STOKE-ON-TRENT

Addressing Educational Disadvantage in Stoke-on-Trent Schools

2022-2025

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ADDRESSING DISADVANTAGE IN SCHOOLS

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Author: Marc Rowland, Pupil Premium & Vulnerable Pupils Adviser

In collaboration with:

Bart's Training and Support Alliance

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every pupil, irrespective of background or prior experience, should be given every opportunity to attain well. Academic attainment and language mastery open doors and lead to opportunity.

Commitment, expertise and knowledge run through the education system in Stoke-on-Trent. Despite this, efforts to address the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils in the community and their peers nationally have not yet had the desired impact. That is not to say that there have not been individual successes, and some schools and teachers have a notable track record of strong outcomes in a range of contexts. This is illustrated in the exemplifications (Section 9) below. However, there is an inconsistency of outcomes for pupils, despite significant efforts.

To address the impact of disadvantage on learning in Stoke-on-Trent, a more coherent, structured approach to support schools should be put in place. This will help to take a more systematic approach, but this is not about all schools doing the same thing. The context of individual schools and the communities they serve are too diverse. It is vital to avoid treating Stoke-on-Trent as an homogenous community. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils are not an homogenous group. Our approaches need to respond to our communities, pupils and families. This work builds on the excellent work done so far across the DfE Opportunity Area.

Stoke-on-Trent has experienced a number of significant socio-economic challenges compared with any other parts of England. This has impacted on the educational outcomes of pupils, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Covid-19 has exacerbated these challenges. However, we know that schools and teachers working with them really can make a significant difference for all pupils, but particularly those that face significant socio-economic challenges. This approach aims to set out the key principles for schools to adopt when looking to address the impact of disadvantage on learning.

This approach looks to take a more systematic approach to addressing disadvantage. Everyone is responsible. Everyone needs to work in partnership. The systematic approach is important. Despite significant efforts, and owing to a range of factors (some of which could not have been preconceived), the entrenched underachievement of disadvantaged pupils has not yet been successfully addressed system-wide in Stoke on Trent. Schools matter to all pupils. But they particularly matter to disadvantaged pupils in Stoke-on-Trent. We will not address educational disadvantage through short-term interventions, but by focusing on inclusive excellence every single lesson, every single day. The report concludes that, whilst additional interventions and interesting innovation are attractive, the keys to success are sustaining effective school leadership teams and high-quality teachers in every classroom, in every school, underpinned by strong pastoral provision. This is an ambitious goal. But it is possible.

This report deliberately focuses on the controllable factors in schools, and not on the roles of organisations outside of the direct influence of schools. That includes some ground-breaking work from the Port Vale Foundation and the Hubb Foundation and their work in the information curriculum / enrichment. This report does not aim to solve all of the educational challenges in Stoke-on-Trent. But it does look to provide a framework for pupils to thrive in the classroom and in wider school life.

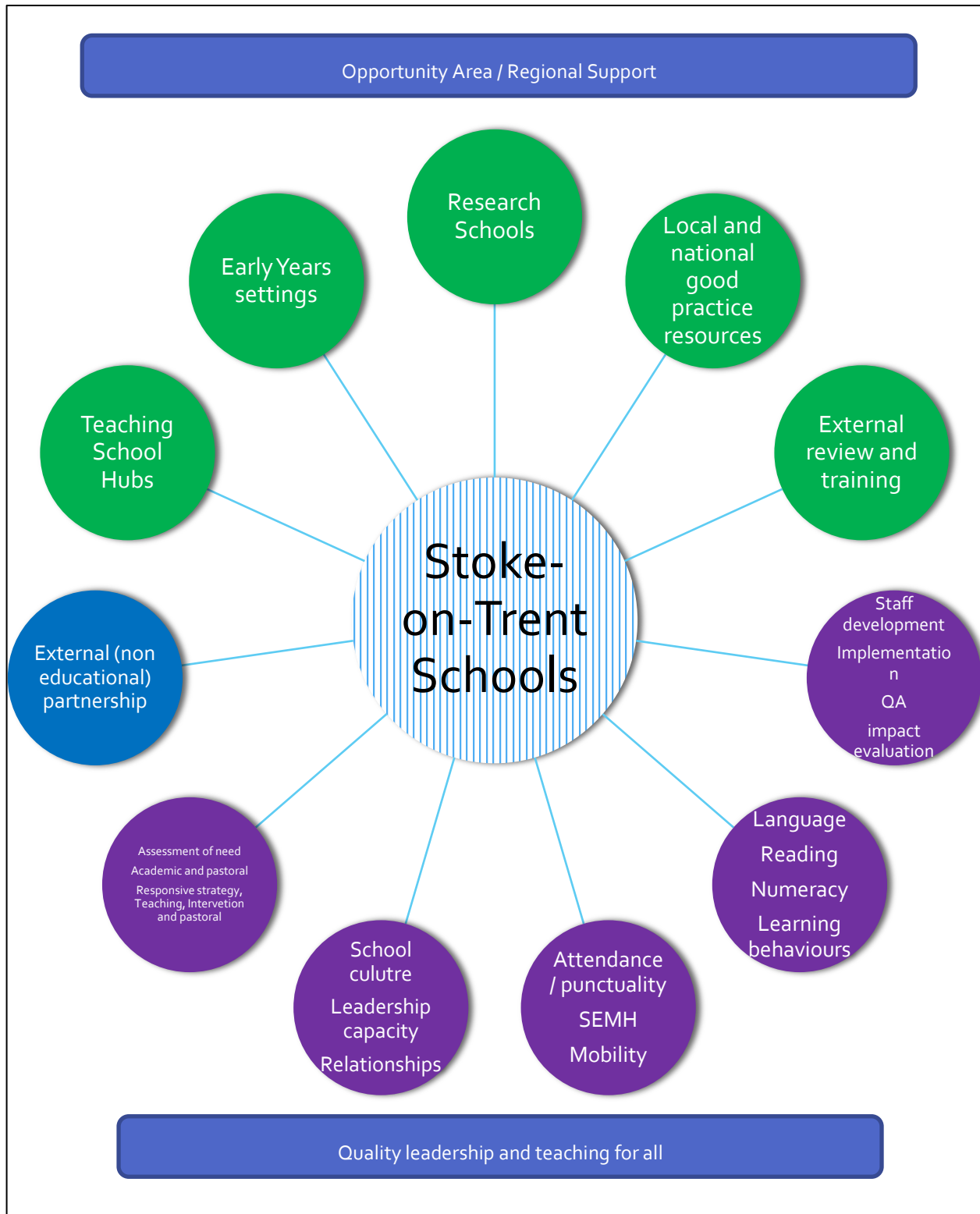## 2. RAISING THE ATTAINMENT OF DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

Figure 1 - Raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

3.   PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND EXPERTISE

Stoke-on-Trent schools cannot solve the impact of disadvantage alone, despite their strengths. This relates to both wider social challenges, and the need to draw on external expertise on the key challenges impacting on learning in the classroom. Schools should:

- Work effectively with external expert partners to address non-educational challenges such as policy and social services.

- Work effectively with external expert partners to address significant challenges such as speech and language.

- Work effectively with external partners to address significant pastoral issues, such as breakfast providers and counselling.

- Work with national expert partners to address key issues in the classroom, for example support on language acquisition and development, foundations for numeracy and improving reading.

PASTORAL CARE

An example of high quality, scalable pastoral support which enables pupils to thrive in the classroom is the 'Cloud 9' provision at the Willows Primary School.

The Cloud 9 provision is underpinned by expert, high quality staff, inclusive values, a principle of support for all families, whatever their circumstances and the ambition to enable all pupils to thrive in school. Staff do not see themselves as doing anything 'extra'. They are professional. The standout element of the provision is that it does not look to 'fix' pupils or families. Rather, it recognises pastoral care as something that is the schools' responsibility to meet pupil need.

Cloud 9 includes a range of support for pupils social, emotional and physical wellbeing – through structured interventions, informal support and ensuring pupils are thriving in class.

Support is responsive to need – it can involve help for pupils with low self-esteem, bereavement, emotional self-regulation, young carers and more. But it is a pupil-led approach, not a label-led approach.

More information can be found here: http://www.willowsprimary.com/index.php/cloud-9/#

The provision is not an optional extra – it is an essential ingredient that supports learning.

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4. BUILDING ON PRIOR WORK

This approach looks to build on prior work, particularly the work to build expertise and understanding of effective use of Pupil Premium through Pupil Premium review.

It is vital that any recommendations support:

- More effective processes and practices, not additional work
- Additional capacity and expertise
- Signposting to high-quality partnerships.
- Identification of Stoke-on-Trent based expertise at school and classroom level.

Whilst this approach recognises their importance, it does not look to make recommendations about work with specific non-educational external agencies.

5. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND EXPERTISE – AND INTO THE CLASSROOM

The structures and systems we put in place at a strategic level provide the environments for teachers and pupils to thrive together in the classroom. It is in the classroom where we address educational disadvantage. That's where we have the greatest level of influence.

The most effective strategies should focus on:

- Having the highest of expectations of all pupils, irrespective of background. It is important to remember that disadvantaged pupils do not lack talent or ability, but can lack opportunity. Prior attainment and labels should not set limits on our ambitions for Stoke-on-Trent pupils.

- Developing and maintaining a culture of collective responsibility for disadvantaged pupils, including within governance, senior leadership, subject leadership, phase leadership, the classroom and pastoral care.

- Assessment, not assumptions, of disadvantaged pupils. Assessment should be the root of strategies.

- Addressing the controllable factors that are preventing disadvantaged pupils from attaining as well as they can.

- A learning-led approach, not a label-led approach. Pupils are not at risk of underachievement because they are 'Pupil Premium' or any other label, but because of the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on their learning over time. This is a long-term process, not an event.

- Providing a culture of *early intervention* for addressing need, using an evidence-informed, tiered model of teaching and learning, academic intervention and wider approaches. 'Teachers were consistent in their views that... almost all [disadvantaged] pupils struggling with mathematics in KS4 had gaps in learning which can probably be traced back to early numeracy difficulties'

- Strategies to address disadvantage stand or fall on how well pupils learn to read.

- Developing language, communication and social interaction. These should be the heart of an effective approach. If pupils struggle to read at home, how well we do this in school matters more than ever.

- Growing stronger relationships to learning through focus on developing and embedding metacognition and self-regulation for pupils within practice – improving pupils as learners.

- Avoiding 'over intervention' and recognising the importance of curriculum equity. A narrow curriculum risks double disadvantage and results in the *Matthew effect* [1] in action.

- Teacher voice - agency in developing a school strategy is vital.

- Giving teachers and support staff the capacity, knowledge, expertise and support disadvantaged pupils to experience success in challenging learning over time. Addressing disadvantage is not about big, one-off interventions. Every interaction matters, the quality of what we do is critical.

- Developing the effectiveness of teaching. The learning outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, particularly those that are lower attainers, correlates closely with the effectiveness of teaching. Pupils who find learning more difficult in the classroom need the most effective teaching.

- Avoiding presumption: presumption of language, presumption of learning behaviours, presumption of background knowledge. This is about the everyday experiences of pupils, day in-day out, *in* school; how well they are included, how well they feel they belong in Stoke-on-Trent classrooms. Carefully choosing the language that is being taught is fundamental. Conversation is more important than word exposure when developing language and literacy, and enables pupils to have multiple, meaningful interactions with language.

- Avoiding trying to do too many things at once and trying to solve all of societies' problems. There should be a strong focus on implementation. A school disadvantage strategy should be the wider school improvement strategy through the lens of disadvantaged pupils and families. Carefully consider the need for strategic abandonment and de-implementation.

- Efficacy: Think carefully about 'implementation pinch points' and the gaps between our intent and reality in the classroom. Particularly in relation to:

    - Use of diagnostic assessment
    - Feedback
    - Deployment of TAs
    - Teaching of oral language and vocabulary
    - Teaching of reading
    - Transitions between interventions and the classroom.

- A clear process and impact evaluation framework, not linked to accountability. It is vital that we are not trying to prove that things are successful, but rather that we are trying to understand whether it is working / has worked and why.

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[1] Beware of the Matthew Effect in our schools! | Unity Research School

- Measurable outcomes that can be monitored using the evaluation frameworks that should be put in place at the start of a school strategy.

- Prioritise the day-to-day experiences of disadvantaged pupils in all aspects of school life over operational compliance.

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

At St Peter's Catholic Academy, the leadership team and staff are passionate to see that the Pupil Premium funding is used to ensure opportunities to allow all children to succeed, no matter what their background and experiences, to enhance their life chances. Through the development of a language programme, children will have the opportunity to be exposed to a language-rich environment. Language will be explicitly taught across the curriculum, further developing reading, writing and enhancing cultural capital for children experiencing disadvantage.

At the academy, training and research is carried out to address difficulties in pupils' metacognition and self-regulation. The objective is to equip children with the right skills and knowledge for them to take more ownership of the way they learn, and become more independent learners. Through metacognition, the children will develop resilience and the skills to tackle challenges in all curriculum areas.

- St Peter's Catholic Academy

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6.   SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEM-WIDE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE (RECOMMENDATIONS)

- Evidence Leads in Education (ELEs) should be developed and deployed to work with schools across the authority on key issues.

- Work with the local research school (and wider Research School Network), teaching school, and curriculum and behaviour hubs to access expert support and training – including reformed NPQs and targeted support for early career teachers through the early career framework.

- Every school in Stoke-on-Trent should undertake an external peer review of their own school disadvantage strategy to a common framework, centred around dispassionate evaluation of their current strategy. This should work outside of individual Multi Academy Trusts (MATs are key to success, but reviews should not be internal).

- All Stoke-on-Trent primary, secondary and specialist provision should participate in an online professional learning programme about the most effective approaches to addressing disadvantage. Those involved in system development and leadership should engage with this programme.

- Provide support and expertise on the key issues that are most impacting on disadvantaged pupils' academic attainment. These are set out in the table below. It is not an exhaustive list, and should be

subject to further consultation with stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils.

- Work with external partners such as ImpactED to develop an approach to effective impact evaluation.

7. KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Issue	Strand
High quality leadership and inclusive teaching in every school	
Language acquisition	Teaching and learning / academic intervention
Language development	Teaching and learning / academic intervention
Reading: Fluency & comprehension	Teaching and learning / academic intervention
Foundations for numeracy	Teaching and learning / academic intervention
Curriculum design	Leadership
Curriculum enactment	Leadership
Disadvantage strategy design, implementation and evaluation	Leadership
Learning behaviours	Teaching and learning
Quality assurance	Leadership
Attendance and punctuality	Teaching and learning/academic intervention/Wider
Supporting highly mobile learners	Teaching and learning/academic intervention/Wider
Social and emotional wellbeing	Wider Approaches
Informal Curriculum / break times	Wider Approaches
Effective implementation	Leadership
Staff development	Leadership
Effective evaluation	Leadership

ST THOMAS MORE SCHOOL

Underpinning our disadvantaged strategy is a change in culture - a shift to a collective responsibility by every adult in our school, to ensure that every child achieves success, in whatever form that looks like for that individual. Pupil Premium Champions in every department are passionate about driving the success of disadvantaged students through high quality teaching and learning, innovative interventions and robust evaluation.

We have developed a three-year strategy with the development of teaching and learning for all at its heart, as well as the careful implementation of a few key interventions. We have taken the approach that strategic priorities for disadvantaged students should be small in number but implemented to a very high standard- if there are too many strategic priorities, they just become a list of jobs to do!

- St Thomas More School

ST NATHANIEL'S ACADEMY

"Our intention is that all pupils, irrespective of their starting points and backgrounds make good progress and achieve high attainment levels in all subjects. Our approach is responsive to common challenges as well as individual needs. To ensure our approaches are effective, we communicate our pupil premium strategy with all stakeholders, ensuring all staff take responsibility for the progress and attainment for disadvantaged pupils."

- St Nathaniel's Academy, Stoke

8.   FINAL PRINCIPLES: THE NEW STOKE-ON-TRENT APPROACH WILL…

- Build on what's gone previously. The expertise in the city is strong. But it needs to translate into outcomes. There are not lists of new activities in this approach, rather an approach of revisit, refine and improve, sharply focused on the needs of pupils.

- Reflect the realities of the challenges that pupils, teachers and schools experience in Stoke-on-Trent.

- Have a sharp focus on dispassionate quality assurance and evaluation through strategic planning, good governance, external review and training.

- Recognise that strong pastoral care is necessary, but not sufficient for strong academic outcomes.

- Require resource and expertise to address the challenge of scaling up the exceptional work that already takes place with families and communities across the Stoke-on-Trent community. Existing examples of exceptional work with communities include the initiatives with Port Vale Foundation, Hubb Foundation and Farm Fresh Food Revolution. Family initiatives include Cloud 9 at Willows Primary School.

- Draw on external expertise for evidence-based support for classrooms, academic intervention and wider approaches. A commitment to evidence is vital. Engagement with research evidence is an ongoing process, not a one-off event.

- Require the recognition that strong systems and structures are vital to enabling relationships to thrive. This is exemplified within the case studies below.

- Recognise that whilst effective Early Years provision is vital, this approach reflects an urgency to support all pupils in all year groups. This approach will support the needs of disadvantaged pupils from EYFS to KS5.

- Identify and draw on excellent local practice and expertise.

- Require the development of a resource bank of local expertise – at school, classroom and issue level - for teachers and leaders to draw on.

- Require commitment from schools to be outward facing, engaging with external partners such as hubs, the EEF's Research School Network and other credible, evidence-informed organisations.

- Recognise that academic attainment opens doors to opportunity. Attainment is more important for disadvantaged pupils. It creates life chances and life choices. Disadvantaged pupils do not lack talent or ability, but sometimes lack opportunity.

- Focus on strategies that prioritise access to high-quality, well-trained teachers and a rigorous, challenging curriculum. Prioritising access to the curriculum for all is key; ensuring pupils are included in, and experience success in, challenging learning.

- Recognise that, nationally, disadvantaged pupils are less likely to attend extracurricular activities compared to their peers. Disadvantaged pupils get short break times too. This limits social interaction, relationships

and personal development. Stoke-on-Trent could be a driver in reversing this gap and providing an approach to the informal curriculum where all pupils, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, are thriving. There is some exceptionally high-quality community support adding capacity, social opportunities and expertise – such as the Port Vale Foundation and Hubb Foundation.

- Implement an evidence-informed, targeted, relational approach, which is key to addressing the attendance gap. This is best exemplified in the work of the Blackpool Research School: 'absences matter and how you can help': https://leadinglearner.me/2017/07/02/absences-matter-and-you-can-help/. It's all about partnership.

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

- Research evidence suggests that extrinsic rewards to improve attendance have little impact, and may have the opposite of the desired effect.

- Relational approaches tend to be more effective.

- Understanding the factor-categories that drive poor attendance is key (physical health, mental health, systemic / attitudinal and school behaviour related)

- Giving parents accurate information about how *their* child is attending compared to *their* peers can impact on behaviour

- Creating a shared agency for attendance, in parent-friendly language is important.

- Children thriving in the classroom and experiencing success in learning matters.

- Incidental, informal conversations with all families matter.

- Adaptability to ensure families feel valued and welcomed is vital: 'I have learnt that I need to be a chameleon... so to ensure that I'm making families feel comfortable and welcome. That is my job' (headteacher)

- Improved attendance is a whole-school responsibility.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

https://attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Teaching-Attendance2.0-Summary_final.pdf

https://www.edutopia.org/article/extrinsic-motivation-it-might-be-even-worse-you-thought

https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Behaviour%20Change%20-%20School%20attendance%2C%20exclusion%20and%20persistent%20absence%20%282017%29.pdf

https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/what-research-tells-us-about-fixing-attendance

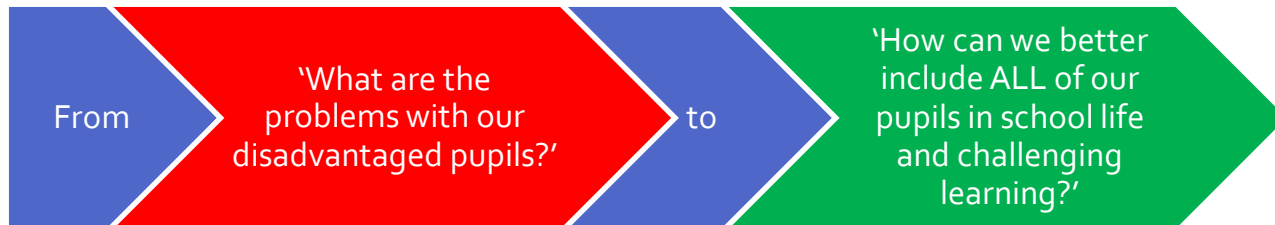https://leadinglearner.me/2017/07/02/absences-matter-and-you-can-help/

IN CONCLUSION:

- Improve pupils as learners.
- High expectations are fundamental
- Assessment not assumptions
- Learning-led, not label-led approaches
- Intervene early, consider trade-offs
- Secure a collective responsibility
- Avoid bias
- Consistency and quality of relationships matter. Classroom interactions are key
- Address the language gap
- Reading is key to success
- Avoid a deficit discourse around disadvantage. Issues may not always lie with pupils and families. Key to success is a commitment to ensuring all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are thriving in all
- Give teachers the support, knowledge and skills to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils
- See school life through the lens of disadvantaged pupils
- Decouple evaluation from accountability. Evaluate, don't prove
- Dispassionately and sceptically quality assure and support to ensure the very best for pupils.

9. EXEMPLIFY

Removing the deficit discourse about disadvantaged pupils:

From → 'What are the problems with our disadvantaged pupils?' to → 'How can we better include ALL of our pupils in school life and challenging learning?'

EXEMPLIFICATIONS

ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY

St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy has 1099 pupils on roll. 26.3% of pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds, very close to the national average.

The academy has developed a high-quality, evidence-informed strategy for addressing disadvantage. The three-year, tiered approach focuses primarily on ensuring all pupils are able to participate in challenging learning across the curriculum. It centres on providing systems, structures, capacity and support to enable teachers to include pupils in challenging learning.

There is a culture of early intervention to address the key challenges pupils face. The school frames efforts to address disadvantage in the possible. There is no deficit discourse around disadvantage, despite challenges within the community. This is an inclusive school – through a commitment to including all pupils in challenging learning.

Their approaches challenge the narrative that socio-economic disadvantage must prevent pupils from attaining well in geographical areas that face significant challenges, such as Stoke-on-Trent. It is a model of good practice locally.

Staff speak with one voice, led by a reflective, outward facing headteacher and disadvantage lead that are restless for pupils for all backgrounds to attain well. When asked, how best we address disadvantage, all staff responded by talking about improving teaching and learning across the curriculum, rather than focusing on issues beyond teachers' control.

The tiered approach adopted by the school sits within a broader framework of systems and procedures that provide structure, consistency and rigour so that all pupils, irrespective of background, can participate in, and experience, success in challenging learning across the curriculum. This includes giving staff the expertise and knowledge to enable this to happen. It mirrors the school's wider, ongoing priorities.

Teachers and pupils are able to articulate clearly how behaviour, learning and expectations have significantly improved. This is a place where disadvantaged pupils are increasingly thriving. Teachers are able to clearly articulate their own roles within it. Staff modelled high expectations for all in discussion and in the classroom. They are rightly positive and proud of the work they are doing.

Pupils and teachers say that expectations, behaviour, learning behaviours, relationships and belonging have improved.

The school's approach centres on developing the reading skills of disadvantaged pupils through the teaching and learning, and academic intervention strands. Disciplinary reading and evidence-based vocabulary instruction in the classroom is supported by more direct, structured reading interventions.

The approach addresses the impact of disadvantage on learning, and works to improve pupils as learners. The focus on reading is everyone's responsibility. It aims ensure pupils can access the broad and demanding curriculum.

BELGRAVE ST BARTHOLOMEW'S ACADEMY

Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy has 503 pupils on roll. Approximately 23% of pupils are eligible for the Pupil Premium, in line with the national average. 70% of pupils speak English as an additional language, well above the national average (21.2%).

Belgrave St Bartholomew's Academy is a model of good practice for improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils attain well. All staff across the school community feel a strong ownership and responsibility for disadvantaged pupils, rooted in knowledge, expertise and commitment.

The approach adopted by the school centres on the following themes:

- Language acquisition / language development across the curriculum
- Building memorable life experiences
- Improving attendance
- Building family engagement

These themes all centre around improving pupils as learners, through participation and experiences of success in the classroom. Robust assessment of need, and the development of teachers and support staff to meet that need, underpin the approach.

School leaders understand the school community. They tell a powerful story of how they have developed a cohesive school community through shared values. The school is founded on community cohesion.

School leaders speak about how they want families to feel like school is 'on their side'. This is delicately balanced by leaders' ambitions to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve through broader vistas and high expectations.

The school has an inclusive, pupil-informed, community-informed disadvantage strategy, not a label-led strategy. Everyone takes responsibility and ownership. Staff development focuses sharply on the needs of learners.

Leaders and teachers are aware of the importance of balancing the need for academic intervention and 'curriculum equity', and the unintended consequences of withdrawing pupils from lessons too frequently (the curriculum can, in part, mitigate for a lack of enrichment beyond school). A 'planning for all' approach by teachers supports this.

Leaders are outward facing in their approach, learning from research about vocabulary learning from the Research School Network. The vocabulary learning is part of a wider culture about not making assumptions about pupils' language or experiences outside of school.

Similarly, pastoral support, such as frequent welfare calls, are seen as supportive and partnership building – enabling staff to be responsive to need.

The school's successful approach to addressing disadvantage and promoting inclusion is founded on strong relationships. Building relationships is not a soft option. This is best evidenced by the engagement with the community over RSE – through a process of consultation, communication and flexibility, a shared knowledge and understanding has been developed within a relentless focus on children's needs. This has also enhanced a culture of trust between school and community over a potentially divisive issue.

Staff across the school are confident in their understanding of relationships and language development: 'things get better as we get to know the children better'. But their restlessness to improve is evident in staff members' reflections: 'We could be better at teaching vocabulary in subjects where we are less confident… and we need to ensure that [pupils] have meaningful interactions with language.'

Teachers recognise that the macro issue of the attainment gap is addressed through the micro interactions that take place in the classroom. They are constantly reflective. For example, looking to ensure that reading options are reflective of the school community helps to create a sense of belonging.

When discussing the most effective approaches for addressing disadvantage, all staff spoke about their roles and responsibilities, rather than focusing on external factors or family issues. Teachers hold all families, irrespective of background, in high regard. This is testament to the culture embedded in the school.

10. DFE REQUIREMENTS

Our strategy should support schools in meeting DfE requirements for Pupil Premium Fund planning and reporting. It is important to recognise workload demands, not add to them. It should create cohesion and support. Again, the most effective strategic approaches recognise that:

- Underachievement, as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, is a process and not an event. It's a process that, in some cases, can start before birth
- All pupils, irrespective of their background, need to feel included in school life
- The best bets for tackling educational disadvantage focus on improving the pupil as a learner
- We need to become experts in the children that we are teaching
- We need to see life in our school through the lens of a disadvantaged pupil

This section provides some key pointers for individual schools when creating, publishing and sharing their Pupil Premium strategy. This will help individual schools with planning, implementing and evaluating, but also for the long-term quality assurance of this work.

SET OUT A STATEMENT OF INTENT

The statement of intent is an opportunity for schools to tell their story, beyond simplistic data. The key questions to be considered and included are listed below. This is about explaining to both internal and external stakeholders about schools' ambitions, how they aim to achieve them and what are our underpinning values and principles. The 'intent' is something that all school staff should understand at a strategic level, and what their individual roles are making a reality.

SET OUT CHALLENGES

The change from 'barriers' to challenges is important. It is beyond semantics. It is important to avoid always framing disadvantage as a deficit model. As stated above, it is vital that assessment, not assumption drives approaches.

Poorly identified challenges lead to poorly identified activity, leading to weaker outcomes for pupils and sometimes an initiative fatigue around addressing disadvantage. It leads to the 'supermarket sweep' approach to disadvantage; grabbing intervention for Y6 / Y11. Early intervention focused on need enables pupils to thrive in school.

Look to be as precise as possible. Centre in on the key aspects that are preventing disadvantaged pupils from attaining as well as they might. Academic and pastoral issues should include developing pupils' language, which is often at the heart of an effective strategy.

> *'Many of our pupils eligible for Pupil Premium have additional vulnerabilities (e.g. SEND)'*.
>
> Whilst these may be a characteristic of pupils at risk of underachievement, it is important to unpick the *actual issues* that are most preventing disadvantaged pupils from attaining well. Pupils are not at risk of underachievement because they are SEND – rather, there needs to be careful consideration how additional needs are impacting on learning e.g. autism and anxiety / language.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

Intended outcomes are determined before activities. Experience suggests the level of resource and expertise needed to address disadvantage is often underestimated, especially when schools don't clearly define intended outcomes. Also, well-defined outcomes are key to good impact evaluation. The intended outcomes should closely link to the challenges pupils face. Be mindful of success criteria that are actually activities.

ACTIVITY IN THIS ACADEMIC YEAR

The activity section uses the EEF's tiered model of teaching and learning, academic intervention and wider approaches. The teaching and learning section should avoid jargon such as 'quality-first teaching'. Our disadvantage strategies should centre on building teacher expertise in addressing pupil need to ensure all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are thriving in the classroom, irrespective of starting points. This is at the heart of an effective long-term approach.

Schools should link activities with challenges and ensure that activity is informed by evidence that it may be effective. It should align with the school's wider development plans.

It is important to remember that research evidence can only point us in the right direction. Evidence should be used to inform our decision making, not justify it. Evidence supplements expertise. It does not supplant it. Evidence provides best bets, at best. It can be used to understand what has worked and under what conditions to support intelligent implementation and appropriate adaption where necessary so that approaches shown to have evidence of promise can be contextualised.

The evidence we can use goes beyond the EEF toolkit and may include small, in-school experiments as well as meta-analysis and random control trials (RCTs).

Activity should centre in on controllable issues that are most impacting on pupils' attainment. In our work, this centred around the following issues:

- Language acquisition
- Language development
- Reading - from learning to read to disciplinary reading
- Learning behaviours
- Foundations for numeracy
- Building partnerships

Activity should also centre on the system-wide capacity, expertise and support, alongside teaching and leadership capacity and expertise to address these issues. The Devon "Right to Read' model might be useful here as an example.

REVIEW OF OUTCOMES IN PREVIOUS YEARS

PUPIL PREMIUM STRATEGY OUTCOMES

This section should detail the impact that our pupil premium activity had on pupils in the previous academic year.

We must reflect on the effectiveness of our ongoing strategies. Do not attempt to prove that strategies have worked, rather whether or not they have worked. We might adjust and change approaches based on ongoing evaluation and it is essential to understand what has worked and why and what hasn't worked and why to effect effective culture and system change. This is fundamental to better long-term outcomes for pupils.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This final section links to the initial intent statement. It looks to help school leaders to articulate how their strategies are evolving, adapting and changing over time. Anyone who visits a school to learn about their Pupil Premium strategy will see a 'still from a reel of film'. This section helps to add to that. Again, to tell the story of the school and its evolving approach to disadvantage is important, as our knowledge about how best to do this improves all the time.

Historically, label-led / accountability-led approaches were common. The most exciting change for our disadvantaged pupils, and those that work with those pupils, is that schools are focusing more keenly on the controllable factors impacting on learning. This is key to success.

11. METHODOLOGY

- Visits to 24 primary and secondary schools
- Consultation meetings with governors
- Online input to school leaders
- Evidence reviews
- Website analysis
- Review of prior activities focused on addressing disadvantage

12. LIMITATIONS

The findings of this report have to be seen in light of some limitations. The first is the size and the breadth of the sample of 24 pilot schools, and the lack of representation from the specialist and AP sectors. However, the report is informed by much more extensive work in Stoke-on-Trent, and nationally in all sectors. It is also informed by national and international research evidence.

The second limitation is the timeframe and resources available for the work (though, again, it builds on 10 years of focus on this agenda). It is also subject to biases of opinion from the author, based on prior experiences. As a result, it should be interpreted with caution and these limitations should be borne in mind.

13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Alexandra Infants' School
- Belgrave St Bartholomew's Primary Academy
- Carmountside Primary Academy
- Etruscan Primary School
- Kingsland C.E. Academy
- Milton Primary Academy
- Our Lady & St Benedict's Catholic Academy
- Packmoor Ormiston Academy
- Parkhall Academy
- St George & St Martin's Catholic Academy
- Hanley St Luke's C of E Aided Primary School
- St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy
- St Mark's CofE Aided Primary School
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School
- St Nathaniel's Academy
- St Peter's CofE Academy
- St Peter's Catholic Primary School
- St Thomas More Catholic Academy
- St Wilfrid's Catholic Academy
- Stoke Minster C of E Primary Academy
- The Willows Primary School
- Weston Federation, Weston Coyney

> *"Every decision made places the children at the very heart. We endeavour to ensure our children leave us with a wealth of experiences. We have worked hard to develop a culture where all stakeholders feel valued.*
>
> *Every member of our St Mark's family matters. Our children and staff are proud of being part of the St Mark's family. When someone feels valued, they achieve more than they ever thought possible."*
>
> **- St Mark's CE Primary School**

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