

Equality and Diversity Case Studies
Directorate: Children and Young People Service
Service: Achievement and Wellbeing service

Title: Narrowing the Gap for Children on Free School Meals (FSM)

Context:

Cheshire West and Chester is one of the poorest performing local authorities for narrowing the gap between the attainment of children on free school meals and those who aren't. Over the last three years the gap has actually widened.

What did we want to improve?

We wanted to narrow the gap, particularly for Key Stage 2 and GCSE students.

What did we do and how did we go about it?

A challenge was presented to all primary and secondary schools through network meetings of the scale of the problem in underperformance of pupils on FSM compared to non-FSM. Subsequent support was provided around data analysis of schools' own data.

- Secondary activities - Consultancy training for all middle leaders of core subjects on 'Narrowing the Gap' using national strategy materials for English, Maths and Science. Some schools were individually targeted for focussed school based support with these materials.
- One to one tuition - The funding model was changed this year to ensure each FSM pupil had access to tuition. (Schools still took decision to award tuition where they saw the need)

For the past two years Secondary schools have put together their own bespoke intervention packages to target improvement in underperforming and vulnerable groups to accelerate the progress above and beyond expectations. This is formalised through the submission of additional bids that outlines their intentions and interventions. Bids up to £5000 per school awarded from SF1.8 based on the rigour of their proposals. Rigorous data analysis has enabled the

Council to target schools for additional finance to address and action research the gap between FSM and non-FSM achievement.

Each school was given £5000 together with LA consultancy and Regional Advisory support from the National Strategies. **Whitby High School saw the most significant narrowing of the gap for FSM in CWAC for 2010**

What went well?

The enthusiasm of operational staff was infectious. Everyone recognised this as a major issue for our borough.

What key issues did we have to address?

The lack of awareness in the schools themselves as to the extent of the problem.

What impact has been there been on learning?

Attainment at GCSE (five good GCSEs including English and mathematics) for students on free school meals rose by 7.2% in 2010 from 16.9% in 2009 to 24.1% in 2010.

Attainment for non FSM students rose by 5.1% in 2010 from 50.6% in 2009 to 56.1% in 2010.

This means that the gap narrowed by 2% to 32%. This is a positive downward trend. At its widest in 2008, the gap was 38%

Attainment at Key Stage 2 for Level 4+ including English and mathematics in 2010 rose by 4% for children on Free School Meals from 52% in 2009 to 56% in 2010.

Attainment for non FSM pupils dropped by 2% from 79% to 77% in 2010.

This means that the gap at Key Stage 2 narrowed by 6% to 21% in 2010

Next Steps

Schools that achieved the biggest increase in their FSM gap narrowing, will share their practice at cluster meetings and on the good practice website. Consultants will continue to work at EIP and individual school

level with major programmes such as ECAR, MABD, One to one tuition etc.

Schools will self evaluate against the school performance wheel with FSM being a trigger for underperformance if the gap isn't narrowing year on year.