

# Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 January 2020

## Closing the Gap Update

### Recommendation(s)

1. That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the report and the initiatives being taken to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in Warwickshire and makes appropriate recommendations.

### 1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 Warwickshire is an academically high achieving county at key stage 4 but reflects the national pattern that disadvantaged pupils perform below the non-disadvantaged group.
- 1.2 This situation remains unchanged despite the wide variety of initiatives the County has undertaken.
- 1.3 The Education Policy Institute reported in the summer that (nationally) disadvantaged pupils are on average 18 months behind the rest of the class in academic achievement by the age of 16. At the current rate it will take 500 years to close the gap. For the first time in several years, the gap between poorer pupils and their peers at GCSE has stopped closing. David Laws, Education Policy Institute chairman and former education minister, said: 'Recent progress on narrowing the education gap between poor children and the rest has ground to a halt'. This is despite considerable investment and targeted intervention programmes by the government.
- 1.4 The Closing the Gap project was established in January 2015 in response to the challenge of closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils<sup>1</sup> and their peers in Warwickshire.

---

<sup>1</sup> Disadvantaged pupils are identified as those eligible for pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to enhance the education of students entitled to free school meals, those who have ever been entitled to free school meals over the last six years, adopted, children looked after or children of parents in the armed forces/services.

1.4 Table 1: Warwickshire disadvantaged attainment gap in Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, 2014-2018

Performance measure	2014 size of gap	2015 size of gap	2016 size of gap	2017 size of gap	2018 Size of gap
Early Years Foundation Stage – Good Level of Development	-25	-20	-20	-15	-17
Key Stage 2, expected standard for combined reading, writing and maths	-18	-20	-23	-26	-24
Key Stage 4, GCSE in English & maths at grade A-C or 5	-30	-29	-30	-26*	-28

\*Strong pass/grade 5

Latest disadvantaged data available is for 2018<sup>2</sup>. The table above shows the gap has increased for the first time at EYFS from -15 percentage points to -17. The gap decreased at key stage 2 from -26 percentage points to -24 but is still larger than gaps for the 3 years before that. The gap increased at Key Stage 4 from -26 percentage points to -28. This gap has remained stubbornly large.

1.5 The Closing the Gap project was reviewed in summer 2018 to evaluate the progress made. The Closing the Gap Board concluded that the impact of the work cannot be measured with headline data because of ongoing changes in assessments across all key stages. However, it was acknowledged that without the work of the project board the gaps may be larger.

## 2.0 Options and Proposal

2.1 Through monitoring the progress of work across the County Council, the Closing the Gap Board aims to reduce the gap in attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Warwickshire compared to national non-disadvantaged pupils.

2.2 Research shows disadvantaged learners often face multiple barriers. This means the work across the County Council impacts on these young people. The board monitors progress in the following areas:

Strand of work	Link or impact on disadvantage	Specific work/projects
School Improvement	The most important school-level factor in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic School Improvement Fund 1 Project</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> 2019 disadvantaged data will be available from January 2020

	ensuring that high quality teaching together with strong leadership are in place in the schools with the highest numbers of disadvantaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Challenge Board, Teaching School and Capacity Board and Area Analysis Groups</li> <li>• Reduce the number of category C &amp; D schools in Warwickshire</li> <li>• Nuneaton Education Strategy</li> <li>• WISSSP (Warwickshire improving SEND and SEMH in Schools Project)</li> </ul>
SEND and Inclusion	Children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are more likely to experience poverty than others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WISSSP (Warwickshire improving SEND and SEMH in Schools Project)</li> <li>• Promoting WInCKS</li> </ul>
Economy and Skills	Children eligible for FSM when they are at school are 23% less likely to be in sustained employment at the age of 27 compared to their peers <sup>3</sup> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work with the Apprenticeship Board to develop a guaranteed interview for previously FSM pupils</li> </ul>
Public Health	Children identified with behavioural, emotional, or social difficulties are significantly more likely to come from a socio-economically disadvantaged background than children without special learning needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Years Health Checks</li> <li>• NHS Trailblazer Mental Health</li> <li>• Transforming Care Project</li> <li>• Year of Wellbeing (CSW Sport)</li> <li>• W-code project</li> </ul>
Education Entitlement Team	Pupils have to be in school and able to pay attention before they can access learning. There are large gaps nationally between the attendance of disadvantaged and not disadvantaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase attendance of disadvantaged pupils</li> <li>• Reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions for disadvantaged pupils</li> <li>• Ethical Inclusion Project</li> </ul>
Children Looked After (CLA)	Many CLA have complex needs and may exhibit the most challenging behaviours. An awareness and understanding of the complex issues these	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attachment- aware schools</li> <li>• Training for Designated Teachers</li> <li>• Raise awareness of enrichment opportunities for CLA</li> </ul>

	<p>children face in an educational setting is essential.</p> <p>CLA often lack experiences and access to enrichment opportunities, and reduced engagement in education. There is a link between education attainment and extra curricula activity that enhances resilience, self-efficacy and emotional and social skills.</p>	
School Governance	Governing boards have a major responsibility in holding school leaders to account for the spending of pupil premium and, in particular, for its impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance training</li> </ul>
Poverty Strategy	There is a correlation between schools with the lowest number of pupils securing good outcomes and schools with greatest number of disadvantaged. Children who are hungry are not able to focus, so they have a low attention span, behavioural issues, discipline issues in the school. Prolonged exposure to lack of food ultimately results in children working below age related expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase take up of FSM</li> <li>• Continue to pursue automated FSM enrolment</li> </ul>
Widening Participation in HE	Young people who were in receipt of Free School Meals aged 15 are significantly less likely to enter Higher Education by age 19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Collaborative Outreach</li> <li>• Programme Enhancing Academic Attainment Project</li> </ul>
Early Years	Development gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers are particularly pronounced and have a profound impact later in life. High quality early education starting at age 2 can have an impact on long-term social mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the quality of practice in Early Years provision to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged children</li> <li>• Promoting WInCKS</li> </ul>

- 2.3 The Closing the Gap Board is the key strategic driver to reduce the attainment gap between Warwickshire disadvantaged pupils and national non-disadvantaged pupils. It focuses less on individual strands of work and more on giving a strategic oversight of the work across the County Council.
- 2.4 The Closing the Gap board's objective is to ensure support for disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority and has a high profile across the work of the County Council.
- 2.5 Warwickshire Education Strategy sets out four key challenges - WE1: Early years, WE2: An Empowering Curriculum, WE3: Family of Schools, WE4 Employability.

Closing the Gap is included in WE2 where the challenge is to 'promote a broad, empowering and creative curriculum, focusing on times of transition and prioritising vulnerable groups' and specifically:

WE2(b) The gaps between the achievements of learners eligible for Pupil Premium and those of their peers will narrow, particularly at age 11 and 16'.

We will celebrate the achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and we will give those who need it extra support to catch up. We will check on this every November from 2019 to 2023.

### **3.0 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 No additional revenue funding is anticipated at this stage in support of this issue.

Opportunities to bid for funding will be maximised where appropriate.

### **4.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

- 4.1 No decision required.

### **Background papers**

1. Warwickshire Education Strategy WE2(b) Closing the Gap, Summary Delivery Plan 2018-2023

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Report Author	Sophie Thompson	sophiethompson@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 746961
Assistant Director	Ian Budd	ianbudd@warwickshire.gov.uk
Strategic Director	Mark Ryder	markryder@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Colin Hayfield	colinhayfield@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Cllrs Colin Hayfield, Yousef Dahmash, Pam Williams, Corinne Davies, Jonathan Chilvers, Dominic Skinner