
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE & EQUITY
Closing the Attainment Gap – Pupil Equity Funding

Report by Service Director Children and Young People

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21 March 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 The report outlines the drive to raise attainment for all Borders children and to close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged. It sets out:

- (a) the national context
- (b) the introduction of Pupil Equity Funding and the expectations of Scottish Government
- (c) what research tells us makes the biggest difference in terms of raising attainment
- (d) the strategic approach and management for Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Border's schools from April 2017.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:

- (a) Note the strong focus on raising attainment for all and reducing the attainment gap, particularly for those children and young people who face barriers to their learning due to the impact of poverty**
- (b) Agree that a report on progress is brought back to the Executive in March 2018**

3 BACKGROUND

For a number of years Scottish Government has prioritised removing the link between poverty, lower attainment and lower life chances.

3.1 SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE

3.1.1 Four years ago Scottish Government introduced the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) to sharpen the focus on narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap in schools. The SAC was launched with seven of the most deprived local authorities across Scotland. In 2014, the Scottish Attainment Challenge was extended to eighty primary schools across a greater number of authorities. In August 2015, St Margaret's PS and Burnfoot Community Primary School in Hawick became SAC schools, and Hawick High School took up the offer to join in August 2016.

3.1.2 Each school received a sum of money to finance the improvement of the learning provision and bring about improved outcomes in Literacy, Numeracy and Health & Well-being. Each school was supported by the Attainment Advisor allocated to the Local authority.

3.2 EXCELLENCE & EQUITY IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION

3.2.1 In January 2016, Scottish Government published the *National Improvement Framework* (NIF) which sets out the vision for Scottish education. The vision is to achieve excellence through raising attainment for all, and to achieve equity by ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The key priorities of the National Improvement Framework are:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- Improvement in children and young people's health and well-being; and
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.

3.2.2 In June 2016, *Delivering Excellence & Equity in Scottish education* was published which outlines how Scottish Government will work with education providers to achieve excellence and equity. It has a strong focus on closing the attainment gap and draws on the findings of the OECD report (2015), *Improving Schools in Scotland* stating:
Be rigorous about the gaps to be closed and pursue relentlessly "closing the gap" and "raising the bar" simultaneously.

3.2.3 The Excellence & Equity delivery plan and the National Improvement Framework place a duty on all schools from August 2016 to have a strategy for closing the attainment gap within their context.

- 3.2.4 Nationally, £120 million has been provided by Scottish Government to help schools raise attainment with a focus on supporting those children and young people who face barriers to their learning due to the impact of poverty. This is referred to as Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

3.3 PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

- 3.3.1 From April 2017 Pupil Equity Funding will be issued direct to schools, to the sum of £1200 per P1 to S3 pupil eligible and registered for free school meals. The funding will be available from 2017/18 and is reported as being available each year for the next three years.
- 3.3.2 Borders schools will receive a total of £1.8 million for 2017/18. The sum that schools will receive varies considerably from £1,200 to £130,000. Two primary schools will not receive any Pupil Equity funding – Heriot PS and Fountainhall PS (shared headship). The allocation to schools is provided in appendix 1.
- 3.3.3 The planning for the funding is a partnership between Scottish Government, the Local Authority and schools with the headteachers leading the planning process.
- 3.3.4 It is essential that headteachers are supported to make intelligent decisions about how best to use Pupil Equity Funding in their context. Scottish Government has provided clear guidance as to what is considered acceptable. It is not about buying hardware or adding 'extras' around the edges; it is what you can do in classrooms and in schools with adult support.
- 3.3.5 Scottish Government stipulate headteachers should work in partnership to agree the use of their funding, and should involve parents/carers, children and young people, and partners in the planning process. Headteachers are encouraged to collaborate within and across schools, and within and across local authorities to pool the money or to deliver very specific targeted work.
- 3.3.6 The headteacher will be accountable for the use of Pupil Equity Funding within their school. Schools are required to incorporate their plans into reporting processes to parents. HMIe inspection and internal review processes will evaluate how well schools are using their funding to improve outcomes.
- 3.3.7 Each school's plan will identify the issues to be addressed, the target pupils or groups of pupils for the interventions, the data used to identify these pupils, the expected outcomes, timescales, how and when data will be collected and reported and how progress will be measured over time.
- 3.3.8 National standardised assessments being introduced from August 2017 will be used to measure progress at individual pupil level.

3.4 WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

Attainment is complex and many factors contribute to success, however, we do know that the greatest impact on attainment lies within classrooms. Dylan Williams is clear that: *Very high quality teaching and learning closes gaps. Average learning and teaching*

doesn't (2016). The Education Endowment Foundation highlights some low cost, high impact strategies such as Metacognition, Effective feedback and marking, Skilled questioning, Informed Task Design, Collaborative Learning, Memorability and Expectation (growth mindset). National foundation for Educational Research (NFER) identified strategies common to schools which are successful in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils:

- i. **Whole school ethos of attainment for all** – avoid stereotyping disadvantaged pupils as all facing similar barriers and having less potential to succeed.
- ii. **Address behaviour and attendance** – effective behaviour strategies are in place, response is quick to poor attendance and strong social and emotional support is available.
- iii. **High quality teaching for all** – emphasis is on quality teaching first, provide consistently high standards by setting expectations, monitoring performance and sharing best practice.
- iv. **Clear responsive leadership** – senior leaders set high aspirations and lead by example. All staff are held accountable and are supported through excellent CPD
- v. **Data driven and responsive to evidence** – using data to identify review and evaluate learning, use evidence to make decisions.
- vi. **Deploying staff effectively** – use the best teachers to work with those who need the most support.
- vii. **Meeting individual learners needs** – identification of needs and individualised, specific programmes and targets.

4 SBC STRATEGY TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO CLOSE THEIR ATTAINMENT GAP

4.1 STRATEGIC GROUP

Scottish Borders Council Children and Young People's Services directorate has established a strategic group to focus on raising attainment and closing the attainment gap. The group comprises volunteer headteachers, two Senior officers – one from each of education and psychological services, and an attainment advisor from Education Scotland.

The work of the strategy group will have two main dimensions:

- a) Universal approaches for raising attainment for all
- b) Targeted interventions to achieve equity for learners and close any attainment gaps.

The strategic group are preparing engagement and learning sessions for Head teachers. All schools will participate in a learning collaborative aimed at action researching their 'closing the gap' strategy including the monitoring of progress in pupil attainment.

4.2 CLOSING THE GAP OFFICERS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Scottish Government will support schools in how to use the Pupil Equity Fund through materials, events and online forums as well as through the Local Authority's nominated attainment advisor. However, it is recognised that headteachers and schools will need greater input if they are to achieve the impact expected from Scottish Government.

A dedicated Closing the Gap officer for each of primary and secondary is required to take this forward. As well as supporting schools with planning, monitoring, measuring and reporting, they will also train staff and share best practice in terms of learning and teaching strategies to raise attainment.

Given the close links with quality improvement, assessment and use of data, the Closing the Gap Officers would be managed by the Senior Lead Officer responsible for Quality Improvement and Assessment.

4.3 MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The key measure of success is evidence of improvement through attainment data. We want:

- a) Expected progress for all
- b) Excellent progress for many
- c) All SIMD bands proportionately represented in the 'excellent'
– no pattern of lower attainment for children in lower SIMD bands

However, we also want pupils to benefit from teachers who:

- i. Systematically reflect on and evaluate their practice.
- ii. Feel confident and supported in adopting innovative practice.
- iii. Adapt their methodology to meet the needs of learners.
- iv. Consistently use Assessment for Learning strategies to inform their practice.
- v. Ensure relevant development of literacy, numeracy and health and well-being across the curriculum.
- vi. Use active learning approaches to support learners in their development of creative and critical thinking strategies.
- vii. Gather a range of evidence of individual and learning group's progress in order to record and report on it.
- viii. Make purposeful use of professional collaboration in school and beyond.
- ix. Regularly share information with parents, carers and relevant others in a range of ways.
- x. Use local and national policies and guidance to inform their practice.
- xi. Access professional development related to the needs of the learner, the teacher and their establishment.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL

To ensure the greatest impact from the Pupil Equity Funding of £1.8 million from Scottish Government:

- (a) Two people will be seconded, one from the primary sector, and one from the secondary sector, to work with schools on planning,

monitoring, measuring and evaluating the specific strategies to ensure improved outcomes.

- (b) These posts will be funded through school carry-forwards.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The risk of not closing the attainment gap is that some children and young people will not achieve their full potential and may not go on to a positive and sustained destination beyond school. Close monitoring and tracking could mitigate this risk.
- (b) There is a risk that headteachers' may not focus on the right interventions, or use the pupil equity funding wisely. This could result in limited improvement in attainment as well as reputational risk. Careful planning, training in raising attainment strategies and regular monitoring of impact should mitigate the risk.

5.3 Equalities

Reducing attainment inequality is a key feature of the Closing the Gap work. It is anticipated that there will be no adverse implications as a result of this report.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no significant effects on acting sustainability arising from this report.

5.5 Carbon Management

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from this report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from this report.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council will be consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Donna Manson
Service Director Children & Young People

Signature.....

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Pupil Equity Fund – School Allocations 2017-18

Background Papers: Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education;
Scottish Government June 2016

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Donna Manson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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