

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

26 JANUARY 2012

SUBJECT:	THE '100 CLUB' PROJECT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report has been produced to provide information on the running and outcomes of Wirral's '100 Club' project, the aim of which was to narrow the attainment gap at key stage 4 between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and pupils not eligible for free school meals (non-FSM). A further aim was to determine the most effective strategies for this purpose.

The project, if successful, would support Wirral's corporate priorities in that it would support schools to improve educational provision for pupils eligible for free school meals, thereby ensuring that more were in a position to take fuller advantage of post-16 opportunities.

1.2 There is no specific exempt information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That the report is noted.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

3.1 The report is to provide information and as such contains no specific recommendations other than it be noted.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 In 2011, provisional data for Wirral showed the key stage 4 attainment gap (at 5+ A*-C including English and maths GCSEs) between FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils was 34%. This compares with the national attainment gap of 27%. Both gaps are long-standing.

- 4.2 Attainment gaps exist at all key stages of education, and tend to widen as pupils progress through their schooling. This is observed both locally and nationally. The gap in Wirral at key stage 4 has narrowed in recent years, down 4% from 38% in 2009, but remains amongst the largest in England.
 - 4.3 Wirral's FSM pupils attain broadly in line with FSM pupils nationally, but the attainment of its non-FSM pupils is significantly higher than the corresponding national group.
 - 4.4 Much effort has been devoted both locally and nationally to close the attainment gap, with some success. The local authority project manager, in consultation with the Strategic Service Manager (Secondary Education) analysed some of the reported strategies.
 - 4.5 Nationally, little hard evidence of the direct impact of strategies on narrowing the gap was found. In some cases the strategies were employed universally, and where supporting data was supplied it pointed to an overall rise in a school's attainment, not a closing of the attainment gap.
 - 4.6 Attainment gaps within schools vary greatly from school to school, but can also vary significantly from year to year within the same school. The National Strategies advised that local authorities should concentrate their efforts on schools with the widest internal gaps. However, analysis of the data for one year found that Wirral's gap was larger than any individual school's gap. Representatives of both the DfE and the National Strategies expressed surprise at this finding, but it was accepted after being demonstrated to be accurate. In 2011, Wirral's gap was larger than the internal gaps of all but one school.
 - 4.7 It was realised that the issue had to be considered at local authority level as well as on a school-by-school basis. Wirral's gap was found to be driven in part by those schools which had some of the smallest internal gaps. Several of these schools tended to have some of the largest numbers of FSM pupils, and the attainment of non-FSM pupils in these schools was comparatively low. The resulting school-level gap therefore tended to mask the low attainment of the FSM pupils in those schools.
 - 4.8 A project ('The 100 Club') was, therefore, conceived and launched in Wirral in September 2010 to establish whether late intervention in a Year 11 group of FSM pupils could narrow the gap. A Principal Manager was charged with overseeing the project. This followed on from a year-long action research pilot, which schools could opt into, focusing on narrowing the gap for various groups of vulnerable children, including FSM pupils. Findings from this pilot were shared with schools participating in the 100 Club project. For the 100 Club, Year 11 was selected as the target group because feedback from the project would be swift, and if evidence of positive impact emerged schools would be in a position to act quickly with current Year 11 FSM pupils and other year groups.
 - 4.9 Schools with the largest numbers of FSM pupils were invited to join the project and between them were asked to identify 100 FSM pupils across Wirral who
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might benefit from extra support over and above what the school already had planned for them. The pupils were to be identified according to the following criteria:

- a) they were currently considered to be unlikely to attain 5+ A*-C including English and maths;
- b) they were thought to be likely to respond positively to extra support.

The selection process was discussed by the Project Manager with the schools.

- 4.10 A sum of £1200 per identified pupil was allocated to schools to support the interventions they planned. Schools were provided with examples of strategies used previously, both locally and nationally, but given total freedom to innovate. The progress of the 100 pupils was monitored by the local authority through its School Improvement Partner (SIP) programme and through the Principal Manager overseeing the project. Additional support was offered to the schools via the Assessment Consultant. Progress was reported half-termly to the Head of the Learning and Achievement Branch. It is thought that the approach used on Wirral is unique.
 - 4.11 Provisional data suggest that Wirral's gap has narrowed by 2% since 2010. In 2011, the attainment of Wirral's non-FSM pupils rose to 71.4% - an increase 4.8%. The attainment of FSM pupils rose to 38.4% - an increase of 6.6%.
 - 4.12 To determine the impact of the project involves attempting to answer the question 'What would have happened had the project not taken place?' No two cohorts of pupils in different years are identical. There are always some differences in their prior attainments and other factors known to correlate with attainment. Therefore any change in the headline results and the gap might simply be due to changes in the relative abilities of FSM and non-FSM groups of pupils, and not the result of targeted interventions.
 - 4.13 An important piece of information to answer this question of impact lies in the contextualised value added (CVA) scores for pupils. CVA is the difference between a pupil's attainment and the average attainment, nationally, of pupils with very similar contexts i.e. pupils who have the same prior attainment, gender, month of birth, FSM status, first language and a large range of other factors. By its nature, CVA calculations can be carried out only for those pupils who have both key stage 2 and key stage 4 results. Pupils who are missing either set of results are excluded from the calculations.
 - 4.14 CVA is generally interpreted as the *net* effect a school has had on the attainment of its pupils. A positive CVA, where a pupil or group of pupils has attained higher results than very similar pupils nationally, suggests that the school has had a positive net impact on attainment.
 - 4.15 If the project were to have impact, apart from narrowing the headline attainment gap, it would be expected that the CVA of the FSM group would improve relative to the CVA of the non-FSM group.
 - 4.16 In 2010, the CVA of Wirral's non-FSM pupils was +3.8%: in other words, the 5+ A*-C including English and maths attainment of Wirral's non-FSM pupils
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(66.6%) was 3.8% higher than the figure for very similar pupils nationally (62.8%). The attainment of Wirral's FSM pupils (31.8%) was 3.7% higher than that of very similar pupils nationally (28.1%) i.e. a CVA of +3.7%.

- 4.17 From 2010 to 2011, the CVA of the non-FSM pupils rose by 2.4% to +6.2%; the CVA of the FSM pupils rose by 4.4% to +8.1%. This is the first time since 2006 that the CVA of the FSM group has exceeded the non-FSM groups CVA.
 - 4.18 While the CVAs of both groups improved, the CVA improvement of the FSM group was 2% greater than the CVA improvement of the non-FSM group. In terms of pupil numbers, this can be interpreted as an extra 19 FSM pupils achieving 5+A*-C including English and maths, compared with what would have happened had the CVAs of the two groups kept pace with each other. The 2% narrowing of the gap is, therefore, the result of a real net improvement in the achievement of FSM pupils compared with non-FSM pupils.
 - 4.19 Another question is whether the '100 Club' pupils fared better than other FSM pupils. In terms of attainment, 51% of the '100 Club' attained 5+A*-C including English and maths, compared with 36% of all other FSM pupils. Again, the possibility that this difference in attainment is due to a differences in ability needs to be explored and, again, CVA is currently the best tool available.
 - 4.20 The CVA of the '100 Club' pupils was +17.6%. This means that the pass rate for the group of 51% was 17.6% higher than would have been expected, given their prior attainment, gender, month of birth etc. The CVA for all other FSM pupils was +6.9%.
 - 4.21 The CVA difference between the '100 Club' pupils and all other FSM pupils was, therefore, 10.8%: by this measure, the pupils who were part of the '100 Club' outperformed other FSM pupils by 10.8%. In other words, had the '100 Club' pupils performed at the same level (in terms of CVA) as the other FSM pupils, 11 fewer of them would have achieved 5+ A*-C including English and maths.
 - 4.22 The evidence suggests that the project had a positive impact and resulted in at least 11 more pupils attaining the threshold of 5+ A*-C including English and maths than would have been the case had the project not run. The longer term effects are as yet unknown, but achieving the threshold increases opportunities at post-16. For example, according to the education charity Learning Plus UK, a 16-year old with 5+ A*-C including English and maths has an 83% chance of getting an A level qualification by the age of 19 compared with a 57% chance if their GCSEs did not include English and maths. Furthermore, many employment opportunities require pupils to have 5+ A*-C including English and maths. The policy research group, Centre for Cities, reports that there are strong correlations between the percentages of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and maths and youth unemployment rates, as well as for wage levels for those in employment.
 - 4.23 As far as is possible, the progress of the '100 Club' pupils will be followed in an effort to determine any longer term benefits of the project.
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5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 The main risk to the impact of the project was its relatively short timescale.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 The project could have been run with younger pupils, but this would have meant that information regarding impact would not have been available as quickly.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 This was a single-agency project.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 None

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

9.1 As a result of the evidence of success from the first year it was decided to extend the project into 2011-12. There are no resource implications for IT, staffing and assets. The financial resource implications are that the Learning and Achievement Branch has allocated a further £60,000 to extend the project into the 2011-12 academic year.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no equalities implications for protected groups.

11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(a) Is an EIA required? No

(b) If 'yes', has one been completed? N/A

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None.

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APPENDICES

Data tables

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

None

Council Meeting	Date

Appendix: Data

Results

Wirral 2011

	All Pupils	All FSM	All Non-FSM	100 Club	FSM pupils not part of 100 Club	100 Club result minus result for other FSM
5+ A*-C inc. English and maths	64%	38%	72%	51%	36%	15%
English A*-C	75%	51%	82%	67%	49%	17%
Maths A*-C	70%	47%	78%	62%	46%	16%
English Points	41.8	36.3	43.7	37.9	36.1	1.8
Maths Points	40	33.2	42.3	36.4	32.8	3.6

CVAs

	All Pupils	All FSM	All Non-FSM	100 Club	FSM pupils not part of 100 Club	100 Club CVA minus CVA for other FSM
5+ A*-C inc. English and maths CVAs	+6.7%	+7.9%	+6.2%	+17.6%	+6.9%	+10.8%
English A*-C CVAs	+5.3%	+6.9%	+4.8%	+17.8%	+5.6%	+12.2%
English Points CVAs	+1.1	+1.4	+1.0	+2.1	+1.3	+0.8
Maths A*-C CVAs	+8.1%	+10.1%	+7.3%	+19.8%	+9.0%	+10.8%
Maths Points CVAs	+1.2	+1.6	+1.0	+3.0	+1.4	+1.6

N.B. CVA figures are rounded to the nearest 0.1%