

Subject:	Update on 'Poverty Proofing the School Day'		
Date of Meeting:	19th March 2018		
Report of:	Executive Director for Families, Children and Learning		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report updates the progress on the agreement to address the Fairness Commission's recommendation 49: 'The council, working with city schools, should bring to Brighton & Hove the 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' initiative to ensure no child misses out on the opportunities and experiences at school because of low family income.'

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress of introducing 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' to all schools in the city.
- 2.2 That the Committee instructs officers to bring a further report of the progress of the project in 12 months.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 National Context

The Child Poverty Action Group outlines the impact of poverty on outcomes for children and young people and in particular for education.

- 'Children from poorer backgrounds lag at all stages of education.
- By the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds.
- According to Department for Education statistics, by the end of primary school, pupils receiving free school meals are estimated to be almost three terms behind their more affluent peers.
- By 14, this gap grows to over five terms.
- By 16, children receiving free school meals achieve 1.7 grades lower at GCSE.'

3.2 Local Context

It is the case in Brighton & Hove that there is a gap between the outcomes for pupils in disadvantage and their peers and all schools have 'diminishing this difference' as a key priority. The Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission considered these issues recommended the introduction of 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' into the City over a two year period.

3.3 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' was a recommendation made by the Fairness Commission in 2014. Councillors committed to offering the 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' process to every Brighton & Hove school. Support is being provided by Children North East, the creators of 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' and includes a license agreement, training, direct support and quality assurance of processes. The project provides a toolkit to poverty proof the school day, to reduce stigma and remove barriers to learning and to assist schools in exploring the most effective way to spend pupil premium allocation. More details can be found on their website, <http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/>. The project runs for two financial years, from April 2017 to March 2019.

3.4 Impact of 'Poverty Proofing the School Day'

The evaluation of the report, carried out by researchers at Newcastle University in February 2016, available on line at www.povertyproofing.co.uk identified the following impact.

Key Findings of the evaluation of '*Poverty Proofing the School Day*'

1. There is evidence of and real concern in schools about the rising costs of the school day.
2. This is a high impact programme, which has revealed a huge array of generic issues that are routinely, if unintentionally, stigmatising children living in poverty and contributing to the increasing cost of the school day.
3. The audit is challenging but highly effective, delivering to the school a rare opportunity to give voice to its most disadvantaged pupils and their families and see their practices through the eyes of all pupils, parents and staff.
4. There are numerous benefits for the school as a result of going through this process, including a shift in whole school ethos and culture and the opportunity to make changes in response to the action plan, with maximum impact on pupils.
5. There is early evidence of increased attendance and attainment of disadvantaged pupils as a result of removing barriers to learning.
6. The audit provides a constructive opportunity to review pupil premium spending and through this and other actions, reduce the cost of the school day for pupils in real terms.
7. These impacts are dependent on the third party nature of the audit. Whilst it is very important to share good practice in this area, it is unlikely that the same benefits will be derived if a school reviews these issues in isolation through a self-evaluation process.
8. Whole school buy in, including senior leadership and Academy Trust or LA as appropriate, is crucial.

3.5 Introducing 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' to Brighton & Hove schools: implementation

3.5.1 The power of ‘Poverty Proofing the School Day’ audit is that the voices of all the children and young people in the school are heard and opportunities provided for all other stakeholders to participate. The report on the audit gives schools feedback on their systems and enables the leadership team to reflect on the findings, celebrate successes and see if there are any changes they can make to remove barriers for families that may be struggling with money.

3.5.2 A group of researchers, staff from schools across the city and the LA team, have been trained to lead and carry out the audits. A team of researchers go into schools and speak to every child and young person in groups. As well as speaking to all stakeholders on site during the audits, there is also a parent / carer questionnaire, a governor questionnaire and a staff questionnaire. At the end of the audit, the responses to questions are analysed and a report is written. The lead researcher goes back to the school to discuss the report and next steps. The report belongs to the school and is confidential to the school. To take part, schools indicate the term that they would like to have the audit the exact week is allocated. The number of researcher days is determined by the size of school.

The pilot schools helped to review and refine the process and there has been excellent take up of the audit over the autumn term

3.5.3 The table below shows the schools that have taken part so far.

Summer Term 2017
Moulsecoomb Primary
Patcham Juniors
Brighton Aldridge Community Academy
Woodingdean Primary
Autumn Term 2017
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary
St Margaret’s CE Primary
Carlton Hill Primary
St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary
West Blatchington Primary
Queens Park Primary
Mile Oak Primary
Dorothy Stringer
Patcham High
Spring Term 2018
Downs Infants
St Paul’s CE Primary
St Peter’s Primary
Patcham Infants
Benfield Primary
Longhill High
Middle Street Primary
St Nicolas CE Primary
Hertford Juniors

West Blatchington Primary
Hertford Infants
Downs Junior

4. Examples of good practice in Brighton & Hove schools

The positive take up of the project is testament to the concern Brighton & Hove schools have for pupil and student wellbeing and particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The teams of researchers have found many examples of good practice already existing in the city and designed to support vulnerable pupils and students to learn and achieve. It has been agreed that some examples would be share with the wider audience. These are some of the examples and are organised in the themes of questions that the Poverty Proofing audit explores.

Behaviour, rewards and attendance

The vast majority of the schools taking part so far had clear rewards for good behaviour and attendance. Carlton Hill and Woodingdean had particularly clear systems that were known and articulated by all the pupils. Queens’ Park has a range of positive ways of addressing things that go wrong – e.g. the ‘Do it right club’, ‘calm room’ and ‘solver 101’.

It was good to see pupils involved in school development. St Mary Magdalen had listened to pupil voice when reviewing their policy and BACA has a ‘junior leadership team’ to help make decisions in school.

Anti-bullying / bullying

Particularly strong practice was seen in several schools. In Woodingdean pupils identified the strong support they received from playground buddies. In Moulsecoomb and Patcham parents, carers and pupils felt that there were always people they could talk to. Pupils at St Mary Magdalen and Queens Park had a particularly clear understanding about what bullying meant and reported that their school was good at dealing with it.

Celebrations

At St Mary Magdalen all Y6 pupils are given a DVD of memories and a year book when they leave the school at no cost to children. In Woodingdean all Y6 pupils are given a leavers’ fleece. These both allow for equality for all pupils.

Class groups

Pupils in BACA and Woodingdean were very positive about the opportunities for self-directed learning. In Moulsecoomb and Patcham Junior, pupils enjoyed choosing tasks that were ‘mild, hot or spicy’, or with a ‘chilli number’. These meant pupils were in

control of their learning and there were no grouping that made children feel that they were 'second best'.

Extra-curricular

The majority of the schools organise trips for pupils to support and enhance the curriculum. There are a range of different strategies that parents and carers said work well to support those who may find paying for the trips challenging. Woodingdean gives good notice and the opportunity to pay in instalments, Moulsecomb subsidises the trips extensively to ensure all families can attend and Carlton Hill PTA contributes a sum to the school budget for trips. St Mary Magdalen ensures that there is only one 'costly' trip each term.

The majority of schools run out of school clubs. At Woodingdean there is a large number of free clubs. The 'Health and Well-being Club in the mornings is very popular.

Food

At Patcham Junior pupils can eat with their friends and menus are all on line so families can plan food together in advance.

No school visited had a system which made explicit to the school community which pupils were entitled to free school meals and those not.

Homework

Moulsecomb offers support for families with homework to make sure that everyone can access it. At Woodingdean the pupils and parents liked that in the summer term the homework was to 'spend time together as a family' rather than specific tasks.

Resources

At Woodingdean the whole class share resources that are brought in for projects. At Moulsecomb there is an art club where children can make things for parents or teachers which give children opportunities to give gifts if they wish.

At Carlton Hill everything children need for school is provided and they allow families to play in the school grounds after school with supervision as not all parent have places to play. They also provide some costumes for dress up days.

Leadership and work of governing body

In Our Lady of Lourdes and Woodingdean there was a clear focus on needs of the disadvantaged. Both schools had up to date policies and regular reviews by governors. Governors attend pupil progress meetings to make sure that they know pupil performance in detail. Governors at Patcham Junior were particularly aware of the performance of the disadvantaged.

Support to parents & families

Many of the schools had very positive and trusting relationships with families which meant that parents were happy to come and talk to them if there was an issue. Mary Magdalen offers courses to parents in a range of languages to ensure all can access

information. Our Lady of Lourdes have found that employing a family support worker has been very positive. Carlton Hill has a notice board that signposts parents to a range of services they could find helpful.

Uniform

Positive comments about uniform from primary schools included:

- Uniform is easily available in common colours
- No pressure for logos
- Discreet second hand uniform available / pre loved uniform
- The junior school has the same uniform as the infant school
- For non-uniform days the cost is £1 per family, not per child which helps make it more affordable

BACA had worked hard to ensure that their uniform was affordable and give ties to pupils each year at no cost.

5. Emerging Areas for consideration in Brighton & Hove schools

This list includes issues that were identified in more than one school visited and could be seen to negatively impact on children and young people living in poverty

- Unclear and inconsistent rewards
- Bringing things in from home to play with – not having the ‘latest ‘ game
- Bringing in things that could identify families as struggling with money - eg ‘own brand’ boxes for junk modelling,
- PTA events that are expensive and include expectations for parents to pay for a range of things
- Trip letters that are not explicit about what to do if the family cannot meet the cost
- Sufficient notice for trips – time to plan payment or the opportunity to pay in instalments over time
- System for packed lunches on trips that don’t identify pupils with FSM
- Arrange groupings so pupils don’t feel second best
- Several non-uniform, dress up or charity days in a term
- Asking parents to supply prizes for raffles etc. and then expecting them to buy tickets to win them back
- Third party businesses that sell things in schools and put pressure of pupils to buy them
- Bringing in birthday presents to show to the class can make some children feel uncomfortable
- ‘Expectations’ about bringing in sweets or for the whole class at birthdays
- Show and tell times ‘when I haven’t done anything’
- Circle time about what you did at weekend
- An expectation / pressure from peers to bring gifts for teachers
- Limited communication with parents and carers about why things are happening – eg the reason for a trip or education benefit of a request

- Lack of parent and carer knowledge about how to apply for FSM and what they are entitled to
- Some schools are unaware of which groups of pupils or students are attending or not attending trips or clubs
- Setting homework which requires internet access at home
- Governors unclear about the progress of all groups of pupils at school
- A lack of awareness of poverty and how it is experienced by local families across the community

6. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 The Fairness Commission was presented with four options to consider and it was agreed to offer the audit to all schools

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

7.1 Headteachers were consulted on the best way to introduce this initiative. The poverty proofing process involves hearing the voices of the whole school community through on line surveys and interviews, so the chosen option provides the greatest element of community involvement.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' does have positive evaluations and is providing an additional tool for schools to ensure that poverty is not a barrier to success at school. The achievement of vulnerable groups, such as those who are defined as disadvantaged is a priority citywide. There will be regular reviews of the actions schools are taking and the impact they are having.

8.2 The Children, Young People and Skills Committee and Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities and Inclusion Committee will be kept informed of the progress of the project.

9. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

The report updates on 'Poverty Proofing the School Day'.

Initial funding of £150,000 was provided over two financial years (2018-2018 and 2018 – 2019). It is important that the financial position is reviewed regularly in line with the Targeted Budget Management Timetable (TBM) to ensure there are no additional costs to the council.

Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis

Date: 09/02/2018

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer Consulted:Serena Kynaston

Date: 07/02/18

Equalities Implications:

'Poverty Proofing the School Day' is to ensure the voice of pupils and stakeholders is heard so schools can take further action to ensure that barriers to learning are minimised.

Sustainability Implications:

'Poverty Proofing the School Day' contributes to the health and happiness of the community

Any Other Significant Implications:

None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 1.1 Engaging young people in school and making them feel included could reduce crime

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 1.2 This is an opportunity to hear the voices of the community and use a successful tool to support educators in their work. Research shows that where schools engage positively then there is most impact. There is a risk that not all schools will not engage.

Public Health Implications:

- 1.3 Overcoming poverty will make a difference to the health of children and young people at school and in their futures.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 1.4 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' supports the citywide priority to raise achievement of the most vulnerable pupils and the corporate priority, 'Live a good life'.

