RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Country Report: United Kingdom (England)

UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND) COUNTRY REPORT

1. What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?

There has been a particular focus in recent years on closing the achievement gap between socio-economically disadvantaged pupils and their more advantaged peers; where disadvantaged pupils are more vulnerable to underachievement.

The British government's plan for education is presented in the White Paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (Crown, March 2016). This sets out the government's holistic vision to drive up standards in schools and other educational organisations, measured in terms of improved pupil outcomes. The document sets out a plan over seven key areas:

- Teacher excellence
- Great school leaders
- Collaboration between schools (with support for those facing challenges)
- Academisation of schools
- Fairer funding through a national funding formula
- Greater accountability of schools
- High expectations for pupil achievement.

Raising achievement is defined within the context of a robust National Curriculum:

- 'fit' for the twenty-first century;
- effective assessment and qualifications;
- a focus on character and resilience;
- stretching both lowest attaining and the most able;
- improving support for the those with additional needs.

The Children and Families Act (2014), given royal assent in March 2014, has legislated for a more inclusive approach in educational settings for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The SEND 0–25 Code of Practice (Department for Education/Department of Health, 2015) is statutory guidance for all those working with learners with special educational needs and disabilities. It emphasises the centrality of parent, carer and learners' 'voice' in shaping decisions concerning their lives.

2. What national policies specifically target raising achievement?

Increase engagement and reduce early school leaving

- Two-phased approach to Raising the Participation Age (2013 increase from 16 years to 17 years and, since 2014, to 18 years);

- Schools to provide impartial careers advice;

- Development of Youth Contract for those not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Reduce attainment gaps between different groups of learners

Introduction of Pupil Premium funding in April 2011 and service premium. This amount was GBP 2.545 billion in the 2015 to 2016 financial year.

Other government actions aimed at closing the gap for socio-economic pupils include:

- requiring schools to publish online details of how they are using the Pupil Premium funding and its impact;

- making schools accountable for improved pupil outcomes through Ofsted;

- making schools seek advice if they are not achieving for their disadvantaged pupils;

- providing funding through the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to build an evidence base of good practice;

- development of a summer school programme (since 2012) for transitional programmes for disadvantaged pupils.

Increase attainment in particular areas, e.g. literacy, numeracy

- Support and backing for the 'Read On Get On Campaign' from a consortium of leading UK organisations committed to developing children's literacy. This is led by Save the Children and includes Achievement for All.

- The National Numeracy and Literacy government strategies

- Funding in 2016 of primary schools to develop the Shanghai/Singapore maths mastery approach

Improve learner health and well-being

The Early Intervention Foundation was established in 2012 to support research into early intervention.

In December 2014, the Secretary of State for Education announced the Character Awards. GBP 3.5 million grant funding was made available to schools committed to developing attributes and behaviours in learners which underpin and promote their academic and longer-term success.

In July 2015, GBP 1 million funding was made available by the Cabinet Office to increase the participation of young people from socio-economic disadvantage in social action projects.

The mental health of the nations' children and young people has been brought to the forefront of government policy over the last few years. This is reflected, following the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce, in the publication of Future in Mind (Department of Health, 2015).

Improve transition between phases of education

Summer schools between phases of education and financially supported by the government are available for learners from poor families. For example, this might include a catch-up programme for learners moving between primary and secondary school.

Increase involvement of parents/local communities

Parents and carers are held responsible for their child's attendance at school.

3.   What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?

Results of national tests and qualifications

National assessment in English and maths (reading, writing and maths) take place in:

- Key Stage 1 (age 7)
- Key Stage 2 (age 11)
- Key Stage 4 (age 16, GCSEs – these take place across a number of subjects, including maths and English).

In addition, tests and qualifications take place during:

- Advanced Level results (age 18)
- Participation in education, training and employment
- Participation in Further Education
- Entry to higher education institutes
- Graduation rates.

The introduction of Progress 8 (2016) as a measure to demonstrate the extent to which all learners are making good progress is a move in the right direction. It no longer disregards the progress of learners who achieve less than a C grade. This measure is based on learners' progress measured across eight subjects:

- English;
- mathematics;
- three other English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages);

- three further subjects, which can be from the range of EBacc subjects, or can be any other approved, high-value arts, academic, or vocational qualification.

Wider 'measures' of learning to learn, learner well-being/welfare, personal/social development etc.

None, however, permanent and fixed period exclusions can be used as a proxy.

Information from assessments designed for particular groups of learners (e.g. learners with learning disabilities, learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds)

This data is collected by the government and published along with data for all learners (data as above). It is available by gender, English as an additional language, SEN, disadvantaged and free school meals.

4.   What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?

As above

5.   What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?

Self-evaluation – Ofsted

School self-evaluation contributes to Ofsted inspection.

Inspection

Ofsted: leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development; behaviour and welfare.

Analysis of learner achievement/other school level data

As set out in question 3. Pupil outcomes are also taken into consideration during inspection.

6.   Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?

The *Achievement for All* programme is central to government special educational needs reform in the UK. The collaborative, inclusive approach to teaching and learning has informed the 0–25 SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education/Department of Health, 2014). Employing an evidence-based, integrated, whole school improvement framework, it enables schools to identify current good practices and highlight areas of challenge for further development across the following four interdependent key areas:

- Leadership (development of vision, commitment of leaders to vision, communication across the school and collaborative approaches)

- Teaching and Learning (quality teaching, recording, tracking, monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and attainment and assessment processes)

- Wider opportunities (pupil social development and well-being, attendance, safety and bullying and provision of extra-curricular activities)

- Parental engagement (structured approaches to engaging parents in their child's learning in school and at home).

Working with colleagues from across the school community, the Achievement Coach and School Champion develop an action plan that supports the implementation of these four elements. This includes high impact and evidence-based core interventions, alongside and blended with a series of tailored school-driven activities.

Achievement for All has worked with over 2,000 schools (3–19 years) in England and Wales, along with schools in Norway, the USA, Lithuania and Latvia. In England, schools working with Achievement for All are diverse in:

- pupil profile (socio-economic status, ethnicity, English as an additional language and SEN);

- Ofsted rating (from Requires Improvement to Outstanding);

- geographical situation (London, other cities, towns, rural and coastal regions);

- size (small primary schools to large secondary schools).

Recent data from an independent evaluation by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC, 2016) in England showed that identified pupils (those with socio-economic disadvantage, those with SEND and others vulnerable to underachievement) in Achievement for All schools made more progress on an annual basis than similar pupils in other schools. In primary schools (5–11 years) between 2011 and 2015, pupils made 4.7 average points score (APS) of progress per annum in reading; 4.4 APS in writing and 4.4 APS in maths (in England the expected level of progress is 3.0 APS). Results were similar for identified pupils in secondary schools (11–16 years) between 2011 and 2015, where pupils made 5.4 APS of progress in reading per annum, 5.4 APS in writing and 4.1 APS in maths (expected progress per annum for pupils at secondary schools is 3.6 APS).

The programme is implemented collaboratively with schools across all educational phases. The focus is raised achievement in reading, writing and maths of learners with SEND, pupils with socio-economic disadvantage and others vulnerable to underachievement. The impact is across the school.

Achievement for All (AfA) is an independent, not-for-profit charity. It is a movement focused on educational change: building a world in which all children and young people are seen as having potential regardless of background challenge or need. AfA is the leading provider of improved outcomes in reading, writing and maths for the 20% of children and young people aged 2–19 who are vulnerable to underachievement. AfA is supported by wide ranging supplementary approaches designed to engage more effectively with leaders, practitioners, parents and carers. It also uses strategies and

approaches that build young people's self-esteem, resilience and self-efficacy. As an organisation, AfA has provided continuing professional development and research with leaders and teachers in over 4,500 early years, school and post-16 leadership teams. This includes Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos). In 2014/15 AfA programmes:

- supported 172,111 targeted children and young people with challenges, needs and disadvantages to achieve academic progress at or beyond national levels;

- supported nearly 70,000 professionals to improve outcomes for the lowest achieving 20%;

- helped over 250,000 parents and carers engage better with their child's learning.

The Achievement for All pilot (2009–2011) showed that when teachers are given responsibility for the pupils in their classroom, supported by senior leaders and provided with focused training, pupil academic and wider outcomes are significantly improved (Humphrey and Squires, 2011). According to 83% of teachers, the *Achievement for All* training proved to be of benefit to them in their role (PwC, 2014).

Improving the progress of individual pupils is dependent on schools developing a culture of high expectations; this is enhanced when it is built into school systems and is part of performance management (Blandford et al., 2011). Leadership in Achievement for All schools is enhanced through an inclusive model focusing on vision, commitment, collaboration and communication (NCSL, 2009).

Evidence from Achievement for All Ambassadors to show commitment of learning to project and willingness to reflect on own practice

> *Achievement for All has helped change the culture of the school. It's not a programme just for children with SEND or on free school meals. It is a school improvement programme* (Julie Hunt, Head Teacher, Brightlingsea Infant School).

> *Achievement for All has affirmed some of the things we have been doing. It makes us take a critical view of what we are doing and how we can improve what we do further. It ensures that we keep children and families as the central focus of everything we do* (Sara Ainsworth, Head Teacher, Brookfields School).

> *I think the biggest impact has been the quality of engagement between parents and the school. Parents and teachers both found the fact that parents could lead the meeting and talk at length about their children's progress really valuable* (Dame Reena Keeble, Head Teacher, Cannon Lane Primary).

7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?

If implemented effectively, the National Teaching Service could go some way to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers, particularly in coastal and rural regions and other challenging areas. In addition, there needs to be a stronger focus on the development of school leaders; programmes like the Teach First initial teacher training provide a model for training school leaders. If accountability of head teachers becomes

too onerous, there is the risk that teachers will be less inclined to pursue the path of leadership.

In addition, SEND reform in schools, including multi-agency working, has not yet been fully implemented and developed. Although there has been more effective identification of children with SEND, particular approaches to assessing, tracking planning and quality teaching needs to be realised across all schools in England.

Reforms which have narrowed the 'preferred curriculum' in England threaten to significantly marginalise some subjects, such as drama, art, design, technology and catering. These subjects had been very successful for a range of learners who struggle with the more conventional subjects. In addition, the marginalisation of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) has made achievement for those learners who struggle to demonstrate their learning in formal examination situations much more challenging.

8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges

Ensuring a whole school approach across all schools in England to raise aspirations, increase participation of pupils and raise achievement is a key challenge for policy. Continuing and focused professional development, as set out in the new Teachers Standard for Professional Development (Department for Education, 2016), can support this if effectively implemented in schools. At the same time, reforms to the examination system, i.e. no coursework, no modular examination, higher levels of literacy challenge and increased grade thresholds, have all made it much more challenging for some disadvantaged learners (especially where this is a literacy-based disadvantage) to achieve.

On a more positive note, the introduction of Progress 8 as a measure to demonstrate the extent to which all learners are making good progress is a move in the right direction. It no longer disregards the progress of learners who achieve less than a C grade. The highly formalised, external examination system employed in England has made schools much better at assessing and tracking learners' progress. This is a system which can be different from that used in other countries.

In England, Brexit may bring short-term uncertainty, with economic 'squeeze' greatest at the local level. Nonetheless, there is government support for a 'one nation' country, with the assumption there will be extra support for those in the disenfranchised areas of England.

Possibly one of the major policy challenges is the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders. This is a particular issue in the disenfranchised areas of the country, where unemployment levels are higher, along with other social and economic challenges; these are the areas where good teachers and leaders are most needed. Teaching Leaders and the Future Leaders Trust (Talented Leaders Programme) are positive examples of effective leadership training. Initiatives such as Achievement for All, 'which have been successful in raising the ambitions and achievement of pupils with SEND' (Ofsted, 2013: 60) and other children vulnerable to underachievement may also provide an effective framework for improvement. Head teachers work in partnership with the organisation; this is particularly

relevant in light of proposed government changes for coasting schools (Department for Education, 2015).

ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Contact person: Professor Sonia Blandford, CEO Achievement for All

1.   Location of school/learning community and short description of context

Hampstead School is a 1,300-pupil secondary school in Cricklewood, north London. Hampstead is a Quality Lead school for Achievement for All. Head teacher Jacques Szemalikowski is an Achievement for All Ambassador.

2.   Summary information on school/learning community

The school serves a diverse community: 82% of pupils are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils face a range of challenges: 40% are currently eligible for free school meals and attract pupil premium funding and 20% are classified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The proportion of learners who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally.

3.   Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice

The school began working with the Achievement for All schools' programme in 2009 to target the 20% of pupils with the lowest attainment.

> *We had looked at a number of school improvement activities. We were very mindful that our students were not achieving as quickly as they should. Our data indicated that work was needed on SEND and other areas. What we were not good enough at as a school was targeting that support. We needed improvement strategies across the board in terms of learning, achievement, outcomes and behaviour. What we found with Achievement for All was that although it really helped us target these groups, students across the school benefitted as well. It provided a solid framework for a co-ordinated approach to driving up attainment for the lowest achieving pupils* (Jacques Szemalikowski, Head Teacher).

4.   Data/information available

The proportion of learners gaining five or more A*–C grades at GCSE level, including English and maths, increased from 38% in 2008 to 63% in 2013. The school's flourishing sixth form is in the top 2% in the country in terms of progress.

5.   Focus of example/work to raise achievement

This approach was characterised by a concerted focus on pupil tracking data, the improvement of parental engagement and ensuring that attainment of the target group was made a leadership priority. Pupil behaviour and attendance was also a priority. Tracking of learners' progress across the school was made more rigorous and there was a focus on ensuring that interventions were targeted at the right learners. The school holds regular 'structured conversations' which give parents an opportunity to talk in more depth about their child and develop targets with the school. This improved engagement with parents and closer scrutiny of the data have led to a range of initiatives that have improved attainment in the target group.

A number of learners were identified as poor or late attenders and some also identified as at risk. The school set up an Early Riser Club, a breakfast club, for up to 25 targeted learners. Those on free school meals attend for free. The club is open before school and is staffed by a higher-level teaching assistant and another member of staff. The club ensures that pupils are in school on time and ready to learn. One pupil who had to leave home before 7am every morning to take a long bus journey to school was waiting outside the locked school gates every morning. The head teacher said that the club gave her a 'safe haven' and played a major part in improving her attainment.

6.   Summary information about developments/current work in this area

There have been significant improvements to the attainment of the target group since the introduction of the programme. The proportion of learners gaining five or more A*–C grades at GCSE level, including English and maths, increased from 38% in 2008 to 63% in 2013. The school's flourishing sixth form is in the top 2% in the country in terms of progress.

7.   Key learning points from this example

Achievement for All not only helped the school to target particular groups, but learners across the school have benefitted as well.

8.   Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)

This case study, along with many other similar examples, is available on the [Achievement for All website](#).