

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

21ST JANUARY 2013

SUBJECT:	NARROWING THE GAP AT KEY STAGE 4
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL DATA FOR 2012 INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT IS UNVALIDATED AND IS THEREFORE PROVISIONAL UNTIL JANUARY 2013.

- 1.1 This report summarises the progress made in reducing the attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those not eligible for free school meals.

The key measure is the difference in the percentage of pupils in each group attaining 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths.

- 1.2 Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan 'My Family' states the objective "Support schools and other settings to improve educational provision and attainment maintaining a specific focus on addressing the impact of poverty".

This report links with the Enjoying & Achieving outcome area of the Children & Young People's Plan 2012-13 – in particular area 2 "Improve the educational outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty and disadvantage including children in care."

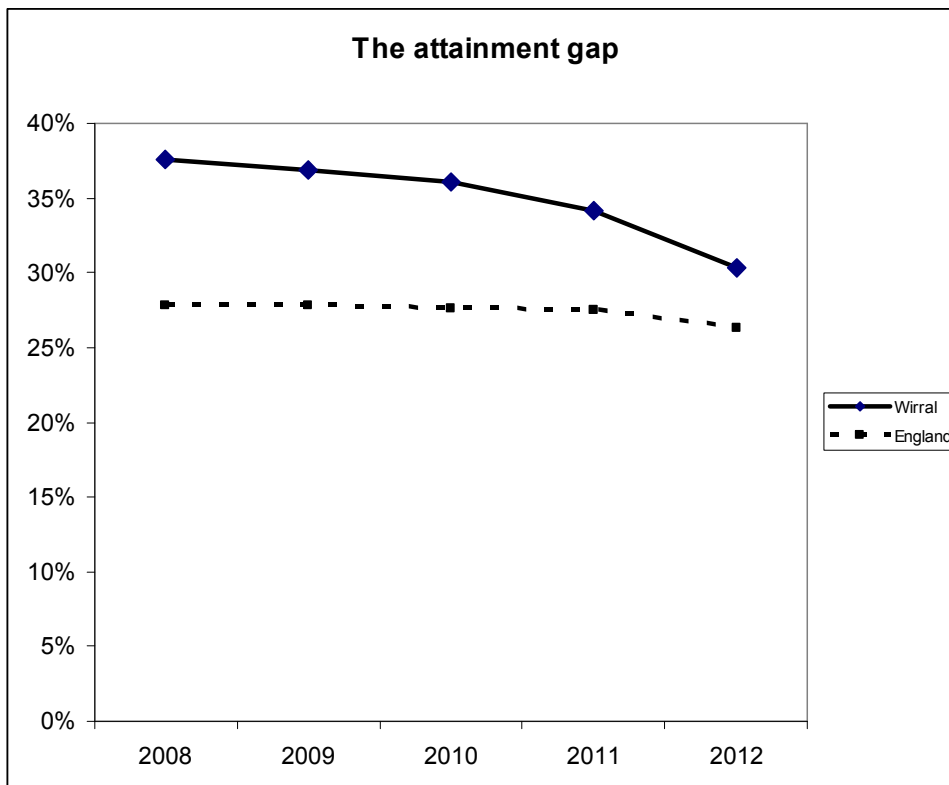
2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Historically Wirral's gap has been very much wider than the national average, and in the bottom 10% of all local authorities in England.

The main indicator for the attainment gap has narrowed at KS4 by nearly 5 per cent from 2011 and continues a positive downward trend from previous years. On average pupils in receipt of FSM perform well against national averages, whilst their non-FSM peers perform exceptionally well against national comparisons, thus leading to a wider gap than nationally.

Attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers at Key Stage 4. (PI 102b)

PI 102b	FSM Wirral 2011	Non FSM Wirral 2011	FSM Wirral 2012	Non FSM Wirral 2012	Wirral gap 2011	Wirral gap 2012	National gap 2011	National gap 2012
5+ A*-C incl E&M	38.6	72.8	40.4	70.1	34.2	29.7	27.5	26.3



2.2 Over recent years, schools have targeted significant resources at intervention for pupils identified as not being on track to meet their GCSE targets. This work has been supported by the local authority via the '100 Club' project.

Since 2010 the local authority has invited schools to identify, between them, one hundred pupils in receipt of FSM thought unlikely to attain 5+ A*-C including English and maths with existing levels of intervention.

Schools were given some additional financial support, from School's Forum DSG funding, to provide extra intervention for the identified pupils. This amounted to £120,000 across the 15 schools in 2010/11 and £60,000 for 2011/12.

As in 2011, pupils in receipt of FSM who were part of the project performed significantly better than pupils in receipt of FSM who were not (53% attaining 5+A*-C including English and maths, compared with 40% for other FSM pupils). Evidence suggests that of the 4.5% narrowing of the gap from 2011 to 2012, the '100 Club' project contributed at least 1%.

- 2.3 However, while Wirral's gap has narrowed substantially over the last three years, it still remains larger than the national gap. Therefore the '100 Club' project is continuing for its third and probably final year focused on Year 11 intervention for pupils in receipt of FSM.

Evaluation of the '100 Club' project in early 2012 involved meetings with schools to determine which interventions with students were found to be the most effective. Reports for schools were drafted from these evaluations. However, there were two unexpected and very significant findings.

- 2.4 First, most schools stated that they did not do anything particularly special for pupils in receipt of FSM. Discussions with other local authorities reveal this to be a common picture.
- 2.5 Second, most schools were setting pupil-level GCSE targets that were significantly lower for pupils in receipt of FSM than non-FSM pupils. Again, discussions with other local authorities reveal this to be a common picture – Wirral's schools are not acting any differently to schools elsewhere in the country.
- 2.6 The first of the two findings: when asked why, schools said that their normal tracking and monitoring systems would pick up any pupil, regardless of pupils in receipt of FSM, who was underperforming, thereby triggering extra support where appropriate. Schools were acting in a way which they believed was equal and fair to all pupils who might be 'off-track'. This conclusion is reasonable.
- 2.7 However, it is the second finding that explains in large part why the attainment gap persists. Schools reported that the targets they set for pupils were, to a very large extent, based on the pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 2. This practice is now believed to be almost universal across the country.
- 2.8 The key fact here is that pupils in receipt of FSM attain less well at Key Stage 2 than non-FSM pupils (as, indeed, they do at every stage of education). Therefore targets that use Key Stage 2 results as a starting point inevitably include a bias against pupils in receipt of FSM, resulting in them having lower GCSE targets.

This has the unavoidable consequence of setting targets to inadvertently generate an attainment gap (assuming that pupils achieve their targets). Pupils in receipt of FSM do not show up on schools' tracking and monitoring systems as often as they need to if the gap is to be closed – because in general they are being tracked and monitored against lower targets and are found to be on track to meet these lower targets.

2.9 If the gap is to be finally eradicated it is an essential requirement that pupils in receipt of FSM, as a group, are set targets which equal those of non-FSM pupils.

2.10 To support this requirement the local authority has developed a target-setting system which automatically generates pupil-level targets that, on average, are equal for both groups.

In addition, the system indicates the stages pupils need to be at in order to meet their targets. This in itself would address both findings simultaneously. When pupils in receipt of FSM have higher targets than they would otherwise have had, they are more likely, in the early stages of their secondary education, to be performing below the level needed to achieve the targets. This, through schools' tracking and monitoring systems, will flag up those pupils for extra support to get them back on track. Earlier intervention is the key here.

2.11 Three schools have volunteered to participate in the Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) project, which is a trial of the target-setting process with their current Year 7 and 8 cohorts. The first data indicating the progress of the FSM cohort will be available in late January and, by summer term, a clear picture should emerge as to whether the pilot is having the expected consequences.

2.12 While the final attainment gap for these pupils will not be known until 2016 and 2017, the live data provided by the schools over this academic year will enable the local authority to judge the likely success of the RADY project.

2.13 One of the schools reported that, during a recent Ofsted inspection, the inspectors had been very impressed with this unique approach through the RADY project.

2.14 CONCLUSIONS

If the pilot in 2012-13 is successful, the target setting system will be made available to all schools. In itself, it is a simple and cost-free process. Possible costs to schools may result from a likely upsurge of extra support for pupils in receipt of FSM, as a result of their being found to be underachieving in the early stages.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 The School Improvement Team needs to monitor the progress of the pilot to ensure it is producing the desired effect on the progress of pupils in receipt of FSM.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 There is regular consultation with schools to determine future plans and strategies to raise standards further.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 There are no plans to formally consult with other partners at this stage.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

7.1 There are no direct financial implications in terms of finance, IT, staffing and assets. The financial resource implications are that the Learning and Achievement Branch has allocated a further £40,000 to extend the project into the 2012-13 academic year, from School's Forum DSG funding.

7.2 The resources of the School Improvement Team are used to monitor the gaps at school and local authority level.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached.

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/children-young-people>

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None identified.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None identified.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 The Overview & Scrutiny to note the report.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 N/A

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APPENDICES

None

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children And Young People Overview And Scrutiny Committee	26th January 2012

Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (from May 2012)

Section 1: Your details

EIA lead Officer: Stuart Bellerby

Email address: stuartbellerby@wirral.gov.uk

Head of Section: Vivian Stafford

Chief Officer: Julia Hassall

Department: Children & Young People's Department

Date: December 20th 2012

Section 2: What Council proposal is being assessed?

NARROWING THE GAP AT KEY STAGE 4

Section 2b: Will this EIA be submitted to a Cabinet or Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

Yes Overview and Scrutiny

January 21st 2013

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/children-young-people>

Section 3: Does the proposal have the potential to affect..... (please tick relevant boxes)

- Services
- The workforce
- Communities
- X Other (Schools)

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 4.

- None (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 4: Does the proposal have the potential to maintain or enhance the way the Council (please tick relevant boxes)

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- X Advances equality of opportunity
- X Fosters good relations between groups of people

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 5.

- No (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 5:

Could the proposal have a positive or negative impact on any of the protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership)?

You may also want to consider socio-economic status of individuals.

Please list in the table below and include actions required to mitigate any potential negative impact.

Which group(s) of people could be affected	Potential positive or negative impact	Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact	Lead person	Timescale	Resource implications
Socio-economic status	A negative impact is that pupils in receipt of FSM attain lower than their non free school meals peers. Close monitoring and evaluation of attainment at all key stages will have a positive impact in raising attainment and the '100 Club' and RADY projects are intended to raise attainment for pupils in receipt of FSM.	School Improvement Associates to monitor and evaluate pupils eligible for free school meals and non free school meal pupils' attainment to continue to narrow the attainment gap	Stuart Bellerby	January 2013 – August 2013	None

Section 5a: Where and how will the above actions be monitored?

Actions will be monitored by the Principal Managers in the School Improvement Team each term with a report completed in the Autumn and Summer term in the academic year.

Section 5b: If you think there is no negative impact, what is your reasoning behind this?

The School Improvement Team focuses on raising attainment for all pupils. In particular the focus is to narrow attainment and achievement for vulnerable groups.

Section 6: What research / data / information have you used in support of this process?

Data from the Local Authority Information Section and the National Statistics Gateway has been compared and analysed.

Section 7: Are you intending to carry out any consultation with regard to this Council proposal?

Yes – with secondary schools.

(please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 8: How will consultation take place and by when?

Through secondary Headteacher meetings.

Before you complete your consultation, please email your preliminary EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer in order for the Council to ensure it is meeting it's legal requirements. The EIA will be published with a note saying we are awaiting outcomes from a consultation exercise.

Once you have completed your consultation, please review your actions in section 5. Then email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for re-publishing.

Section 9: Have you remembered to:

- a) **Include any potential positive impacts as well as negative impacts? (section 5)**
- b) **Send this EIA to your Head of Service for approval.**
- c) **Review section 5 once consultation has taken place and sent your completed EIA to your Head of Service for approval then to your Chief Officer for re-publishing?**