

**REPORT OF THE 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 groups of learners.

**Key actions and update on impact since the last report**

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. The **2015 provisional attainment data** for pupils who were eligible for free school meals at some point in the past six years (**FSM6**) indicates that;
  - in Early Years, 43.3% of FSM6 pupils achieved a good level of development compared to 37.9% in 2013 and 40.1% in 2014. The attainment gap, however, widened from 22.8 percentage points (pp) in 2013 to 26.4pp in 2014 and 25.4pp in 2015 due to the greater gains secured by Non FSM6 children in 2014 and 2015.

- at Key Stage 2, provisional data shows that the gap between FSM6 pupils achieving level 4 or above in combined reading, writing and mathematics against those not eligible has narrowed for the fourth year running. 68.7% of FSM6 pupils achieved this measure compared to 84.8% who were not FSM6, representing a gap of 16.1pp. This represents a 1.3pp decrease from the 17.4 gap reported in 2014. Whilst national data is not yet available for 2015, the Nottinghamshire gap is, for the first time since the start of the Strategy, in line with the national gap for the previous year (17pp). Since the inception of the Closing the Gap Strategy in 2012, the gap has narrowed by 6.2pp.
  - at Key Stage 4, invalidated outcomes for the 5+A\*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics indicator shows that the Nottinghamshire gap has increased by 0.7pp to 29.6pp. Since the start of the Closing the Gap Strategy, the gap has narrowed by 1.1pp.
6. Analysis of **district level provisional data** provides the following commentary and provisional data charts are attached as **Appendix 1**:
- at KS2, provisional data indicates that the gap has narrowed in Bassetlaw, Broxtowe and Mansfield. The gap widened slightly in Newark and Sherwood by 0.3pp and in Gedling by 1.5pp. The gap widened significantly in Ashfield and Rushcliffe.
  - at KS4, unvalidated data indicates that the gap narrowed in Broxtowe, Gedling and Mansfield. The gap widened slightly in Ashfield by 1.2pp and in Newark and Sherwood by 1pp. The gap widened significantly in Bassetlaw and Rushcliffe.
7. Nottinghamshire's **Fair Access Team** continues to work closely with schools through the school-led locality panels to secure school places for vulnerable children as part of Nottinghamshire's well-established Fair Access Protocol (FAP). The average waiting time for FAP cases in 2013-2014 was 29 days and the longest wait for a school place was 78 days. In 2014-2015 the average waiting time has reduced to 22 days, and the longest wait has reduced to 65 days. Clear processes have been introduced in 2014-2015 to identify children at risk of becoming Children Missing Education (CME). Interim educational provision has been provided by the Local Authority in exceptional circumstances to ensure that learning is maintained for vulnerable children. Of the 53 children identified in May 2014 as being without education (CME) only 1 child of statutory school age was still not engaged with education by May 2015, whilst 36 were engaging full-time with mainstream provision.
8. The **Family Service** continues to work with vulnerable families who meet the Level 3 Threshold and/or Level 4 criteria in the Pathway to Provision. This includes families in need of Early Help where there are issues with attendance or behaviour at school. Persistent absence rates remain below the national average. Post 16 NEET (not in education, employment or training) also continues to be low in Nottinghamshire.
9. A key aspect of the Strategy is to encourage and enable greater inter agency working across key agencies. To exemplify this, a significant achievement has been a deepened partnership with health through the extended deployment of speech and language therapists in targeted schools. Approximately 40 primary head teachers from across the County have bought in additional support from Nottinghamshire's **Speech and**

**Language Team** in 2015-2016 to target those early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 disadvantaged pupils (as well as non disadvantaged pupils) who require additional support to develop their language skills but who do not meet the thresholds for a health referral. This has been developed due to the success of the Closing the Gap "Talking to Learn" Project in **Gedling** delivered during 2014-15.

10. **The 'Together for Newark' (TfN)** locality collaboration has now entered its fourth year of development. Schools and local partners are now leading and funding the strategy for themselves as a result of the proven benefits of local collaboration on narrowing the gaps and improving the life chances for disadvantaged learners and their families. The TfN Steering Group, following local consultation and external evaluation, has re-set the vision for the work of TfN during 2015-16. There is now a strong focus on early years' school readiness, improving mental health and well-being of vulnerable learners and securing economic well-being for 16-25 year olds in the town. This innovative collaboration continues to attract significant interest at local and national level. Most recently, in July 2015, a group of Ofsted Inspectors visited schools and partners in the town to compile a good practice case study on 'transition' and 'closing the gaps' strategies at locality level.
11. 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** has narrowed yet again in the TfN primary schools by 2.4pp, compared to a Nottinghamshire reduction of 1.3pp. The TfN gap is now well below the national gap for 2014 at 11.4pp compared to a national gap of 17pp.
  - 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 14.3pp compared to a Nottinghamshire reduction of 6.2pp. FSM6 outcomes in TfN have improved by 15.1pp compared to an 8.5pp improvement in Nottinghamshire overall.
  - The most significant gains can be demonstrated in **the L4+ reading progress (KS1-2) outcomes** for FSM6 pupils. In TfN, since 2012, FSM6 gains in **pupils making the expected 2 levels of progress** in reading have improved by 15.7pp compared to 3.1pp gains for FSM6 in Nottinghamshire. Indeed, FSM6 outcomes in reading **progress** are, for the first time in four years, above the outcomes for Non FSM6 pupils in the TfN schools. The gap in TfN reading **progress** outcomes has reduced by 13.8pp in four years, compared to a Nottinghamshire reduction of 3.1pp.
12. A second locality collaboration is now being facilitated and co-ordinated by the Education Improvement Service. **'Together for Worksop' (TfW)** schools and local partners have used their first year of collaboration to seek and agree key strands of collaborative working focused on a range of strategies proven to further close educational attainment gaps and maximise pupils' engagement with and readiness for learning. External evaluation activities will be conducted by colleagues from the Centre for Equity in Education at Manchester University, as was also the case for TfN.
13. Two new "Closing the Gap" locality collaborations have just begun and are being facilitated by the Education Improvement Service. In the **Mansfield district**, a steering group of

primary head teachers has identified the need to develop collaborative research and action around the impact of loss and bereavement on disadvantaged learners. In the **Broxtowe** district, a focused English as an Additional Language (EAL) Pilot is in the early planning stage and will build upon the learning from other locality pilots.

### **Other Options Considered**

14. No other options were considered.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

15. Latest impact data and external research evaluation indicates that the CtG Strategy is having a positive impact on narrowing the gaps for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners. 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**

16. 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.

**John Slater**

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### **Constitutional Comments**

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

### **Financial Comments (SS 27/10/15)**

18. 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 10 November 2014

A Strategy for Closing the Educational Gaps in Nottinghamshire – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 18 May 2015

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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