

**REPORT OF THE ACTING SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS
AND INCLUSION****A STRATEGY FOR CLOSING THE EDUCATIONAL GAPS IN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present a summary of the impact of Nottinghamshire's 'Closing the Educational Gaps' (CtG) Strategy.

Information and Advice**Context**

2. The CtG Strategy was approved by Full Council on 29 March 2012 and updated in autumn 2014 for the 2014-16 period. It sets out Nottinghamshire County Council's long term commitment to ensuring that the full range of services and partners work coherently with schools and other educational settings to maximise the impact of available resources in further improving the attainment and progress of vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups of learners. **A key focus of the refreshed strategy is** to "work with schools, key services and partners to support a whole system approach to planning and commissioning in order to raise aspirations, build school readiness and academic resilience, promote health and economic well-being and ensure accelerated progress and good attainment for the most vulnerable learners."
3. For the purposes of this report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past 6 years (FSM6) and are therefore eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Key actions and update on impact since the last report

4. The key actions identified in the CtG Strategy, led by the **Education Improvement Service** and monitored termly by the **CtG Performance Board** continue to provide the focus of the collaborative working between all partners named within the Strategy.
5. Nottinghamshire's **Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team (PIP)** continues to produce a wide range of high quality CtG datasets in order to assess impact, identify areas of greatest need, areas for improvement and examples of good practice that can be shared and built upon at county, local and school level.

6. Whilst good gains have been made in reducing Nottinghamshire's attainment gaps between disadvantaged and non disadvantaged pupils at KS2, there remains a **continued need to address on-going educational gaps** across all key phases but especially in the Early Years and at KS4.
- In **Early Years**, 41% of FSM pupils achieved a good level of development in 2015 compared to 39% in 2014 and 37% in 2013. Whilst this represents a steady trend of improvement for FSM, the attainment gap between FSM and Non FSM is getting wider, standing at 27.6 percentage points in 2015 compared to a national gap of 18 percentage points.
 - At **Key Stage 2**, final data shows that the gap between FSM6 pupils and Non FSM6 pupils achieving level 4 or above in combined reading, writing and mathematics has narrowed for the fourth year running. Figures show that the rate of improvement was greater for FSM6 pupils compared with the rest. 68.4% of FSM6 pupils achieved this measure compared to 85.2% who were not FSM6, representing a gap of 16.8 percentage points compared to a national gap of 14 percentage points. Although the FSM6 gap in Nottinghamshire continues to reduce, the national gap is reducing at a faster rate because of the greater increase in FSM6 outcomes between 2014 -15 (+3 percentage points nationally compared to +2.4 percentage points in Nottinghamshire).
 - At **Key Stage 4**, (5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics and equivalent outcomes) 33.8% of FSM6 pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades including GCSE English and mathematics in 2015 compared to 35.5% in 2014. This contrasts with 64.0% of Non FSM6 achieving this measure which was broadly in line with the 2014 outcome for this group. The FSM6 gap for Nottinghamshire schools is 30.2 percentage points which represents a widening of the gap (1.3 percentage points) from 28.9 percentage points reported in 2014. A similar widening of the gap was witnessed nationally with the national gap now standing at 27 percentage points (an increase of 1 percentage point from 2014).
7. Analysis of **district level** data provides the following headline commentary and provisional data charts are attached as **Appendix 1**.
- At Early Years, the gap has narrowed significantly in Gedling and is narrower in Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood. It has remained broadly similar in Ashfield and Rushcliffe, and has widened in Bassetlaw and Broxtowe. The widest gap remains in the district of Rushcliffe
 - At KS2, data indicates that the gap has narrowed significantly in Broxtowe with outcomes for FSM6 improving by over 12 percentage points in this district. There have been year on year reductions in the districts of Bassetlaw and Mansfield. The gap widened significantly in the Ashfield and Rushcliffe districts
 - At KS4, final data indicates that the gap narrowed in Broxtowe and Gedling, remained broadly static in Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood, widened slightly in Ashfield and significantly in Bassetlaw and Rushcliffe, It should be noted, however, that outcomes for FSM6 pupils in the Bassetlaw district were the highest in the County

and also significantly higher than FSM6 pupils nationally (43.2% in Bassetlaw versus a national outcome of 36%).

8. The **Education Improvement Service** continues to ensure that key actions are in place to provide challenge and support for Nottinghamshire's schools and academies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These include:
- the delivery of termly primary and secondary head teacher briefings with an enhanced focus on the '**East Midlands Challenge**' which sets out the current and urgent agenda to improve outcomes for the following groups of disadvantaged learners: FSM6; White British FSM6; Looked After Children; and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
 - **Education Improvement Adviser** support for targeted LA maintained schools, focusing particularly on the provision and outcomes for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups including bespoke visits to targeted schools/academies where **Looked After Children** outcomes are of concern
 - ensuring the performance of disadvantaged groups is a high priority for all **training** on Assessment, Appraisal, Leadership and Governance
 - the development of a '**Pupil Premium Toolkit**' and training to build schools' capacity for self-evaluation and improvement planning in order to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, as well as providing a model for bespoke Pupil Premium Reviews
 - supporting **governors** (and governor services) to identify and promote key 'CtG' messages and strategies
 - working with the **Regional Schools' Commissioner** to challenge targeted Nottinghamshire Academies and/or Academy Sponsors to improve the under-performance of schools under their auspices
 - working with the **Teaching School Alliances** (TSAs) to develop and promote a **cohesive 'sold offer'** which will enable Nottinghamshire's schools to access appropriate training and support in a timely manner
 - developing a "**Readiness for Learning**" offer with key partners, including TSAs, LA services, Speech and Language, Public Health
 - planning and co-ordinating **out-of-county learning visits** to higher performing statistical neighbours during summer term 2016 to seek out good practice strategies that are proven and have had a sustained impact on outcomes for disadvantaged learners.
9. The **Early Childhood and Early Help (Locality) service** continues to contribute to improving early years' attainment, the impact of which is shown by the increased number of eligible two year olds taking up their free entitlement place last term (72%). In addition, 89% of early education providers were rated 'Good' or better by Ofsted in 2014-15 which

equates to a 3 percentage point rise on the previous year. A revised outcomes framework for Children Centres has been developed and agreed which will support activity for narrowing the attainment gap. The Council has also been successfully selected to become an 'Early Innovator' for the 30 hours free entitlement for eligible three and four year olds, to be introduced September 2017.

10. The **Children Missing Education Strategy (CME)** has led to the development of a revised internal process that seeks to identify, monitor and challenge all those in Nottinghamshire who are involved in ensuring that our children and young people are enabled to access their full educational entitlement. There is now an established partnership between schools and key Local Authority services through the Locality Fair Access Panels (FAPs) and the School Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships (SBAPs) to ensure that children who are at risk of losing a place can be more effectively supported to either remain in their original school or rapidly secure a place in another school. The Fair Access Team continues to mediate if children do not secure school places through the 'In Year' admissions process. The number of days that children who qualify as 'fair access' remain without a school place has continued to reduce with the average number of days lost to learning in the Autumn term 2015 being 16. There have been 188 cases raised with the Fair Access Team since September 2015. 146 of those cases have now been resolved, and 11 of those cases required the support of interim Higher Level Needs funding to support their transition back into learning. 15 cases were not ready to be placed in mainstream learning and have required an alternative provision pathway which will be monitored through the Council's new Education Other than at School (EOTAS) arrangements, whilst the remaining 27 are current cases.
11. The **Family Service** continues to work with vulnerable families who meet the Level 3 or 4 threshold in the Pathway to Provision. This includes families with complex needs where there are issues with attendance or behaviour at school. The proportion of young people post 16 who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) in Nottinghamshire remains below the England average as identified in the National Client Caseload Information Systems (NCCIS; December 2015 to February 2016, three month average) and the proportion of 16/17 year olds participating in education and/or training is above the England average (NCCIS February 2016). The proportion of young people post 16 whose EET status is unknown is falling in Nottinghamshire. For the 2014-15 academic year, the pupil absence rates for Nottinghamshire were below or in line with the England average for both overall and persistent absence. During this academic year, the Council has seen another significant increase in the use of fines for unauthorised absence and in particular for holidays in term time.
12. Nottinghamshire's Education Improvement Service and the **Speech and Language Team** continue to work in close partnership to ensure schools maintain a high profile on developing the speech, communication and language skills of all pupils especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Following the successful pilot of the "Talking to Learn" Project in Gedling (2014-15), there has been a significant increase in the number of primary schools using Pupil Premium funding to purchase additional speech and language therapists' support to build the capacity to target disadvantaged pupils who do not meet the thresholds for a health referral but still require additional support to develop their language skills.

13. **Together for Newark (TfN)** is entering its fifth year of collaboration and continues to develop. Newark schools and partners are forging links with business and are looking to rebrand and develop a new website to share best practice. Following the recent 'Newark Summit', a task and finish group has been convened to find ways of forging effective careers links between schools and local businesses to improve young people's readiness for work and employment. Based on outcomes from a recent 'listening' survey, there is a new focus on improving children's 'secondary school readiness'. This has led to primaries and secondaries linking to produce a new programme of transition to be trialled this year. 'TfN' is also linking with the new Primary Mental Health workers to look at developing cohesive support and provision around the mental health and well-being needs of children and young people. A science project (The Einstein Project) continues to find opportunities for promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in schools. The work of the previous groups continues with strong moderation projects in mathematics and English. In the future, TfN is looking to find new schools to sit on the Steering Group so as to keep the 'TfN' concept alive and sustainable.
14. Analysis of '**TfN**' **outcomes for 2015** compared to Nottinghamshire and national outcomes provides the following positive commentary:
 - between 2014 and 2015, the **KS2** the gap between FSM6 and Non FSM6 at level 4 or above in combined reading, writing and mathematics narrowed again slightly in the TfN primary schools by 0.3 percentage points, compared to a Nottinghamshire reduction of 0.6 percentage points. The TfN gap of 13.5 percentage points is now below the national gap of 14 percentage points
 - since the introduction of Nottinghamshire's CtG Strategy and the launch of TfN in **2012**, Newark Town primary schools have reduced the **L4+ combined gap** by 12.4 percentage points compared to a Nottinghamshire reduction of 5.5 percentage points. FSM6 outcomes in TfN have improved by 15.5 percentage points compared to an 8.2 percentage point improvement in Nottinghamshire overall
 - outcomes at **KS4** (5+A*-C including English and mathematics) have risen in Newark Town over time but there is more improvement still to be made in order to narrow the gap.
15. The '**Together for Worksop**' (TfW) locality collaboration in Worksop town is now in its second year of development. 'TfW' schools and local partners have focused on a number of strands of collaborative activity including a focus on 'Readiness for Learning' at key transition points, 'Talking to Learn', 'Take Five – Mindfulness programme', 'Science in Schools', Junior Council Developments and local music projects/events. Future developments will include a focus on supporting the needs of and improving the provision for looked after children and pupils with English as an Additional Language. An 'End of Year 1' external evaluation was conducted by colleagues from the Centre for Equity in Education at Manchester University, which confirms that "during its first year, TfW has already established some activities which have the potential to be strategically important in the town, and to support the improvement of outcomes over time".
16. In the Mansfield district, a steering group of primary head teachers has been working collaboratively on behalf of "**Together for Mansfield**" to develop collaborative research and action around the impact of loss and bereavement on disadvantaged learners.

17. In the **Broxtowe** district, a focused English as an Additional Language (EAL) pilot is in the early development stage and will build upon the learning from other locality pilots. A further collaboration in the Ollerton and Sherwood area of Nottinghamshire is currently being developed.

Other Options Considered

18. The report is for noting only.

Reason for Recommendations

19. Latest impact data indicates that whilst the CtG Strategy is having a positive impact on narrowing the gaps for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners there is still a continued need to maintain a high focus on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, especially in the Early Years and Secondary phases of education. There is secure evidence that cross service/phase collaborative working at County and locality level is supporting the development of new ways of working focused on earlier intervention to close gaps and ensure vulnerable learners meet their potential.

Statutory and Policy Implications

20. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the impact of Nottinghamshire's Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy is noted.

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Constitutional Comments

21. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 05/05/16)

22. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

A Strategy for Closing the Nottinghamshire Educational Gaps 2014-16 (renewed version)

A Strategy for Closing the Educational Gaps in Nottinghamshire – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 16 November 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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