

Brighton & Hove City Council – Education and Inclusion

Closing the Gap in Educational Achievement for Vulnerable Groups in the City

1. Introduction

This strategy outlines Brighton & Hove's vision, priorities and expectations in relation to closing the gap in educational achievement for vulnerable children and young people in the city. It builds upon the success of schools in raising attainment and progress and is ambitious for the future. We are beginning to see closing of the gap as the strategy elements are put in place.

Closing the Gap in educational achievement is a moral imperative. We believe that through educational success, vulnerable children and young people will maximise their life chances and secure their future economic well being. We are committed to partnership working and believe that everyone has a part to play in addressing this most serious issue.

2. Where does this strategy fit in? Links to the Corporate Plan

This strategy links to the theme of Tackling Inequality in the City Corporate Plan 2011-2015.

'We want to make sure that all of our children and young people have the best possible start in life, so that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, whatever that might be, and to be happy, healthy and safe'. This means making sure that all children and young people in the city have access to high quality education that will provide them with the knowledge and skills to secure employment and be active and responsible citizens. We will focus on raising overall attainment and narrowing the gap between the lowest and highest performing pupils.'

Brighton and Hove Corporate Plan 2011-2015

Closing the achievement gap between vulnerable groups of children and young people in the City and their peers is a priority in a range of strategies and policies including the Special Education Needs Partnership Strategy, School Improvement Strategy Early Help Strategy. This strategy outlines a consistent, city wide approach that we will take to 'closing the gap'

3. Vision for Education

Our vision was devised by the Learning Partnership with contributions from learning organisations across the city. It is shared by all and interpreted by each phase and school to meet the needs of the learners. It underpins everything we do.

A 21st Century Vision for Learning in Brighton & Hove

Our provision will ensure a coherent and inclusive experience that makes learning personalised, irresistible, engaging and enjoyable. To maximise the potential of every learner, each must thrive from relevant, motivating and exciting experiences that draw upon the uniqueness of our vibrant city by the sea.

We will encourage all to become confident, flexible, resilient and capable life-long learners and critical and reflective thinkers, empowered with essential knowledge, life skills, dispositions and technological capability necessary to participate as responsible citizens in the 21st century.

4. Rationale for ‘Closing the Gap’

Each year the Standards and Achievement Team carries out an extensive data analysis and examines the performance of the different groups of pupils in the City. The data analysis shows that the most significant gaps in performance are those between the performance of children and young people eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and their more advantaged peers, between those children and young people identified as having special educational needs or disability (SEND) and their peers and for Children in Care (CiC). These gaps widen as the young people move through our school system. The impact of large numbers of pupils, particularly pupils with FSM not achieving 5 GCSE's A* to C with English and Maths at the end of Key Stage 4, not only has implications for the economy of the city, but also has an impact on the quality of opportunity for young people in the city. However, there are overlaps in these groups, in 2013 11% of children in the city were both in receipt of FSM and identified as having special educational needs. 31% of pupils with SEN were also in receipt of FSM and 47% of pupils registered for FSM were also identified as having SEN.

5. Partnership working and the role of the LA

Brighton and Hove is committed to working in partnership to ‘Close the Gap’ in educational achievement for vulnerable groups.

Although schools are being given increased levels of autonomy, it is still the responsibility of the LA to ensure that there is robust self evaluation by the management of the school, particularly in relation to pupil progress. A key task for this LA is to further develop its work to ensure schools are effectively addressing the needs of their vulnerable groups of pupils, and that good progress is made towards ‘Closing the Gap’ in educational achievement in all schools. We would want to support schools to find their own solutions that will work effectively in the different contexts of the schools.

The Ofsted Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, has recently made it clear that Local Authorities still retain a direct responsibility for the standards achieved in all of the schools in their area, including academies; this responsibility is particularly in relation to the progress made by vulnerable groups. He also told Headteachers, that increasing attention will be given, during the course of school inspections, to the impact schools are making through the use of the Pupil Premium on the issue of ‘Closing the Gap’ for the disadvantaged. It has also been indicated by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) that there will be an increasing focus on this issue, not just at a school level, but when considering the relative performance of local authorities in addressing the issue of the progress of disadvantaged pupils in their area.

In its role as champion of children and families, the LA can facilitate, broker and commission support. We have a small intervention team with a focus on closing the achievement gap and they offer support and challenge for schools in this area.

6. The Provision of Pupil Premium and SEN funding

Pupil Premium is intended to assist schools with addressing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers; for the purposes of identification, disadvantage is identified with registration for Free School Meals (FSM). Although an imprecise indicator, FSM registration remains the most accessible way to identify disadvantage in schools.

From April 2013 the premium stands at £900 for each FSM pupil, registered during the last six school years, and this is likely to rise to, at least, £1000 by the final year of this parliament. Additionally, there is funding available of £500 for each FSM pupil to support Year 6/7 Summer School Transition Programmes, and a further £500 'catch-up' payment, paid for Year 7 pupils who did not achieve Level 4 at the end of the Primary phase; this produces a potential £1900 for each underachieving FSM pupil at the key point of the Primary / Secondary school transition.

Through the formula the LA has delegated directly into school budgets a notional amount to support children with SEN. In 2013 / 14 this was £12.7m across mainstream schools and academies. In addition there is 'top up' funding for pupils with high needs and in 2013 / 14 this in the region of £2.04m (adjustable over the year), giving an overall total approaching £15m.

7. Best Practice: What makes the difference?

Where schools have been most effective in raising the progress of vulnerable pupils, and have closed the gap, there are factors which are frequently observed:

- the deliberate and systematic involvement of pupils, at all stages, with taking responsibility for their own progress and learning;
- appropriate management structures, quality assurance and data collection;
- First Quality Teaching in the classroom, setting intervention into a context in which the progress secured can be developed and sustained;
- effective leadership on the issue of intervention from the school's senior management team;
- the identification of strategies that are right for the particular setting and needs of the pupils - all of the selected interventions being subject to a rigorous process of cost/benefit analysis;
- the careful selection, training and support of intervention staff, recognising that intervention requires a different range of skills to that of class teaching;
- integration of intervention staff into the work of the whole school - particularly that of the class/subject teacher;
- suitable assessment processes that fully and adequately inform intervention, enabling progress to be monitored across a range of learning need.

We have also seen the gap narrow in a number of schools across the city. Discussion with leaders of those schools also identified the following key points

What do schools think makes the difference?
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'We have high expectations from the top down and the bottom up'

'We make sure we do it well for every child – and there are no excuses'

'We make sure that teachers are aware of their responsibility and accountability for every pupil '

'There is a focus on tracking and assessment – making sure no one veers off track '

'We ensure high quality teaching and learning for all '

'ECAR and ECC are very valuable and have a positive impact '

Some special initiatives and projects local and national had lifted aspirations for all and accelerated progress eg MfL project

Case Study Rudyard Kipling Primary School:

Rudyard Kipling Primary School was judged to be 'good' in May 2013. The school RAISEonline shows that educational achievement gaps are closing.

The inspector wrote:

'Funding for the pupil premium is effectively used, primarily to provide non-class based teachers and additional adults to deliver tailored support in both English and mathematics. The impact of the funding has been clearly shown in improved achievement.'

Some of the features of the school are:

- The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, is very clear about what she wants the school to achieve.
- The School's approach to improvement is incredibly detailed and consists of very accurate school self-evaluation, improvement plans and detailed termly plans. All staff are fully aware of these realistic and achievable plans.
- There is an effective programme to monitor and improve the quality of teaching. Leaders ensure that all teachers meet the 'Teachers' Standards'. All staff, including support staff, have targets to help them improve their performance to make them accountable for accelerating pupils' progress. The school has produced detailed documentation to ensure that teachers fully understand how progression through the pay scales can be achieved and is inextricably linked to pupils' progress.
- The quality of the school's assessment information, detailing how well pupils progress, is exemplary. Personalised plans are made for each pupil, after looking at their books, their work in lessons and their progress information. Decisions about how to maximise progress and use carefully targeted interventions include the teachers and senior leaders as well as governors.
- Middle leaders are involved in all aspects of monitoring, including lesson observations. They have a good understanding of school performance and often trial innovative practice, as demonstrated in Year 5.

- Governors know the school well and are therefore able to offer effective support and challenge.

8. How our strategy will work

What we will do

- Form a group of school leaders and LA officers to drive the strategy
- Further evaluate and disseminate national research: (e.g. Sutton Trust)
- Evaluate and disseminate the national evidence into the most effective interventions
- Evaluate and disseminate the local evidence: e.g. Schools data and the Schools Supporting Schools projects – what is working well?
- Provide a universal offer of data analysis, advice and guidance (e.g. Intervention health check / governor support and training)
- Support partnership / Cluster data analysis – so that every school knows its pupils
- Identify, through the data analysis of schools where practice is strong and schools where the gap is particularly wide.
- Link schools with similar profiles together to share practice
- Investigate different evidence based programmes such as: ‘Achievement for All’ or ‘Success for All’, ‘Working with Others’ ‘Talkboost’, and ‘School Start’, to see if they would be the right support for schools in the city
- Continue to promote and facilitate the Every Child a Reader and the Every Child Counts programmes with schools along with their associated initiatives
- Extend the ‘Every Child a Reader’ programme, in a number of target schools, to encompass a broader strategy for addressing achievement in literacy, particularly in writing.
- Promote virtual learning opportunities where these have been shown to make a successful contribution to learning

9. What success will look like

Year on year, pupils achievement for all groups in the city will improve the gaps between pupils in vulnerable groups and their peers will narrow and close

We will identify key milestones and targets to support and challenge schools to accelerate achievement of the most vulnerable, the milestones seek to raise aspiration and ensure that the gaps in educational achievement are in line and then below the national average at all key assessment points.

