



LEAGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Striving for Excellence, learning for life'

PUPIL PREMIUM - **STRATEGIES REPORT**

Date: December 2021

What are the barriers and challenges disadvantaged pupils face within your school?

Leagrave Primary is an above average sized primary school, serving a dynamic and diverse community in the west area of Luton. Many of our children and families face barriers and challenges in their home and school lives which are above and beyond the “national average”.

The school sits within the top 20-50% of schools in the most deprived areas nationally, with a percentile of 31%. 28.3% of our pupils are eligible for Free School Meals. The impact of poverty on educational attainment is well established, and at Leagrave, this link is complex. As a result, our teachers are required to spend more time than expected, on teaching readiness for learning, supporting welfare, promoting positive behaviour, and breaking down engagement barriers, whilst delivering an enriched and challenging curriculum.

Furthermore, 32.9% of our children on role have had safeguarding files because there have been Safeguarding / Child Protection concerns about them at some point in their lives. This includes:

- two children who are looked after,
- one child who is a previously Looked After Child
- four children who are the subject of Child Protection plans,
- three children who are subject to Child in Need plans,
- eight children are the subjects of single assessments by Social Care and
- two children work with Family Support Partnership
- We also have one child who has been placed in the care of family members.

Many of these children can be hijacked by issues that are taking place in their homes and are often distracted in the classroom. This has a direct impact on their learning and achievement. At Leagrave, we have put a number of strategies in place to support these children and their families, including a Community Education Officer. This new role has been devised to support the children in school, and also their families within the home. Their work includes supporting carers to establish vital routines such as getting up, getting dressed for school, and breakfast, all of which supports readiness for learning.

In addition, 85% of all pupils are from minority ethnic groups with less than 48% all children speaking English as their first language; both indicators are again well above the national average. There is considerable research evidence showing that a child's fluency in English is a key predictor of their achievement in national tests. Teachers at Leagrave access resources to assess a child's ability in their first language and teach them the appropriate progression of English, which develops differently from child to child.

There are also more individual challenges at Leagrave, with the number of children with Special Educational Needs being well above the national average. As a result, not only are teachers delivering first quality learning opportunities but also a significant number of interventions are required.

The final barrier facing the children of Leagrave, is harder to measure, but possibly the most complex challenge of all, low aspiration. The aspirations of many of our children are low for many reasons, namely because a child's school experience is shaped by their family background, their families' own experiences of school and also the area in which they live.

Therefore, this barrier has dominated our agenda for closing the gap for all children at Leagrave.

Which strategies have you employed to solve these issues and make sustained improvements in the outcomes of your disadvantaged pupils?

In order to make sustained improvements at Leagrave we have developed a rigorous cycle of school improvement, that delivers continuous training to meet the needs of the staff, and careful monitoring to ensure decisions are well informed. This however, is not enough to meet the needs of our children with the complex challenges they face.

The plan included:

- Staff ethos: high ambition for children
- Quality first teaching
- Diverse and tailored curriculum to capture interests and imagination
- Identification and tracking of vulnerable pupils
- Appropriate interventions
- Speech therapists and a play counsellor
- Playtime and lunchtime activities
- Before and after school sports clubs
- Uniform vouchers
- Fruit and milk for all, in Key Stage 2
- Nurture room staff member and resources
- Staff CPD and training from external Maths and English consultants
- One to one tuition
- Achievement for all intervention plans
- Three class teachers across 60 children in Year 6
- Extended day, with small teaching groups in Year 5 and 6
- Boosters in Year 6

What evidence did you use to help you identify and choose these strategies? (Please identify and explain concrete examples and strategies, making reference to disadvantaged pupils across your whole school.)

Due to the socio economic demographic of the local community, we were keen to explore evidence that would positively impact on the families we serve. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" outlines the essential needs that are required for positive learning. A child's availability to learn depends largely on their motivation, their personal desire to achieve results and improve their knowledge, regardless of the material being studied. Maslow suggests that this is one of the most important factors in our ability to learn.

At Leagrave, a child's availability to learn may change from day to day; their home experiences that morning will directly impact on their readiness to cope with formal expectations, for the rest of the day. As indeed does their personal desire for academic success and achievement. If such aspirations are not important in the family home, then it is unfair to expect a child to hold them in high regard.

Through exploring Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, teachers better understand children's needs, and better access support through the Nurture Base resources and staff. They also sensitively hold challenging conversations with parents, supporting them in their understanding about the possible opportunities for their child's future. This work is being continued, through parent workshops, information sessions and also when necessary, more formal meetings.

The Nurture Base offers a variety of interventions including giving the children opportunities to discuss family or school concerns and issues, their feelings, learn social skills, and offer support to children when they are at their most vulnerable. Some of our most vulnerable children need further intervention and support and so we offer play therapy to those children whose behaviour causes staff or parents and carers to be concerned about their well-being and mental health.

Another strategy focussed on, was raising the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. A rigorous system has been put in place to improve attendance. A member of SLT now leads on attendance, giving it the focus it requires. The Attendance Team work closely with the Education Welfare Officer to challenge and insist that parents ensure their children are attending school. This entails working with vulnerable families and parents who do not always prioritise education, or possess a good attitude to learning for the future.

Members of the team make first day absence visits to support or advise parents on the importance of attending. Regular register sweeps allow for swift identification of children whose attendance drops below 95% and these parents are contacted for a school meeting. In the rare instance that attendance continues to drop penalty warning notices are issued and thereafter, fines for unauthorised absences. The team work relentlessly to provide evidence for any cases that go to court, with the sole aim always being to ensure vulnerable children are attending school, where their barriers to learning can be addressed. Our persistent absentees (a majority of these being disadvantaged children) now sits at 5.5% as opposed to 6% at the end of 2018/19, the last year prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our current overall attendance is 95.6%, whereas it was 96.1% in 2018/19.

How have these strategies had an impact on the achievement and wider development of disadvantaged pupils?

The comprehensive strategies employed at Leagrave to close the attainment gap, and ensure that all children have aspiration for life, has seen great success. Year on year there has been a significant improvement in the percentage of disadvantaged children achieving the expected standard, as there has been for all pupils. Furthermore, 2019 data shows that the progress score for disadvantaged children were above the national average, (Reading 4.9, Writing 4.6 and Maths 4.6).

Parental engagement has improved and is evident in the increased attendance figures for our parent workshops. They provide an opportunity to up skill our parents in order to support and encourage their children and be aware of the expectations of their children. Sessions included a reading session, which involved parent's experiencing the test materials as our children do. Another session has focused on the teaching of phonics, or a session where parents were able to learn about the coverage of the curriculum and the expectations for each age group.

We believe that the great success our children enjoyed, despite arriving to school with a variety of complex barriers, was due to the robust school improvement cycle that paves the foundations for the work that goes above and beyond. Their attitude towards learning and their future has significantly improved. They are eager to learn, and are eager for good results. They know that such rewards are hugely important for their future and their secondary schooling. Past pupils who are currently in Year 7 and 8 often pop by Leagrave school on their way home. They tell staff how well they are doing- a true reflection of their newly found engagement and tenacity to learn.

How have you evaluated this impact?

When SLT evaluated this work, it was difficult to pin point the success. Difficult because it became clear that there was not one individual intervention that was responsible, but rather the map which most importantly included the development of our teachers understanding on readiness for learning, and the “I can and I will” aspiration.

What have been the strengths and weaknesses of these methods?

One of the most positive outcomes from the methods explored, is that our disadvantaged pupils know that they are valued. They are kind and caring children, and have a strong work ethos, and above all now have life opportunities.

In order to achieve this, there have been many other positive developments, our teachers know how to support children in becoming ready to learn. Teachers take time to understand why a child might have arrived at school with aggression, they now seek out appropriate support systems in school and work with the child to help them. They do so, whilst holding the highest expectations of behaviour. They understand that it is only then, can the child be inspired to aspire, and then work conscientiously to achieve all possible.

Pupil voice has also developed and plays a strong part in children’s wellbeing. Some of our children do not have positive role models in their personal lives that are able to make informed decisions that lead to better lifestyles. We want to empower our children and give them the opportunities to make choices around issues that impact their lives. With this in mind, pupil voice has and will continue to be a focus for our school. Our School Learning Council the Investors in Pupils award.

Leadership opportunities have also been a strength across the school. Our Play Leaders have undertaken bespoke training to lead and facilitate positive experiences at playtimes. For our children who require positive role models, they will invariably learn and achieve better than if playtime presents them with a degree of anxiety. Play Leaders promote the essential skills of communication, active listening and problem solving, encourage an awareness of feelings and the ability to make and maintain positive relationships. In addition, our School Learning Council has a clear focus on making decisions that are for the benefit of the members of our school, but also the wider community. The work of the children and those who are witness to the work that they do, sends a clear message that success is a team effort and that self belief, positivity and motivation are key drivers for success in life.

Contrastingly, one of the weaknesses of the approaches is the time barrier, of working with families to support them in developing aspiration for their children. It is true that our families

want the very best for their children; however, their interpretation of the very best is not always a place at college or even a job. Therefore, we feel that we will further explore this approach. Mobility also has a significant impact on children's emotional development and achievement.

Can you provide evidence of using research, and/or working in collaboration with other partners, in order to develop the most effective strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

At Leagrave Primary School, we benefit from many collaborations and partnership, that positively impact on leadership, teaching and learning and initial teacher training programmes. The West Area Partnership (WAP) facilitates many purposeful working groups, from the West area of the town; the committees include the Heads, Deputies, Assessment, Maths and English. In addition to this, the school is a member of the Luton First Teaching Alliance, forming partnerships with other schools across Beds, Herts and Bucks.