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Pupil Premium and Attainment Overview & Scrutiny Review

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Background to the review

At its meeting on 16th July, the Education Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Educational Attainment of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

The Committee learned that nationally as well as in Lancashire the educational attainment of FSM children is consistently well below their peers. In 2011, the Government's Pupil Premium Scheme was introduced, whereby budget allocations for individual schools from the Department for Education were boosted according to the numbers of FSM children on the school roll. Authority was delegated to head teachers and school governing bodies to choose how best to make use of this Pupil Premium in raising the learning and attainment levels of FSM children in their care.

The Committee resolved to establish a task group to explore these issues and begin to identify possible actions. The work of the task group would begin as soon as the statistical data for 2013 became available.

Membership of the task group

- County Councillor Cynthia Dereli (Chair)
- County Councillor Susie Charles
- County Councillor Anne Cheetham
- County Councillor Chris Henig
- County Councillor Bernard Dawson
- Mrs Janet Hamid
- Mr Ken Wales

Scope of the Scrutiny exercise

To review the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium scheme, with a focus on the

groups where statistics indicate more work is needed in raising standards, in particular FSM children at Key stages 3-4

- interrogate the data available in relation to FSM children
- drill down into the detail of the data, subdividing it into more discrete sub-sets, such as by: gender; geographical location; schools; community/ethnic settings; pupil/population density (rural/urban); FSM density
- select and investigate further particular data sub-sets to illuminate reasons why the performance of those FSM children remains below the Lancashire and national average
- explore with practitioners what they see as the specific barriers around learning and achieving amongst those FSM they are working with
- appraise the role and performance of the County Council's Quality and Continuous Improvement Team in supporting Lancashire's head teachers and school governing bodies to deploy their Pupil Premium resources to best effect.
- identify local examples of good practice in use of the Pupil Premium
- make recommendations for improvements.

Methodology

The Task Group examined statistical data on attainment, considered reports from Ofsted and the Sutton Trust, conducted a series of one to one discussions with Primary School headteachers, held meetings with Secondary School Heads, and conducted a number of visits to Secondary schools.

Witnesses

Lancashire County Council

- Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement, Lancashire County Council
- Paul Dyson-Knight, Senior Adviser & Team Leader, Secondary Team, Quality and Continuous Improvement

Headteachers from Primary and Secondary Schools in Lancashire

- Richard Varey, Headteacher, Blessed Trinity RC College, Burnley
- David Burton, Headteacher, Sir John Thursby Community College, Burnley
- Sally Cryer, Headteacher, Unity College, Burnley
- Bob Wakefield, Headteacher, Shuttleworth College, Burnley
- Damien Callagher, Headteacher, Christ the King Catholic Maths and Computing College, Preston
- Siobhan Collingwood, Headteacher, Morecambe Bay Primary School, Morecambe
- Gillian Thomas, Headteacher, Thurnham Glasson CE Primary School
- Jo Williams, Headteacher, Wilson's Endowed CE School, Over Kellet
- Stephanie Reeves, Headteacher, Garstang Community Primary School, Garstang
- Cathryn Wilkinson, Headteacher, SS Mary and Michael Catholic Primary School, Garstang
- Jo Longworth, Headteacher, Bowerham Community Primary School, Lancaster
- Gill Jackson, Headteacher, Archbishop Temple School, Preston

- Jonathan Smart Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Engineering College Skelmersdale
- Caroline Sephton, Assistant Headteacher, St Michaels CE High School, Chorley
- Sean Bullen from Millfield Science and Performing Arts College.

Headteachers also introduced us to other staff and pupils during site visits

Introduction

Whilst the efforts of secondary schools in particular have yet to show through consistently in improved levels of achievement for Free School Meals pupils, schools in Lancashire are doing excellent, innovative and effective things with Pupil Premium funding. That much is clear and needs expressing from the start. The Task Group was deeply impressed by the commitment, enthusiasm, hard work and ability being brought to the task of using this funding to help children and young people by schools and teachers, supported by the County Council.

The schools spoken to by the Task Group were reflective of all schools in Lancashire, Primary and Secondary, big and small, from all parts of the county and at different stages of the work towards high attainment for all Lancashire children. Whilst the detail of what was being done differed, the commitment to excellence was shared.

This report, as a reflection of what the task group saw and heard, is a reflection of good practice, an attempt to show to a wider audience what is being done. The report also sets out the challenges faced, the difficulties experienced. Finally, the report sets out the characteristics of the good practice the Task Group has seen, with a view to supporting the development of a checklist that can be used by school leadership teams and governors to assess their own use of Pupil Premium funding.

It is essential that attainment levels for this group of children and young people improve. It is hoped that the findings of the Task Group will be used to support schools in delivering this aim.

Findings

Lancashire County Council, working alongside the schools in Lancashire, aims to ensure that all children in the county get the best possible education, and reach the levels of attainment they are capable of. It is the case in Lancashire, as in the rest of the country, that children who are in receipt of free school meals have lower attainment levels than those children who are not. The reasons for this are many and complex. Clearly it is the case that children's entitlement to Free School Meals indicates that they are likely to be economically disadvantaged, and this will often go hand in hand with social deprivation, worklessness in the family and a range of other challenges. However, whilst there may be a range of reasons which make it harder for some of these pupils to achieve, it is by no means an automatic excuse for those children or their schools for them not reaching the levels of attainment they are capable of. Partly to address this very issue, the government introduced the Pupil Premium in 2011. The Pupil Premium (PP) is a sum of money paid to schools for each pupil who is entitled to Free School Meals. For 2014/15, the amounts will be £1,300 for primary-aged pupils and £935 for secondary-aged pupils

The use of this money is monitored by Ofsted, and schools are required to account for their spending of PP to demonstrate it is being spent on those pupils for whom it is intended.

It was not, therefore, the intention of the task group to duplicate the work of Ofsted. Instead, the Task Group's aim was to establish the things that worked in the use of PP for FSM pupils and the challenges that schools face in this area, to produce a form of checklist of things to consider for schools, the county council and other interested bodies when considering how to support

FSM pupils to achieve, attain and aspire.

In examining the data, the position in Lancashire is fairly clear in that attainment levels for FSM pupils are far lower than those for non-FSM. This is not unique to Lancashire, nor is it unique that the most significant areas of under performance are amongst boys at KS4, and particularly in English. What is true is that Lancashire's results for FSM pupils at Primary level are in line with or better than the National average, but below the average at KS4 and that there has been little improvement in attainment at KS4 over the past few years despite a clear focus on this issue. Rather than look at that issue in isolation, however, the Task Group spoke to both primary schools (where differences in attainment are less pronounced) and secondary schools to see what the different approaches were and what interventions, actions and support activities had been demonstrated to work. It should be stressed that PP has, in some sense, not been in place for long enough to be able to assess the long term impact. However, it is equally clear that schools have seized the opportunities to act quickly and decisively, as well as innovatively to address the problem and start showing positive results.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Experience of Primary Schools: introduction

Primary Schools generally recognised the advantages they gained from being smaller than secondary schools in terms of being able to engage with their families. The simple fact that parents were usually present to drop off and collect children from school, giving the school the opportunity to engage face to face with parents, was mentioned. With lower numbers of staff, and staff who will work full time with the same group of pupils, issues could be identified early, and information could be exchanged between staff members with relative ease.

What Primary Schools do with Pupil Premium funding

The Task Group saw many projects, programmes and support activities undertaken by Primary Schools using Pupil Premium funding. The Task group broke down the types of support into four broad categories, although it is clear that there is significant overlap between them. The categories were:

- Personal: direct support for a child's individual needs to facilitate good attendance and achievement
- Social and Emotional: support with a child's broader wellbeing
- Teaching: academic and specific educational support
- Working with families: Support aimed at the child's wider environment, helping families to become resilient and able to support their own children.

Examples include:

Personal

- Help with the cost of essentials

from uniforms to food and equipment

- Help with the cost of school trips and out-of-school clubs
- Contributing to cost of home to school transport
- Funding for breakfast clubs

Social and emotional: Building confidence:

Schools identified types of social and emotional need to be targeted that included lack of 'boundaries' at home, language deprivation, poor routines and impoverishment of opportunities. Examples vary from specific cases to whole school policies.

- Running summer schools for pre-reception children to prepare them for the school experience
- Employing one-to-one Teaching Assistant (TA) support or mentoring
- Employing home school liaison workers
- Running Counselling Services
- Providing staff to take a pupil to a hearing test when the parent was unable to do so

Teaching Support

Pupil Premium funding was often used to pay for extra teachers or TAs. The importance of high quality teaching was emphasised repeatedly. There were many innovative ways of utilising this to meet the needs of the pupils.

- Running after school clubs, including homework clubs, but also clubs for creative and sporting activities
- Providing extra/specialist teaching support for individuals or groups.
- Adapting the spread of mixed age classes to meet the needs of pupils

- Creating smaller classes allowing the curriculum to be tailored to individual learning needs
- Adding value through extra teacher training
- Employing a specialist teacher for literacy
- Paying for an apprentice to do individual education plans for children

attainment. Many Secondary Schools run their own tests rather than rely on data from Primary Schools. While this is clearly not universally true, it may be an area which would benefit from more discussion and collaboration between primary and secondary schools.

Working with families

There were many very specific examples of how schools have used extra resources to step in when families are under stress to enable the child's schooling to continue.

- Employing TAs specifically to mentor parents
- Employing a Mentor/ Parent Support officer to support FSM families
- Providing specific targeted support for families through extra welfare support at lunch times and a homework club
- Paying for home/school liaison workers and social workers
- Money spent on attendance issues
- Sessions for parents sign-posting support available
- Liaison work with the local Children's Centre

Transition

Several primaries expressed concern about transition arrangements to Secondary Schools. There was a view that the Secondary sector does not always take enough notice of the information about the support a child has received and may need, and about their family circumstances, sometimes apparently preferring to almost start from scratch. The same criticism was also made in relation to academic

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

What the secondary schools told us

All schools recognised that, in comparison with the Primary sector, being larger schools made it harder to know families in the same way. However, the larger size of secondary schools meant that they could achieve "economies of scale" – they had enough funding to purchase expertise in a wider range of areas.

There was also a general consensus that there were pupils in need of support who did not fit into the FSM category. Schools vary in their expression of their ethos, but all agree they want the best for students, and we found that, to this end, innovation was widespread.

What Secondary Schools do with Pupil Premium funding

Personal

As with Primary Schools, there are a whole range of different items of 'behind the scenes' spending to support the individual pupil and help to bridge the gap.

- Support with uniform costs
- Support for costs of school trips
- Breakfast clubs – a safe space in the early morning
- Purchasing books
- Specialist support staff, including in one school music classes
- Help with travel costs

Social and emotional:

Schools were emphasising a range of issues that interrelate to raise the confidence and hence achievement of FSM pupils:

- Giving high priority to pastoral issues, including significant

- investment in staff working in purely a pastoral capacity
- Creating a House system, with this vertical structure providing a 'family' with same tutor relations through their school career, and "vertical" tutor groups, including pupils from years 7-11
- Addressing emotional intelligence, including running special classes for children experiencing difficulties in this area
- Directly employing a social worker (as part of a Lancashire-wide pilot scheme)
- Supporting disciplinary structures, for example through the use of internal exclusion and one-to-one work
- Paying for school trips – as a reward for good behaviour, attendance etc
- Employing dedicated staff to work on attendance
- Bringing in careers advice early - rolling out a programme of careers advice from year 7, and using Facebook to interest pupils in careers advice
- Offering support for pupils throughout the day eg providing a special activities room for lunch time break and offering personal contact through the ex-service personnel mentoring scheme – and cutting lunch time to keep the focus on education.
- Providing extended work experience to support well-being of pupils not engaged.

Teaching

In addressing the gap for FSM pupils' attainment, teaching of course is central. So is having a school ethos and pastoral structure linked to attainment, with a vision for both strong discipline and positive learning going hand-in-hand. Schools agreed that getting quality

teachers was paramount, adding in many cases that support for the staff who will deliver the improvements was also important to them. A significant amount of Pupil Premium funding goes on staffing, recruiting and retaining the best teachers and making the best use of TAs.

Varieties of initiatives on these themes included:

- Providing targets for each child in every subject
- Having a schools tracking system on which FSM pupils are highlighted for all staff to see with staff able to share concerns quickly via the internal school system
- Promoting literacy across the curriculum,
- Where literacy is a problem, especially with boys, ensuring that all staff see literacy as their issue
- Making use of student literacy leaders
- Providing a Reading Club
- Having a Catch-up programme on literacy with year 7
- Running a repeat Year 6 for low achieving pupils
- Use of TAs to work intensively with a child, with a view to enabling the child to function independently
- Providing additional lessons at weekends and in holidays, using both teachers and TAs
- A school which only shuts at Christmas – with staff paid to teach in all other holidays to provide continuity of learning experience as well as of discipline
- Providing a specialist language support worker for newly arrived families
- Employing speakers of foreign languages where a high

proportion of pupils speak that language at home

- Where there is large population of pupils for English is an additional language (EAL) employing a 'floating' English teacher to lead on English across the curriculum

Working With Families

Schools recognise that social deprivation has many factors and as a result were providing many different measures from employing a school counsellor or attendance officer to investing in developing relations with families through a wide variety of measures:

- Employing attendance officers who work out in the community
- Staff being present at the front of the building to welcome children and parents from 8.0am
- Sending letters home to encourage engagement of parents
- Recognising the importance of having engagement of parents, having staff contact parents on day of parents evening with a reminder
- Tracking information about parental attendance at meetings

Schools also commented that the support they had had from other agencies in tackling these issues, is now diminishing because of budget cuts.

Transition and structural issues

As with primary schools, several secondary schools expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of transition from Year 6 to 7. It was noted that transition is hard for many students, and relative roles of primary and secondary schools were questioned.

There was criticism of SATS data as not being objective, a feeling that some primary schools were pushing pupils through SATS, with the result that secondary schools distrusted data provided by primary schools. There was also a feeling that the time gap from finishing SATS to secondary school entry may be part of the problem and schools were taking action to address this. Finally it was noted that sometimes parents can exacerbate problems, finding it hard to adjust, for instance, if they no longer have one person to contact.

Schools were taking action to address transition issues by:

- Having several staff dedicated to dealing with this
- Having staff going into primary schools to work with pupils identifying social/emotional needs and allocating pupils to houses in advance
- Holding summer schools for FSM pupils prior to year 7 entry and even for year 5 pupils; or yr 6 pupils in school for 2 days a week for half a term in June/July to begin their Y7 studies
- Employing primary specialists to support pupils in year 7, in some cases effectively running a repeat year 6 for those pupils

For the future, there was a view that a move to progression rather than attainment measures would be better, but some concerns about how this would work in practice.

Good practice examples

One school was faced with a situation where a parent's mental health issues were causing the child to miss school. A successful deal was made with the parent that the school would pay for a taxi in the morning if the parent would pick up the child from school in the afternoon.

A secondary school has used PP money to put £1 a day on the electronic lunch card of every child entitled to FSM. The £1 is automatically removed if it's not spent before 8.45, meaning that it has to be used for breakfast at school (also encouraging improved punctuality).

One school explained how fortunate they had been to be part of a pilot scheme for schools to directly employ a social worker, reporting to the Headteacher. The school felt that this meant they were so much more responsive, faster to deal with issues and also better able to coordinate a child's education and wellbeing needs. The Headteacher suggested that the scheme should be rolled out to all schools.

For smaller schools, and therefore especially primary schools, there simply is not that much PP funding available. Some of the initiatives run by larger schools and schools with larger numbers of FSM pupils are simply beyond the reach of some, and this is a major frustration. A child who the school feel would benefit from specialist help may not be able to get it because it is simply not financially viable. The Task Group heard some schools starting to talk about sharing resources and working in co-operation with others to identify if there were ways in which these specialist services could be accessed in that way.

A child's academic attainment cannot be separated from their home and social surroundings. A chaotic home life will cause problems for punctuality, attendance, homework and engagement. A primary school used PP money to employ a cleaner to help a family who were struggling. The cleaner didn't just clean the home – they showed the parents how to maintain a clean home. Other schools have offered support with cooking, and nutrition.

A number of different approaches to developing literacy across the curriculum have been tried. One school runs a "theme of the week" running across all subjects. Examples might include "to-too-two" or "Capital Letters", which will be referred to and addressed in all lessons. Other schools have employed floating English teachers, who both work with small groups of students and lead on literacy projects across the curriculum.

Many schools use PP funding to provide equipment and uniform for pupils. One school explained that their policy in this area was to always provide a child with the equipment they needed. Items supplied would be new and good quality, not just drawn from the schools stock of older or used items. However, this would be done once and once only, and the child and family would be given the clear message that they were expected to look after and respect the equipment. The school felt that this policy was working for them, as an expression of the wider culture of the school.

Establishing a "safe" place for children – somewhere they could go outside of lesson times – can be a crucial element in the pastoral care a school can offer. One secondary school has invested extensively in a room, open to all children, where they can go, be around familiar faces, seek help and advice, or just play computer or board games. This safe room has also become a conduit for wider activities, for example, the children who regularly use it have undertaken visits to offer help themselves to other members of the community, such as older people. The room functions both as a place where children who may otherwise be struggling with some social activities can feel they belong, whilst also providing a place where the school can reach those children, understanding and offering the support mechanisms the child needs back in the "real world" of the school and academic achievement.

Although transition was picked up as an issue by both secondary and primary schools, again there are pockets of good practice. One school used the post-exam space in the summer timetable to bring in year 6 pupils, not just for a day or two, but for two days a week for the last weeks of term. As well as helping the children adapt to their new surroundings, this also tackled the issue identified by some secondary schools, who felt that Year 6 children often failed to continue progress post SATS, and indeed even went backwards over the long gap between the SATS, over the summer holidays and into September.

Ethos and culture

All the schools the Task Group spoke to stressed that tackling the issue of attainment of pupils entitled to FSM required support tailored for that group, whether in individual help for a single student facing particular issues, or more general help for the cohort. However, in

doing this, they emphasised strongly that the key to raising attainment for one group was inextricably tied up with the overall ethos of the school. Schools emphasised that they were working to create an ethos or culture running which permeates the whole school and which is understood by students, teachers, families and the community. One repeated theme that came from schools is the desire to not allow a child's personal circumstances to affect their potential to attain. Some described this as enabling a child to "leave their baggage at the door" of the classroom. Others said that the aim was "to understand but not to excuse" poor behaviour. Either way, the meaning was clear – that the school would do all it could to provide the maximum support to remove any possible barrier to effective and successful learning.

Effective use of PP money

There is no one size fits all when it comes to the use of PP money. As many schools, both primary and secondary, said – many of the things they do with PP money they would be doing in any case. Many noted that PP was not additional money, and that reductions in funding elsewhere cancelled out the money from PP. Many others made it clear that they did not treat FSM pupils as a distinct group, even though performance reporting did. Schools preferred to stress the needs of all pupils and sought to address them in any circumstances.

However, it is clear that the schools spoken to as part of the review have approached the issue in a number of ways, but where there has been success, this is often in line with a number of clear principles evident in the following features.

Governance and Strategic Leadership

- The school has a clearly expressed ethos, and demonstrates this to others. It is well understood by teachers, non-teaching staff, students, families and the wider community
- Steps have been taken to identify students entitled to free schools meals and to encourage take up
- The specific issues and conditions that apply to the needs of students, school and community as they relate to the pupil premium are well understood
- There is a fully developed long term strategy to identify whatever issues are faced by the individual school and by those pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium

- The Management Team play a full and active role in ensuring the high attainment of pupils on FSM
- The Governing body is actively engaged in challenging and supporting the school in how Pupil Premium funding is used
- There is a clear understanding of what success will look like
- Pupil Premium funding is clearly targeted at those pupils for whom it is designed
- There is a clear structured plan behind the activities, projects and processes put in place to achieve the objectives behind the provision of Pupil premium funding
- The outcomes of activities paid for by Pupil Premium funding are monitored and measured
- Each individual piece of work or initiative is assessed for its impact on attainment
- Schools are open to opportunities for co-operation and collaboration with other schools.

Working With Students, Families and Communities

- There is good engagement, knowledge and understanding of not just the child, but their family and community.
- There is a communications strategy in place to talk to students, families and the community about attainment, support for pupils, and the pupil premium
- Information and understanding is shared between different members of staff involved in a child's support

- The role of classroom teachers and support staff in the pastoral support for students is clearly defined and appropriate for the school.
- Engagement with other child and family support services not provided by the schools (for example, social care professionals) is strong
- Internal mechanisms exist for classroom teachers to engage with and refer to specialist support services
- Support for any given individual pupil is tailored to their specific needs

Year 6 pupils will be moving on to, in order to ensure a smooth transition

- Information passed on to secondary schools is accurate and useful
- There is an ongoing relationship with primary schools to ensure best understanding of their former pupils is carried forward as they move into year 7
- Pupils are prepared for secondary schools post SATs

Transition

Secondary schools:

- Strong and positive relationships exist with feeder primary schools
- Feedback on pupil attainment and progress to Primary schools at Yr 7, 8 and beyond is given
- There is confidence that information provided by feeder primary schools can be trusted and used to assist the new intake (including 'softer' information about pastoral support needs alongside achievement data)
- Alternative forms of teaching provision to Year 7 students have been considered and, where appropriate, implemented
- Extra support is in place at year 7 to help students having difficulties with transition, and those students needing that extra support are identified early

Primary schools:

- Strong and positive relationships exist with secondary schools that

Issues and Challenges

The use of PP money is not a straightforward area. Whilst it is a requirement that the spend is reported to Ofsted, it is clear that there is no such thing as a typical FSM pupil, nor that all FSM pupils share any particular characteristic, other than the obvious one that they are entitled to free school meals. The issues are numerous: Many pupils fall just above the threshold. Many may be entitled to FSM, but don't claim it for a range of reasons (pride, lack of awareness or understanding). Some pupils not in any way entitled to FSM will have the same complex needs or poor attainment that are being tackled by the use of FSM money. Schools are spending money appropriately, but there are grey areas.

Another significant grey area is in the simple question of how much schools can really be responsible for. Many schools, when asked what the greatest challenge to the attainment of FSM pupils was, said it was nothing to do with their schooling or education, but to do with their family and social background. Children coming to school with poor nutrition, parents uninterested in education and unsupportive of schools, lack of aspiration in the family or community, not speaking English as a first language, and a whole range of social and physical problems all posed challenges. Schools recognised that many other service providers and support mechanisms are being lost in the difficult public sector spending climate, be that social care from the County Council or benefits from central government, and it's clear that many of the things schools are spending PP money on are in areas that are not what would usually be understood as educational matters. Clearly, helping a family get organised, helping them learn to cook cheap healthy meals – all these things will help a child at school. But the extent to which they are a school's

problem and to which schools should pay for them is a major issue.

One issue which was highlighted to the Task Group was how statistics don't always tell the full story. Whilst there are exceptions, it is more likely that those pupils who effectively don't attain at all on the published data are FSM pupils. One school highlighted that, amongst any group of pupils, it is more likely that the "non-achievers" will be found within that group entitled to FSM. Even a small handful of pupils who effectively contribute very little to the formal attainment measures can skew averages downwards, even if schools work hard to find alternative provision or help for those pupils, who may be non-attenders, facing serious family issues, be experiencing serious health problems and so on.

The final point to note is on the role of the County Council. The Council provides a great deal of support to schools, support that is valued by the schools, as demonstrated by the fact that large numbers of schools continue to subscribe to what are often paid-for services. School advisors, for example, obviously have a key role. The County Council can take into account, when making its difficult budget decisions, the impact these will have on schools and on FSM pupils and their families. And the County Council can play a key role in co-ordinating activities with schools and other partners to deliver whole family solutions, perhaps especially so now that the Council has direct responsibility for public health matters.

Conclusions

The strengths and numerous examples of good practice highlighted in this report should be recognised and acknowledged. However, the reasons why the Task Group originally chose to undertake this work have not gone away. In choosing to focus on examples of good practice, the Task group are under no illusions that to date there remains a gap between the achievement of those in receipt of the Pupil Premium and their peers, particular at the end of KS4. The task group calls on all schools and the County Council to maintain the focus in this area and maximise efforts to address this attainment gap. The task group therefore recommend that:

The gap between the achievement of those in receipt of the Pupil Premium and their peers, particular at the end of KS4 must continue to be a key focus for schools, and that the County Council must retain a close overview of the performance of this group, including regular reporting to Councillors.

Lancashire schools are working intelligently, creatively and effectively in their use of PP funding to drive attainment amongst those pupils entitled to Free School Meals. Schools are clearly working hard to create an ethos which is both nurturing and yet attainment focussed, and it is clear that the support offered by Lancashire County Council is also geared to that same goal of providing the best quality education for all children and young people in Lancashire. We therefore recommend that:

The work being undertaken by Schools, with support from the County Council, to create an ethos of inclusivity, caring and community-focus that in many schools is helping to bridge the gap for FSM pupils is recognised and applauded.

Whilst there are many areas of very good practice, as highlighted in this report, it is the case that a number of schools, both at Primary and Secondary level, are concerned about transition. This is a difficult time for pupils, and can be especially difficult for those who are experiencing other difficulties. It is essential that schools from the two sectors are encouraged to work with each other in an open and honest atmosphere, to identify cooperative ways of working to benefit the children. We therefore recommend that

The issues that can arise in the transition from primary school to secondary school are recognised by all concerned, especially for vulnerable pupils, and that the County Council considers what they can do to support good practice in this area.

Whilst PP funding has been welcomed, schools make clear that the funding is not an additional sum that makes anything possible. Many schools said simply that they would be doing the things they are doing with PP money anyway, and that PP money is simply the name given to a slice of the funding they receive, not an extra amount. For many schools, particularly smaller schools (and therefore especially Primary schools), there is an issue of scale. For example, they are keen to tap

into specialist support, but have neither the money nor the need to pay for the extra member of staff this might entail. One possible option is for schools to investigate working in co-operation with other schools, and possibly even pooling resources to allow them access to these more expensive specialist services. The Task Group believe that the county Council has a role to support and facilitate this kind of work with schools. It is therefore recommended that:

The County Council considers how best to facilitate partnerships between schools where there are aspirations in relation to the use of Pupil Premium money which are limited by financial constraints

Of concern to the Task group was the need to ensure that schools get the money they need. That means making sure that pupils are registered as being entitled to FSM. The government's programme to offer free school meals to all KS1 Pupils is very welcome; however, there is a major concern (identified in the pilot areas for universal infant FSM) that this policy will remove the incentive for many parents to register their entitlement, and thus reduce the amount of money coming into schools. The Task Group is aware of some excellent partnership work undertaken by the County Council and the District Councils on data matching to identify families who would be entitled to FSM. It is felt that it is essential that this work is continued to make sure schools in Lancashire don't lose out. It is recommended that:

The benefits flowing from the Pupil Premium budgets are recognised, and that therefore the County Council continues, in partnership with the District Councils in Lancashire to address the issue of take up of benefits, and that these efforts, particularly in the context of forthcoming changes to Free School Meals for all Key Stage 1 children, are sustained

This Task group work has naturally focussed on schools. What schools have said, and what is demonstrated by many of the activities they undertake with PP money, is that this is not simply a school issue. Attainment and aspiration is affected by all sorts of outside factors – family, community, expectations, health, economic prosperity. Schools alone can't tackle these issues. The difficult financial situation faced by the wider public sector is recognised, and it is acknowledged that some services which supported the same ambitions as schools are no longer available in the same form as in previous years. However, there is still much that can be done, and where these issues cover whole communities and neighbourhoods, the County council is in a position to help, perhaps especially since the responsibility for Public Health – a massive factor in and reflection of a child's chances in life – now lies with the council. It is recommended that:

The County Council considers how it can work in partnership with schools where there are particular community or locality barriers to achievement.

Finally, whilst there is so much that is good happening in Lancashire, there is no room for complacency, and there are always ways in which schools can improve. The Task group identified in this report the characteristics of schools that make excellent use of PP funding. It is felt that using this information to produce a toolkit for school leaders and governors to carry out a form of self-assessment to challenge their performance would be extremely useful. Whilst the Task group have laid these out as a set of statements, it is felt that schools may benefit more if these principles were set out as questions for schools to answer. Such an assessment would undoubtedly help schools improve and evidence their improvement to Ofsted. It is therefore recommended that:

The County Council develops a check list or guidance for schools' leadership and governors to use as a tool for assessing their use of Pupil Premium, based on the good practice identified and set out in this report

Summary of Recommendations

The Task Group recommend that:

1. The gap between the achievement of those in receipt of the Pupil Premium and their peers, particular at the end of KS4 must continue to be a key focus for schools, and that the County Council must retain a close overview of the performance of this group, including regular reporting to Councillors.
2. The work being undertaken by Schools, with support from the County Council, to create an ethos of inclusivity, caring and community-focus that in many schools is helping to bridge the gap for FSM pupils is recognised and applauded.
3. The issues that can arise in the transition from primary school to secondary school are recognised by all concerned, especially for vulnerable pupils, and that the County Council considers what they can do to support good practice in this area.
4. The County Council considers how best to facilitate partnerships between schools where there are aspirations in relation to the use of Pupil Premium money which are limited by financial constraints
5. The benefits flowing from the Pupil Premium budgets are recognised, and that therefore the County Council continues, in partnership with the District Councils in Lancashire to address the issue of take up of benefits, particularly in the context of forthcoming changes to Free School Meals for all Key Stage 1 children
6. The County Council considers how it can work in partnership with schools where there are particular community or locality barriers to achievement.
7. The County Council develops a check list or guidance for schools' leadership and governors to use as a tool for assessing their use of Pupil Premium, based on the good practice identified and set out in this report

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