

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 16 April 2008

SUBJECT: Strategies to Address Comparative Underachievement in Leeds Schools

Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Narrowing the Gap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the strategies employed to target underachieving young people and schools in Leeds, so that the gap in achievement between the most the and least successful groups is narrowed
- 1.2 At the Executive Board meeting on 8 February 2008 Members considered the Annual Standards Report for Secondary and requested that a further report be brought back on the strategies being used to address identified areas of comparative under achievement.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 One of the greatest challenges facing the education system nationally is narrowing the gap in progress being made by the highest and the lowest attaining children and young people. As children grow older, the gap increases.
- 2.2 In Leeds, the challenge is striking. At the end of primary education the gap in achievement at level 4 between those children eligible for free school meals and those who are not is similar to national figures. By the end of Key Stage 4 the gap in Leeds is larger than that seen nationally. In 2007 only 27% of young

people eligible for free school meals achieved 5A*-C at Key Stage 4, whereas 62% of those not eligible achieved the same benchmark. This disparity of achievement is also shown by the lower than average achievement of certain ethnic minorities and looked-after children. Indicators impact cumulatively so that, for example, summer-born boys from particular geographical and ethnic groups have extremely low levels of achievement

2.3 The big challenge for Leeds is to raise overall levels of achievement while at the same time reducing the gap between the more and the less successful. Responding to this challenge requires a collaborative response from schools and agencies that support children and families and which builds on the practice we know is effective.

2.4 In recent years some of the largest gains in achievement have been made by schools serving the most disadvantaged areas of Leeds. The improvement seen at schools such as Wortley, John Smeaton, Cockburn, West Leeds, Carr Manor and others is making an impact on young people entitled to a free school meal, on those with learning difficulties and on minority ethnic groups. The commitment and effort of these schools, individually and in partnership with Children's Services, Education Leeds and other council services provides us with a powerful insight into what works for young people at risk of underachieving. Our strategy is built on this insight.

2.5 There are three interrelated strands to the strategy for narrowing the gap in achievement:

(a) Securing greater inclusion

So that young people and their parents feel positively engaged with education through a more personalised experience which maximises attendance and reduces the risk of exclusion

(b) School Improvement

So that we sustain and accelerate the progress our schools are making in raising attainment and narrowing the gap. This strand includes targeted interventions across groups of schools

(c) 14-19

So that we provide an appropriate range of pathways and learning environments to inspire young people and meet their learning needs

2.6 Each strategic strand is explored in more detail in the next section

3 MAIN ISSUES

3.1 Securing Greater Inclusion

3.2 This is undoubtedly the most complex challenge in narrowing the gap. It necessitates Children's Services, Education Leeds, other council services and wider agencies working in a more integrated way to support underachieving children and their families at the level of schools and in localities. Development of multi disciplinary support at school and area level is helping to raise aspirations and ensure that support is given to children and families at greatest risk of underachieving.

The following list summarises the key components of this strand.

- (a) Powerful models of multi-agency working are developing across the city driven by the principles of Every Child Matters and the need to secure more effective support and personalisation of services for young people and their families. For example, at South Leeds High School an internal school panel can alert a multi-agency group when issues emerge which may require a more coordinated multidisciplinary response to the needs of particular families. This is resulting in much closer collaboration between agencies including, for example, social care, youth services, primary care, community policing and inclusion services. Such arrangements operate on a two way basis so that agencies can alert the school to wider issues that need to be considered when working with individual young people to personalise their learning experience.
- (b) Across the city, the Extended Services agenda is assisting schools to work more closely and effectively with a range of services relevant to the needs and aspirations of families in localities. Thirty eight clusters of schools are working collectively to address issues around the most vulnerable and under achieving groups of young people. The building of self esteem and personal development, including safe and healthy lifestyles, is supported by a variety of programmes, including those using art, music and drama organised through Artforms. The development of extended services clusters and larger area-wide collaborations are providing a mechanism for localising the support of Children's Services, other local authority services and wider agencies.
- (c) Enterprise Programmes are connecting employers, schools and young people through the provision of experiences which explicitly nurture the skills and qualities young people need to be effective employers and employees. There is good evidence of the particularly positive impact of these programmes on young people for whom the prospect of future employment, education and training was challenging. Similarly, Aim Higher programmes are helping raise the aspiration of young people for higher education and employment.
- (d) The No Child Left Behind initiative and the development of Area Management Boards has successfully assisted schools in avoiding exclusions by developing a much stronger collective commitment to keeping young people in learning. This has a small impact on overall outcomes but, a dramatic impact on the lives of a significant number of young people.
- (e) The development of the virtual school for children in public care has meant the appointment of a headteacher for looked after children. This has raised the profile of their achievement with headteachers, governors and School Improvement partners (SIPs, see 3.6a below). The headteacher is also improving the flow of information needed to coordinate support across Education Leeds, schools and social services
- (f) On behalf of Children's Services, Education Leeds has developed much more targeted work for Children Missing Education. This strategy involves much stronger identification of children missing education through effective information management across services and local authorities and is supporting more targeted interventions

(g) Attendance is a major factor in underachievement. Schools need support for making learning more relevant and attractive to young people, as well as for monitoring and ensuring that parents and young people fulfil their responsibilities. The attendance team and strategies consultants are working with eighteen schools with high levels of persistent absence. Schools have greatly improved their knowledge of individual pupil attendance through the week and through the day, and developed systems for responding to absence quickly by contacting parents and carers.

3.4 **School Improvement**

3.5 Potential underachievers are now more easily identified, creating the opportunity for effective targeted intervention. Schools and Education Leeds have the data to identify challenging but realistic expectations for the achievement of individual young people. Schools have the systems to track and record progress through a key stage. The challenge for schools is to make effective use of this information to design a curriculum that allows young people to achieve and to intervene and support learners when they do not make the progress expected.

3.6 The following list summarises key components of this strand

(a) School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and advisers have challenged all schools in the last year about the achievement of groups within the school and helped to broker support to address underachievement. A particular focus has been given to improve achievement at A*-G at Key Stage 4, to enable all young people to achieve qualifications and to increase the number progressing to further education and training. Schools are developing curriculum strategies to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to gain at least eight qualifications and to maximise the point scores they achieve. There were small increases in A*-G and average points measures in 2007, and further increases should be seen in 2008. Secondary SIPs are also challenging schools this year to improve attendance and arrangements for the welfare and development of young people

(b) Schools are provided with support through the National Strategies teams employed by Education Leeds. In 2007-8 the national strategies consultants focused their time on underachieving departments in lower achieving schools. A new programme of support was trialled with selected schools. This placed a number of consultants in the school at the same time, leading a programme on a common theme such as literacy. Evaluation showed that this raised the profile of the support and made it more effective. Customised programmes are being negotiated with each schools so that SIPs/advisers and lead consultants for 2008-9 are focused on agreed priorities, including underachieving groups, and are connecting their work more effectively through each school's senior team

(c) Middle leaders in schools need the skills to monitor the progress of young people and plan interventions when young people do not make the progress expected from their prior attainment. Advisers and consultants have worked with middle leaders to develop models for identifying and supporting pupils making inadequate progress. Schools and staff are now more confident about how to use individual pupil data. The introduction of targets for the progress of individual pupils during a key stage is helping to focus the attention of teachers on the potential of all pupils. This includes pupils with

special needs and those aiming for a D-G grade at GCSE, as well as those aiming for higher grades. Advisers are developing the links between middle and senior leaders and modelling systems of review and accountability to make sure that progress is closely monitored and evaluated by the senior

(d) Education Leeds has set enhanced targets for the achievement of Black and minority ethnic young people. These targets aim to ensure that these groups will make greater progress than predicted by national trends. This has led to the implementation of specific programmes and projects supporting minority ethnic achievement and disadvantaged groups:

- 2006 and 2007 the MEAP project (Multi Ethnic Achievement Programme) has worked with Pakistani, Turkish and other students focusing on leadership, monitoring, learning and involving parents. Eighty percent of targeted pupils met or exceed their targets.
- BPAP (Black Pupils Achievement Programme) has worked directly with pupils of African Caribbean heritage with a similar methodology. Again, this programme is clearly impacting on the achievement of young people. Black Caribbean achievement at Key Stage 4 was 8 points below national expectations in 2005; in 2007 this gap had been halved.
- For 2008-9 Education Leeds will build on this practice by developing a bespoke programme with the headteachers of the eleven high schools with nearly two-thirds of the BME population. This programme will build the 'booster' programmes needed to ensure that the specified number of each ethnic group meet the targets the local authority has agreed with the DCSF.

3.5 **14-19**

3.6 Leeds is currently embarking on a major transformation of 14-19 learning in the city. Although a full account of the strategy is beyond the scope of this paper, there are key components of this strategy which are highly pertinent here.

3.8 The following list summarises these components

(a) Providers in Leeds have committed to developing an entitlement for all learners which embraces 'what we know works' in raising young people's aspirations and securing their progress. Central to this entitlement will be the provision of coaching and guidance to all young people and extending the opportunities for young people to take advantage of new courses and styles of learning. The entitlement will be specific about how schools and colleges will work with learners and their families when they do not make the progress expected given their prior attainment.

(b) Improved systems for guiding and recording individual progress are being introduced using new technologies that engage young people. This will be in the form of an electronic individual learning plan (e-ILP) that they can take with them from one key stage to the next. The e-ILP will include:

- a portfolio of a learner's success and achievements,
- tools to help them reflect on and self-assess their development as a learner,
- space to express their personal goals and learning targets; and
- their plan of how their learning experiences will help them achieve their

goals

- (c) Education Leeds is developing a 'model trajectory' for each high school which projects their performance through to 2015. This trajectory builds on current progress and will act as a guide for target setting meetings with each school. In turn this will support discussion of the provision and pathways needed to achieve these ambitious targets. This will also inform the process by which Education Leeds works with wider providers to broaden the range of quality assured and accredited learning pathways available to learners and inform them of this provision through the on line prospectus.
- (d) City Learning Centres will continue to make a significant contribution to achievement in a number of targeted schools by providing access to the vocational qualifications these schools are not yet equipped to deliver.
- (e) The opportunity for young people to take part in intensive achievement camps is boosting achievement for the lowest achievers and raising point scores in the lowest-achieving schools.

4 **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION LEEDS POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

- 4.1 Raising the achievement of all young people and of particular priority groups is a main feature of strategic plans for Children Leeds and Education Leeds. Team plans for 2008 and beyond will need to show how multi-agency support can be coordinated to target support for identified schools, communities, children and families.

5 **LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The bulk of the standards fund grant at secondary level is aimed at support for targeted schools. In the short term resources will need to be devoted to specific projects with identified groups to offset their previously weak progress; in the longer term resources should develop new learning places, guidance and courses that lead to improved attendance and achievement.

6 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 As the standards achieved by schools have risen in the past few years, more attention is now being focused on young people and groups who have not shared sufficiently in this overall improvement. Experience to date shows that narrowing the gap in achievement between the more and less successful requires:

- co-ordinated support from all services in Education and Children Leeds working in partnership with schools
- prioritisation of action by middle and senior leaders in schools
- tracking of the progress of young people and effective interventions at school, area and city level
- continued development of relevant and inspiring curriculum
- effective personalisation of learning for young people; and
- parental engagement

7 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Board is asked to:

1. Note the strategies being employed to address comparative underachievement in Leeds
2. Continue to give support to the programmes and projects in Leeds which focus on underachievement.