

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Education Advisory Panel
Date:	11 June 2014
Title:	Strategy to improve the performance of pupils with free school meals at KS4
Reference:	5889
Report From:	Area Director, Education and Inclusion West

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1. Summary

- 1.1. Nationally, pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) have underachieved at the end of each key stage relative to their peers. This underachievement is generally referred to as “the gap” and is recognised as a national issue, prompting the Government to designate “Pupil Premium” funding in schools’ budgets. This funding stream is to be used by schools to support the improvement of the performance of pupils with FSM. The national concern is such that HMI have been working closely with a number of LAs, including Hampshire, to develop strategies to bring about improvement for this group of children.
- 1.2. Official statistics often quote the size of “the gap” and strategies identify how “the gap” might be closed. This is not wholly helpful and misses the point, as a relatively easy way for the gap to close would be for the attainment of pupils without FSM to fall. It is far more appropriate to focus on raising the attainment of pupils with FSM.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. In Hampshire, the attainment of pupils with FSM at KS2 has improved from 48.4% L4+ combined in reading writing and mathematics in 2011 to 60.3% in 2013. The respective figures for pupils without FSM are 74.6% in 2013 from 48.4% in 2011.
- 2.2. At KS4, not only is the improvement less but the gap is wider. In 2012, 29% of pupils with FSM reached the standard of 5A*-C (including English and mathematics) against 63% of pupils without. This rose to 31% and 65% respectively in 2013.
- 2.3. Whilst the underperformance gap at KS2 is in line with that nationally, it is greater at KS4 (26.3% nationally compared to 33.8% in Hampshire in 2013).

The rate of improvement in Hampshire schools at KS2 indicates that schools are developing effective measures to address the issue. However, the fact that there has been little improvement at KS4 and that the gap is larger than that nationally is a cause for concern.

- 2.4. In terms of numbers involved, in 2013 approximately 2400 pupils were identified as being eligible for FSM in the Y11 cohort. Approximately 800 of them obtained 5A*-C in the 2013 GCSE examinations. If another 600 of them had done so, there would have been no performance gap with their peers; another 220 pupils would have led to the same sized performance gap as that nationally. Over the 70 secondary schools in Hampshire, this equates to an additional 3 to 4 pupils per school obtaining 5A*-C to bring the Hampshire gap in line with that nationally, or about 9 pupils to close the gap completely.

3. Finance

- 3.1. Hampshire was the only local authority that was awarded an Education Endowment Fund grant to support a two year research programme to identify the needs of such pupils. Visits to secondary schools conducted by District Managers at the end of the 2013 academic year, in response to our concerns, drew heavily on this work and showed that headteachers are, for the most part, committed to improving the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Many secondary schools are beginning to make use of the national and international research evidence in trying to bring about improvements.

4. Performance

- 4.1. In the past two years Hampshire County Council has undertaken a series of focussed interventions with approximately 80 primary/junior schools. This work has not focussed specifically on pupils with FSM but on improving standards for all children. As a result, however, the performance of pupils with FSM has improved by 18% across the LA at the government's preferred KS2 measure.
- 4.2. In such schools there is clear evidence that the fundamental cause of pupils' underachievement lies with teachers losing sight of the standard that is expected of their pupils by the end of each year. Teachers are also unclear about the best way in which children will learn. These two factors mean that they are unable to plan and teach to ensure children will achieve well. Leaders are not systematic in monitoring or evaluating the things they need to effectively. Consequently, intervention as a result of such evaluation is, at best, patchy. The solid foundations on which teachers and schools need to build are not present.
- 4.3. In improving standards in such schools, we have improved teaching by focussing on these two factors, as well as using them to improve leadership and management. Research indicates that pupils with FSM are particularly sensitive to the quality of teaching. Whilst the focus on improving teaching has improved standards for all, it has particularly done so for pupils with FSM.
- 4.4. A key element of improving the performance of pupils with FSM in underperforming secondary schools must therefore lie with using these

factors as the basis for improving teaching and the associated monitoring by leaders.

- 4.5. Conversely, in schools that are performing well, teachers have a clear understanding of the standards that pupils have to achieve, an understanding of how children learn and the knowledge therefore of how to plan and teach lessons that will enable children to reach these levels. The key foundations are present in such schools, so this means that using the national and international research evidence to strengthen the school's good practice is likely to have an impact. Even so, it will be important that senior leaders monitor and evaluate the impact of this work with an unswerving focus, using strategies with sufficient granularity, rather than using a broader approach derived from Ofsted inspections.
- 4.6. Many secondary schools set their expectations of pupils' GCSE performance on their KS2 results. This risks pupils who have underachieved at KS2 being set a GCSE target that "locks in" their underachievement so that they never catch up with their peers. FSM pupils are more likely to fall into this group. Consequently, secondary schools need to ensure that such pupils are set targets that address this historical underachievement and their progress is accelerated through KS3.

5. Other key issues

Our strategy must therefore:

- 5.1. be tailored to take into account differences in capacity of schools and the performance of their pupils;
- 5.2. help schools to develop their work by drawing on our research as well as other national and international sources;
- 5.3. focus on improving teachers' understanding of standards and expectations, their understanding of learning and the consequential improvement in planning and teaching in the schools in which it needs to happen;
- 5.4. support schools with developing appropriate approaches to monitoring and evaluation in the schools in which it needs to happen;
- 5.5. support and challenge schools to accelerate the progress of pupils through KS3 who have underachieved at KS2;
- 5.6. include discussions with HMI to share effective practice;
- 5.7. support and challenge schools in the way in which they are addressing the underperformance of pupils with FSM.

6. Future direction

Our strategy therefore consists of the components listed below.

- 6.1. The performance of pupils in secondary schools is reviewed on an annual basis by School Improvement Managers (SIMs) carrying out a desk audit of GCSE data. This is followed up by a visit to the school by the Leadership and Learning Partner (LLP).

- 6.2. Through this process we identify schools in which there is significant underperformance of all pupils, as well as underperformance of pupils with FSM. In academies (which do not have an LLP funded by the LA) the SIM will challenge underperformance or any underperformance of groups directly.
- 6.3. Where we identify schools in which there is underperformance of all pupils, we will develop the strategies that have proved so successful at KS2 to raise the performance of all pupils and thus improve the performance of pupils with FSM.
- 6.4. These strategies are based around improving teachers' expectations and their teaching, as well as developing the monitoring carried out by leaders.
- 6.5. Where we identify schools in which there is significant underperformance of pupils with FSM but not all pupils, an audit of practice will be commissioned. This audit will draw upon current research and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. A summary report will be produced from this activity at the end of the year.
- 6.6. As part of the annual review process we will challenge schools on the degree to which they set GCSE targets that address pupils' prior underperformance and how they use KS3 to accelerate the progress of these pupils. We will ask schools for predictions of performance of pupils with FSM every six months.
- 6.7. We will work with schools in which there is good capacity to set up work groups to implement elements of national/international research. Through these groups, schools will be able to work together and share good practice. Successful approaches will be disseminated across the LA and we will involve HMI in this process.
- 6.8. International research findings indicate that teaching strategies based on cognitive acceleration bring about a significant improvement in the performance of all pupils, but particularly those with FSM. One such scheme is "Let's Think English". A small scale pilot that has been run through 2013 has shown particular impact for lower attaining pupils and we intend to scale this up through the academic year.
- 6.9. We will work with groups of schools to ensure that the expectations of FSM pupils on transfer from KS2 are sufficiently high and the work through KS3 builds on that at KS2 appropriately.
- 6.10. We will continue our programme of Governing Body training.
- 6.11. We will monitor progress and impact of the work through visits to the school by the Learning and Leadership Partner, and/ or through the Local Authority's annual desk audit of school performance. School Improvement Managers will visit underperforming schools where necessary.
- 6.12. Following this work and the findings from the EEF project, we will set up a further conference to disseminate effective practice. We will involve HMI in this work.
- 6.13. We will also consider commissioning a bespoke piece of work with, and for, education centres.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Panel notes the report and supports the direction of travel.
- 7.2 That the Panel receives further reports on the attainment of children and young people eligible for free school meals, and the impact of the work being done.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. N/A

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. N/A

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint /energy consumption?

N/A

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

N/A