

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****ATTAINMENT OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN TOPIC GROUP  
WENESDAY, 23 MAY 2018 10.00AM****BACKGROUND PAPER FOR ATTAINMENT OF DISADVANTAGED PUPILS AT  
KEY STAGE 4 TOPIC GROUP**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide members with information in relation to the educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils relative to their peers at Key Stage 4
- 1.2 To describe the context within which strategies are being adopted and steps being taken by schools and various agencies in Hertfordshire to improve outcomes.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The scrutiny was agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 29 September 2017. The scrutiny's objective is *'to examine educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils relative to their peers at Key Stage 4, and the steps being taken by various agencies in Hertfordshire to improve this'*.
- 2.2 Members will be seeking information to address the following:
  1. *Is the Council satisfactorily discharging its responsibilities towards maintained schools as regards attainment of disadvantaged pupils?*
  2. *Is the performance of disadvantaged pupils at Academies satisfactory?*
  3. *Are there further steps the Council could take in this regard*

**Definition of disadvantage**

- 2.3 The term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used by the Department for Education (DfE) to refer to pupils who are:
  - Eligible for free schools meals (FSM) in the last six years; or
  - Looked after continuously for 1 day or more; or
  - Adopted from care on or after 30 December 2005, or left in care under a special guardianship order or a residence order
- 2.4 For the purposes of this scrutiny we have followed the same definition to ensure comparability and availability of data, and because this is the measure used by DfE when discussing social mobility and educational attainment. However, it is the case that eligibility for FSM does not wholly capture

“disadvantage” and relates back to how eligibility is defined, and how it changes over time as the recent debate round the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit indicates. Disadvantaged pupils are supported by Government funding called the Pupil Premium Grant, and schools are required to set out publicly how they use this grant and the pupil impact.

### Measures of educational attainment

- 2.5 There have been considerable changes in recent years to measures of educational attainment, both as far as pupils and concerned, and as applied to assessing the performance of institutions.
- 2.6 The central measures used by Government at Key Stage 4 (KS4) are Attainment 8 (A8) and Progress 8 (P8), alongside the percentage of pupils achieving grade 4 (a standard pass) and grade 5 (a strong pass) in both English and Mathematics at GCSE-level, and the proportion of pupils gaining the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).
- 2.7 Attainment 8 measures the average achievement of pupils in up to 8 qualifications including English (double weighted if the combined English qualification, or both language and literature are taken), maths (double weighted), three further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and three further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list.
- 2.8 4.11 GCSE scores are now linear (all assessments are normally taken at the end of the course) with a grading scale from 1 to 9. Due to the reforms it is not possible to compare test and examination results from 2016 onwards with previous years.
- 2.9 Progress 8 aims to capture the progress pupils make from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4. It compares pupils’ achievement – their Attainment 8 score – with the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils nationally who had a similar starting point (or ‘prior attainment’), calculated using assessment results from the end of primary school. Progress 8 is a relative measure; therefore the national average Progress 8 score for mainstream schools is zero. When including pupils at special schools the national average is not zero as Progress 8 scores for special schools are calculated using Attainment 8 estimates based on pupils in mainstream schools.
- 2.10 Further detail on changes to the assessment system can be viewed here [\(LINK\)](#) in a paper prepared for the House of Commons Library.
- 2.11 Further information on performance across Hertfordshire against various attainment and progress measures can be viewed in a recent report to Education Panel here [\(LINK\)](#). However, highlights are described below and will be covered in more detail in presentation and Q&A format to the Scrutiny Panel.

- 2.12 It should be noted that the main measures by DfE for schools – A8 and P8 – are not particularly meaningful to individual pupils, who are concerned with actual results in key subjects. However, they bring together in a manageable and comprehensible form a wide range of performance and contextual information so as to support discussion of how schools and authorities’ perform in the round.

### The “Attainment Gap”

- 2.13 A concern of the County Council and the DfE is the gap in attainment and progress between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Some data on this will be considered at the Scrutiny. However, from the perspective of individual disadvantaged pupils what matters most is the absolute level of their performance. This is considered below. Data on the “Gap” can be seen in Section 10 of the report referred to in para 2.11.

### Summary data: Attainment 8

- 2.14 In Summer 2016 approximately 12,400 Hertfordshire pupils sat their GCSEs. Of these, 16% (1961) were “disadvantaged”, using the DfE’s terminology and 84% (10,400) were not.
- 2.15 It can be seen from the summary data below that there is a clear difference in the relative performance of dis-advantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. This has been the case, using various different ways of assessing performance, for many years. In summary, non-disadvantaged pupils in Hertfordshire do very well, better than in any other large authority. However, dis-advantaged pupils do slightly worse than the national average.

Attainment 8, non-disadvantaged – 10,400 pupils/ 84%

- National rank 23 out of 150 local authorities, Quartile A
- Improving relative to national and stat neighbours

Attainment 8, for 1961 pupils/16%

- National Rank 84, marginal decline

- 2.16 A similar pattern applies for attainment of the EBacc – 27<sup>th</sup> nationally for non-disadvantaged pupils and 52<sup>nd</sup> for disadvantaged – though on that measure disadvantaged pupils in Hertfordshire do better on average than their counterparts elsewhere.

### Responsibilities of the County Council for standards in schools

- 2.17 This is an area where responsibilities are not clear, and have changed over time. At the highest, most general level, a local authority “must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards”. This

responsibility derives from the 1996 Education Act. However, when it comes to what this means in practice the situation is less clear.

- 2.18 So far as Maintained Schools are concerned, LAs retain considerable responsibilities in terms of standards. Two years ago, the direction of government policy was towards local authorities “stepping back” from any responsibility for school improvement for their schools and funding related to this was withdrawn by DfE. Since then, however, there appears to be a greater recognition of a continuing role. In Hertfordshire, we have continued to take very seriously our responsibility for standards in maintained schools, and have organised activity and resources in support of that through our continuing arrangements with HfL (Herts for Learning). This activity, though, is no longer funded by the Council itself but through “de-delegated” funding from maintained schools’ own budgets.
- 2.19 As far as Academies are concerned, the Government’s position as set out in the Schools Causing Concern guidance is that *“Local authorities should focus their activity on the schools they maintain rather than academies which are accountable to the Secretary of State. However, should a local authority have any concerns about an academy’s standards, leadership or governance, they should raise these directly with the relevant RSC”*.
- 2.20 However, in Hertfordshire as with other local authorities we have chosen to seek to continue to support and promote the quality of education in Hertfordshire Academies, through sustaining and enhancing strong relationships with a range of local partners, and working with HfL to ensure strong local school improvement capacity is available both from HfL itself and from local schools.

#### Location of disadvantaged pupils

- 2.21 Most secondary schools in Hertfordshire are now Academies. Whilst a relatively-higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend maintained schools than attend academies, the large majority 71% of disadvantaged pupils undergo their secondary education in Academies, as set out in the data below.

Academies: 71%

Maintained schools: 29%

- 2.22 Within those totals, most disadvantaged pupils attend Good or Outstanding schools, and more than half attend Good or Outstanding Academies. Our work to improve the attainment of those pupils needs to reflect this:

Academies: Good or outstanding: 57%

Academies: RI/Inadequate 14%

Maintained: Good or outstanding 17%

Maintained RI/Inadequate: 12%

### **3. SUMMARY**

- 3.1 Set out above is contextual information to allow the Scrutiny Panel to consider and challenge the approaches which will be set out by council officers, schools and other partners on the day.