Education & Children Scrutiny Committee
Task and Finish Group 2015/16

Narrowing the Attainment Gap: Learners eligible for free school meals

Planning & Scoping Document

Context	• The Education & Children Scrutiny Committee has a key role to play in monitoring services, development of key policies and strategies, as well as identifying areas for improvement or development. • At its meeting on 24th September 2015, the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee considered provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results. It agreed to establish a task and finish group to research and review the attainment gap for e-FSM learners, one of the key priorities for the Department and ERW this year. • Research[1] shows that the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than their non eligible counterparts at all key stages and in all performance measures. • Looking at the core subject indicator (see definitions), the gap in performance has generally narrowed over the last four years at Key Stages 2 and 3. At Key Stage 4, the gap in performance in the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English/Welsh and maths widened every year to 2009-10 before narrowing in the following three years, but the gap has widened again between 2012-13 and 2013-14. • The gap in performance increases with key stage level. • There is a strong link between achievement and the level of entitlement to free school meals: as the level of FSM entitlement increases, the level of achievement decreases. • Schools where learners eligible for free school meals are not making adequate progress will be given an improvement capacity rating no higher than a C in the School Categorisation process. The performance of free school meal pupils is a central focus to the primary categorisation model. In the standards stage of the primary categorisation process each measure is benchmarked based upon performance compared to the free school meal group. If a secondary school is below the national three year weighted average

[1] *WG Academic achievement and entitlement to free school meals 28th January 2015*

	of 27.2% of eFSM learners gaining the level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics it will not be categorised as a green school in the support category.
Membership	**<u>Elected Members</u>** • Cllr. Ryan Bartlett • Cllr. Peter Hughes-Griffiths • Cllr. John James • Cllr. Hugh Richards • Cllr. Tom Theophilus • Cllr. Eirwyn Williams (Chair) **<u>Co-opted Members</u>** Mr. Simon Pearson – Parent Governor Representative Mrs. Vera Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative **<u>Advisors / Support Officers</u>** • Gareth Morgans – Chief Education Officer / Head of Education Services • Alan Walters – Head of School Effectiveness • Andi Morgan – Principal Challenge Advisor • Aeron Rees – Head of Learner Programmes • Glenn Evans – Senior Education Consultant • Mary Parry – Consortium Assoc. School Improvement Officer • David Astins – Strategic Development Manager • Cressida Morgan – Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator • Noeline Thomas – Service Manager, Children's Services • Matthew Hughes – Assistant Consultant
The main aims of the review	• To research the attainment gap for learners eligible for free school meals in Carmarthenshire. • To identify trends at all key stages and key indicators. • To review how the Pupil Deprivation Grant is being used in our schools. • To identify best practice interventions in the county's schools, across ERW, the rest of Wales and the UK. • To raise the profile of the challenge of overcoming the attainment gap in the midst of shrinking budgets, other priorities and curriculum changes. • To formulate recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.
Scope of the study	This review will focus on learners eligible for free school meals, including Looked After Children, and the attainment gap in Carmarthenshire.

How it will contribute to achieving corporate / community objectives and priorities	Contributes to the following outcome from the County Council's Corporate Strategy 2015-20 and Carmarthenshire's Integrated Community Strategy 2011-16: • People in Carmarthenshire fulfil their learning potential
Initial list of key officers, stakeholders, partners or other agencies to involve	• Wales Centre for Equality in Education (based at University of Wales Trinity Saint David) – Professor David Egan • ERW • Schools with effective interventions and improving attainment • City & County of Swansea
What information / documents are required to inform the work of the study?	• Welsh Government (WG) Achievement and entitlement to free school meals in Wales, 2014 • Making effective use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant – University of Wales, March 2014 • The Good News...What schools in Wales are doing to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' achievement – Wales Centre for Equity in Education, December 2014 • WG Rewriting the future • WG Rewriting the future 2015 – A year on • WG Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012 – 2016 • WG Building Resilient Communities – Taking forward the Tackling Poverty Action Plan Annual Report 2015 • ESTYN Tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools: working with the community and other services – July 2011 • ESTYN Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools – November 2012 • Estyn Working together to tackle the impact of poverty on educational achievement – December 2013 • Carmarthenshire School Performance data up to and including 2015 • ERW School Performance data up to and including 2015 • Welsh, English and Scottish national comparative data • The take-up of free school meals • Pupil Deprivation Grant in Carmarthenshire including LAC • WG Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant – Year 2 Report
Timescale for completion of the review	**Tuesday 8th December 2015** • Scoping and Planning • Introduction to and overview of attainment data • Setting the scene – learners eligible for free school meals

	Monday 18th January 2016 • Detailed review of attainment data • ERW comparison • Pupil Deprivation Grant • Case studies - schools **Friday 5th February 2016** • Case studies – schools • Assessing the use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant in Carmarthenshire **Monday 14th March 2016** • Research – effective interventions **Monday 25th April 2016** • Sharing good practice – case studies **Tuesday 17th May 2016** • Looking forward • Draft final report **Tuesday 21st June 2016** • Finalise the Group's report **Friday 22nd July 2016** • Next steps...Outcomes conference for schools