Closing the Gap

‘Narrowing’ or ‘closing’ the gap is well established in the vocabulary of education policy and practice in the UK. There is little, if any disagreement that we need to do everything we can to compensate for the disadvantage that limits the life chances of so many young people. The pupil premium has been a considerable help during difficult financial times.

However, beyond the mantra about which so much is written and said, the ‘gap’ is a complex concept with many different interpretations and criteria identifying what is meant by disadvantage. Many of these are controversial or extend way beyond what a school can solve on its own. Many are challenging in terms of the capacity of our schools, social services and other agencies to resource what needs to be done but that must never be an excuse for inactivity.

Such issues can for example include:

• Child poverty.
• Family background – social factors impacting on a child’s chances to succeed.
• Parental engagement in education.
• Critical incidents during early childhood.
• Mental or physical health issues and disability.

If there were simple answers we would have found them long ago. We already do a vast amount to identify these issues and make up for shortfalls in aspects like:

• The number of books at home
• Achievement at KS2
• Quality of oracy
• Levels of literacy
• Levels of numeracy
• Self confidence
• Numbers going to university

In spite of the real challenges in the shifting ways in which outcomes are measured there are many things we can do to assess the effectiveness of the action we take going well beyond the narrow measures upon which the accountability system focuses.

Much of what PiXL does is focused on these challenges. – The Edge, The Primary Edge, the No Wasted Years resources, our work on oracy (PiXLOrate) and PiXL Primary are all examples. Despite this, we know that we can always do more and the statement ‘what got you here won’t get you there’ applies as much here as in any other aspect of our work. As an organisation focused on practical solutions, we have begun a piece of work extending over the next year to identify practical suggestions for action from EYFS.

Brian Lightman
Introduction

Why does “the gap” matter? Because people matter and it remains our moral imperative to improve the life chances of all young people and especially the most vulnerable.

Nobody has closed the gap and most have not narrowed it! This toolkit is a PiXL approach driven set of ideas to tackle this rather stark and certainly sad state of affairs.

It is easy when talking about closing the gap to conflate ideas. Financially poor does not mean educationally poor or does it mean lower ability. So part of this toolkit is to ensure partners have absolute clarity on who is most vulnerable and which gap needs to be closed.

Basic definition of disadvantaged is complex. Certainly, it goes much beyond the simplistic definition of family finance. Currently the educational proxy indicator is free school meals. Most school leaders would agree it is a far more complex issue than this. The measure does not reflect amongst other things the quality of parenting, home environment and childhood experience. So it is a challenge to leaders to only look beyond allocation of additional monies to identify children of disadvantage.

It is important to appreciate that a child’s earliest years from birth to the time they reach statutory school age are crucial. All the research shows that this stage of learning and development matters more than any other. The differences between disadvantaged children and their peers is stark whilst attainment gaps at aged 5 have nationally begun to close the GAP in speech and language equivalence of 19 months. This gap has already emerged before they have even started statutory school age.

“To be behind after only 1000 days of life predisposes some children to a long and difficult struggle through the rest of their formal education.”

Effective schools recognise that disadvantaged pupils are not a homogenous group.

So this is a toolkit for partners that highlights what PIXL does best – simplifying the complicated and offering practical and impactful advice. We aim to help schools determine:

1. How do you really know who are the most vulnerable?
2. How do you “keep an eye” on them?
3. Who “owns” them?
4. Do you know why you are doing things to close the gap?
5. What does it mean for your next steps?

Any gap is rightly a key point of inspection. The move to and creation of all-through MATs has galvanized many leaders to look in a new and far more accountable way at what is happening at Primary level. PiXL Gap therefore is truly a cross PiXL phase piece of work. It is our collective belief that the acquisition of language and especially reading is truly fundamental in closing the gap therefore, alongside this toolkit is the work of a new PiXLSpecial phonics reading programme that will be launched in March 2017.

Certainly much of PiXL’s work ought to be signposted as supporting the disadvantaged and improving outcomes. Therefore, we have listed key PiXL strategies and subject resources below with hyperlinks for ease of access!

**PIXL Edge and Primary Edge**: click here
Currently running in over 600 primary and secondary schools, PiXL Edge provides a nurturing, reflective and systematic approach to the development of life skills in young people. Focusing around five key attributes – Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communication – the PiXL Edge provides resources and support from Early Years to Post-16.

**PIXL Oracy**: click here
PiXLorate has been developed to help non-specialists develop oracy and verbal communication in young people. These are a series of lesson plans and stimulus materials to help students develop specific speech skills.

**PIXL ‘No Wasted Years’**: click here
The No Wasted Years initiative was founded by a group focused on defining the issues relating to transition or progression from KS2 to KS3 as they relate to different organisational structures including multi academy trusts, traditional free standing schools and all-through schools.

**No Wasted Weeks**
Building on the success of the No Wasted Years initiative, the team are new developing resources for secondary schools to share with their feeder primary schools. There will be three packages of materials, each lasting approximately 15 hours, for English, mathematics and character development. The purpose of the materials is to develop the pupils’ skills, knowledge and experience in English and mathematics, to prepare for the same subjects in secondary school. Alongside the subject development, there will also be the opportunity to develop their life skills, with a focus on the primary secondary transfer, based on the successful Edge programme.
PiXL Classrooms
PiXL Classrooms is a model and a strategy that, we hope, will reduce teacher workload, increase student engagement with their own work and provide a way of making sure that no child is left behind.

English PiXL Classrooms: click here
Archive PiXL Classrooms: click here

PiXL Subjects:

Maths:
*Interactive Resources (website – www.pixl.org.uk)*
  - KS3/4 Personal Learning Checklist click here
CCEA (Northern Ireland)
  - KS3 Arithmetic – Arithmetic Intervention Manager, PLC (with tests, solutions, therapies), bolster material, year 7 baseline test.
  - Maths 2017 (reformed specification) - Maths Intervention Manager, PLC (with tests, solutions, therapies)
WJEC (Wales) – PLC (with tests, solutions, therapies), Maths Intervention Manager
  - PPE+ (upload result spreadsheet from previous PPEs to generate smith proformas for your students)
  - PiXL Maths App click here
  - PiXL Maths folder on Huddle: click here

English:
*Interactive Resources (website – www.pixl.org.uk)*
  - KS3/4 Personal Learning Checklist click here
Boost and Secure 2016 with scoreboard
  - PiXL English Literature App: click here
To purchase the app for a one off cost of £50 + VAT, please click here

PiXL English folder on Huddle: click here

Science:
*Interactive Resources (website – www.pixl.org.uk)*
  - KS3/4 Personal Learning Checklist click here
AQA - Biology, Physics, Chemistry (questions, solutions), Intervention Manager
  - Edexcel - Biology, Physics, Chemistry (questions, solutions)
OCR 21 Century – Chemistry, Biology, Physics (questions, solutions)
OCR Gateway - Chemistry, Biology, Physics (questions, solutions)

PiXL Science folder on Huddle: click here
History:
*Interactive Resources (website – [www.pixl.org.uk](http://www.pixl.org.uk))*
  - KS3/4 Personal Learning Checklist [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk)
History KS3 PLC – (PowerPoint, resources, tests, assessments, mark schemes), Intervention Manager

PiXL History folder on Huddle: [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk)

Geography:
*Interactive Resources (website – [www.pixl.org.uk](http://www.pixl.org.uk))*
  - KS3/4 Personal Learning Checklist [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk)
Geography KS3 PLC – (PowerPoint, resources, tests, assessment, mark schemes), Intervention Manager

PiXL Geography folder on Huddle: [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk)

MFL:
PiXL MFL folder on Huddle: [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk)

Other subjects:
The resources for other subjects not mentioned above will be located in Huddle – PiXL Resources – Other Files and Folders. Please [click here](http://www.pixl.org.uk) to access this folder.

PiXL Primary:
Primary resources can be accessed through [www.pixl.org.uk - Primary Resources](http://www.pixl.org.uk)

Pre Public Examinations (PPE):
PPEs for all subjects can be found on Huddle in a separate workspace called Pre Public Examinations – secure area.

Username / Email: Pixl PPE (there is a space here)
Password: Pixl16/17 (case sensitive)
Known as the PiXL ‘USB’, Huddle is a cloud-based platform which we use to store and share our resources. Although it is linked to an email address, it is not personal and should be used by all members of staff.

There are two ways to access Huddle. One is through the PiXL website (pixl.org.uk - Members Area - Huddle) or via the internet: here

Once you have signed in, you should be taken to the overview page for PiXL Resources.

The PiXL Resources workspace is the main section of Huddle where all static resources can be downloaded. If you have purchased any extra membership types or initiatives such as the Edge, their workspaces will also be shown in your dropdown menu.

**PiXL Website:** www.pixl.org.uk is the main website where you can access everything interactive in relation to PiXL. This includes booking onto events, registering for separate initiatives and viewing your schools PiXL membership details.

**Login details for the website:**
Username: (specific to your school)
Password: Regional password for 2016/17
Making the Next Steps Accessible
Brian Lightman, PiXL Area Leader

Preamble

For young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds one of the most powerful motivators to raise their aspirations and open doors is to make them aware from as early as possible about the vast range of career opportunities and routes available. This is backed up by a wealth of research here and here. This document summarises six key points from research. Whilst a high quality programme of careers education and guidance is vitally important for all students, it is even more important to compensate for those experiences which more advantaged students might more readily access. This section of the toolkit therefore focuses on a selection of practical strategies and advice under four headings – leadership and management, information, access to employers and careers education programmes. Listed resources are free of any cost to schools. In the current deregulated context it is beyond the scope of this exercise to identify the numerous commercial resources which schools might find useful.

1. Leadership and management

The Compass learning tool is a free resource which enables schools to evaluate their careers provision against the eight Gatsby benchmarks.
• A stable careers programme
• Learning from career and labour market information
• Addressing the needs of each pupil
• Linking curriculum learning to careers
• Encounters with employers and employees
• Experiences of workplaces
• Encounters with further and higher education
• Personal guidance

This is an excellent starting point to consider schools’ provision and explore where roles and responsibilities ensure that this is a high priority.

This guidance summarises statutory requirements relating to careers and links to the Ofsted Framework.

2. Access to high quality information

Information about higher education is relatively easy to access. However for many disadvantaged young people universities are completely outside their and their families’ experience so opportunities to visit them and also invite in former students
to talk about their experiences. Some schools have found alumni networks very helpful in this respect.

Many schools have found it difficult to access comprehensive information about apprenticeship opportunities. The government is well aware of this and has funded a major project with a number of delivery partners across the country. Details of the project and support for London and the South can be found [here](#). This website also contains a host of resources and case studies of use to schools in all regions. Schools outside London and the South can find links to delivery partners [here](#).

The Careermap website and free Careermag magazine are excellent resources. The National Apprenticeships Service Website is a further source of information.

### 3. Access to employers

There is compelling evidence in the research listed above that regular encounters with employers have a powerful impact on young people’s aspirations and future career routes especially when started early in their schools careers. The commitment of employers to support schools is immense and was enormously bolstered by the work of the CBI under John Cridland’s Leadership and the First Steps initiative.

The Careers and Enterprise Company has established a network of Enterprise Coordinators whose role is to deploy volunteer advisers from a host of employment backgrounds to assist schools to develop links with businesses. This network is being rolled out and supported by a range of funded projects focused on ‘cold spot areas’. Details can be found [here](#).

There is also a scheme to allocate mentors from business into schools.

The Education and Employers charity has a network of over 32,000 volunteers from all kinds of career backgrounds who are willing to visit schools and talk to young people. In addition to this Inspiring the Future programme there are parallel programmes designed to provided schools with female role models and one for Primary Schools. This organisation can also assist with the organisation of careers fairs and other events.

### 4. Careers Education Programmes.

There is no correct way to organise these programmes which need to be informed by all of the above and suit the individual needs of the school. However there are clear things that need to be taught and it is equally clear that employers need young people not only to possess a range of key skills and attributes but also be able to
articulate them. This is a key purpose of the PiXL EDGE programme which is proving to be particularly effective in motivating young people who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education. We are developing a comprehensive set of curriculum resources and guidance for all key stages as part of this programme.
Developing Curiosity in Pupil Premium Students

Cheryl Day, PiXL Consultant and Director of Leading Women Education

Preamble

To be curious is to have a strong desire to know or learn something. The importance of learning in order to achieve in life, is widely acknowledged. It is behind so much of our agreed moral purpose in ensuring the best for all of our children and young people. As teachers we know that curiosity and the desire to learn makes a difference in whether learning takes place easily, enjoyably and developmentally. However, we also know that children differ; some appear eager to learn and others appear much less interested, with a whole spectrum in between, whose degree of curiosity may depend on circumstance in life, home or school, and may be temporary or longer term. What can we do to encourage all children to be curious and to have a desire to learn?

Tom Stafford, in a BBC article, states that ‘Evolution made us (human beings) the ultimate learning machines and the ultimate learning machines need to be oiled by curiosity’. His view is that humans are deeply curious by nature as part of our evolution and this leads to a lifelong capacity to learn. Click here However, for some children curiosity is encouraged and stimulated, and for others it is suppressed and/or disrupted. This has an impact on the very young, right through to the school or college leaver. Poverty, whether economic or cultural, is likely to feed the suppression and disruption of curiosity, and might help to explain the NCB Young Research Advisers conclusion that it isn’t just cognitive ability and regulation skills that results in poor children doing less well in school. Click here

If being a so called ‘disadvantaged pupil’ (Pupil Premium) means that you are less likely to be curious, schools have a moral duty to do all they can to re-dress the balance and to promote curiosity as well as a desire to learn.

Advice

So how do we encourage curiosity in those children and young people who seem less interested and unwilling to learn? There are many practical strategies that schools are using successfully to ensure every child makes progress (some are listed below) but isn’t there an overall message about treating every child and young person as an individual, not giving up on them and being there when they are ready and able to learn? Many schools who achieve great success with their disadvantaged students will cite this philosophy as underpinning their practice. Another strategy that we use is to turn the focus away from what prevents young people from learning to what actually helps them to learn.
Professor Victor Rios encourages us to see disadvantaged children and young people as bringing their assets to school, not problems. He suggests re-labelling them as ‘at promise’ instead of ‘at risk’. He suggests that we (a) get rid of the deficit model (b) value the grit, character and resilience that have enabled these young people to survive and (c) provide adequate resources for them to achieve. Adequate resources are crucial and therefore the effective use of Pupil Premium funding is another key strategy that effective schools use well. Encouragingly, Victor Rios also recognizes the enormous importance of teachers who care - ‘when you teach to the heart, the mind will follow’. This is not always an easy thing to do but as Victor says “my teacher believed in me so much that she tricked me into believing in myself’!

Click here

Practical Strategies

Terry Heick, of TeachThought, thinks that developing curiosity is a huge challenge whilst formal schooling is constrained by the curriculum and the focus on outcomes. However, schools can create the ideal conditions where natural curiosity begins to grow and flourish. Terry suggests 5 Learning Strategies That Make Students Curious which are definitely already used in many schools, particularly primary schools.

1. Revisit old questions
2. Model and promote ambition
3. Play
4. Develop the right collaboration at the right time
5. Use diverse and unpredictable content

Click here

Also from TeachThought, Lisa Chesser has produced a helpful list of 50 Questions to Help Students Think About What They Think. The questions are divided into sections for English, maths and science but many can be used across disciplines. They are designed to open the mind of the learner and inevitably help develop curiosity in secondary, if not primary, learners. ‘Ultimately questions spark imagination, conjure emotions, and create more questions.’ Click here

We are all aware that feelings of safety and security, mentally and emotionally as well as physically, are key to being receptive to learning. Therefore, it is worth visiting the National Children’s Bureau website and looking at the NCB’s ‘A Whole School Framework for Emotional Well-being and Mental Health.’ Building on what works, the NCB has produced a self assessment and improvement tool to support school leaders in implementing a whole school approach to emotional well-being and mental health. It is complemented by a set of resources. Click here
Of course, a powerful resource for developing the five key attributes of leadership, organization, initiative, resilience and communication, all of which contribute to the confidence of being curious, is The PiXL Edge. PiXL Edge is a practical programme which benefits young people in secondary schools and sixth forms, by introducing and accrediting the development of the five life attributes. Primary and TRIP provide their own distinct Edge Programmes. Click here

As the NCB Young Research Advisers conclude, there is much research to be completed as to why disadvantaged students do less well at school, with the subsequent, often, predictable impact on life chances. Those of us who are part of PiXL are all too aware that data driven information can help us to put into place the right strategies at the right time in order to support all young people to succeed. Where the picture and information is less clear, as in the case of developing curiosity, we can embrace the resilience and the emotional stamina that disadvantaged children bring, build on it and nurture curiosity for all. This, after all, brings true meaning and commitment to our moral purpose as educationalists.

References:

“The Underrepresentation of white working class boys in Higher Education – the role of widening participation”
Kings College London
Sam Baars, Ellie McCally, Eleanor Bernard

HMI

“Asessing the impact of pupil premium” May 2016
NGA

The Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Leadership Toolkit
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Effective pupil premium review
National College May 2016

“Missing Talent”
Sutton Trust

“Private Schools Success”
TES

Suggested wider reading for year 9 – 10 Balliol College list
Measuring the Impact of Interventions

David Rowan-Robinson, Assistant Headteacher: Pupil Premium, Aspirations and Interventions

The purpose of this section is to advise school leaders on how to measure the impact of interventions and offer some practical strategies. In order to ensure the needs of the disadvantaged students are met, leaders need to continuously monitor the impact of interventions. For costly external interventions you can monitor whether or not the Pupil Premium budget has been spent effectively. Through measuring impact, you ensure a layer of quality assurance, which often results in more rigour, where a clear entry and exit point is established, e.g. grades before and after an intervention.

The end product of measuring the impact of academic interventions is that a standard Impact Report is generated, which clearly presents quantitative data on attendance and progress (both broken down into PP and non-PP). See hyperlink 1. For pastoral interventions, the Impact Report can include quantitative data presented on attendance, progress and behaviour points. See hyperlink 2. Both Impact Reports will show a breakdown of the above for PP and non-PP students and be RAG rated according to level of impact.

Advice

- Keep it simple. For academic interventions, ideally the administrative team should put together a simple spreadsheet for data entry so that the staff using it only need to register whether or not a student has attended and enter their entry and exit grade.
- For short term academic interventions, sub grades/levels should be used for the entry and exit points.
- The data entry should be consistent across the school using the same IT software for registering attendance (e.g. SIMS or equivalent software). This data can then be exported to Excel.
- The data generated and presentation of the Academic Impact Report and Pastoral Impact Report needs to consistent across all interventions in the school.
- The RAG rating of the Impact Report should be decided in advance, with a set formula, e.g. whether or not a whole grade improvement is classed as ‘green’. The school leader decides on the formula, not the person/organisation delivering the interventions.
- The Impact Report should be able to populate data from the school’s assessment and reporting system, e.g. compare the students’ grades from one assessment point to another.
- To be efficient and avoid overlap, the data generated from the Impact Report needs to produce information that is able to feed into a range of reports (such as the PP Report), e.g. For those that attended the ____ intervention, X percent improved by at least one whole grade.
• Data inputted should feed into a whole school database, where leaders can identify which students have had interventions throughout the year and those who have not.
• Where internal staff are paid to deliver an intervention, they should submit their Impact Report with their expenses claim form in order to get paid.

**Practical Strategies**

**Academic Interventions:** see instructions for overall process ([hyperlink 3](#)). Staff delivering the interventions complete an Academic Intervention Request Form ([hyperlink 4](#)) which includes the names of the students who need to attend, the admin team then uses this information to set up a mark sheet on either SIMs or Excel which staff use to record attendance, entry and exit points ([hyperlink 5](#), [screen shot of SIMs](#)). For long term interventions, e.g. over 7 weeks, entry and exit grades can be populated from the assessment points already inputted from the data drop.

**Pastoral Interventions:** the names and details of the interventions are sent to the admin team. The pastoral intervention takes place between the issuing of progress reports over the year (to provide entry and exist points). The data from the Progress Reports feeds into the Impact Report. For example, percentage of subjects on or above target, attendance and the number of behaviour points ([hyperlink 2](#)).

**Acknowledgments**

Sue Maguire (Headteacher at Hatch End High School)
Noelle Norris (Attendance Administrator & Curriculum Admin Assistant)

[Hyperlink 1 Academic Intervention Tracker]
[Hyperlink 2 Pastoral Intervention Tracker]
[Hyperlink 3 Intervention Process]
[Hyperlink 4 Academic Intervention Request Form]
[Hyperlink 5 Academic Intervention Instructions]

**The Cultural Gap and Ways to Bridge and Overcome**

*Maria Curtis (Headteacher of Ash Grange Children’s Centre and Primary School, former role as a Literacy Consultant)*

From birth to death culture richness or poverty impacts every aspect of a person’s life. As young infants arrive at Children’s Centres, Pre-schools and Nurseries, they carry with them a tapestry of experiences; the basis of their cultural heritage has begun and the impact of the extent of this prior experience, is immediately evident in their talk and language.

[Article 1 - click here](#)
From this immature and poor language basis, the children are not ready to engage fully with the curriculum and are placed at a disadvantage: Article 2 - click here

‘Reading and writing float on a sea of talk.’ Content-Area Conversations (Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Carol Rothenberg). Teachers across the land then see the impact of the cultural divide on oracy confidence, content and usage, on reading diet and desires and on writing skills and content. Each of these elements in turn underpins every subject and area of learning for children. At the heart of all learning is the cultural experiences that a child has or has access to. This is the spring within and this is what we can address through education, so let us turn to how to address these areas.

Oracy opportunities – to build confidence and skills. Whether a child is standing before the class in show and tell time, debating school policies or undertaking a university interview, oral command and confidence is crucial. How important is this in your school? How much daily time is spend developing oral skills? Is there a programme? To access the PiXL Oracy resources, please click here

Books – every book provides children with a view of the world, real and imagined, where they can find themselves and experience others. Books are a gateway to a world of experiences, knowledge, language and understanding of the world. Taking control of these experiences is crucial. What is the diet children will experience in your school? How do you ensure this is carefully and consciously developed, beyond core syllabus reading. Creating a reading programme as a backbone for wider reading in the primary years widens children’s experience and expands their cultural understanding. Many schools are putting together class reading lists that are not left to chance, but are embedded in the curriculum offer.

People and Places – what are the core cultural experiences that a child needs to understand the world and which will become a shared cultural platform that a child can use as a reference point? Consider what is the basis of visits, trips, exchanges and visitors to schools? Creating a programme of events is crucial, children need exposure to a bigger world before they reach their “gap” year. These opportunities to expand their world, interact and gain cultural reference points will provide richness to their verbal and written communications.

Expanding the world – curriculum offers the need to expand the cultural world. What is the basis of the curriculum, an international world, a technology or creative world? What is the intention beyond the delivery of the national curriculum? Look closely at the cultural experiences the years of study will provide. All teachers want children to achieve their potential and their greatest results at every stage of learning and life. Everyone deserves the opportunities and it is time to address the gaps; be focused, be deliberate and be expectant.
Wider articles:
Organisations across the land are drawing together examples of how to overcome these gaps, a place to share ideas.

Can Culture and The Arts be Used to Bridge the Divide Between Rich and Poor Children? Click here

The Impact of Culture on Creativity. Click here
How Effective Post 16 Provision Can Raise Aspiration and Attainment for All
Martin Bayliss - Principal, Holyhead School, Handsworth, Birmingham

Preamble

Holyhead is a larger than average 11 to 18 school serving one of the most socially and economically deprived electoral wards in the UK. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Over three quarters of the students speak English as an additional language and the proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. There has been no discernible gap in achievement between non-FSM and FSM students at the school for a number of years.

The school opened a Sixth Form on site for the first time in September 2010. This case study considers the significant impact of post 16 initiatives on aspiration and attainment throughout the school.

Case Study

Schools that have achieved some success in ‘diminishing the difference’ in outcomes for their students have invariably focussed on establishing an ethos of high aspiration across their school community. In many institutions, this begins before students join the school, perhaps in Y5 or Y6, and is reinforced at every significant transition point throughout a student’s secondary school career. When parents/carers of new students first meet with staff they are assured that along with caring for and nurturing their children, professionals pledge to ensure that all students are at least ‘university ready’ whatever their next step in life is to be. Increasing levels of motivation and self-confidence are essential if aspirations are to be raised and students effectively prepared for life beyond school, whether that be in continuing education or employment.

Monitoring and Tracking

Much of the work at Holyhead on maintaining high aspirations in the Sixth Form has impacted upon the younger students. At transition to post 16 education, four key developmental themes are initially identified for students. These are: Independent Learning; Contribution to Lessons; Response to Feedback; Attendance and Punctuality. To monitor progress in these areas a tracking system has been developed to operate across all students in the school, from Years 7 to 13. Motivation Scores for each of the themes have been introduced to replace generic comments on attitudes to learning, a move which has enabled razor sharp analysis of areas for intervention on an individual student, subject and/or cross-subject levels. Each student is given an individual subject score based on the themes. These are then combined to produce an overall score. At this point, specific interventions are put in place to help the students to address issues in their weaker areas, as well as to highlight patterns amongst cohorts which can inform staff CPD. This information is
communicated to parents/carers regularly and enables them to engage with staff in supporting their children at home. In keeping with PiXL principles, closer links between Raising Standards Leaders and Pastoral Teams have led to a significant step change in the development of these skills, playing a major role in closing gaps in student outcomes in both attainment and progress over recent years.

**Guidance for Students**

A lack of effective Career Education Information Advice and Guidance [CEIAG] can lead to underachievement at both Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. This is particularly significant for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools working positively with such students tend to provide additional interview time for Pupil Premium and/or Looked After Children. For many students in such schools, CEIAG ‘lessons’ begin in Year 7. Fundamental to any campaign to drive up aspirations is the declared expectation that the majority of students will obtain the highest grades at A Level and be applying to the most competitive and prestigious universities. At Holyhead a programme of workshops and talks each month is provided, involving representatives from a variety of industries and professions who share their experiences and offer advice about qualifications, higher education and apprenticeships. These workshops are offered to students from Year 10 to Year 13. Attendance at workshops is monitored and although not compulsory, the impact over the last four to five years has been clear. There has been no ‘aspiration gap’ for our students and, significantly, Holyhead has a much lower than average figure for NEET students at 18+.

**Transition**

Low levels of challenge in lessons and a narrow, restrictive curriculum offer often leads to a lack of engagement that can contribute significantly to gaps in achievement. It would appear that many schools addressing such differences have managed to provide a varied curriculum, protecting creative and vocational subjects at every opportunity. Lack of effective support from both home and within peer groups can lead to students making unsuitable subject choices. Successful schools enable students to make effective and informed choices about ‘next steps’. At Holyhead, providing a taste of what the future might hold has become an essential tactic at every transition phase. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 have many opportunities to attend university taster sessions and similar experiences are offered to students in Year 10 and Year 11. Year 11 students spend two days in November ‘becoming’ Sixth Form students, undertaking A Level style courses for the first time. All Key stage 4 students are provided with the opportunity to join Sixth Formers in their ‘Study Spaces’ at the end of each school day. This renewed focus on facilitating effective transition has impacted on KS2 to KS3 very noticeably. At Holyhead, Key Stage 3 begins in Year 6. Students from Primary Partner schools spend at least three days at Holyhead undertaking CAT testing, taster lessons, tutorial activities and simply having fun. Many of them will go on to enroll in Summer School for at least a
further five days of induction activity. The testing of new students before they begin secondary school enables interventions and support to be implemented as soon as the students enroll in the September of Year 7. No time is wasted on the diagnosis of need.

At Holyhead, students opt for Key Stage 4 subjects at the end of Year 8. Mid-way through the year they are given the opportunity to experience GCSE style teaching and learning before making any firm choices. The impact of this initiative has been significant. Student feedback suggests that they value the insight into what successfully moving forward will require of them. Anxiety levels have decreased [as seen in Pupil Attitudes to Self and School surveys]. Less students are requesting to change subjects mid-course. Motivation scores have improved and fluctuations in achievement are less evident.

Supporting High End Attainers

Inspiring the most able students represents a considerable challenge, particularly for those young people without significant emotional and motivational support within the home environment. Many schools have academic enrichment programmes that endeavour to provide high ability students in all year groups with the opportunity to take part in projects that both challenge their self-esteem and increase their knowledge base, supporting them on route to the most prestigious apprenticeships, universities or other employment opportunities. The RSA Academies’ bespoke Student Leadership Programme is one such example. In schools that have a strong record of ‘diminishing the difference’, students who have an interest in a specific career path are able to become members of a number of associations such as Holyhead’s ‘Healthcare Society’, run by Sixth Form students and their teachers. These associations engage in topical debates and access current research materials, journals, news articles and podcasts. Similarly, staff in successful schools have been keen to promote Massive Open Online Courses provided by universities through Future Learn over recent years. For Sixth Form students, this furthers their subject knowledge and develops their independent learning skills. These courses are promoted to the most able students in Year 11 as a means of providing additional challenge whilst broadening academic horizons beyond the confines of examination syllabuses.

Enrichment

Although academic enrichment is crucial in helping to inspire a desire to be stretched and challenged, wider enrichment opportunities are used to broaden students’ understanding of the positive role they can play within both the school and local community. Making use of organisations such as the National Citizen Service and Envision in Year 11 and 12 provides students with unique opportunities to work collaboratively on social action projects, developing ‘soft skills’ which are critical in supporting applications to apprenticeships and university. Mentoring training can be provided for Sixth Form students to work alongside younger students, whilst peer
reading schemes also promote interaction between age ranges. At Holyhead, this builds effectively on the vertical tutoring system that involves all of years 7 to 11.

Many of the techniques pioneered at initiatives like The McKinsey Leadership Academy for Year 13 students have been adapted successfully in programmes for younger students in many forward thinking schools.

At Holyhead, a productive partnership with a local primary school with a specialism for autistic pupils has proved to be mutually beneficial for all involved, especially for students with an interest in pursuing futures in education or care related subjects. The experience of providing regular in class support alongside young people with communication difficulties and working as part of a team in such a collaborative environment is crucial. This challenges students and develops organisational and interpersonal skills which help to hone their career aspirations. In recent months at Holyhead this has resulted in increasing numbers of students focussing on moving into the primary teaching sector.

Partnerships with organisations such as Teach First Futures, the Social Mobility Foundation and local university providers such as The University of Birmingham and The University of Warwick can help to provide students with access to not only high quality university study experiences, but vitally important work placements and internship opportunities which would ordinarily be inaccessible for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students gain subject specific mentoring from undergraduates along with advice about courses and preparing for interview. Such experiences help shape an attitude amongst high ability students that they should aspire to wherever their potential could take them. Once again, the impact is obvious. Over 30% of Holyhead students gain places at Russell Group universities with increasing numbers gaining places on competitive courses such as Engineering and Medicine. Two students are currently studying at Oxford University. Such outcomes were an aspiration of the school five years ago: now they are a growing expectation.

**Conclusion**

Like many similar schools, Holyhead has used PiXL principles and ALPS monitoring to develop high quality intervention strategies. These systems, informed by ‘Quality First Teaching’, are part of a genuine Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 strategy for all students that has met with considerable success in recent years. Students understand the language of the ‘Raising Standards Strategy’. At Holyhead, students in Year 8 can talk about PLCs, PPEs and ‘walking talking mocks’. PiXL Edge will launch in January. This will take the school further forward in its work to push aspiration levels to even greater heights.
Acknowledgements

Ross Trafford – Principal [Designate]
Samirah Roberts – Senior Vice Principal [Designate]
Dave Knox – Vice Principal – Post 16
Andrew Bowen – Director of Logistics

Attached Papers:

Intervention for Improvement

Learning Conversation Prompts for Motivation Scores

Motivation Score Guidance
Parental Engagement: maximize your pupil premium strategies impact!

Kevin Sexton Deputy Headteacher (RSL), Chesterfield High School, Crosby, Liverpool

Preamble
We all know that a child’s success at school is impacted upon and can be improved by their parent (s) being engaged in what is happening in their school. It is the schools role to work with parents and other stakeholders in the community to develop the character of the child and shape their future successes.

Parents have a primary influence on their child’s attitudes towards school, their learning, and their future success. “Parent involvement programmes that are effective in engaging diverse families recognise, respect, and address cultural and class differences.”

“Parent programs and interventions work best when the strategies respect the needs of families. When school staff engage in caring and trusting relationships with parents that recognize parents as partners in the educational development of children, these relationships enhance parents’ desire to be involved and influence how they participate in their children’s educational development.” Henderson & Mapp, 2002

Schools are increasingly accountable for their levels of engagement with families and carers. Schools are increasingly accountable to parents for the progress and achievement of pupils. Schools are heavily scrutinised for their work on engaging and improving the attainment of pupil premium students. (Ofsted 2009, 2015)

This is central to the Government’s strategy for raising achievement levels, improving pupils’ behaviour, and lowering the attainment gap. The Field Review on Poverty and Life Chances (Field 2010) identifies a central role for parents in meeting each of these goals, particularly in the early years. Since September 2009 Ofsted has been considering how effectively schools engage with parents. And pupil premium parents are high up on that agenda.

Advice
The key to engaging pupil premium parents is leaders deciding to prioritise this group and look at why PP parents don’t engage? What activities they might engage in? When are the best times to maximize engagement? How are these going to be led and by who? The most successful schools in improving the chances of PP students have a dedicated leader, someone who is passionate about the issue and has the moral purpose to ensure that all students come first when it comes to progress and achievement.

Schools need to focus on building positive relationships with parents, improving the quality of how they communicate with PP parents, reporting to parents on progress in a meaningful way, and scaffolding the mechanisms/plans for helping parents to support their children’s learning. We know that a critical dimension of effective teaching and learning is the relationship between the teacher, their pupils and their parents.
How much a parent is involved in the life of a school and the progress of their child will directly impact on how they behave, how much they attend and ultimately how much progress they make. The school not only influences what happens in the twenty five hours they child is at school but it has the ability to impact on their home life if there is an effective school- parent – student relationship. To engage parents in raising attainment and raising aspirations to look at ways of challenging disadvantage and removing the barriers financial disadvantage can create. School improvement and school effectiveness research consistently shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement. Schools that improve and sustain improvement engage the community and build strong links with parents. Where schools build positive relationships with parents and work actively to embrace racial, religious, and ethnic and language differences, evidence of sustained school improvement can be found. It is therefore a priority to identify interventions that are effective in supporting parental involvement, particularly those parents who are either not significantly involved in their children’s education or who are not involved at all.

Firstly before you start planning your interventions or strategies you need to audit and survey levels of parental engagement. Pupil Premium parents and students aren’t one homogenous group who operate in one particular way devoid of school context, geographical location, financial or employment status. It is really useful and purposeful to undertake a parental engagement survey for all parents but particularly focus on PP parents.

Key areas that you need to survey are these:

- **Learning/engagement indicators**: homework completion, academic progress, planner checking, attitudes, attendance and punctuality, supports after school intervention, holidays revision clubs
- **Levels of Communication**: school-home; home-school, ease of access via the phone/email, attendance at parent’s evenings etc.
- **In-school activities**: volunteering; supporting PTA’s, school fundraising, GCSE information meetings, attending shows and sporting events
- **Decision making**: are they school governors? Attendance at parent care forum meetings, foreign school trip meetings

Once you have your school PP premium survey completed you need to formulate a **whole school policy** on parent engagement but have a dedicated section outlining how PP premium parents are going to be engaged and who is accountable. Examples are widely available from schools.
Practical Strategies (this is not exhaustive …. You will have plenty of your own)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Before Transition</strong></th>
<th>Attending primary fairs/fetes, sports day end of term show – having a presence early on in the lives of these families. Being friendly and accessible</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employ a full-time leader of KS2-KS3 transition who leads on both the pastoral and academic issues.</td>
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<td>Ensure you have a dedicated Governor who works with key staff and liaise with Primary Governors where appropriate.</td>
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<td>Strong liaison with Primary schools not just in Year 6 but at least down to year 3; know the whole child and the whole family.</td>
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<td>Open days and evenings for parents of Year 3+ not just to sell your school but to create a partnership of support too.</td>
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<td>Inviting key target PP Premium parents for tours of school. During the school day when they can see the school and you can directly chat to them.</td>
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<td><strong>During Transition</strong></td>
<td>Regular meetings with most of the primary headteachers.</td>
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<td>Getting subject leaders talking to one another about the work undertaken in Years 5, 6 and 7. Speaking primary headteachers about KS2 assessment this will get you thinking about you own tracking systems.</td>
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<td>Cross-phase Subject meetings so that we can try to avoid duplication in Year 7 and utilize the skills and knowledge the students bring with them.</td>
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<td>Create a media clip about school to show to Year 6 parents what a typical day, places and routines look like. This could be completed as a media project involving Year 7 parents and perhaps even use ex parents from the primary school.</td>
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<td>Use staff from across both settings who work in both the primary and secondary sector (e.g. Transition Behaviour Co-ordinator) to lead sessions with vulnerable students in Year 5 and 6 to prepare them for transition.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We employ a full time Attendance and Welfare Manager who works with Year 6 parents on key issues of attendance, punctuality, equipment and uniform.</td>
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Transition days / Taster afternoons/ Summer school events which have a focus for parents at the end of the day with students performing or presenting – get the PP parents into school.

Arrange for vulnerable Year 6 students to prepare for the induction day(s) by working with trained Year 11 mentors and/or Edge leaders.

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<tr>
<th>Secondary Phase</th>
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<tr>
<td>School Leader who is responsible for championing the progress of PP students and their families, supported with resources to invest to bespoke engagement strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular CPD sessions and updates on parental engagement and disadvantaged students; do staff know the context every student they teach and how they can remove the barriers of attainment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour for learning polices which are clear and have high expectations about routines, ensure parents are aware of these and know how to support from home. 100% Classroom- Doug Lemov is worth reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use ICT effectively to communicate with PP parents – text messaging school notices; dedicated website space for parent; weekly newsletters, school gateway apps, homework monitoring apps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Contact details are regularly updated each term; those hard to reach parents get a home visit if necessary. Staff show parents how to use the technology they need to maintain high levels of school contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Engagement survey taken each term and presented to Senior Leaders, issues raised are addressed. Annual report to governors of levels of parental engagement with particular focus on PP parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP Premium Parents are phoned and directly contacted before every school event that you want them to be at. Including school shows, sports matches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP Premium parents are directly contacted before each</td>
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<td><strong>assessment cycle and after each data capture to ensure they are monitoring progress.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with parents and students showing them how to access on-line resources to support academic progress. E.g. Maths App, Tassomai; Eng. Lit app; monitor usage closely and run follow up session to maintain engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLT Open mornings/afternoon held fortnightly/monthly when PP parents are contacted to come and see their child’s work; celebrate their contributions.</td>
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**Acknowledgements:**

“*No Wasted Years*’ PIXL document

[Review of best practice in parental engagement Research Report DFE-RR156](#)

**NFER :Teacher Guide: Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children**

**Parental-engagement toolkit – School Home Support**

**The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers. Ofsted: Briefing for section 5 inspectors**
Closing the Reading Gap in Primary Schools
The PiXL Primary English Team

Introduction

Reading has gone from a strength in many of our primary schools to an area of intense focus, due to the different expectations required for the KS2 test in 2016 compared with previous years.

The KS2 Tests identified the following areas where improvement is essential:

1. Build speed and stamina
2. Language and vocabulary development
3. Focus on accurate basic retrieval
4. Developing inference skills
5. Whole school review of how reading is taught/the reading diet/curriculum

Advice

• Ensure all (whole school) staff are completely familiar with the content domain, the 2017 interim test assessment framework and the reading exemplification materials.
• Make sure that teaching (particularly with regards to the KMs) focuses on language in context, retrieval and inference and use the key strategy. Use QLA to guide planning and teaching.
• Use speed reading ideas, Y6 reading list extracts and ensure exposure to text extracts of sufficient length and depth, to build stamina and speed for the test.
• Look at ideas to develop each of the content domain – disseminate to all staff.
• Think about question language and TEACH THIS EXPlicitly.

Practical Strategies

1. Use the reading PLC for Years 3 through to 6 to identify the gaps in learning
2. Use the therapies on Huddle as necessary for each PLC element of concern
3. Intervention should be with a qualified teacher

Acknowledgements

The PiXL Primary English Team
Packs a Punch

School Culture

- Set the expectations that disadvantaged students must be included in EVERYTHING, which is in line with the percentage of the cohort. E.g. 50%

- Photos of all the Y11 disadvantaged students (or any other year group) get put up around the hall in a staff INSET session. All staff then write on post it notes information about their aspirations, barriers and effective teaching strategies. A directory can then be created and shared with all staff.

- Ongoing item on all Department and Pastoral Meetings.

- Over communicate the message, that disadvantaged students need to be make accelerated progress, in order to catch up with their peers.

Leadership

- Have in place Pupil Premium Intervention Action Plans in departments with large gaps. Select key students to target for interventions. Review agreed strategies and data 5 x per year with SLT lead or AHT overseeing PP.

- Movement of groups: If possible, where there are a disproportionate number of disadvantaged students in a group, deploy your most appropriate teacher.

- Use of ex-Sixth Form pupils who achieved an A or above in Maths to run sessions over Easter to support small groups of disadvantaged student.

- Routines: An orderly environment can negate the impact of deprivation on achievement. School routines help all students
to learn; however, they benefit the disadvantaged students the most because some students rely on the structure in school to overcome the disruption outside of school.

**Classroom Teacher**

- Mark the disadvantaged students` books first.

- Ask the underachieving disadvantaged students to redo their mock exam based on the teacher feedback, then remark.

- WISE Feedback: Increase motivation to respond to feedback. By explicitly stating a belief in student’s potential when giving written feedback has been shown to drive notable changes in behaviour; research has shown that they are also far more likely to respond to feedback.

- Building resilience: Students need to have awareness of their obstacles and how to overcome them. Ask teachers to identify specific classes who have low levels of resilience. Ask them to WOOP the start of the lesson as a starter activity.

At the start of the lesson, get your students to WOOP the lesson. Today`s study wish....
Best outcome.....
Obstacle....
Plan. If (obstacle).........then.......(action to overcome).

| Checklist for disadvantaged students in every lesson. Have you: |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| ✓ Provided an orderly learning environment with clear routines for all students? |
| ✓ Identified each DSV student on your seating plan, are they sat next to peers who will support their learning? |
| ✓ Asked each DSV student a challenging question? |
| ✓ Spoken to each DSV student one to one, with encouragement using growth mind-set language? Acknowledge what they are good at and praise their effort. |
| ✓ Checked that the DSV students understand your written feedback and have the appropriate learning strategies to be resilient and ‘bounce back’? |
In his role as pupil premium champion John Dunford wrote a number of blogs which can be found here. These also contain references to further reading/research etc.

This one here contains the following checklist which draws together characteristics of best practice he observed during his two years in that role.

**School Culture:**
- An ethos of attainment for all pupils
- An unerring focus on high quality teaching
- Clear, responsive leadership, with high aspirations and expectations
- 100 per cent buy-in from all staff, with all staff conveying positive and aspirational messages to disadvantaged pupils
- Evidence (especially the EEF Toolkit) is used to decide on which strategies are likely to be most effective in overcoming the barriers to learning of disadvantaged pupils. Particular consideration is given to high-impact, low-cost strategies.
- Able to demonstrate positive impact of all strategies
- In-depth training for all staff on chosen strategies
- Every effort is made to engage parents/carers in the education and progress of their child

**Individual Support:**
- Identification of the main barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils
- Individualised approach to addressing barriers to learning and emotional support
• Focus on outcomes for all individual pupils

• Frequent monitoring of the progress of every disadvantaged pupil

• When a pupil’s progress slows, interventions are put in place rapidly

• Teachers know which pupils are eligible for pupil premium

• The needs are recognised of disadvantaged children in specific groups, e.g. high ability pupils, looked-after children

School Organisation
• Deployment of the best staff to support disadvantaged pupils – developing the skills of existing teachers and TAs

• Excellent collection, analysis and use of data relating to individual pupils and groups

• Performance management is used to reinforce the importance of this agenda

• Effectiveness of teaching assistants is evaluated and, if necessary, improved through training and improved deployment

• Governors are trained on pupil premium

• Pupil premium funding is ring-fenced to spend on the target group

• Effectiveness of interventions is evaluated frequently and adjustments made as necessary

• A senior leader has oversight of how PP funding is being spent

Relevant works:
‘The School Leadership Journey’ John Dunford (Chapter 6)
**Attendance**

- Compulsory part of uniform in years 7 – 9
- Awarded in end of term assemblies, wear monitored by form tutors
- Bronze badge for 100% attendance for one whole term
- Silver badge for 100% attendance for two whole terms
- Gold badge for 100% attendance for whole year – given Sept’ ‘17

**Book of Excellence**

Each week, a member of the SLT will select five of the best exemplary work pieces which have been put on faculty display.

The selected students will be invited to attend lunch with the Head Teacher the following Friday.

The selected students will have their photograph taken with the Head Teacher which will be put into the school’s book of excellence along with a summary of their work

**PRIDE in Presentation**

**Vision**

- Reinforces and promotes PRIDE
- Promotes responsibility for own learning
- Routine ensures students feedback to advice given

**What it isn’t**

- Flexible
- Different standards for KS3 and KS4, or for different ability groups, despite a possible difference in outcome
**Prize Giving**

**The Venue:** The Plaza

**The structure:** Special awards presented by SLT/guest speakers
Departmental staff presenting awards for their faculty, led by HOD

**The prizes:** No books, glassware/medals instead

**The awardees:** Mixed – not just top set students

**The awards:** Not GCSE Certificates