

Closing the Achievement Gap: Good Practice in Schools



Chair Welcome and Introduction to What Works in Schools

Cathy Twist, Director of Education and Learning, Lambeth LA

Programme- Morning Session

08.30 Registration and Coffee

09.15 Welcome and opening remarks on 'What Works in Closing the Gap'

Cathy Twist, Director, Education and Learning, Lambeth LA

09.40 What does data and research tell us about closing the achievement gap?

Feyisa Demie, Head of Research and Adviser for School Self-evaluation, Lambeth LA

10.10 Addressing the North and South Achievement Gap

Professor Stephen Gorard, University of Durham

10.40 Question and Answer Session

11.00 Tea and Coffee

11.30 Headteachers Panel 1: What works in closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils

Chair: David Boyle, Principal, Dunraven School, Lambeth LA

Edison David, Headteacher, Granton Primary School, Lambeth LA

Jacinta Waters, Head of School, Hitherfield Primary School, Lambeth LA

Serge Cefai, Headteacher, Sacred Heart Secondary School, Southwark LA

Jeremy Rowe, Headteacher, Sir John Leman High School, Suffolk LA

(including Question and Answer Session)

13.00 Lunch

Programme- Afternoon Session

13.45 Tackling disadvantage using pupil premium: Lessons from schools, regions and DfE opportunity areas

Gaynor Roberts, Senior HMI, Ofsted

14.15 Practitioners Panel 2: Tackling disadvantage: Case studies of successful schools

14.15 Effective practice in tackling disadvantage in secondary schools

Wendy Tomes (CEO) and Claire Turpin (Headteacher), Sidney Stringer Academy, Coventry

14.45 Effective practice in using pupil premium in primary schools to close the gap

Marc Rowland, Head of Rosendale Research School

15.10 Question and Answer Session

15.25 Closing Remarks

15.30 Close

Closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils: Lessons from successful schools

Aims

The 'Closing the Achievement Gap for Disadvantaged Pupils' research aims to examine the success factors behind outstanding achievement and improvement of schools that serve disadvantaged inner city areas.

Research methods:

1. Case studies and observations:

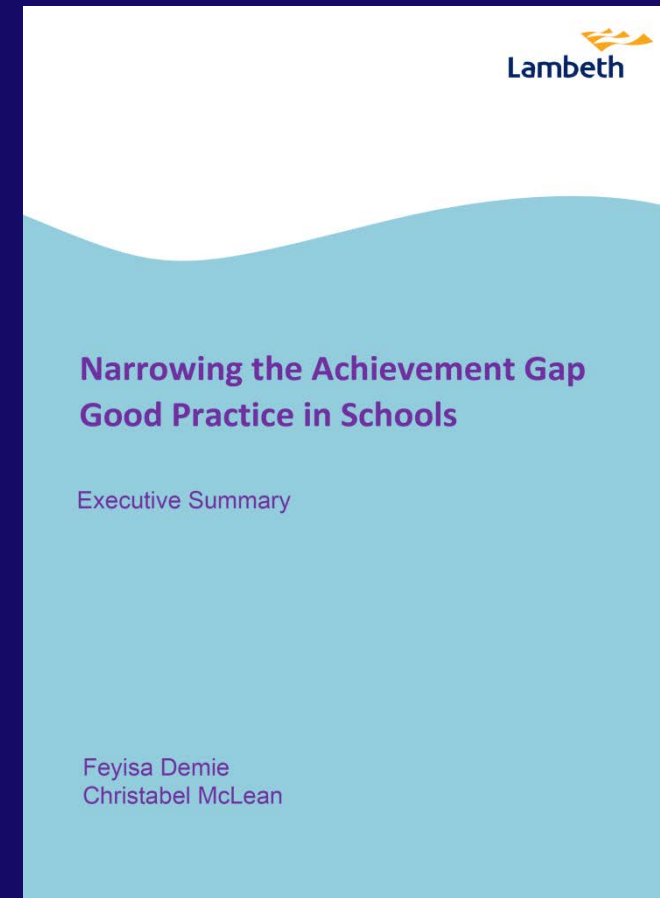
Eight primary and three secondary schools were selected for case studies. Key criteria for the selection of schools were:

- Good or outstanding grades in their most recent Ofsted inspection
- Exceptionally good results and a sustained KS2 and GCSE improvement
- Evidence of narrowing the gap at KS2 and GCSE for disadvantaged pupils

A detailed questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, staff, parents and pupils to gather evidence on what works.

2. Focus groups:

Headteacher, parent and pupil focus groups were carried out to ascertain their views about what works in schools.



Research Questions

The 'Closing the Achievement Gap' research has tried to answer two questions about pupils who are entitled to free school meals.

- 1. What are the success factors behind closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils?**
- 2. What are the implications for practice?**

Success Factors and Reasons for Closing the Gap

The research identifies a number of factors that are successful in closing the gap:

- Strong leadership
- High quality teaching and learning
- Effective use of data to identify underachieving groups
- Providing an inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils
- Effective targeted support for disadvantaged pupils

Success Factors: Strong and Inspirational Leadership at School Level

- Lambeth managed to recruit and keep many exceptional school leaders who with their staff and governors have fostered a climate of high expectations and delivered such impressive outcomes.
- All schools demonstrate 'good and outstanding' leadership by the headteacher and senior management teams. Each is supported by a committed team of teachers. Leaders are described as 'inspirational' and 'visionary'. Each has a strong moral drive for pupils to succeed whatever their background. One headteacher stated:
'We challenge stereotypes about the area served by the school by asking questions such as why can't a school behind Brixton be a good school, where achievement is outstanding? Why can't children in the area have their dream? We have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently.'
- The headteachers are excellent role models and have clear visions for raising standards and effective monitoring of the curriculum at all levels.
- A focus on high standards and the needs of the individual child.
- Personal contact with parents and the community.

Success Factors: Effective Teaching and Learning

- Good and outstanding teaching by consistently recruiting high-quality staff who show great commitment and passion
- There is an active focus on learning in the schools with a sustained focus on ensuring access to the curriculum for every pupil, whatever their background
- The schools are good in using an inclusive curriculum that reflects/ uses the pupils' heritage, culture and experience.



Success Factors: Effective Use of Data for Self-Evaluation

- Data is used as a driving force to raise standards. All schools have high quality assessment and tracking and target setting procedures for individuals and groups.
- Use of background data such as ethnicity, language spoken, EAL level of proficiency in English, attendance rates, free school meals and types of support.
- Use robust data from a range of tests and assessments e.g. Phonics, KS1, KS2 and GCSE assessment data to set targets/appropriate lessons
- Data is used to decide priorities - planning, reviewing activities including resourcing priorities, school improvement priorities, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing effectiveness of initiatives and strategies:
 - *'Data should be used as a lever for change. We are a school that is effective in the use of data, is responsive and able to act on what data tells us.'* (Headteacher)
- Termly pupil progress meetings - attended by the Headteacher, class teacher, TAs and inclusion team members.
- Pupil progress is discussed and actions are agreed. Actions are reviewed termly.
- There is a clear strategy for support that is shared and reviewed each term.

Parental Involvement

- Schools understand the reasons why some families are not involved and make sure that pupils get extra help before, during and after school
- Informal, friendly approach to parents, seeking to know their interests and personally inviting them to take part in classes.

We know our community; there are sections where the families have chaotic lives. (Executive Head)

'Our success is based on good practice; of breaking barriers to learning, why families are not engaged and what's stopping children from achieving for a range of reasons, temporary housing, social care and mental health issues. These are the disadvantages families come to school with. We work in many ways with families. A lot of parents may not have had a positive experience at school themselves. If we are pleasant and friendly then they will come in.' (Family Support Leader)

The pastoral team make sure families are aware of the support available, for example breakfast club, after-school care and support during holidays. They are responsible for bringing in providers for before and after school care and have been able to negotiate on behalf of some children who cannot afford to attend these groups so that they are able to have free access to clubs and summer clubs. (Head of School)

An Innovative Curriculum

- **Case study schools have rich and imaginative curricula, both within and beyond the classroom, which add value in many ways.**
- **Children see themselves and their own cultural heritage included.**
- **Designing an exciting curriculum that teaches core skills rigorously, incorporates national curriculum requirements creatively and widens children's experiences and horizons ambitiously, is a particular accomplishment of our case study schools.**
- **Curriculum and lesson planning is thorough, with well-defined learning objectives for both the class and individual children. Teachers work in teams across year groups and are allocated assessment, planning and preparation time (APP) to develop their plans.**
- **Assessment for learning, constructive marking and reciprocal feedback are well embedded and regular reviews of the progress of each class and each child are standard practice, with frequent feedback to the parents.**

Effective Targeted Support

Effective targeted support through extensive use of:

- the best teachers to teach English and maths intervention groups
- the pupils' class teacher to deliver booster classes
- well trained teaching assistants
- tailored support for individuals in the classroom
- one to one support
- parental engagement
- enhanced Maths and English staffing
- a wide range of visits

Conclusions

1. The research findings contain a number of messages for schools with implications for replication and sharing good practice with other schools
2. The findings suggest that disadvantage need not always be a barrier to achievement. The case study schools were good at challenging poverty. Some have succeeded in not merely narrowing the gap but closing it.
3. Some of the approaches used in the successful schools can be applied elsewhere. The key ingredients are:
 - *Rigorous monitoring of data*
 - *Ensuring access to high quality teaching*
 - *Providing a strong and visionary Headteacher*
 - *Working with parents to increase engagement and raise aspirations*
 - *Use of the best teachers to teach English and maths intervention groups*
 - *Use of well trained TAs*