



Closing the Gap

Welcome to the Autumn 2016 Newsletter

- sharing developments from around the county and updates on national initiatives

Closing the Gap Conference

27th June 2017

The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester

We are pleased to announce that **Marc Rowland, Director of Policy and Research at the National Education Trust**, will be the keynote speaker for our annual Closing the Gap Conference for primary, secondary and special schools.



Marc has worked nationally to support schools in maximising the impact of the Pupil Premium. This includes LA-wide work in Warwickshire, Essex, Sheffield and North Yorkshire. He is currently working with the Jersey government on the introduction of a 'Jersey Pupil Premium'. The second edition of his successful book 'An Updated Practical Guide to The Pupil Premium' was published in December 2015. Marc has sat on a number of education advisory groups, including the recent Independent Review of Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants. He has been a primary school governor.

Further details, and a booking form, will be sent out via Heads Up next term. If you would like to reserve a place then please email

kathryn.ursell@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

School Inspections from September 2016

Minor revisions have been made to the section 5 handbook to reflect the government's latest education policy. The main amendments related to pupil premium/disadvantaged pupils is within the 'Outcomes for pupils' section: emphasis has been placed on the progress made by the most able disadvantaged; reference to within school gaps has been removed inline with the removal of in-school gaps from the Performance Tables and RAISEonline reports; and there has been a change in phraseology.

180. Inspectors will take particular account of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils from their starting points, **especially the most able**. They will consider the progress made by the end of the key stage compared with that made nationally by other pupils with similar starting points and the extent to which any **differences** in this progress, and consequently in attainment, are **diminishing**. In doing this, inspectors will take account of past cohorts and how well current pupils are on track to **diminish any differences**.

When reviewing where you are as a school in terms of the pupil premium funding it is useful to consider Ofsted's expectations. To support you in doing this we have extracted all references to 'pupil premium' and 'disadvantaged pupils' from the School Inspection Handbook (September 2016) into a document which can be downloaded from the [Pupil Premium Toolkit](#).

We have also compiled some comments from Ofsted reports which can also be downloaded from the [Pupil Premium Toolkit](#). Here are a few of the comments:

Pupil premium funding has been used in the main to support pupils who are disadvantaged and least able by reducing class sizes. This has been successful and the low-and middle-attaining disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. Leaders and governors recognise that there is more to do to support those who are disadvantaged and most able in unpicking their individual barriers to success.

The governing body ensures that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used properly to improve the attainment and progress of these pupils. However, although the school has a wealth of information on the use of the pupil premium, reporting on the school websites lacks detail and does not do enough to evaluate the impact of spending.

The school's strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not well developed. Leaders do not check regularly and carefully enough, to find out the effectiveness of additional support in accelerating pupils' progress. Although the very few disadvantaged pupils have achieved expected standards over time, there is little evidence to suggest that leaders consider the barriers for these pupils and take deliberate action to support them.

Online reporting from September 2016

From September 2016, maintained schools are required to publish a pupil premium strategy online, detailing how they intend to spend their allocation to address barriers to learning and the rationale behind the school's decisions: www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online. Academies and free schools may not be required by their funding agreement to publish their pupil premium strategy online, but are encouraged to do so in the interests of sharing their practice - www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online.

For the current academic year, you must include:

- your school's pupil premium grant allocation amount
- a summary of the main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils at the school
- how you'll spend the pupil premium to address those barriers and the reasons for that approach
- how you'll measure the impact of the pupil premium
- the date of the next review of the school's pupil premium strategy

For the previous academic year, you must include:

- how you spent the pupil premium allocation
- the impact of the expenditure on eligible and other pupils

To support schools the Teaching Schools Council, along with the National College, has produced example templates for primary and secondary schools.

The templates, along with completed primary and secondary school examples, can be downloaded from the online [Pupil Premium Toolkit](#).

Pupil Premium Reviews

In the White Paper, March 2016, the government stated their intention to *“Encourage a culture where schools regularly review the effectiveness of their pupil premium strategy, drawing on expert support where necessary.”*

As a result the [guidance](#) for pupil premium reviews has been amended and DfE guidance now states:

“You can commission a review at any time if you want to improve your school’s pupil premium strategy. All schools should consider whether they could benefit from the fresh perspective of an experienced school leader to help them to try new approaches or improve current provision to help raise the attainment of their disadvantaged pupils.”

So, if you’re interested in a pupil premium review, the [DfE website](#) provides guidance about who you might commission, what the review should entail and how much it is likely to cost.

To support schools GCC have developed a pupil premium review package, following the updated guidelines and with support from a Lead Inspector, which can be purchased through traded services. Further details can be found [here](#).

School Inspection Update, November 2016

Marking

In this latest update to inspectors Sean Harford, HMI National Director, says “Inspectors must not give the impression that marking needs to be undertaken in any particular format and to any particular degree of sophistication or detail; the reference to marking on page 10 of the school inspection handbook deals with this...please do not report on marking practice, or make judgements on it, other than whether it follows the school’s assessment policy...do not make recommendations for improvement that involve marking, other than when the school’s marking/assessment policy is not being followed by a substantial proportion of teachers; this will then be an issue for the leadership and management to resolve.” He refers inspectors to the Education Endowment Foundation’s (EEF) report [‘A marked improvement’](#) (April 2016).

Effective deployment and use of teaching assistants

The update also refers inspectors to latest research from the EEF showing that when TAs are deployed effectively, with appropriate training and support, they can make a significant contribution to pupil’s learning (see Spring 2016 Closing the Gap newsletter). It refers inspectors to the recommendations in the [‘Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants’](#) guidance report and the additional resources available to help schools implement the recommendations: [Interventions healthcheck](#) and [Red Amber Green \(RAG\) self-assessment tool](#) to monitor current practice against the guidance.

EEF suggest that inspectors might want to consider:

- How do senior leaders ensure that TAs are deployed effectively in line with this evidence?
- Are TAs supplementing the work of teachers or replacing them?
- Is there a well-planned programme of training and support for TAs who deliver out-of-class interventions?



The DIY Evaluation Guide

The Education Endowment Foundation has developed a new online DIY Evaluation Guide. The guide explains the importance of “Do It Yourself” evaluation. It outlines a range of options open to teachers who want to improve the way they evaluate new interventions or strategies and provides practical advice on designing and carrying out evaluations. DIY evaluation is useful for three reasons:

- **It indicates whether or not an intervention is effective.** Without evaluation, it is impossible to know whether an intervention is having a positive impact on learning. It can be tempting to implement plausible-sounding strategies which, in reality, don’t benefit students.
- **Evaluation saves teachers time.** It is often easier to start doing something new than it is to stop doing something which has been running for a number of years. The evaluation strategies in this guide show how data can be used to obtain an estimate of the impact of a particular intervention. Teachers can then put their time and effort into the most effective things and avoid pursuing approaches that do not work.
- **Evaluation guides future action.** By investing a little time in carefully recording what is being done and by measuring its outcome, it is easy to identify improvements for the future.

The guide can be viewed [here](#).

Breakfast clubs found to boost primary pupils' reading, writing and maths results

Breakfast clubs that offer pupils in primary schools a free and nutritious meal before school can boost their reading, writing and maths results by the equivalent of two months' progress over the course of a year, according to the results of a randomised controlled trial published by the EEF on 4th November.

106 English primary schools with higher than average numbers of disadvantaged pupils took part in the trial, which was delivered to 8,600 pupils by the charity Magic Breakfast. Over the course of an academic year, parents were encouraged to send their child to free breakfast clubs before registration.

The independent evaluation by researchers at the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the National Children's Bureau found that Year 2 children in schools with a breakfast club made two additional months' progress in reading, writing and maths compared with a similar group whose schools were not given support to offer breakfast.

The evaluators reported that the pupils' concentration and behaviour improved too. This suggests that breakfast clubs provide an opportunity to improve outcomes for all children, not just those who actually attend, by creating better classroom environments. The impact for Year 6 pupils was slightly smaller but still promising.

The summary and full independent evaluation report on Magic Breakfast can be downloaded [here](#).

Improving Literacy in Key Stage One – Guidance Report

This guidance has been produced to support the EEF's North East Primary Literacy Campaign, launched in November 2015. It offers eight practical evidence-based recommendations which are relevant to all pupils and particularly to those struggling with their literacy:

- Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language.
- Use a balanced and engaging approach to developing reading, which integrates both decoding and comprehension skills.
- Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme.
- Teach pupils to use strategies for developing and monitoring their reading comprehension.
- Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing.
- Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and effective practice and explicitly teaching spelling.
- Use high-quality information about pupils' current capabilities to select the best next steps for teaching.
- Use high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy.

The guidance booklet can be downloaded [here](#).

Two additional reports focused on improving literacy in the Early Years and Key Stage 2 will be released in 2017.

Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress

Ensuring that assessment is efficient, effective and without bias is a considerable challenge. The removal of National Curriculum Levels as mandatory assessment measures in English schools presents teachers with uncertainty around how to judge pupils' mastery of knowledge and concepts. A successful assessment system will enable the teacher to understand thoroughly what is expected to be mastered by pupils at any given stage of education and assess their progress towards doing so in a meaningful and fair way.

The Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress (AMPP) Guide from EEF sets out to unpick some of the problems and offer some next steps for improving teacher assessment and monitoring.

AMPP is divided into the following five sections:

- Developing whole school assessment
- Assessing progress without levels
- Testing
- Improving teacher assessment
- Measuring impact

The AMPP guidance should be used to inform a well-led and clearly-defined approach to assessment, which itself sits within a well-led and clearly-defined vision of teaching and learning in a school, or a group of schools. It outlines the components of effective assessment and offers practical steps for putting it into practice.

The guide can be viewed [here](#).