

The Inclusion Expert Essential Guide to Pupil Premium

by Daniel Sobel

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This guide contains:

- Daniel's Pupil Premium articles for Headteacher Update
- Extracts from Inclusion Expert's *Pupil Premium Handbook*
- New material written for this guide

It features:

- Beating Ofsted top tips
- Interventions that actually work
- How to demonstrate the impact
- A whole school self-evaluation exercise
- How to run your own PP review

About Inclusion Expert

Inclusion Expert provides targeted support for schools so they can achieve outstanding inclusion practice, through training, consultancy and resources. Daniel and the team regularly appear in the Guardian, TES, Headteacher Update, SecEd, and Academy Magazine. Inclusion Expert won Best New Company of the Year, and were named a Top 20 Education Business at BETT 2015 by Business Today Magazine.

Support we can offer your school

- SEN: replacing your LEA
- Narrowing the gap and Pupil Premium reviews
- Differentiation: training for teachers
- Online training: the outstanding TA
- CLA/LAC: outstanding training

3 key facts about Inclusion Expert

- We have helped more than 600 schools with their inclusion
- We work with MATs, dioceses, large academy chains, and individual schools
- We are known for our quality and the impact we've been able to achieve is well-documented in the media

“*Varied coaching techniques, coupled with a wealth of experience and a clear understanding of our school, has been at the heart of our successful relationship with Inclusion Expert.*”

Nathan Atkinson, headteacher

“*Working with Inclusion Expert, we narrowed the gap by half in 6 months.*”

Sarah Conant, headteacher

“*We have just received a DfE award for the Pupil Premium work we have done. The action plan we developed with you was part of the process to evidence our approaches – and now we are eligible for a larger award. We just wanted to say thank you.*”

Amanda Campbell, headteacher

4 ways we can help get your school on 'the path to outstanding'

1. The popular Inclusion Expert Pupil Premium Review

One day of consultancy and your school will come away with a co-authored implementation plan identifying your key issues, what you are going to do about it, who will do it, when it will happen and what success looks like.

Using this programme, our schools have won awards and narrowed their gap by half in 6 months.

2. The essential Inclusion Expert SEN Review

A one-day consultancy will ensure you are compliant with the new code of practice and are maximising your SEN assessment, provision, and are able to demonstrate the impact of your work.

3. The money and time-saving Inclusion Expert Provision Mapping Day

We ensure your assessment and intervention planning is robust and maximises the impact and efficiency of your resource deployment. Using the Provision Mapping Day, schools can save huge amounts of time and money, and of course improve outcomes for students.

4. Outstanding differentiation training for your teachers

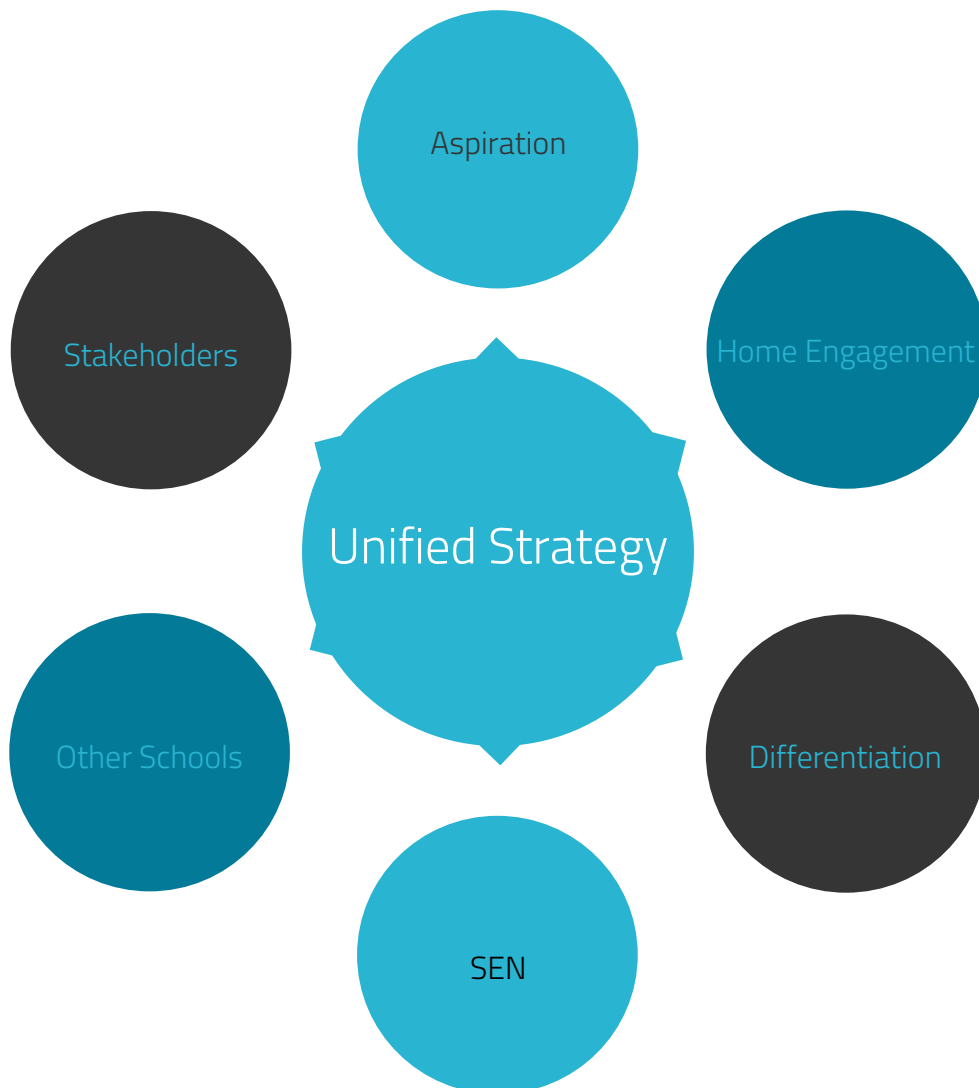
Our approach has been heralded in the press and all schools that we've provided this service for have asked for more of the same!

Narrowing the Gap:

A Whole-School Self-Audit Tool

Exclusive Article

This is an exercise I carry out with senior leadership teams as part of a Pupil Premium Review; it makes for a fascinating discussion. The purpose is to consider the major factors that contribute to narrowing the gap. It is fairly obvious that any one of the key points in the diagram that is not addressed can impact the gap. For example, your school may promote the most amazing aspiration but if this is not coupled with excellent differentiated and personalised learning, then it will only go so far. The exercise asks senior leaders if they agree about these key areas and most importantly, if they can identify a strategy that you have in place to get you where you need to be.



Exercise

Self-evaluate out of 10 (10 being as outstanding as you could possibly be) according to these key areas:

Home Engagement	/10
Aspiration	/10
SEN	/10
Differentiation	/10
Other schools	/10
Stakeholders	/10
A unified, clearly articulated strategy bringing together these individual efforts	/10

Stakeholders usually refers to anyone who impacts the school or could contribute and these include: GPs, MPs, Social Service, Police, CAMHS and parents.

Other schools may refer to feeders, trusts and academies but, most importantly, the schools that also serve the same community as your school.

Next Steps

Where you go from here is up to you. I tend to use the findings of these discussions to inform whole-school development and map out from general terms such as ‘aspiration’ to practical steps earmarking who, what and when, and most importantly, what success looks like.

Discuss the scores with your senior leadership team and any other stakeholders. Map out:

1. the impact of not being 10/10 in any one of the areas on your FSM cohort progress; and
2. your plan of action to get to 10/10



More information

Find out more about this whole school strategy exercise by calling Daniel and the team on 0333 301 0170 for a free consultation.





What a Pupil Premium Review should deliver for your school

Exclusive Article

Although there are no set rules on how to carry out a Pupil Premium Review, I believe it should be as broad and deep as one day's collaborative working can allow. By the end of the day, your school should come away with clear guidance and a specific plan of action – as well as the most important element: **what success looks like**.

Inclusion Expert Associates use over 40 categories to evaluate Pupil Premium management in a school; we use four different perspectives in this work: the individual student, interventions, whole-school and community.

Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate active engagement with governors and put minutes of this on website • Convene stakeholders meeting and document unique setting and approach of your school • Hold a staff meeting and discussion process about PP
Other schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage feeder schools about moderating levels, catch SEN even earlier, standardise information, transition planning
Family liason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly increase engagement with parents with learning and aspiration and curriculum
Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop classroom teachers' nuanced understanding of their students • Link provision to curriculum
Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop higher aspirations in PP students: whole school, previous school, broader than school, community owned, pervasive, persistent, insistent • Link whole school aspiration to the classroom and to each intervention
SEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instigate pre- and over-learning across the school, language rich school • Compare intervention list to the needs of the actual student cohort
Measure and Demonstrate Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce case studies that demonstrate soft data impact • Be able to immediately access PP info that is useful • Create more detailed overview of PP expenditure, that shows the cost per student of each intervention; investigate the use of a financial provision map • Develop a whole-school provision map to show the interventions used and their costs, as well as their impact as measured by both hard and soft data

To explain three action points in particular:

Convene stakeholders meeting and document unique setting and approach

When you can demonstrate that impoverishment is unique in your school, and is based in a particular community with specific needs, this opens the door to your own, unique approach. No school is facing the same challenges in narrowing the gap and you can rationalise your entire approach to Ofsted when you articulate the key factors. Ask stakeholders for their views and put them on the PP website.

Link provision to curriculum - through teacher and TA collaboration

Beware interventions that do not directly promote curriculum engagement. In an ideal world, all interventions would be home grown, developed by your teachers and TAs and rooted in the curriculum. There are obvious exceptions to this rule, but in a school where 30 interventions are delivered, you should expect 20 to be based specifically on the curriculum.

Compare intervention list to the needs of the actual student cohort

Bog standard interventions often miss the point. This requires a nuanced assessment and a thoughtful intervention strategy.

Tracking Soft Data

An Extract from Inclusion Expert's **Pupil Premium Handbook**

www.inclusionexpert.com/pph

Pupil Premium Handbook



3.4 – Tracking soft data

Essential information is very difficult to sift through. How do you capture precisely what you did for one individual? A lack of careful and clear soft data can make and break tribunal cases, Annual Reviews and any major pastoral meeting. This table introduces the 'One document to save them all', containing the core information about a single (in this case) FSM student. It is a robust structure that asks for the most essential information and gets to the heart of capturing and tracking soft data.

In one case, a challenging FSM student was predicted As but because of a challenging home situation she refused to come to school. Interventions were put in place to bring her back to school and she ended up with Cs. According to the hard data, the school failed this student. However, the soft data demonstrated a tremendous success as this student was clearly not going to sit any exams and only because they went beyond the call of duty and expertly spent their premium did they manage to help this student attain any grades at all. A table like the one below could articulate this story simply. It could also be used as a template for a case study. You do not have to use this for every single student as this may end up taking you weeks and detracting from your work with your students – depending on how big your FSM roll is. However, it is wise to use this format for your most challenging cases and/or issues that affect numerous students that you want to focus in on (such as attendance, aspiration, etc).

An important benefit of using this framework is getting your staff and teachers to think in terms of this kind of data which stretches beyond the basic 'result focus' and considers a much more holistic impact on the whole student. This document can also help you anchor useful information and orient you away from the two extremes: vagueness, e.g. 'so and so can't concentrate', compared with having too much information that no one has the time or will to read.

Managing the Pupil Premium is a whole-school event, but within that, there are many individual cases: school -> cohorts -> individuals. But information gets lost when it comes to dealing with individuals: 'liaison with home' is often recorded, but what is not recorded are things like how that is done, how difficult it can be, what impact that has, timetabling, etc. There is a danger of losing time and resources in the paperwork, and creating endless documents that people aren't ever going to read. Fifty documents on one student is probably unlikely to help them. This document helps to map out what is actually important: the impact that interventions have on a pupil's needs. The two bullet point rule is worth applying here: Two bullet points on impact is more significant than thirty bullet points of impact (because no one will read thirty). It may be necessary to have the thirty somewhere, but for the process of tracking and following up on the interventions applied to a single pupil it is more useful to have a very condensed record of the information.

How to use this guide

1 – What you need to know

2 – Putting your school into context

3 – Researching your students

4 – Analysing your research

5 – Spending your Premium

6 – Monitoring spending

7 – Demonstrating Impact

Additional Resources

Demonstrating the impact of interventions per individual student

STUDENT NAME:

IN THE CLASSROOM

Divide up areas that make most sense to you and the circumstance of the student. Common divisions are: Classroom and Non contact time. Alternatives include: Social, Learning and Self management.

In bold, the name of the issue, and in brackets, half a sentence's explanation.

Headline action in bold followed by detail in brackets which shows how the object is specifically met. Write down this level of detail so that information isn't lost.

PRESENTING ISSUE

Calling out (lack of respect of class rules, teacher authority, inability to self settle)

ACTION

TA (prompting and supporting understanding under guidance of specialist and in liaison with teachers)

IMPACT (over the last half term)

Where a TA is available the student has significantly cut down on calling out because they seem to be getting all the attention they need from this adult. The problems remain:

- in classes where there is no TA available
- how to cut down the reliance on the TA

Seating Plan (sat away from students X, Y and Z)

Has significantly contributed to a reduction in outbursts from the student.

Differentiation (specifically designed with specialist support)

- When this is given to the student at the beginning of the lesson, the student settles well
- Where it is provided more than 10 minutes into the lesson, the student may have already lost interest in the lesson

Reward and Sanction (monitored daily by Key Worker and liaison with home)

- Lack of consistent application at home
- Use of rewards have been well received

Jumping out of seat (distracting other students and dominating the teacher's focus)

Planned movements (by both teacher and TA planned with student)

- In the lessons where this has been planned well, there are no more incidents
- 60% of lessons remain challenging

Time out card (encouraged to use responsibly)

- Student keeps forgetting to use this and needs prompting by the TA
- Teachers have been sceptical about whether the student has used it appropriately

No exercise books or equipment (no record of any written work)

TA keeping **folder in school** (used also to review work with student everyday)

- Student has half a term's work and is very proud of this
- Every lesson the student looks back over work they have done and is excited to add new things to it

Colour coded timetable (to enable greater confidence in reading and managing their own plan of the day)

- The student has lost this a number of times
- This has not been a successful action

The impact should show whether the objective has been reached. How did the action affect all the people involved (staff, peers, student)? How was it received? Impact is closely linked to how well things are run and administered. The structure/layout of the table allows you to think in terms of impact: end goal oriented, not about short term solutions.

This section is written in 2-3 bullet points to facilitate a succinct understanding of what can be a complex situation. This document is for capturing broad-stroke terms and can be further explained if necessary. Writing too much will guarantee that the receiver will not read it or take in the information.

So what would the next step be in this case? Perhaps using social services to make sure the system is applied at home.

This framework is akin to other important documents documents such as a PSP and old-style Statement and could be used in place of them. It could, for example, be a useful stage in the process of articulating to parents/students/teachers that a pupil has serious pastoral issues and is perhaps even at risk of exclusion.

The above framework is used by many schools with whom we have worked, to replace most key student documents, from an IEP to PSP, CAF and CAMHS referral forms. Simply mark on the form, 'See the attached document'. Aside from laying out your case studies in this format, the most impressive use of this approach has been as a discussion guide between TAs and teachers as well as school leaders and classroom-based staff. We call it 'the one page to save them all' - it saves hours and hours of paperwork.

Call us today so we can show you how the Pupil Premium Handbook has worked for hundreds of schools



0333 301 0565

Preparing your Pupil Premium for Ofsted

Top Tips

Exclusive Article

I should say from the get-go, I am not a fan of Ofsted and I think the system needs to change. Having said that, I have consulted in countries where there isn't an Ofsted system and you quietly think to yourself, 'I'm glad we have Ofsted!' None of us went into education to serve Ofsted and they really are not the goal in any way, shape or form for the vast majority of heads that I work with. So, Ofsted feelings aside, what can you do to maximise your communication with them and indeed all stakeholders by means of acknowledging and celebrating the wonderful work you and your staff do?

Here is my top 10 list:

1. Where you have a cohort that is smaller than 5% that is significantly below attainment then produce your own 'capped score' demonstrating what the whole school data looks like without this cohort. Produce the cohort data separately with detailed explanation.
2. Less is more. Big thick files of data and 50-page case studies are likely to go unread considering the time limitation. Put the summary data in one slim file and everything else in an appendix.
3. Hardly anyone is going to read your Pupil Premium website copy – but Ofsted will. So, say everything you want to say to them there.
4. Plaster the walls of the entrance hall and the room in which Ofsted is based with newspaper cuttings and success stories from the school. After visiting a lot of schools you develop a sense of what each is like just by looking at the walls. Let the walls sing your school's praises and - trust me: this goes a long way.
5. Get your PP, SEN and narrowing the gap reviews done way before you expect Ofsted so you can show them the plan you have been working on.
6. Establish the key themes of impoverishment your school is tackling which could include Orator Skills, Aspiration, and Home Engagement. Be clear on your website and in your discussions that these key themes inform your whole school approach to narrowing the gap.
7. When describing an individual intervention, link it back to the whole school theme – for example you could be talking about a reading comprehension intervention that also contained an element of reading at home in order to develop Home Engagement.
8. Lead the conversation. Be prepared and know what you are going to be asked and what you want to say and start saying it.
9. In the circumstance that the Ofsted inspector is rude, ask them to step aside and speak with them about their conduct and explain that you will lodge a formal complaint.
10. Remember, Ofsted is not the reason why you are in the position you are and do the work you do. Keep coming back to this and ditch the fear.



Let us help you prepare for Ofsted.

Contact us for a free initial consultation by calling on 0333 301 0565.



Send an email to info@inclusionexpert.com

Creative Uses for the Pupil Premium

Headteacher Update, published 10 June 2015

A common question I am asked when delivering Pupil Premium Reviews is: What should we be spending the money on? I believe that when interventions and provisions address the root and cause of an issue directly, rather than the end results, then they are often successful. The problem is that this is a hard-to-define formula.

In this article, I will demonstrate the most effective approaches to narrowing the gap that I have come across. By describing and examining their processes, I hope it will enable you to apply the thinking as opposed to copying the exact idea, which may not be relevant for your school. I will also demonstrate the process I go through with schools when carrying out a review to enable them to arrive at their own bespoke approach.

There is one thing you could do

At one of our regular team best practice sharing meetings, I asked the Inclusion Expert associates if they had to pick, what one intervention would they choose which would have a maximum impact on the narrowing the gap in all schools in the country?

There was a resounding agreement among us that if all schools did “pre-learning” and “over-learning” we would see a massive closing of the attainment gap. This one action, if done well, enables students from almost the full spectrum of learning issues to gain an advantage in their learning – from those with speech and language issues to dyslexic students, from shy learners or those with attention deficit disorder.

Interestingly, a lot of outstanding schools drill vocab. I think this solves a problem without them even necessarily being aware of it. A lot of what the GCSE and indeed SATs actually test require students to have acquired and recall language. Such fundamental learning processes are not picked up in the battery of tests we put children through, such as CATs and reading comprehension.

These test comprehension and cognition, but a student with language acquisition and/or recall issues might be able to read excellently or pass a cognitive test with flying colours. I often find that students are easily misdiagnosed, such as those who are supposed to have problems with maths actually have no issues concerning number bonds at all but struggle in picking up the complex language. Pre-learning and over-learning could be the closest thing to a panacea that I can think of.

Don't buy 30 bikes!

Sometime ago, I wrote about how a school in Sheffield had bought their student a bike because they struggled in maths. I have had schools respond to this example by proposing a purchase of 20 bicycles – but this misses the point of how this specific intervention was identified as relevant. This pupil was struggling in maths. Instead of immediately putting additional maths support in place, the school looked at the cause more carefully. In fact the student was always late to first period – which was maths – so he missed vital lesson time.

Rather than trying to motivate attendance using rewards or penalties, the school investigated why he was always late. He kept missing his bus because he was a young carer for two younger siblings. Like all carers, this pupil found getting out of the house in the morning a struggle.

The school understood that there are two big “nos” that you avoid when meeting the needs of a young carer:

1. don't take away their break times – they really need down time when they are off duty, and the social connections they can make during break are vital; and
2. protect their self-esteem – if you put them into a low set or remedial group they will be likely to feel that they are “bad” at that subject.

The reason why I herald this as the best case of interventions I have seen is because the school took the opportunity to look beyond what could easily have been the “standard” response to the problem. They spoke to the student, his parents and the supporting social worker and didn't make assumptions about the best way to respond to the presenting issue of poor performance in maths.

In addition, and equally impressive, the school managed the expectations of the other students who didn't get jealous and demand a bike for themselves. I think when a school can identify the real issue behind the attainment gap and address that then they will see outstanding results. I hope this explains how investigating cause and effect and tackling the root issues really inform your work to identify effective interventions.

No more maths, just take them on holiday

A common Pupil Premium problem schools report is engaging small cohorts of boys in maths. The issues are more attitudinal than ability-based, such as poor relationships with their teachers and continuous low-level behaviour. One school tackled this problem by using Pupil Premium funds to enable the Maths Department to take their identified cohort on a five-day trip to the Lake District for some fun and maths. By the time they had returned, they had bonded with the maths teachers and also caught up some very basic maths that was holding them back. This school sought to heal the heart of the issue as opposed to just dealing with the symptom.

Karate for breakfast

A first step in analysing the free school meals (FSM) data is to work out all of the intersections with other groups which include SEN, gifted and talented, English as an additional language etc. Common groups often left out of this list is: how many Pupil Premium students are also regularly late, often absent or under child protection – or combinations of these. Lateness is a common issue and one school decided to provide a wholesome breakfast at 8am – this increased punctuality and morning school engagement manifold.

Another school tried this and it failed miserably, there was no uptake. After speaking with the students they found out that providing something like kick-boxing or karate would get them to school for 8am and they did that with great success.

I am most impressed when I can see a student comment on a provision report about how it had broader benefit to their engagement and enthusiasm for school. Just providing additional curriculum support doesn't achieve this level of school engagement.

Teach them Frankenstein

Schools often show me reading comprehension groups run as a withdrawal lesson parallel to the English lessons. The problem is, of course, that although the students' reading skills are increasing, their ability to participate in the mainstream classroom is not, as they are studying a completely different story.

Another school took the approach of getting the classroom teacher to work with their teaching assistant and with the support of the SENCO to develop a short reading comprehension course based on the book they were reading in class, which happened to be Frankenstein. When I observed the class, I saw two of the SEN cohort volunteer to answer questions and give their views.

The added bonus was that the teacher was in charge of the withdrawal too, as opposed to not knowing where they were going and what they were doing in isolation in an SEN room down the corridor.

Sometimes the best thing to do is not to purchase things but to invest in additional time and support for your staff.

Aspire to aspire

On a short trip to America I saw a group of 30 students at an aquarium who must have been about 11-years-old. They all wore a tee-shirt that said “I promise to go to college”. Their four group leaders wore bright orange caps that had the words “I believe in you” emblazoned on them. My initial thought was that this was quite indoctrinating but probably quite powerful.

I wouldn't advocate this approach but it highlights the lengths we might need to go to in order to develop aspiration, especially with students from families that have experienced multi-generational unemployment. I remember taking one student to Oxford to explore the possibility of doing physics. He had just got straight A*s and wanted to quit school to do an electrician course.

I don't value the hierarchy of one life course as opposed to another, but I was bothered by his perceived lack of choice – he didn't believe university was open to him or that he could belong there. I realised, taking him at 16 was too late and the influencing factor was family attitudes to career aspiration. Some schools have combatted this issue by taking parent groups to universities and introducing them to people who went on to college from their postcode.

The principle is illustrated well by the following, admittedly secondary phase, example: one school decided to prioritise work experience but they were not going to accept the bog-standard set up where their students made the coffee and did the photocopying, as they felt that this simply confirmed their own self-limiting aspirations. Instead, they had meetings with individual businesses and asked them to experiment by allowing students to closely shadow senior executives (inviting them to meetings, asking their opinions, listening in to phone calls, and getting a taste of management and senior leadership). This worked out well not just for the students, but also for the businesses, who found it very worthwhile.

Connect the dots

If you meet with your stakeholders from the postcode your school is in and they advise the key to addressing the gap could be parental engagement, promoting aspiration or developing oration skills and confidence then apply these across the school, not just with individual interventions but throughout the curriculum and pastoral aspects of school life.

One school wanted to address vocabulary acquisition beyond the classroom and had a word of the day in the entrance hall. Class teachers asked their students to come up with new words to share with the class each day. Another school made sure the parents of their most concerning FSM cohort were getting positive feedback about their child once or twice a week in order to promote parental engagement.

Conclusion

I hope the above examples demonstrate that any individual intervention is only as good as the extent to which it addresses the real need. The phenomenon of the gap itself involves multiple issues and to think they can all be solved simply by additional literacy or numeracy is missing the point.

Each school faces their own unique challenges regarding poverty but I have experienced tremendous benefit that comes from working with groups of schools who have begun to address their gap not in isolation but with the co-support and joint procurement of local schools serving the same community, especially when this is done across phase and between link-schools.

Justifying your Pupil Premium spending

Headteacher Update, published 11 March 2015

It is essential that schools are able to justify their decisions over how to spend the Pupil Premium when inspectors come calling. We offer some simple, yet effective approaches

It is neither unreasonable nor unusual to have to justify what you do with a pot of money – if you are in the public sector. If taxpayers' money is to be used in a certain way, it seems fair to qualify and defend this decision: How will it be used? What is the return on investment?

Such questions are neither complex nor esoteric, but can appear irrelevant and perhaps even foreign for school leaders when making pedagogic decisions. Many heads have told me that inclusion costs significant amounts of time and money and I believe for us to become truly inclusive in our classrooms we have to address this attitude.

When conducting Pupil Premium or SEN reviews, my associates and I frequently find that schools are hemorrhaging resources on inappropriate and low-value outcomes.

For example, commonly a school may spend tens if not hundreds of thousands of pounds on poorly trained and badly managed teaching assistants. We ask the same three questions every time:

- What issue did you identify?
- What action did you take?
- What impact did it have?

More often than not, we find there is an inadequate measure of impact of interventions and nearly always lack of strategic thinking about how to maximise the impact.

I will stay away from the important ethical questions surrounding financial accountability in a free educational system, although I think it is one which just isn't discussed enough.

Instead, in this article, I will summarise some key points from my online Pupil Premium Handbook, which explains in great detail how to justify your expenditure and all of the aspects of strategy and data analysis that you need as a school leader.

Justify what exactly?

I am not sure when this phrase first came into use in school leadership, but it has become a partner to the other catchphrase of our educational era: 'Demonstrating the Impact' [see article below]

I think it is worth deconstructing this phrase to clarify what this does and doesn't mean. It is certainly not a scrutiny to the penny – not least because no-one has the time, let alone the requisite mix of skills, to do this.

No-one is going to ask why you spent £500 on this provision or £1,000 on that rather than adopting a cheaper approach.

Rather, justifying your spending is simply making sure that the decisions you make around money to achieve certain goals with your free school meals (FSM) or SEN cohort are sensible and considered.

In short, it has nothing really to do with the cash, but everything to do with how well you can demonstrate your thinking.

Justify to whom? Communicating your successes

There are a variety of stakeholders who need to look at the same data but from different perspectives. This belies the need to continuously celebrate your successes and to draw upon a variety of formats to celebrate your success.

There are two easy forms of demonstrating success which actually go the longest way and are the least drawn upon by schools. First is the local media, which constantly seeks heart-warming stories.

One school told me about how they spent some Pupil Premium funds on taking a group of students who were disengaged with maths to the Lake District for a week of fresh air, exercise, seeing the world and fun maths every day.

They returned genuinely enthused and performed well in their maths tests. Unfortunately, the school missed the opportunity to celebrate this success with their community in the local press.

The second most commonly missed (yet simple) opportunity for schools to communicate their success is on a board in their entrance hall, which tells of all the innovative ways the school has spent their Pupil Premium funds.

Obviously, this needs to be done anonymously and carefully, but a hallmark of outstanding schools is that they tend to quite literally write their successes all over the school, and highlight everything from trips to provisions, from clubs to the achievements of their alumni.

A two-stage process

“Just focus on the impact” and “forget about the impact because it is irrelevant”. What I mean is, justifying your spending is a two-stage process: before (while considering what interventions to apply) and after (when evaluating what happened).

Before – focus on the outcome before choosing your provisions. A common mistake is to misread the underlying issue and to attempt to solve a by-product.

If an identified cohort is not engaging with their English lessons, before setting them up with a well-known computer-based booster programme, think about whether this will really have an impact on their engagement with classroom learning. Increased literacy skills are not the main result you are seeking to engender.

After – manage your and others’ expectations that even the best provisions will not ensure 100 per cent success. I have encountered excellent provisions where the sought impact was not achieved, despite the efforts and resources spent by the school to include them.

If you can demonstrate your effort and your thinking, you should not be held responsible for the unfortunate lack of positive outcomes. This is not true on a whole-school perspective, but is very much so for individuals.

Quality over quantity

An intervention can succeed or fail based on how well it is managed, implemented and resourced. Returning to my early example of teaching assistants, a school might employ a large number of teaching assistants but omit to train, manage and support them well.

I would argue that it is better to work with half the number of teaching assistants, but train them brilliantly. Otherwise, what might appear to be a wise decision by putting a teaching assistant into every classroom might be hard to justify if the desired impact is unachievable due to poor support and supervision.

Whole-school vs individual

If I am to become convinced you have spent your money well then this has to occur on two levels – the whole school as well as the individual level.

The obvious approach to demonstrating your work with individuals is through case studies, although the key ingredients are easy to miss especially when you can easily get bogged down in the complexities of a case.

Similarly, on a macro level, it is easy to over-generalise and lack substance. This brings me back to the three golden questions that should structure all articulations of your strategy:

- What issue did you identify?
- What action did you take?
- What impact did it have?

Though these examples are from different perspectives, they employ the same formula. You do not have to rigidly stick to this format, but something similar will demonstrate how you are aligning your provision decisions with the identified needs.

This formula is true on both a whole-school and an individual level. For example, Student A presents with five issues, you take action with three provisions, and the impact was X, Y and Z.

A real-life example:

Student A:

- Presenting issue: Difficulty in language acquisition (20 per cent of new words).
- Action: Pre- and over-learning sessions.
- Cost (£): Four 30-minute teaching assistant sessions per week, reinforced at home.
- Impact: Acquired 75 per cent of the previous term's new curriculum words.

Whole-school:

- Presenting issue: 85 students present difficulty in language acquisition.
- Action: Purchase two days per week of speech and language support to train teachers and teaching assistants for a term in pre- and over-learning.
- Cost: 24 sessions with a speech and language therapist.
- Impact: 17 staff and 12 teaching assistants confidently use pre- and over-learning with a good understanding.

Though these examples are from different perspectives, they employ the same formula. You do not have to rigidly stick to this format, but something similar will demonstrate how you are aligning your provision decisions with the identified needs.

Getting the details right

The devil really is in the detail: if you haven't accurately identified the issues, you can't hope to address the real gaps. I have come across too many schools that are confident about their provision, but whose assessment procedures, on closer inspection, are in fact flawed. Usually this is due to a lack of clear entry and exit criteria for interventions and robust assessments of students' needs. This is true regardless of their Ofsted grade, as this requires lifting up the bonnet and inspecting files.

Therefore, to go beyond the usual expectations of the simplistic Ofsted criteria and the myopic attitude of hard data-based judgements, a quality justification of approach and systems can be found within the soft data – looking at how engagement, positivity and esteem have been affected.

Concluding thoughts

Justifying your spend is actually easier than schools think. The challenge, as ever, is in selecting and communicating the key information. The simple formula above clearly demonstrates a process. Ask your stakeholders – especially your parents – for feedback about whether the information you give them is meaningful, and use their guidance to help you to clarify and share your successes. In doing so, you will not only publicly and confidently justify your spending, but also share your successes and best practice with your community and other schools.

Demonstrating Pupil Premium Impact

Headteacher Update, published 12 January 2015

There are a number of key issues that have arisen time and time again out of the Pupil Premium approach to social migration. The biggest of course is: “What shall we spend it on?” Followed by a close second: “How do we demonstrate the impact?”

The obvious short answer to the first question is: anything that addresses the need you have identified – which then opens the door to the real question: how do we fully and accurately identify the need of the student? This may of course then give us some sort of baseline to measure any progress against – and there’s your demonstration of impact. Would that life were so simple, this article would end here.

Ofsted now uses schools’ Pupil Premium spending as an indicator of the competence and effectiveness of senior management. They speak not only to senior leaders, however, but also to governors, asking them about the school’s approach and how they know it is working. Staff members lower down in the school may also be asked questions on the topic.

It is key that you are methodical, thorough and clear in your data, not only fulfilling the accountability criteria but also ensuring that staff throughout the school understand your school’s Premium use and aims. Accountability is the factor which ensures that the Pupil Premium makes sense at a governmental level: it is what allows them to provide the funding with no direct guidance about how it is spent. But it can be stressful and difficult for schools to work out exactly what is needed, as well as to gather the data and present it in a meaningful way.

There are three aspects to demonstrating the impact of your school’s work with the Pupil Premium.

- The first is fulfilling formal accountability criteria: presenting data on your website, creating a folder of information for Ofsted, and so on.
- The second is the broader but equally important process of making sure that all staff and stakeholders are engaged and kept updated.
- The third is to ensure that this becomes an on-going cycle, not just a one-off. The Pupil Premium is a process, not a project that can be easily completed and tidied away. With this approach, you will be judged on the dynamism of your system, not just the results (however good they may be).

The following steps are easy-to-implement ideas that are designed to help you in your demonstration of impact. The advice is based on Inclusion Expert’s Pupil Premium Handbook.

Contextualise: Demonstrate that you really know your students and your approach makes sense for your school.

My team and I have carried out hundreds of Pupil Premium Reviews in schools across the country and there is one major similarity between all of the visits: no school is the same. No school has the same student make-up, setting and resources, community and support or lack thereof. Most significantly, impoverishment means something different in every borough, every region, between housing estates and even streets.

Some schools may describe how certain ethnic community students struggle to engage whereas in an inner city London school I visited, they focused their narrowing the gap money strategy on the minority white British boys who performed significantly behind all other minorities in the school.

The first step in the journey then in trying to demonstrate the impact is being clear about what the make-up of your free school meals (FSM) cohort is and the specific challenges that they may face in your region. If you decide behind the comfort of your own desk about what these factors are then you open yourself up to doubt.

Convene a stakeholder meeting and invite representatives from social services, police, youth work, parents and parent support groups and even your local MP. Ask them about the key factors that inhibit progress and how to build aspiration with the community of your students. It is possible that this will end up being a tick-box exercise, but some of the best examples of Pupil Premium spending I have come across have resulted from such meetings.

Put a summary of the minutes of this meeting in the Pupil Premium section of your website and when Ofsted pay you a visit be sure to always begin your discussion of your FSM cohort with: “Our community is unique and our stakeholders have helped us understand that they face these issues X, Y and Z and as a result we have taken the following actions...”

This approach goes a long way to demonstrating your savvy in social migration. Even if your students haven’t made the necessary hard data progress, this will still open the door to being able to demonstrate other progress factors.

Personalise: Demonstrate that you have a bespoke approach to narrowing the gap

Along with the broader data, include a number of exemplar documents which give a much more precise level of detail. These provide not only a more specific, but often a more accessible insight into one or two of the interventions that the school is using.

It allows readers to engage with specific programmes and targets, and to see the students that these are benefiting (or, equally importantly, not benefiting). Such documents also demonstrate the level of care in the micro-management of the whole project.

They can be given to your team, to senior management, governors, and even posted on the school website, providing individual names are removed. Also, prepare four to five case studies demonstrating how you tackled different types of issues. Not all of the cases have to end in success – it is your thinking, effort and measure that makes all of the difference.

This is an opportunity to show how you go beyond the call of the duty (that is not to suggest that you have to do so, but rather simply draw on situations where you already do!).

The rule of 3: issue, solution and measure

Probably the most significant point in the article is for me to emphasise that it is okay to use soft data to demonstrate your impact. The vast majority of progress cannot be ascertained by the crude measure of a grade or a percentage point.

All major research into narrowing the gap as well as basic common sense tells us that the myopic view of RAISEOnline or whole-school data will simply not tell the story adequately enough. If that is all you show Ofsted when they come knocking at your door then it will be difficult to get a picture of whether you fully grasp the issues.

There is only one basic formula that succinctly captures progress in soft data terms and that has three columns:

- What issue did you identify?
- What action did you take?
- What impact did it have?

All key pastoral and inclusion documents and forms are based on this simple formula, from a Pastoral Support Plan to an Education, Health and Care Plan.

At the heart of the question is: what was the issue, what did you do about it, and what happened as a result? If you can present that in succinct bullet points then you have a decent (not fool-proof unfortunately) chance that Ofsted will actually read it.

I have sat on too many tribunal cases where hundreds of pages were presented about a case to the extent that they were drowning in evidence. But nearly all of them have one thing in common – they lost the wood for the trees and they could not answer the simple question: what was the issue and what did you do about it and did that work okay? In Pupil Premium terms you might want to simply add one additional column: how much you spent.

Marketing: It is not just what you know but who you tell

Encourage your school to celebrate its Pupil Premium achievements. After all, the results you achieve with it don't only represent money well spent, but effective work on the national issue of social migration.

Keep parents and other external stakeholders in the loop: mention the issue in newsletters and emails, and perhaps even link the relevant section of the school website in your email signature.

Post information and positive results on boards in the school. Preface the information on your website by saying that the issue is a high priority for the school.

Beyond the information necessary to fulfil statutory requirements, consider including: a list of your interventions and mention that these are in regular review, as well as some success stories if you can anonymise them appropriately enough.

Similarly, it is also good practice to produce a report on the issue for submission to your governors. This further ensures that the issue is being talked about at every level, and creates a paper trail to prove it. Governor enthusiasm and involvement is obviously a hugely beneficial thing – even without additional funding it would go a long way toward putting structures in place to help Pupil Premium students.

How you create the report is up to you, but it should contain: basic data (Pupil Premium student numbers and other hard data), a summary of the key concerns and successes from the beginning of the year, financial details, how the money was spent, and some of the impact.

Also include some notes on the decision-making process and some more specific information, such as the case studies discussed above. This report, with the minutes of the meeting at which it was discussed if available, would be a valuable addition to the Ofsted folder.

Let us help you prepare for Ofsted.

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Send an email to info@inclusionexpert.com

Six ways to achieve results with your PP budget

Exclusive Article

- **Those in control of the money should receive training on how to use it effectively.** The pressure on heads to succeed with their FSM students is intense; failure with this cohort could impact their Ofsted inspections and their careers. But why should staff know what to do? Training to implement the pupil premium – to determine where it fits between pastoral and curriculum provisions, and to support staff across the school – is lacking.
- **Individual institutions must work together to look at the bigger picture and learn from each other.** They span geographic regions, student phases, cultures and communities. For example, feeder schools could pool their pupil premium resources, and develop communication and transition planning to address wider concerns.
- **Clarity of thinking comes from clarity of systems.** We need a single, coherent, flexible and nationally-used system which can be tailored to each school's needs and is internally managed. It's a waste of resources for each school to create their own system which only generates the right table or graph to demonstrate the most attractive trajectory.
- **Be allowed the time and room to experiment and be creative with budgets.** A focus on return on investment runs the risk of foregoing the discovery of better ways of working. Each school should nominate and train a pupil premium champion. These champions should be brought together in large groups to share their insights, experiments and explorations. Schools need training from experts, of course, but they can learn the most from each other. Innovations that address the underlying issues require resources – perhaps a percentage of each pupil premium should go towards continuous improvement and learning.
- **Look at the wider scenario and how we create seamless change.** Education affects and is affected by poverty, jobs and social migration. It's directly related to housing, health and social care as well as pathways, apprenticeships and opportunities – we could add in many more factors. The FSM issue will be addressed most efficiently by multi-agency approach. If those working in health, care and education can communicate effectively with each other, it would be a good starting point.
- **Remember your stakeholders.** Schools must engage with parents; all the key studies into FSM conclude that parental influence is crucial. It is unclear where the current provision brings them into the equation. Schools need to work with other agencies to establish parental involvement to raise aspiration, expectation and an appreciation of career opportunities.



More information

Find out more about this whole school strategy exercise by calling Daniel and the team on 0333 301 0170 for a free consultation.



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How to halve the attainment gap in 6 months: A case study in 5 lessons

SecEd and Headteacher Update, Published January 2016

The number of schools that have not been able to make even a dent in their attainment gap since the inception of the Pupil Premium is quite staggering, and could call into question the existence of this initiative. Recent GCSE exam results showed that just one in three disadvantaged students hit the government's pass target, compared with more than 60% of non-FSM. Knowsley in Merseyside was again the worst-performing area, with just 35% of pupils gaining five good GCSEs including English and Maths; Bradford and Blackpool saw just 44% of pupils pass. The guidelines from the powers that be have left schools with too many unanswered questions. Pupil Premium reviews by leaders are often too superficial and lacking in impact. Many heads continue to feel the pressure with Ofsted looming or letters from the DfE insisting the gap reduces in their school. However, I have also seen successes in a myriad of forms and I have written about these in both **HTU** and **SedEd**. In this article, I aim to capture what I believe to be a winning formula for narrowing the gap in a school that could be applied in most settings. I have chosen one particular case study of a school where we followed that formula to the letter and within 6 months we had halved the attainment gap. We then went on to apply this to a number of schools in the local area with significant successes. Here is that story.

Sarah Conant, Executive Headteacher of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust, stepped in to temporarily take over a primary school for one year which had been left with a serious attainment gap. Sarah is an inspirational headteacher willing to take on challenging schools; she said, *'We had received a letter from the DfE highlighting the key issues. They wanted us to act quickly: financial spending was not specified well enough, monitoring of PP spending was ad hoc, interventions were not assessed for impact, governors didn't understand the importance of the PP and the targeted funding required. No one had looked at the PP cohorts to look at their real needs. In addition, the school was faced with a brand new senior leadership, issues with teaching, and data that was very much in the red.'*

Lesson 1: The gap can be narrowed even in a school with a difficult starting point.

Some have argued incorrectly that only schools with a history of outstanding practices such as King Edward VI Five Ways Birmingham can achieve results where 100% of their FSM cohort gain five or more GCSE passes – the fact that it is a selective school was a point missing from the DfE website where it was heralded as a shining example.

Sarah commissioned a review from Inclusion Expert; we concurred with Sarah's concerns. Sarah wanted the review to identify barriers to progress and articulate the steps needed to close the gap. Although the review was carried out in one day, half of it was spent co-authoring a very detailed and robust implementation plan which mapped out:

- areas for development
- what success would look like
- specific action points matched against each success criterion
- an identification of who would implement them and by when
- next steps

The implementation plan stretched to 30+ points and covered everything from how the school liaises with parents to governance, assessment and interventions, hard and soft data capture and even liaison with other schools and outside agencies. The gap doesn't exist in just one area of a school's work; it is a broad socio-economic phenomenon and schools need to sharpen every faculty across a broad range of understanding and skills. But – it can be done from even the toughest of starting points.

Contextualise: Demonstrate that you really know your students and your approach makes sense for

Lesson 2: A Pupil Premium review and action plan is only as successful as it is specific, relevant and authored **by** the school.

A common assumption that schools make is, ‘Let’s bring in an external consultant who does PP reviews regularly and let them fix the issue for us.’ However, the situation isn’t as simple as bringing in a plumber to mend a pipe: narrowing the gap is a whole-school issue and must be owned by the school. The best ideas will be generated from within, and what works in one school in one region won’t necessarily help in another. The reasons why Pupil Premium reviews fail are a lack of breadth, a lack of depth, and an insufficient understanding of the specific local setting. Of course, expertise is needed – but it must facilitate the involvement of staff and incorporation of their own expertise.

In the case of our work in Ely, we found that key challenges included gaining a greater understanding of issues and building relationships:

Urgent Concerns for the School
Inheriting an already exaggerated attainment gap from a feeder school
The need for nuanced identification of student needs including soft data factors such as preparedness for learning, engagement and confidence
The need to reach out to families and ensure staff know families, inspire community aspiration and manage expectations
The need to tackle a significant mobility issue with a high percentage mid-phase entry
Lack of teacher training in personalised learning and differentiation
The need for a SEN review and focus

The identified barriers to progress were both typical of many schools and at the same time very specific to this particular setting in their subtlety. At the review, when we had explored the issues, Sarah reflected, *‘I think it’s about trying to understand where the parents are coming from both literally and in their thought process. You need to target them as much as their children.’*

Lesson 3: Create an environment that fosters parental engagement and promotes aspiration.

Getting to know the families of students can make a significant difference in narrowing the gap. Not only can a school in this way gain a closer understanding of the major social and economic factors at work in the community, but by bringing parents ‘on side’, you’ll have a greater impact than hiring a few more TAs ever could.

The School took swift action across a range of needs, for example:

IDENTIFIED NEED	TYPE OF ACTION
Inheriting an already exaggerated attainment gap from a feeder school	Develop strong links, regular communication and shared best practices with feeder school
	Develop regular planning around students and issues
The need for nuanced identification of student needs including soft data factors such as preparedness for learning, engagement and confidence	Offer a free breakfast club which can double as a help and support club, including homework and reading, with teachers present
	Develop a whole-school focus on oracy to boost student confidence including: poetry reading, emphasis on performance, performing all kinds of reading
The need to reach out to families and ensure staff know families, inspire community aspiration and manage expectations	Significantly increase knowledge of families
	Build community aspiration, and offer opportunities for informality, openness, expressing you are welcome, you belong etc.
	Emphasise cross-curricular support of students through music and other activities – don’t just focus on SPAG and Numeracy
	Inspire parents through publicised good news stories, such as stories in the local press noting achievements in art and sport
	Put up an ‘Aspirations Board’ in the foyer
	Invite parents for coffee and cake at numeracy and literacy participation events – parents aren’t invited to a ‘talk’ but to a combination of activity, food and socialising
	Make family engagement the focal point of key school events, such as the picnic at sports day
Increase formal forums for parental voice	

After a few weeks of concerted efforts, particularly aimed at hard-to-reach parents, the parents started engaging in a different way towards the school; parents could choose their own pace of increased engagement and how they wanted to get involved. This eventually grew into a fresh interest in their child's education and other opportunities the school could offer.

Nathan Atkins, Head of Richmond Hill Primary School in Leeds, has expressed this idea further than any other school I have seen by truly putting parents and the community at the heart of school life; Richmond Hill, amongst many activities, opened up a donations-only food store and café for parents and emphasised parental learning and support.

Lesson 4: *Successful implementation of a Pupil Premium plan goes hand in hand with management of staff.*

You can't separate out the Pupil Premium from staff management. Implementation of a new plan will involve a process of evolution for staff, not just at the beginning stages but throughout the whole journey.

All heads have to find their particular balance between playing the encourager and yielding a stick with their staff. Certainly in Sarah's school she found the staff responded well to understanding clearly what the real issues were and what the plan entailed. A fleeting meeting with a short summary of the plan in a few points would have been inadequate; instead there was a strong emphasis on clear communication, high expectations set for all staff, and clear consequences for not getting on board. Sarah recalls, *'Initially, there was simply a lack of clarity on what Pupil Premium meant from the majority of staff. Staff came to realise that it is a constant evaluation and revaluation of what their students need. Emphasising soft data gave them a much better insight into these children's lives. For example, focusing on getting students in early rather than on absence has improved their interaction with school. Additional training for staff reinforced the need to be specific about support and impact, and provided the skills to meet the needs in the classroom.'*

The lack of teacher training in personalised learning and differentiation as well TA training was a key barrier to narrowing the gap. Wendy Knott, an Inclusion Expert Associate and expert in differentiation training, worked with staff in Ely in small groups of four, over four one-day sessions. The end result was a shift in thinking and action of the staff.

Assume that your teachers and TAs are nowhere near where they could be in their ability to personalise learning and adapt the curriculum to really drive student engagement. Also assume that student engagement in the curriculum is the responsibility of the classroom teacher once you have provided sufficient training for them.

Lesson 5: *Know your students.*

It's an obvious statement to make, but the obvious is the thing which schools often miss. It is a brave school that invests the time to dig deep into the real issues. Both Sarah Conant and Nathan Atkinson agreed that heads need to feel that they have permission to address the real issues in the way of student engagement and preparedness for learning.

It can be counter-intuitive to think you can improve outcomes in hard data in ways that seemingly have nothing to do with the curriculum. However, I have seen in multiple schools that creative answers to challenges in academic performance are often more powerful than traditional interventions such as extra tuition.

Your staff may not have the full picture of a student's needs; does a particular student require additional Maths or language acquisition support, or just a stronger relationship with their Maths teacher? I shared Inclusion Expert's **360 assessment procedure** with Sarah's school so that staff could capture what is really going on for a student. This process then led to a discussion about how to best meet those needs.

Sarah commissioned an in-depth SEN review from Inclusion Expert, which provided a similar level of breadth and depth to the Pupil Premium review. The overlaps between these two cohorts are clear nationally, and very often – but not always – in individual schools. The provisions for SEN students required careful unpicking to ensure maximum impact from minimum input.

Daniel Sobel - Inclusion Expert is always keen to hear from readers about their inclusion issues
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Sarah Conant and Nathan Atkinson now join Daniel in lecturing on how they narrowed the attainment gap.

Narrowing the gap by addressing the real issues

Headteacher Update, Published 3 March 2016

The raft of challenges facing Richmond Hill School made narrowing the gap seem like an outrageous challenge. However, by tackling the barriers that prevent pupils from being ready to learn, among other strategies, the school is making huge strides. Daniel Sobel explains

I read yet another news article about a large academy chain that fails its students and in particular “those from poor homes”. Unfortunately, there have been many articles like this in recent times. I conjecture that it is because planning over a group of schools tends to deal with the symptoms and not the causes of the attainment gap.

Sometimes, when you throw more maths at a cohort of boys who are significantly below their attainment levels, they don't respond positively because it doesn't necessarily address the fact that they may have language acquisition difficulties and the maths language is complex. Or that they have parents who decry maths at home as a “waste of time” because of their own difficult experiences when they were young.

The reasons could be many but certainly what they all have in common is that there is something personal behind the large wall of data. I have written previous articles for Headteacher Update about how to identify and track this soft data, capturing the personal issues and translating them into action. My formula for narrowing the gap is straightforward:

1. Start with the early years and catch narrowing the gap as early as possible.
2. Make sure every school is trained and equipped to carry out nuanced, detailed assessments that accurately identify the inhibiting issues.
3. Make sure teaching staff are trained to deliver consistently outstanding personalised learning through differentiation and adapted curriculum.
4. At every strata of the school ensure soft data is captured, tracked and demonstrated (individual students, interventions and whole-school data).
5. Encourage and support the headteachers to face outwards to their parents and evolve into a school that regularly meets with the traditionally hard-to-reach parents and, from that base, build aspiration in the home.

A common problem in delivering these steps is number 5. For me, this is the denouement of the entire process. I think results will always remain elusive for a school's bottom 10 per cent gap cohort unless we directly address the causes.

The example of headteacher Nathan Atkinson and Richmond Hill School shows how this really can be done with a bit of tenacity and gumption.

Case study: Richmond Hill School

Richmond Hill was the kind of nightmare challenge that most heads would quietly think to themselves they would be daft to take on. It has every category of challenge that is on the official and unofficial lists. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index places the school within the lowest two per cent and the Index of Multiple Deprivation is 69.55.

The school is ranked 22/155 in terms of deprivation for schools in Leeds. More than 33 per cent of pupils live in households which rank in the lowest three per cent of deprived households in Leeds. Nearly 90 per cent live in the lowest 20 per cent of deprived households in Leeds.

Since September 2014, 153 children have joined the school through the in-year admission process. Of these, 107 remain in school. Of the new arrivals, 64 per cent have some form of additional need – English as an additional language (EAL), SEN, social, emotional and mental health needs, or child protection issues. Eleven children have been admitted who have significant behavioural needs.

Overall, 66 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, 48 different languages are spoken in school, with Portuguese the most widely spoken after English, 35 per cent speak EAL. There are currently 60 pupils who receive intensive additional teaching because they are new to English and a number have had no experience of schooling prior to admission.

Half of children are from an ethnic background other than White British. The most significant ethnic group after White British is Black African children, followed by White Eastern European heritage. There 25 children who are of Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage.

So, what would you do to narrow the gap in a school like this? I am not sure that the Department for Education or the larger academy chains really have the answer to this fundamental question. However, Nathan seemingly wasn't put off. We met because the East Yorkshire Authority had asked me to look into how to increase learning outcomes for looked-after children and Richmond Hill volunteered to be a guinea pig. I had an opportunity to spend some quality time with Nathan and the school and what I walked away with was that rare feeling that I had come across something genuinely and deeply inspiring.

Differentiation and soft data

The school had some significant work to do with the staff. With the help of Wendy Knott – a SEN specialist teacher and expert on differentiation – the school rapidly embedded highly effective differentiation and personalised learning. Her work focused on how to deliver high-impact differentiation within a manageable amount of time for the staff.

This fostered a different outlook and helped them to rethink their views of the pupils as having individual needs which could be met by the teaching staff. Instead of instantly blaming the child for a behaviour challenge, they sought to consider their own responsibility for how they could include that pupil better.

I focused on implementing whole-school soft data systems and getting the SEN department on track. There was a need to simply import an SEN system and effectively start again. The SENCO was heavily bogged down in paperwork and meetings and hardly ever left her room. We worked out a way that she could be present in classrooms every day and reinvent the role of the SENCO as being a supporter of inclusion in the classroom rather than a repository for all problems vaguely SEN.

Nathan and his equally inspiring deputy Judy had already started implementing a whole range of school-changing activities and the challenge which I helped to solve was how to best capture and demonstrate the soft data impact of these strategies. Much of this kind of work I have written about in previous articles for Headteacher Update (See <http://bit.ly/20YDhq5>) and it is worth reflecting on this because there is a direct correlation between your capacity to measure and track soft data and the real impact that targeting soft data issues can actually have.

Barriers to learning

Nathan identified the many barriers to learning that are caused by life in the local community. They began with the obvious basics such as attendance and punctuality. Soon after Nathan began, one word became loud and clear and he wrote it in quite large letters in his office as if he was gripped with a mad inspiration.

The word was “HUNGER”. Their speaking with students and their parents revealed that a high percentage of children attend school each day without having any food and often not even a drink. Subconscious neglect as well as general poverty are just two of many reasons for this desperate situation.

It is common knowledge that trying to teach students who are starving is ineffective. Hunger affects concentration, energy levels, attentiveness and emotional wellbeing. Prolonged exposure to a lack of food ultimately results in children working below age-related expectations. Throwing additional maths and literacy at this cohort would fall flat. Even one-to-one specialist teachers and any of the fancy computer programs available for schools could not overcome this significant barrier.

But, providing children with food each morning would be costly both financially and in terms of time when the timetable is already beyond capacity. Nathan got round this by intercepting large quantities of bread which had past its sell-by date but not its use-by date. They provide toast each morning to all pupils (600) using only this “waste” bread.

Preparedness for learning

You might argue that the challenge to ensure that children arrive at school ready to learn could be considered to be a combined effort between home and school with the emphasis on home. However, when schools are judged for their outcomes the imperative has to shift towards increased effort from schools – in loco parentis.

Nathan had opened a Pandora's box. What other steps could the school take to maximise the pupils' wellbeing and preparedness for learning? The needs of the community are massive and he and his staff had decided to do all they could to reach out to them. They realised that if they could intercept bread then maybe this could be done with other foods too?

Perhaps through the medium of food they could get the hardest to reach parents to engage with the school at last and possibly thaw their iced hearts towards education. If this was a movie rendition there would be a montage at this point where you would see Nathan and his staff converting an empty learning space in the school to create a café, built to look and feel just like a high street coffee shop.

The school worked in partnership with local supermarkets, caterers, independent traders and wholesalers who generate tons of waste food that predominantly ends up in the bin. They set up a weekly food shop where a wide variety of products have been distributed through this initiative including fruit, vegetables, pastries, cakes, bread, cheese, cooking oil, tinned and jarred products to name a few.

This food is then made available to parents and members of the school and wider community on a “pay as you feel” basis, which ensures that the food is valued and that people have a sense of worth.

Parents who would normally avoid the school were now coming regularly. Parents started to talk to the staff over a coffee, share worries as well as their laughter and as a result of these interactions they developed an entire community’s trust in the school and this was the biggest hurdle to developing a real shift in aspiration.

Nathan and his team have developed many other wonderful interventions that are entirely focused on bringing their families into the school and fostering a positive contact. Attendance has improved as a result of Nathan’s work, children are keen to come to school and start their day with breakfast and a chat. Parents are more widely involved in school life too, at the most recent parent-teacher consultations, 90 per cent of families attended meetings, this enabled them to share success stories as well as the next steps in learning required for their children.

When dealing with real impoverishment, you could not hope to narrow the gap without addressing preparedness for learning. As I said above, it takes more tenacity and gumption than any policy document or formal research can tell you.

Daniel Sobel is founder of Inclusion Expert which provides SEND and Pupil Premium reviews, training and support with all forms of inclusion. Visit www.inclusionexpert.com



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Please contact Daniel and the team today for a free consultation to answer your questions about the Pupil Premium in your school.

Pupil Premium Handbook

