

# Improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners in opportunity areas

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## OLDHAM AND DERBY

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## INTRODUCTION

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It has been a privilege to work with talented and committed teachers, support staff and leaders as part of this review within a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. The commitment to improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable pupils in our education system has been inspirational at times. We have learnt from our review of the Harmony Trust that background, perceived barriers to learning and living in communities that face some exceptionally challenging circumstances do not have to mean academic achievement is predetermined. Improvements to outcomes over time are not guaranteed. So identifying the 'active ingredients' for success are critical for systemising and scaling up for maximum impact and improved outcomes for all.

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## SECTION A: CONTEXT, PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Harmony Trust is a multi-academy and school led organisation based in the opportunity areas of Oldham and Derby. The Trust was set up in February 2014 with its core aim being to raise attainment in local schools, many of which serve communities facing challenging circumstances. The Trust also provides school to school support for a number of local schools and has a Teaching School.

The Trust has a good track record over time of ensuring that a high percentage of children either meet or exceed national expectations by the end of KS2. Most schools have high numbers of disadvantaged children. Many have high numbers with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), many of whom make excellent progress. A high proportion of children in the Trust have English as an Additional Language (EAL), a growing number are International New Arrivals (INA) and a large number are both New to English and to Education itself (NTEE).

The Trust comprises 12 Primary Academies; five of these are located in Oldham, seven in Derby. The Academies serve a variety of contexts.

The attainment data shown in the table opposite should be treated with caution. It presents a picture of school contexts at the time of publication; however, the situation in some academies is rapidly changing. Further, this data does not include factors which may impact on attainment, such as mobility or adverse childhood experiences.

On average, there is a correlation between length of time within the Trust and improved attainment for disadvantaged pupils. The data in this table also highlights a significant challenge; schools such as Northmoor and Westwood support communities facing increasing deprivation, but because of eligibility criteria restrictions on families without British citizenship, they receive relatively low levels of Pupil Premium funding. This situation is exacerbated by universal free school meals in KS1.

### Methodology

- 10 full or half day Pupil Premium strategy reviews in Oldham and Derby. Reviews comprised of a school self-evaluation, whole or half day in school which included interviewing leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils, documentation review and classroom visits. Participating schools received individual visit reports which fed into the evaluation.
- Meetings with an invited group of school leaders (including MAT trustees) and school improvement partners in Oldham and Derby, comprising a presentation on national good practice and discussion on local challenges and successes.
- Analysis of recent Ofsted inspection reports and DfE performance data.
- Survey of Oldham and Derby headteachers, teachers and support staff in participating schools.

Outcomes for Academies in the Trust for Two Years (joined prior to Sept 2016)	
KS1-KS2 Progress	KS2 Attainment
Reading= +0.7	Reading, Writing and Maths (Combined)= 54% (disad) vs 68% (non-disad)
Writing= +4.2	Reading= 59% (disad) vs 68% (non-disad)
Maths= +3.7	Writing= 83% (disad) vs 89% (non-disad)
	Maths= 72% (disad) vs 89% (non-disad)
	SPaG= 83% (disad) vs 87% (non-disad)

## Academies

Academy	Context	Date joined Trust
Richmond Academy, Oldham	Richmond Academy is a two form entry school with 504 pupils on roll, including 85 part-time pre-school and Nursery places. Richmond Academy is situated in the Coldhurst Ward of Oldham. 26.6% of our pupils are entitled to Free School Meals with 35.9% of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium. SEN is high at 32%. 19 pupils (13.9% of our pupils) have an EHCP with a further 27.8% of pupils receiving SEN support.	Nov 2014
Greenhill Academy, Oldham	Greenhill Academy is in the St Mary's ward of Oldham. Greenhill is a two form entry with 14 classes plus an Under threes Provision, Nursery and two non-funded Special Needs Learning Bases. The current number on roll is 534 pupils (U3s to Y6). Free School Meals is below National – currently at 16% and 26% Ever6. The number of parents who have registered for FSM has decreased significantly since the introduction of Universal Free School Meals and the new Universal Tax Credits, for example just 5% (three children) in Reception are eligible compared with 23% in Y6 (April 2019 figures). SEND is high at 33% (U3s to Y6), with 27 pupils (5%) with SEND EHCPs.	Feb 2014
Westwood Academy, Oldham	Westwood Academy is a one form entry school with approx. 220 children on roll, including Nursery. Westwood Academy is located in the Coldhurst ward of Oldham. Pupil Premium eligibility is approx. 21% and has decreased from 50% (January 2014 census) despite the proportion of pupils living in the most income deprived areas increasing by 8.7% between 2017 and 2018. SEN is slightly above national.	Nov 2014
Alt Academy, Oldham	Alt academy is a one and a half form entry school with 313 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils eligible for FSM is 33% with 54% eligible for Pupil Premium. SEN is high at 26% although the number of EHC plans is low. Our children come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds with 41.5% white British, 32.6% Pakistani heritage and 17 different home languages spoken.	Oct 2014
Northmoor Academy, Oldham	Northmoor Academy is a larger-than-average school with approx. 530 children on roll, including Nursery. The academy has unexpectedly and rapidly grown in size since its opening in every year group. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is higher than average at approx. 38%. The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. Mobility of pupils is extremely high, currently mobility is approx. 40% with 50% newly arrived to the country. Northmoor Academy is located in the Coldhurst ward of Oldham.	Sept 2016
Cavendish Close Junior Academy	Cavendish Close Junior Academy is a larger than average sized Junior School at 323 pupils with a three form intake. The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who have SEN is above average at 17.4%. Cavendish Close Junior Academy is located in Chaddesdon, Derby. Disadvantaged pupils currently make up 33.3% of the school.	Sept 2017
Reigate Park Primary Academy	Reigate Park is two form entry Primary Academy with a small nursery. The school also has an Enhanced Resource Unit for the Deaf. There are 388 children on roll, with 38% of children eligible for the Pupil Premium grant. 18% of children have SEND, 16% are EAL, with pupil mobility at 21%.	Sept 2018
Ash Croft Primary Academy	Ash Croft is a one form entry school in the Sinfyn ward of Derby with 217 pupils currently on roll. 38% of pupils are Pupil Premium with 27% currently eligible for FSM. 42% of pupils are EAL and 18% are SEND.	June 2018
Alvaston Junior Academy	Alvaston Junior Academy is a three form entry, larger than average sized Junior School, with approximately 346 pupils on roll with an Enhanced Resource Unit which is funded by the local authority. 36% of our pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. The percentage of SEND pupils is 15%. Our children come from predominantly White British backgrounds, and 8% of our children are EAL.	Sept 2018
Village Primary Academy	Village Primary Academy is a three form entry school with approx. 710 pupils on roll, including two and three year old nursery provision. Village Primary is located in the Normanton Ward of Derby. Pupil premium eligibility is approx. 40%. EAL and SEND are higher than national at 45% and 22% respectively.	May 2018
Lakeside Primary Academy	Lakeside Primary Academy is situated in the Alvaston area of Derby, close to the city centre. It is a three form entry school with approximately 670 on role including our nursery. Our FSM is 26% with 34% eligible for Pupil Premium. 12% of our pupils have SEND and 17% are EAL.	Jan 2019
Cottons Farm Primary Academy	Cottons Farm Primary Academy is a small school with approximately 140 pupils on roll (including Nursery). 62% of our pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding, well above the national average.	Sept 2018

## SECTION B: KEY FINDINGS

The following guidance and recommendations are based on a range of evidence collected during the project.

We saw numerous examples of good practice, and some exceptional provision for highly vulnerable learners. There are some clear features within the schools that are performing well by their disadvantaged pupils. This report aims to codify those features into a scalable approach that could be adopted in other groups of schools in Opportunity Areas and beyond.

Schools performing well by their disadvantaged pupils had the following features:

- A shared set of values that everyone understood and bought into (see case study page 17)
- Leadership capacity, experience and expertise
- Strong relationships with families and the community, with less fortunate families held in high regard by all
- A strong understanding of growing up as a disadvantaged pupil in the community, and how that disadvantage presents in the classroom
- A strategy that is clearly understood by all staff in school, who are aware of their role within that strategy
- The highest of expectations for pupils, with high expectations defined
- A positive climate for implementing new strategies
- Strong adult-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships are given the highest priority
- Pupil Premium is NOT ring-fenced. School leaders use professional judgement, knowledge of pupils and research to inform their approach and impact on all vulnerable learners. The most effective schools are addressing disadvantage in the classroom first through high quality, inclusive teaching. Research evidence supports this approach. Ring fencing risks promoting short term, intervention heavy, reactive activities which are less likely to lead to sustained improvements.
- A focus on inclusive teaching and curriculum equity – teachers understand that disadvantage is best tackled in the classroom and are skilled and equipped to do so (see case study page 17)
- Pupil need is clearly identified and targeted
- A relentless focus on literacy and language
- Key staff members with areas of defined expertise were strategically deployed by the Trust. Leaders prioritise well (see case study page 17)
- The valuing of, and responding to, the voice of pupils

- A commitment to recruitment, training and retention of high-quality staff. A high turnover of teachers and leaders is one of the major barriers to improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in vulnerable schools. This has rightly been a priority for schools and the Trust; it is the foundation of a successful Pupil Premium strategy

The following were less well-established Trust-wide, but present in some schools, particularly those that have been with the Trust longer:

- Schools that 'tell their story' in Pupil Premium strategy documentation, and make sure that this documentation is 'live'. A Pupil Premium strategy document should be for more than just compliance.
- Schools that carefully consider the proportion of money spent on Teaching and Learning and Pastoral and Enrichment activities (in that order) and how this dovetails with the School Development Plan.
- The importance of defining what optimal teaching and learning will look like, what will be seen in classrooms and how the preferred approach will be implemented. The most effective Schools consider teaching and learning through the lens of pupils from less fortunate backgrounds. The starting point should be that teaching can always be improved. Where this is not accepted, there is a risk that pupils and families are blamed for weak results.
- Use of a range of research evidence to inform decision making; but this should be combined with 'knowing your pupils', professional judgment and values.
- A strong understanding of the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils, and how these present in the classroom.
- Prioritising and developing expertise in the Early Years, recognising the importance of this crucial phase for a long term approach to tackling disadvantage (see case study page 17).
- Having expert, professionally qualified, high quality staff in key roles which enables teachers to focus on success in the classroom (for example, a qualified social worker employed by the Trust).
- Working closely with external partners (for example, a number of schools in the Derby Hub were working closely with the Derby Research School).
- The use of high-quality diagnostic assessment (academic and pastoral) to identify pupil and CPD needs.

- The need to take a long-term approach to tackling entrenched disadvantage. The nine-month reporting cycle for the DfE risks creating a culture of short termism. All schools should feel confident to set out their strategies over a minimum of two years, with key milestones in place for accountability and evaluation purposes.
- A critical engagement with research evidence to support and inform strategies, beyond superficial use of the EEF toolkit.
- Robust impact evaluation.

There were no significant differences between schools in terms of how the Pupil Premium was being used.

However, leadership expertise, experience, capacity and consistency were a feature of those schools that were implementing their strategies in a way that was having greater impact. To this end, academisation is a useful component of success, giving the Trust the time to appoint and embed high quality executive and academy teaching and leadership teams. This enables them to embed a more strategic, medium term approach to improving outcomes. This may also be helpful in attracting and retaining staff in schools where this has recently been difficult.

The 'long-term' approach described above could be supported by the Opportunity Area.

## SECTION C: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This section is informed by wider our wider research on the us and impact of Pupil Premium and the school visits carried out during this review informed this list of guiding principles to adhere to when tackling educational disadvantage. The principles should inform deeper develop of strategies at school, Trust and local system level. They are as follows:

### Leadership, Culture, Values and Systems

1. It is critical that there is consistent understanding of a given strategy for tackling educational disadvantage, with all individual staff (including non-teaching staff) understanding their roles within that strategy.
2. Our study showed that schools that were most effective for disadvantaged pupils did a small number of things very well.
3. The strategy should 'come to life' and be visible in all aspects of school life. There should not be a gap between what a strategy document says and what is happening in classrooms, or between different members of staff in a school.
4. Teachers and other staff should, as the most important intervention, be inputting into the design of strategy, activity and the evaluation framework. The strategic plan should be 'owned' by all staff.
5. At system, school and classroom level, teachers should be deployed where they can have the greatest impact – in working with vulnerable learners; intervening in gaps in learning, not labels or attainment levels.

### High Expectations

6. High expectations for all pupils, irrespective of background or barrier to learning, are vital. There

needs to be a commonality of understanding of what this means in principle, and in practice, in all aspects of school life.

7. High expectations are where disadvantaged pupils and those with low prior attainment have equitable access to well trained, high quality, experienced academic and pastoral staff.
8. Well-intentioned inclusion strategies can sometimes be exclusive. For example, taking a group of vulnerable pupils on a special trip may serve to be exclusive and exacerbate a sense of being 'different'.
9. If setting or 'ability grouping' is taking place, reference is given to the Grouping Study by Professor Becky Francis, UCL Institute of Education. Teachers and pupils should be clear that the purpose of grouping is to ensure mastery of key knowledge, and not because they are 'less able', not clever enough or poorly behaved. Pupil perceptions of grouping may be different to those of the teacher. Further, where grouping takes place, it is important that groups who are low current attainers are not always working with less experienced, less qualified staff.<sup>1</sup>
10. Narrow, simplistic, limiting labels like 'bottom group' and 'lower ability' should be avoided. This is particularly important for pupils with low self-esteem, or pupils who are developing the notion of self-esteem.
11. 'Low ability' is a misunderstanding of prior attainment in English and Maths, related to the number of words pupils have heard, the two-way conversations, the opportunity to play with numbers, access to language, social, cultural and financial capital and more. These labels can, subconsciously, risk lowering expectations of pupils' learning over their school career.

12. Boosters, catch up groups and similar should be supplementary to the curriculum entitlement, rather than a replacement for it. Pre-teaching of key vocabulary is a good example of this. Teachers should be wary of pre and post teaching becoming a default position, rather than a response to specific gaps in / barriers to learning.

### **The Impact of Socio-economic Disadvantage on Educational Achievement**

13. An accurate, well defined list of the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils is critical for improved outcomes. High quality diagnostic academic and pastoral assessment is needed to inform this list.

14. Avoid generalised statements about pupils and barriers, such as 'our disadvantaged pupils have low levels of literacy' and 'our disadvantaged pupils have low aspirations.' Rather, consider the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on pupils and how that impact on them in the classroom and other aspects of school life. It is important to consider the characteristics of learners, remembering to recognise the gifts pupils bring to schools too (for example, polylingualism).

15. Schools have more control over some barriers than others. The most effective strategies focus on where they can have the greatest level of influence. For example, the Oldham Schools have had a long-term focus on the teaching of reading and championing reading in school as a vehicle for improving reading for pleasure, improved vocabulary and cultural knowledge.

16. Pupils' barriers to learning observed in schools in the Trust have included (but are not limited to) the following. These are not exclusive to pupils from less fortunate backgrounds:

- Self-regulation (of emotions and cognition)
- Oral language
- Vocabulary
- Dispositions towards learning
- Attendance and punctuality
- Self confidence
- Passivity
- Relationships with adults and / or pupils
- Gaps in learning due to high mobility or poor attendance
- Access to resources
- Cultural capital
- Experiences, travel
- Prior learning/experiences

17. Community barriers to learning can be related to the geographical and social features of the community the school is serving. For some school communities, access to transport posed a significant challenge. For some, such as Northmoor Academy in Oldham, the high proportion of International New Arrivals was a feature. In other cases, cultural expectations that determined evening activities sometimes left limited time for home learning. In other cases, poorer quality housing and external factors such as cuts in social care funding impacted.

18. In-school barriers need to be considered too. These might include:

- High turnover of staff
- More inexperienced staff/ staff with professional development needs
- Use of limiting labels (not having a shared positive language)
- Poor practice with streaming and setting
- A lack of nuance in identifying gaps in learning / generalisations about pupils
- Negative perceptions of parents
- Lower expectations for low prior attainers
- A lack of shared understanding of the school's strategy
- Vulnerable pupils disproportionately working with less experienced staff
- Poor implementation
- Overly focusing on external factors before addressing inclusive teaching and learning
- Lack of middle leadership capacity to implement strategies
- Lack of shared planning opportunities
- Onerous marking policies

### **Inclusive Teaching Strategies to Support Disadvantaged Learners**

19. Strategies should always focus on the needs of pupils, whether at school, classroom, small group or individual level.

20. What happens in the classroom matters most: That is where schools can have the greatest impact, it is where school leaders have the most control and influence. Research evidence tells us most effective/optimal use of resources focus on the classroom.

21. School leaders should consider how many of their strategies focus here, and how many focus on external factors. The starting point must be that we can improve the teaching that disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils receive. It is useful for school



- leaders to reflect on what is most in their control and what is least.
22. This focus on teaching and learning needs to be specific about how it will address pupil need, and not just 'business as usual', for example, reducing class size without a clear understanding of what will be different for pupils and how that will be implemented and evaluated.
  23. Inconsistent, poor quality practice disproportionately impacts on the least fortunate. The quality of teaching impacts most on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.
  24. Therefore, it is important to use Pupil Premium to give teachers and other staff the capacity, expertise, professional development and support to meet the needs of their pupils; in this review, the most frequent themes were language and self-regulated learning.
  25. A commitment to professional development for teachers is fundamental to the quality of teaching, but also for sustaining strong, consistent relationships with vulnerable learners. Tackling educational disadvantage requires a great deal from teachers, so support and sufficient capacity is vital. Success of professional development should be measured by the impact it has on pupils.
  26. A commitment to curriculum equity for disadvantaged learners, particularly those that are low prior attainers. Too often, these pupils are more likely to experience a narrower curriculum than their peers and more likely to work with less qualified, less experienced staff. This should apply in both the morning and the afternoon in primary schools. Having a flexible approach to the teaching of small groups (in terms of the adults teaching them) is likely to lead to a fairer curriculum entitlement for all.
  27. Teachers in the classroom must feel accountable for the outcomes of disadvantaged learners. This should never be the responsibility of the inclusion lead / pupil premium champion / or member of staff implementing an intervention.
  28. There is a need for a long-term approach. Tackling educational disadvantage is not about finding interventions that will enable pupils to make leaps in progress. Rather, it should be giving teachers and other staff the knowledge, expertise and professional development to meet the needs of their pupils. Everyday interactions between adults and pupils, and between pupils and pupils, are arguably more important than structured interventions, especially those that may be needed because of inconsistent teaching or a professional development need.
  29. Where interventions are used, they should be supplementary to high quality teaching, rather than a replacement for it. A healthy scepticism about impact should be maintained, with success measured by intervention gains 'sticking' in the long term. Research evidence suggests that effect sizes of interventions often diminish over time, if they are not backed up with repeated learning in the classroom.
  30. Frequent, low stakes testing and the use of interleaving can help embed learning and reduce anxiety, particularly for those pupils who have less experience of being tested outside of school. Cumulative quizzing, building on the Ebbinghaus forgetting curve, and other Assessment for Learning Strategies are essential for ensuring that vulnerable pupils do not 'slip through the net'.
  31. The language gap was a critical focus for schools in both Opportunity Areas. This should form one of the key foci. A broad evidence base highlights the impact of socio-economic circumstances on language. This, in turn, is a significant causal factor in educational disadvantage in respect of:
    - Behaviour
    - Behaviour for learning
    - Access to the curriculum
    - Self confidence
    - Relationships
    - Participation
    - Achievement
    - Self-regulation
  32. The significant language gap experienced by pupils from less fortunate backgrounds cannot be addressed through an intervention. Rather, it is important that teachers and leaders use evidence-based strategies in the classroom. Again, as evidenced below, the strategies that tend to have the greatest impact largely focus on language. All teachers in all lessons in all phases should consider how to address the language gap.
  33. Isabel Beck's work on 'bringing words to life'<sup>2</sup> and Alex Quigley's 'Closing the vocabulary gap'<sup>3</sup> provide guidance on evidence-based vocabulary instruction. Beck's work suggests the following strategies:
    - Introduce words through explanations in everyday connected language
    - Provide several contexts in which the words can be used
    - Encourage pupils to interact with word meanings
    - Develop activities that require pupils to process the meanings of words in thoughtful ways

- Provide examples, situations and questions that are interesting
  - Provide numerous encounters with target words
  - Reward pupils for use of target words.
34. Teachers should plan to ensure equality of participation and individual accountability in classrooms by putting structures in place to enable all pupils to practise using and listening to modelled language. Done well, co-operative learning structures prevent pupils from 'opting out' because there is a requirement to participate. In addition to planning the quality of their questions, teachers should think about how they are giving all children an opportunity to practise using language in the way they are required to answer.
35. Be wary of superficial, well-intentioned strategies that will have limited impact such as marking the books of disadvantaged pupils first or sitting all disadvantaged pupils at the front to give them extra feedback and create in class socio-economic grouping. This risks being driven by labels and creating dependent learners. Rather, the teacher should deploy their resources where they can have the biggest impact on learning.
36. It is important to remember that feedback is a highly relational transaction. Without positive relationships, feedback risks becoming a 'gap widener', with more confident learners better placed to take advantage of feedback.

## Relationships and Parental Involvement

37. Strong, positive, consistent relationships are critical for the success of disadvantaged pupils, both in and outside of the classroom. Again, this is particularly pertinent for pupils who may have less consistent relationships outside of school.
38. All staff should be well trained in attachment to support the needs of some of the most vulnerable learners, so as to build relationships and understand the causes of sometimes challenging behaviours. This should not be the role of a small number of individuals in schools. The strategic deployment of expert staff in Social and Emotional / Mental Health difficulties and broader pastoral issues is essential given the complex needs of communities.
39. Pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning can enhance pupil-pupil relationships; building social networks and class cohesion.
40. Research evidence shows that where families are heavily engaged in their children's education, those children tend to do well at school. There is evidence of promise. However, the evidence base for parental

involvement strategies that improve attainment is not strong,<sup>4</sup> mostly because strategies are difficult to sustain over time.<sup>5</sup>

41. All schools should, of course, be trying to build positive relationships with all families (especially for behaviour, boundaries and to encourage self-regulation), but research evidence tells us that schools should not see this as the primary vehicle for improved attainment, remembering that the greatest influence is in the classroom.
42. Further, research evidence from the University of Missouri-Columbia suggests that teacher perceptions of parents can have an impact on pupil achievement. Therefore, it is important that staff should hold all families in positive regard, even those that may find supporting their children's education more difficult.<sup>6</sup>
43. Pupils and families from disadvantaged backgrounds are perceived to be a positive part of the school community rather than an anchor on the school's attainment scores or a drain on resources. It is important to consider what gifts pupils and families bring to schools, not just get drawn into a deficit model. Schools must exercise caution around the negative labelling of families.
44. Through trusting relationships and effective channels of communication, parents and families are empowered to recognise and understand their contribution to their child's success. Getting this right in EYFS is critical for relationships throughout school.

## Evidence

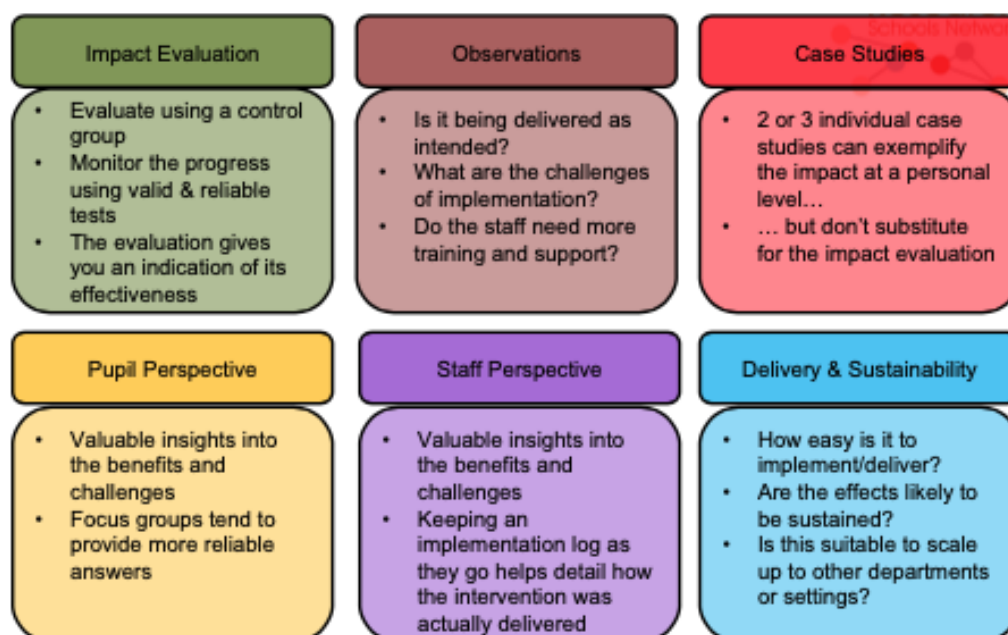
45. A commitment to research evidence to inform strategies for tackling educational disadvantage is vital. Research evidence supports the needs of the most vulnerable. Engagement with research needs to go beyond selective use of the EEF toolkit to justify decisions already made. A commitment to evidence should challenge our assumptions. Being research-informed means healthy scepticism; an understanding of limitations of studies.
46. Be wary of publication bias, where only results of trials which show positive evidence get published.
47. Schools should draw on a range of sources of research such as; Best Evidence in brief from the IEE at the University of York, Durham University and UCL IoE. It is important not to solely rely on the EEF toolkit. Also, local action research and in-school experiments can be highly valuable.
48. Research evidence and professional judgement combined leads to evidence-informed practice. For example, to improve vocabulary through ensuring children read more widely, it is critical to teach pupils

to read more effectively, rather than overly focusing on the reading environment.

## Impact Evaluation

49. Effective quality monitoring and rigorous impact evaluation are fundamental to success.
50. Schools need to take a long-term approach based on short-term dips in performance. A clear goal, with pre-determined short, medium and long term outcomes is necessary to ensure this is done well, and avoids schools 'grabbing' at short term approaches.
51. Effective evaluation is about finding out whether something works, not proving it works. We can learn a great deal from activities that are less successful. It is important to de-couple impact evaluation from accountability.
52. Dispassionate internal quality assurance is vital. Are Pupil Premium funded activities being rolled out as planned? Is professional development impacting on classroom practice? Professor Thomas Guskey's model provides a framework for doing this.<sup>7</sup>
53. Be wary of poor proxies for impact and confirmation bias, e.g. 'pupils enjoyed...'. Further, research tells us that those involved in the implementation of strategies are often poor judges about whether they have been successful.
54. Where individual pupils or groups of pupils are the focus of two or more funding streams or activities, leaders should consider how these work together to support progress. This may be best achieved through sophisticated and thoughtful provision mapping. The analysis of impact and evaluation of spend needs to reflect where different funding streams have been legitimately used together to meet complex needs.
55. The weaker the evidence base for an activity, the more important it is that there is a robust impact evaluation framework in place. The more poorly designed the evaluation framework, the more likely it will be to (possibly incorrectly) suggest that an intervention or programme has been successful.
56. Pupil voice has a critical role to play in evaluating impact. The Trust has a good track record with the use of pupil voice to critically appraise all aspects of school life. This includes hearing the voices of those pupils who might be less willing to put their voices forward.
57. Asking good questions is important: What impact does [what practice?] delivered [over how long?] have on [what outcome?] for [whom?]? What is the comparison group?
58. The table below sets out the different approaches to monitoring end evaluation that are readily available and relatively easy to implement.
59. The evaluation process should not be carried out retrospectively. The evaluation framework should be designed at the planning stage of implementation.<sup>8</sup>
60. Case studies can be highly effective for impact evaluation, but the pupils involved should be decided upon before an intervention begins, not retrospectively.

## Approaches to Evaluation



## SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as setting out to codify the features of a successful strategy and the guiding principles that bind that effective practice together, this report sets out the following recommendations for individual academies, the Trust and the Opportunity Area. However, academies,

schools and other MATs may well find these useful to consider within their own context. Recommendations are rooted in the findings from this study, but also draw on a wider evidence base around effective use of Pupil Premium.

<b>Outcomes for Academies in the Trust for Two Years (joined prior to Sept 2016)</b>		
<b>Recommendations for Schools</b>	<b>Recommendations for the Trust</b>	<b>Recommendations for Opportunity Areas</b>
Pupil Premium has to be used to prioritise recruitment, development and retention of high-quality teachers and leaders. Otherwise all other strategies are less likely to be embedded.		
The need to focus strategy where we can have the biggest influence: in the classroom first.		
Prioritise inclusive teaching strategies that maximize participation in learning. Have a commitment to curriculum equity for disadvantaged pupils, especially those that are low prior attainers. Too much of a reliance on interventions can result in a narrower curriculum entitlement for these pupils over time.		
Focus on implementing a small number of things well: staff recruitment and retention and tackling the language gap.		
Building multi-disciplinary teams was an innovative strength. Speech and language therapists/qualified social workers, expert staff who can support pupils and families allow leaders to focus on teaching and learning.		
		Promote and support system leadership based on local expertise and excellence – NOT around Ofsted grades or raw attainment.
		Promote and support Leadership development around disadvantaged pupils
	Create a proforma for strategic planning (and guidance around research evidence, rationale, proportion of money)	
		Adapt the pro forma for strategic planning and support the notion that the Pupil Premium money can be spent on improving teaching and learning; including recruitment and retention. Use the proforma to encourage a more long-term approach that focuses on the classroom.
Provide guidance and training on effective impact evaluation		
	Effective engagement and understanding of the relevant research disseminated through a bulletin – perhaps a research champion across the trust so that research informs decision making	
Research evidence can be drawn from a range of sources, not just the EEF toolkit.		
Follow up support for schools where Executive leadership feel appropriate. These should be prioritised, but not absolutely limited to schools at the earlier stages of implementing their strategies.		

	Local knowledge should be utilised. E.g. at Northmoor Academy, expertise, systems and commitment of staff and evidence informed practices to support vulnerable learners who are new to English is exceptional.
Take a more nuanced look at performance data (e.g. length of time eligible for FSM) not just 'ever 6'. Not having this suggests not using funding in a way that is proportionate to risk.	
The need to ensure all staff understand the strategy for tackling educational disadvantage and their role within it. This was more present in schools with stability of staff, and correlated with positive outcomes.	
Continue to support and facilitate school to school working on explicit evidence informed approaches to early years education in areas facing disadvantage	
	<p>To determine how an area-based approach to supporting outcomes for disadvantaged learners could reduce barriers that are not directly within schools' control, such as the availability of support services for vulnerable children</p> <p>To look more deeply at why ever6 eligibility appears to be a weaker proxy for indicating the proportion of disadvantaged learners in Oldham.</p>

## SECTION E: ACCOUNTABILITY AND ONLINE DOCUMENTATION

Accountability for the Pupil Premium starts with meeting pupil needs. Adopting an effective, long-term strategy to tackle educational disadvantage will result in improved, more robust pupil outcomes. Overly focusing on end of key stage tests means schools remain 'cohort vulnerable'. A small attainment gap can be a poor proxy for success. Accountability should be focused on the attainment and destinations of disadvantaged pupils.

Schools should be driven by need, not labels or accountability measures. Eligibly for the Pupil Premium tells us very little about pupils themselves. This is particularly important in school facing challenging circumstances. The label in itself may not always be an effective proxy for disadvantage. For example, some newly arrived families and those in low paid employment may be highly vulnerable. Schools have autonomy over how the money is spent and should direct it towards need, not towards the label.

Documentation published online must be an accurate reflection of what is happening in the school. Documentation will be of limited use to a school, or their pupils and families, if it is simply used for accountability or compliance. Instead it should be used as part of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school's strategy for tackling educational disadvantage. The document should be used and updated as part of this process and not be a one-off event.

Documentation must include:

- An explanation of the Pupil Premium Policy

- The amount of funding received for the current year (spending does not have to be broken down any more than this)
- A thorough list of barriers to learning backed up by diagnostic assessment
- A spending approach that addresses the identified barriers
- Rationale for the spending approach – with reference to robust research evidence from in and out of school
- An impact evaluation approach with short, medium and long term outcomes and accompanying success criteria
- Date of the next review of the strategy
- Information about the spending and impact on outcomes of the previous year's Pupil Premium strategy

Pupil Premium strategy documents are public and are intended to be read by families. The core purpose for their publication is accountability to families. Language used within them should demonstrate that families are held in the highest regard. For more information on Pupil Premium website documents can be found via these FAQs:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/809229/Pupil\\_Premium\\_Frequently\\_Asked\\_Questions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/809229/Pupil_Premium_Frequently_Asked_Questions.pdf)

## SECTION F: STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

### Staff Survey Analysis

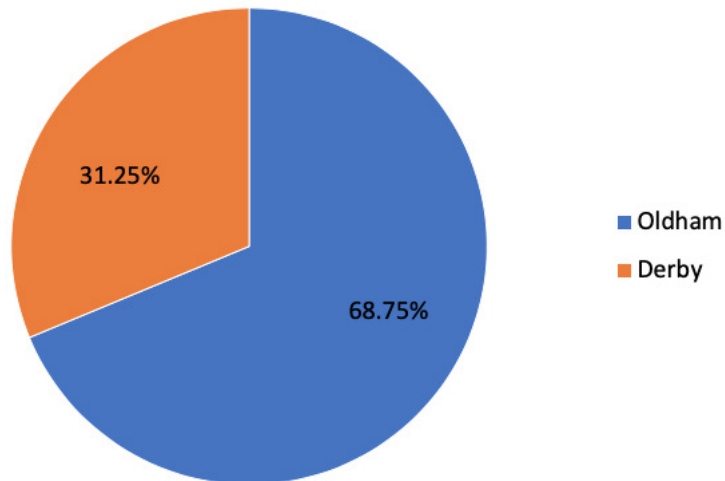
In summary:

- Where outcomes tended to be weaker, responses were more likely to focus on external factors that schools can influence less (e.g. housing, parents).
- In some schools, there was a need to better communicate that what happens in the classroom is the most effective intervention for tackling disadvantage.
- There is an overwhelming desire to get it right for disadvantaged pupils across all schools in the Trust, and people want to be involved in both planning and delivery.

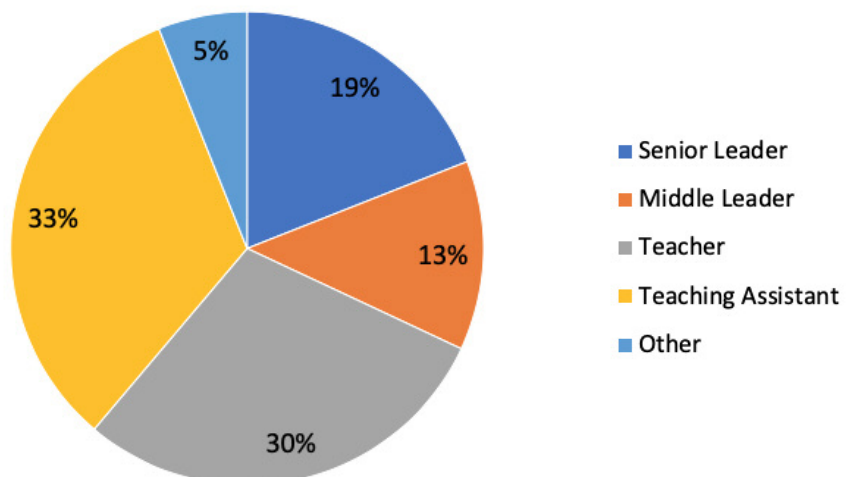
- Impact evaluation is something that needs to be a focus for the Trust.
- Staff in schools performing well were more likely to respond.
- Good communication of a school's strategy is critical.
- It would be useful to repeat this survey one year on...

Effective practice was closely linked to a commonality of understanding from staff in visits and the survey about policy, strategy and practice. Where this was less understood, respondents were more likely to focus on areas where they have less control, i.e. outside of the classroom.

#### Where Do You Work?

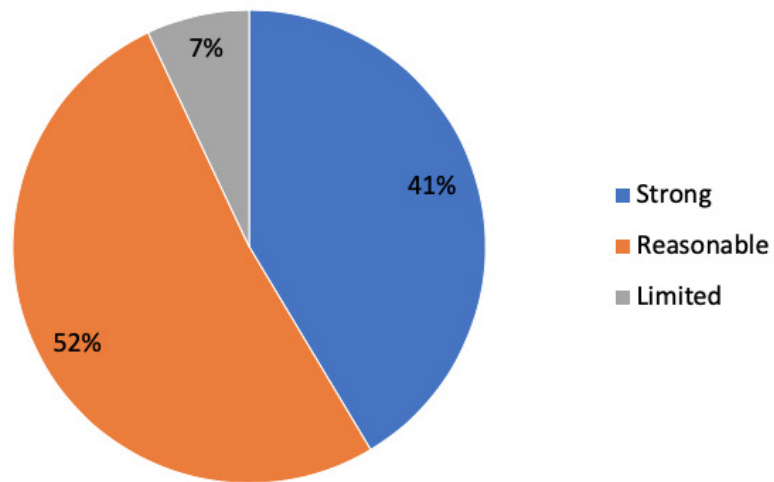


#### What is Your Role Within Your School?

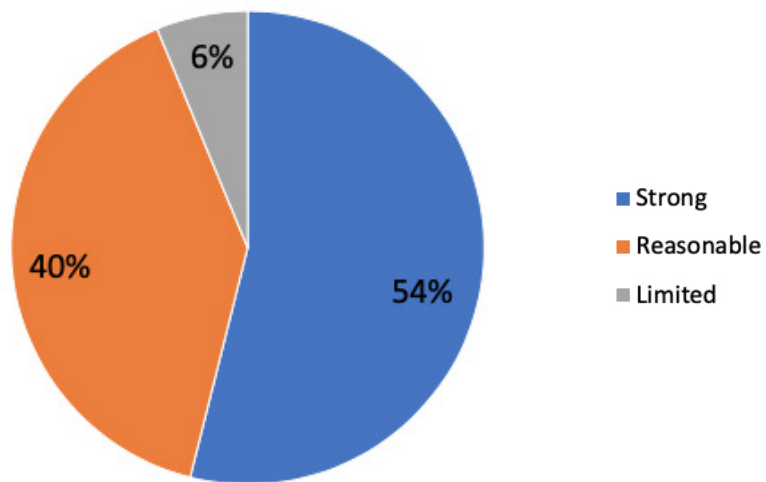




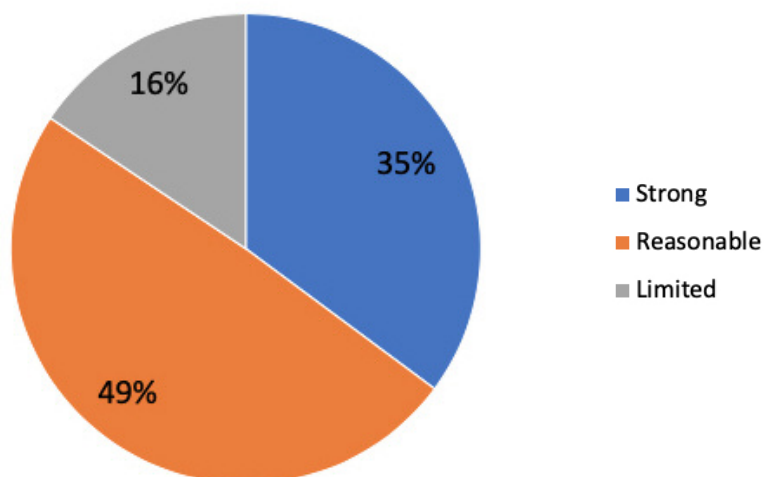
**How Would You Describe Your Understanding of the Aims, Use and Impact of the Pupil Premium in Your School?**



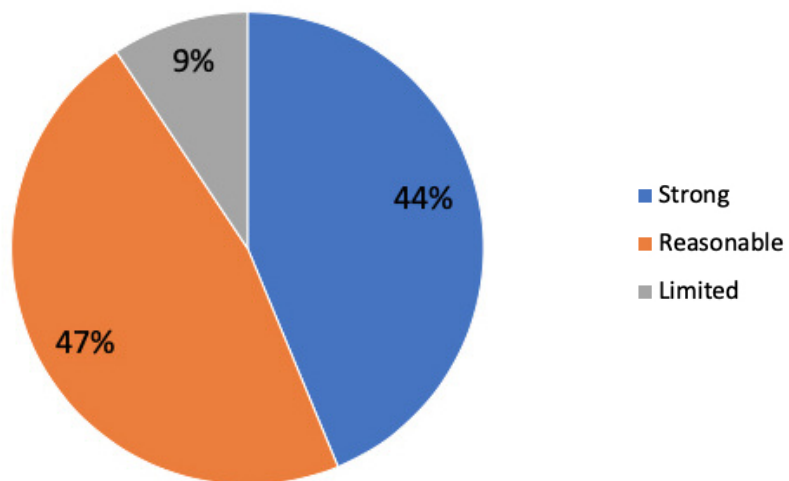
**How Would You Describe Your Understanding of the Impact of Poverty on Educational Achievement in Your Area?**



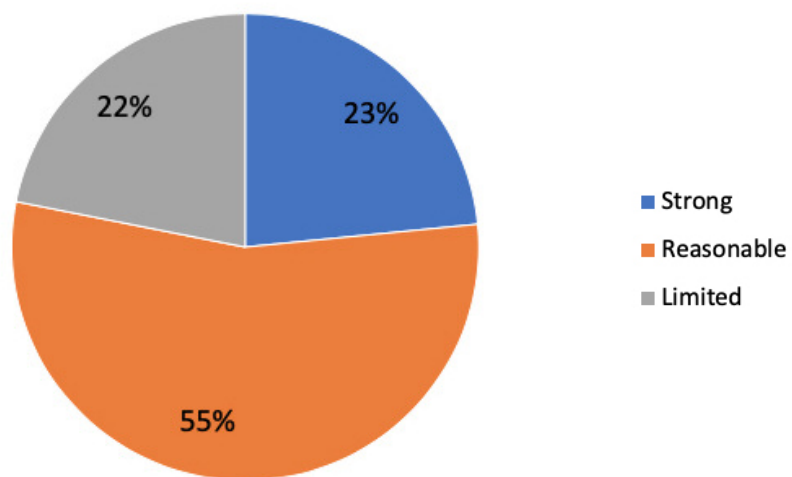
**How Would You Describe Your Understanding of the Evidence of How Best to Tackle Educational Disadvantage in Your School/Local Area?**



### How Would You Describe Your Understanding of Your School's Strategy to Improve Outcomes for Disadvantaged Pupils?



### How Would You Describe Your Understanding of How to Evaluate the Impact of Efforts to Tackle Educational Disadvantage?



### In your opinion, what are the best ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners in your school?

#### Notes

Popular responses include:

- Real-life enrichment experiences / extra-curricular opportunities (36%) – ‘opportunities that [learners] would not ordinarily have access to; socially and educationally’ (ID 100068555)
- Increased parental engagement / education / communication (34%) – ‘working closely with home to create a positive outlook on school and learning’ (ID100112052)

- High Quality / Quality First Teaching (26%) – ‘improvement and provision of Quality First Teaching and gaining consistency with this’ (ID 100146400)
- High expectations / raise aspirations / build self-esteem (20%) – ‘children should be encouraged to believe that they can achieve anything and be given the resources and self-belief that will enable them to reach their goals’ (ID 105901014)
- Greater focus on language (15%) – ‘enhance speaking, listening and reading ... to ensure children are more literate’ (ID 94539240)

Specific responses include:

- ‘Improve deployment of TA’s to ensure this is highly effective and maximises progress’ (ID 94539240)



*'Discuss with other schools within the area what is already being done successfully to support pupils and compare this to current practice'* (ID 100044219)

*'Identify academic struggles and incorporate studies into before and after school clubs'* (ID 100046356)

*'Recruitment and retention of quality staff. Stability of teachers in particular'* (ID 100061656)

*'Be open and willing to listen to the children when, and if, they want to talk'* (ID 100277908)

*'Well-specified, well-supported and well-implemented interventions and structures'* (ID 100963659)

*'More communication between leadership, teachers and TA's'* (ID 105901097)

## **In your opinion, what are the best ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners in your local area?**

### **Notes**

Popular responses include:

- Building relationships with parents (52%) – *'support for families to break the barriers between them and the education system'* ID 100330002

- Investment in local services / community links (18%) – *'free access to the leisure centre for children / outreach from youth clubs / a purpose for the children'* (ID 1070433320)
- High expectations / raise aspirations (13%) – *'break the cycle of low aspirations within the community, enabling children to access enriching education, leading to great opportunities in life'* (ID 105900601) and *'challenge perceptions that children from Oldham don't go to University'* (ID 100146337)
- Funding the basics (e.g. breakfast club) (8%) – *'address the immediate needs of the children and families; school uniform, lunch, warm coats, shoes, toiletries, food over the holidays'* (ID 107043332)

Specific responses include:

*'More opportunity to develop and go beyond 'the estate''* (ID 100077996)

*'Look after [pupils'] mental health by giving more brain breaks'* (ID 100213393)

*'Use figures within the local area [...so] children can learn from positive role models'* (ID 100246752)

*'Continual CPD for teachers and support staff'* (ID 107043332)

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## **SECTION G: CASE STUDIES**

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### **Wendy Wheldon – Drawing in External Expertise in Derby**

#### **EYFS support**

The work has focussed on improving the quality of teaching and learning in EYFS and helping to close the gap, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, as quickly as possible.

EYFS offers a great opportunity to give all pupils the very best start to their education, and therefore their life chances. When pupils start nursery or Reception, they are often not at age related expectations due to lack of opportunities for development rather than any cognitive issue. By providing opportunities with rigour and high expectations pupils can often catch up very quickly and enter statutory schooling at expected levels; from there they have great chances to continue a successful trajectory, as demonstrated by the work of Professor Kathy Sylva. The work has focused on four main areas:

- A balance of direct teaching, group learning and play based consolidation with a key focus on reading (based on Bold Beginnings, Ofsted 2017)

- Provision which maximises the opportunities for consolidation and practice of key skills, particularly communication, language and literacy, through play
- A focus on rhyme and song, using the work of Tina Bruce, to impact on cognition and motor skills, by the implementation of a discrete programme using a range of finger rhymes, action rhymes and moving songs
- A focus on improving parental engagement, based on much research (particularly Charles Desforges) which evidences the importance of parental engagement and encouragement as a key marker of pupil success

### **Northmoor Academy – Supporting Early Language Development**

Northmoor Academy is a three-form entry primary academy and opened as a single-form entry primary academy in September 2016.

During the 2017/18 academic year, 450 children were on roll. At some point, only 150 of those children had completed a full year of education at Northmoor. In the academic year 2018/19 the academy continues to grow towards a number on roll of 540 plus Nursery. Figures as

of January 2019 show that 51% of children are new to the UK since September 2016.

The Academy takes a four-part approach to supporting early language development.

## 1. Beginning English Base

The purpose of the Beginning English Base is to:

- Acquire social language skills and build self-esteem so that the children become confident, independent learners who can communicate effectively
- Introduce children to the essential vocabulary needed to function within a school setting and to access an age appropriate curriculum
- Develop early reading skills including 'concepts about print' and reading for pleasure
- Secure phonological awareness for reading and writing
- Begin to orally construct, build and then write simple sentences in English
- Teach key mathematical concepts including knowledge of numbers and the number system
- Enable pupils to learn the mathematical vocabulary needed to verbalise their mathematical knowledge and understanding
- Equip the children with the foundations of the national curriculum so that they are ready for the next stage of their learning

The provision is suitable for up to 25 children with at least two members of staff. There are some opportunities for whole group teaching but most teaching occurs in small groups while children have access to continuous provision. The provision is designed to challenge the children in their independent learning and to also allow for pupils to apply their newly learned English skills within the classroom context. The academy recognises the need for children to continue their academic development in their first language and to also enable the development of friendships with peers.

It is intended that children will access this provision for a maximum of 8 weeks; however, this will be based upon pupil need and professional judgement through weekly team meetings and discussions with the EAL Lead. Formative assessment and pupil progress discussions will inform this process.

The timetable reflects the needs of the children. The majority of teaching will focus on the basic skills of communication, reading and writing so that English acquisition is accelerated and children can access age appropriate classes as quickly as possible. The day includes an extended dinner time (one hour) for the

teaching of key social skills, an extended playtime (30 mins) for the teaching of play and friendship skills and regular breaks throughout the day.

## 2. Developing English Base

The purpose of the Developing English Base is to:

- Enhance social language skills and promote high self-esteem so that children become confident, independent learners
- Introduce pupils to subject-related vocabulary to enable access to an age appropriate curriculum
- Continue to develop and embed the skills of communication, reading and writing with increasingly complex language structures
- Apply phonological awareness to reading and writing
- Teach the subject specific mathematical vocabulary needed to reason and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding
- Equip the children with the basic knowledge and skills of the national curriculum so that they are ready for the transition to age appropriate classes
- Provide opportunities for children to be immersed with their peers through a variety of activities

The provision is suitable for up to 25 children with two members of staff. There are short whole class teaching sessions followed by small group teaching and independent learning activities. Children have English and Maths sessions on a daily basis with a thematic approach to learning in the afternoon to support their transferrable skills, deepen their understanding of language and have the opportunity to apply it purposefully.

It is intended that children will access this provision for a maximum of 8 weeks, with the final part of the placement supporting the transition to an age appropriate class. The timetable reflects the needs of the children. The majority of teaching will focus on the basic skills of communication, reading and writing so that English acquisition is accelerated and children can access age appropriate classes as quickly as possible.

## 3. Transition to age related classes

The purpose of the 'Welcome Hub' is to prepare children for the age-related National Curriculum. The academy acknowledges that this will happen at different rates depending on the child's experiences, including prior schooling, and so the journey will be bespoke to the individual needs of the child. The 'Welcome Hub' Team including Leaders, Teachers and Teaching Assistants will meet on a regular basis to discuss the progress of pupils within the bases and determine next steps. This meeting includes

professional conversations regarding the achievements and needs of the individual pupils.

Once a child is ready to move to the age-related class a transition plan will be developed. This will include:

- Information sharing with the receiving class teacher
- Discussion with the child and their parents
- Visits to the receiving class supported by a staff member
- Induction sessions
- Mentor support
- Regular check-ins by the INA Lead

It is important to recognise that at first the transition to class may result in regression for the child and that the transition period may need to be extended to ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

#### 4. Interventions and Ongoing Support

High quality teaching has the greatest impact on pupil attainment and achievement and we aim to meet the needs of all pupils through a language rich, structured curriculum in effective learning environments. However, it is recognised that some children will need additional schemes and bespoke interventions that help to accelerate their progress and ensure that they meet their full potential.

### Westwood Academy – Creating a Whole School Approach

The starting point is for all staff to understand the context of our Academy well and for all staff to identify the barriers to learning for children and barriers to engagement for parents/carers. Due to changes in the demographic of children and families, this is done at least annually so that staff understand how to better meet learners' needs.

This context shapes provision in the following ways:

- **Timetabling** – that ensures that punctuality does not impact on key learning (eg. Phonics/reading) and provide opportunities to develop and apply key skills in non-core lessons.
- **Systems** – consistent approaches to behaviour management, selecting and adapting teaching and learning strategies that reflect learners' needs and address barriers to learning (not just buying 'off the shelf' products). Keep the best and learn from the best.

Senior leaders at Westwood Academy also strive to:

- **Implement chosen strategies well** – provide ongoing professional development, anticipate difficulties, be prepared to adapt to meet learners' needs and plan for effective implementation to take time. Staff need to feel supported by SLT through CPD.

- **Communicate key messages regularly** – 'If you can't say it, you can't write it' is key to meeting the needs of our learners, but needs reinforcing so that staff understand its paramount importance. We aim to be concise so that staff are not over-loaded by too many 'priorities'. We will improve outcomes by doing X, Y and Z.

- **Monitor and evaluate** – Senior leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly in order to shape provision and to support all staff to better meet the needs of individual learners. We have developed a culture where leaders are open to challenge and our SLT meetings involve regular reflection on whether our whole Academy approaches are impactful.

There is a belief that our high expectations of all learners to progress well from their starting points – as the driver for raised attainment – is key in improving outcomes for PPG learners. The key skills and knowledge acquired at Westwood Academy will support effective learning at High School and into further education.

Above all, it is not accepted that being 'Pupil Premium' is a determiner of future success. All children can be successful in their future studies, the world of work and in their lives beyond Westwood Academy.

### Tamara Rolfs – Executive Leadership, Derby

#### Executive Leadership and Strategic Deployment of Staff

Bringing the needs of disadvantaged learners to the forefront of our development planning, whilst at the same time raising expectations for all, has been a primary strategy to address gaps in standards. There has been a focus on developing leadership to ensure approaches to teaching and learning are informed by research and are well implemented. Senior leaders at both Lakeside Primary Academy and Alvaston Junior Academy have taken advantage of attending Opportunity Area funded programmes from Derby Research School, including a Pupil Premium and Leading Learning programme. In addition, a recently appointed Trust Senior Leader has led trust-wide collaborative leader professional development focused on supporting teachers with planning high quality lessons.

The investment in CPD for all staff aims to build a workforce who have the skills and confidence to plan and deliver engaging, high quality lessons that meet the needs of all our children. This year this approach has led to an increased focus on communication skills and spoken language across the curriculum.

A 'Persistent, Positive, Praise' initiative has also been launched by one Head of Academy to ensure the work with families most in need has a positive impact on learning.

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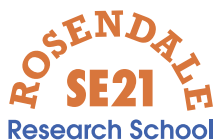
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