupilpremium.learningtrust.net](http://pupilpremium.learningtrust.net).
- Pupil Premium website launched at [pupilpremium.learningtrust.net](http://pupilpremium.learningtrust.net)
- On-line platform launched to share ideas and material for those involved in the Pilot Project.

Feedback to date; all schools have engaged positively in the Pilot project and are eager to improve outcomes.

Schools who participated in the first project closed the gap by 6%

HMCI will include the project in his annual report.

The project is running again with new schools involved.

## Appendix B

### Narrowing the gap in secondary schools update

1. Work commenced academic year 2013-14 with differentiated commitments made to secondary schools regarding the funding and training for PP leadership in schools, for 2014-15 –
  - a. 16 Blue schools (highest need 125-296 PP students) - PP Champions TLR3 @ £1500 per school;
  - b. 19 Green schools ( 20 – 124 PP students) - PP Champions TLR3 @ £1500 per school;
  - c. 11 Yellow schools (<20 PP students) - PP Champions TLR3 @ £1500 per school – **total funding per school £1500**

Total funding committed

**46 PP champions - £69,000**

**The aim of this TLR position is to raise the profile of the pupil premium pupils and ensure one person within the school takes the responsibility of monitoring their progress.**

**The pupil premium champions will also meet 3 x over the year to attend training and impact reporting sessions with the BLT.**

2. All Secondary schools had the opportunity to Bid for school designed projects with potentially £15K available per school for appropriate projects.
  - **19 bids immediately successful** and schools informed funds to be transferred in 3 installments, the first being in September 2014 with further release of funding dependent on attendance at termly progress meetings; This allows the schools with the highest need to design their own specific interventions for PP students.
3. Experienced, urban challenge Headteacher consultants have been engaged to work with 10 (out of total of 16) Blue schools to monitor/support impacts – Kevin Moloney and John Bowers. The highest need schools have been targeted and the external consultants will provide support and challenge.

4. A range of other activities have been proposed – conference and seminars; school improvement school triads; specific interventions with students etc

### Work Plan

- 1 **A steering group combining local Headteachers/senior leaders; BLT consultant(s) and external specialist support.** A group of willing secondary Headteachers have already come together and are willing to support this work – see list above.
  - 2 **TLR3 for Pupil Premium Champion** in each school – some secondary schools have already implemented this element and appointed Pupil Premium Champions in their schools.
  - 3 **Funding the agreed school specific projects @ £15K** and the opportunity for school's not yet with a successful bid to learn from what other schools are doing and to bid to improve an aspect of their provision in school. A second bidding round could be run alongside the proposed progress meetings for schools already underway – both could be designed as development opportunities for schools.
  - 4 **Bespoke support to Blue schools via Consultant Headteachers** who will support and challenge.
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- 1 **Refresh data analysis to allow priority schools identification** – Pupil Premium analysis and agree with Headteachers/BASH steering group the priority schools based on the proportion of PP students in the school, the size of the gap and direction of travel in addressing the gap.
  - 2 For those schools contributing most to the undesirable gap, ringfence a resource to be set against detailed and achievable plans for improvement which create a balance between creating impact through each of addressing QTL in the classroom (e.g. ineffective identification and tracking of progress, or weak subject departments where achievement is low overall) and targeted PP interventions with identified pupil groups. Schools who are succeeding in reducing the gap should also be identified through this analysis and their practice understood, celebrated and shared e.g. Cressex

- 3 **The resource allocated to the development opportunity for collaborative learning-**  
Combining a local programme where these lead teachers form a learning network and are introduced to innovative practice through a series of seminars and visits to successful schools with training bursaries bespoke to the school and individual may be more successful. It would be advisable, however, to profile this group and create either smaller local groups or groups of leaders at similar levels of development. Development activity could then be planned across whole group events (e.g. termly best practice conferences as originally planned) and smaller group work with common interest groups, led by a NLE or similar, focusing on developing actual school practice.
- 4 Proposed targeted student interventions will be provided over the Year.
  - **Inspirational career days for PP students**
  - **Exciting University experiences**
  - **Improved access to well trained learning mentors**