



# Narrowing the Gaps

Leadership for impact





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## Introduction

...generations of low and middle-income young people will miss out unless we do more to close the educational attainment gap... For reasons of economic progress, we need a second wave of mobility. But, more than that, this is a question of basic justice. A talent unfulfilled is not just an opportunity cost. It is an opportunity lost.

**(Alan Milburn MP, chair of the Government's panel on social mobility, July 2009)**

Children entitled to free school meals (FSM) encompass the full spectrum of needs and backgrounds in the school community, including white and minority ethnic pupils, looked after children, gifted and talented (G&T) children and those with special educational needs (SEN). Each child in this diverse group is an individual; they need adults who take the time to understand and personalise provision, through quality first teaching (QFT), to help them to overcome barriers to learning through the systematic application of what works well. Many do well but too many do not; there is an urgent national priority to unlock the potential of these children and to narrow gaps between those entitled to FSM and their peers.

This publication focuses on what leaders and managers can do to accelerate the progress of this group of pupils to narrow attainment gaps. It has a particular focus on those entitled to FSM but can equally be used to address other gaps.

Successful schools are single-minded in narrowing gaps. They:

- use data to identify gaps and to make them visible, pinpoint pupils at risk of underperforming and challenge those whose progress needs to accelerate
- accept no excuses
- take time to understand the needs of each pupil, know what works best for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and apply it consistently and relentlessly
- evaluate, celebrate and share success.

More widely, effective schools:

- recognise and unlock potential, including identification of G&T pupils eligible for FSM
- intervene early and effectively, track progress and change approaches where necessary
- focus on transition, one-to-one tuition and progressive development of language and literacy skills
- search out the most effective ways of engaging parents and families, and listen to pupils and engage them in sustained dialogue about learning.

*Narrowing the gaps: leadership for impact* is aimed at headteachers, senior leaders in primary and secondary schools, secondary subject leaders, year leaders and primary curriculum leaders. It may also be useful to governors with responsibility for FSM, narrowing the gaps (NtG) and/or standards and effectiveness.

These are not new or different approaches but they require leadership teams and staff across schools to ensure that there is a sharp focus on disadvantage. The first step is to ensure that every member of staff in every classroom knows which pupils are disadvantaged and takes clear and accountable action to accelerate progress to narrow gaps. This is everyone's responsibility.

## Using the materials

The materials provide a structure and workshops including:

- a summary of good practice drawn from recent Ofsted reports with discussion questions
- commentary on school culture and its central importance, together with a workshop for staff development

- an overview of Strategies for success – four key areas where effective practice narrows gaps and, for each, a summary of key actions to secure improvement
- a NtG pupil impact workshop to focus staff on what they currently do and what else can be done to narrow gaps.

## Starting points

*Narrowing the gaps: leadership for impact* is best used flexibly to reflect local need and context – there is no need to use the materials in sequence. A good starting point is, however, a review of school culture. An introduction is available on page 6 and a 50 minute staff development Workshop 1 (page 15). This can be used for CPD sessions in full staff meetings or, in larger schools, with subject or year teams.

Evaluation of current provision can also provide a challenging starting point or, alternatively, builds on work on culture. Workshop 2 (page 18) involves two one-hour CPD sessions to take you straight into discussion of the nature and impact of the school's work to meet the needs of selected pupils. It provides a framework to evaluate what is in place and agree next steps following review of the progress of a small group of pupils in school, through discussion of classwork, tracking data, evidence of dialogue with pupils and lesson observation.

If you intend to use this document to engage senior leaders, middle leaders or all staff in building consensus and commitment to narrow gaps, we suggest you begin with the summary of good practice on page 4, then move on to Strategies for success (page 8). This section invites practical review of what the school is doing and what else might be done. It provides a good resource for the senior FSM/NtG lead to facilitate discussion with the leadership team, subject/year teams or to guide work of an enquiry group.

For governors and school improvement partners (SIPs) discussion of this document may be helpful in exploring how narrowing gaps contributes to wider school improvement and agreement of key actions and accountability for improvement.

## Learning from good practice

From research into good practice in, for example, schools involved with the Extra Mile Project and those reported by Ofsted in *Twelve outstanding secondary schools – excelling against the odds*, and the companion report *Twenty outstanding primary schools*, effective senior leaders are identified as key players in NtG and improving attainment for all.

Where there is effective leadership and management, senior leaders:

- communicate their vision and connect with all in the school; children, teachers, support staff, parents, carers and governors. They provide the drive and commitment to motivate staff. They strive to make it happen and model what matters. They talk and listen to all; pupils and staff.
- create a culture where success is a right and therefore an expectation, articulating values and challenging shadow cultures; often small groups of people in school who continue to espouse different values and expectations. The culture and values are embedded in every part of the school. They are understood and explicitly shared with new staff and children as they join the school.
- identify a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) to be the NtG senior lead. They ensure clarity about roles and accountabilities at all levels. They maintain consistent focus on the key underachieving group of FSM pupils.
- establish and place high value on an effective tracking system which provides timely, regular and accurate feedback on pupils' progress that drives provision for learners in the classroom.
- create effective links across phases. They ensure that transfer and transition is effective. Records include all information about FSM pupils.

- engage staff in appropriate CPD. Staff systematically develop skills and understanding to support FSM pupils and narrow the gaps.

The Ofsted report *Twelve outstanding secondary schools – excelling against the odds* provides an important insight into further factors that can help to narrow gaps.

The outstanding schools in the sample succeed for the following reasons:

- They excel at what they do, not just occasionally but for a high proportion of the time.
- They prove constantly that disadvantage need not be a barrier to achievement, that speaking English as an additional language can support academic success and that schools really can be learning communities.
- They put students first, invest in their staff and nurture their communities.
- They have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently and never relaxed.
- They fulfil individual potential through providing outstanding teaching, rich opportunities for learning, and encouragement and support for each student.
- They are highly inclusive, having complete regard for the educational progress, personal development and well-being of every student.
- Their achievements do not happen by chance, but by highly reflective, carefully planned and implemented strategies which serve these schools well in meeting the many challenges which obstruct the path to success.
- They operate with a very high degree of internal consistency.
- They are constantly looking for ways to improve further.
- They have outstanding and well-distributed leadership.<sup>1</sup>

### Questions for review

**Which elements do we have in place already?**

**What evidence do we have for this?**

**What is missing in our current work?**

**Where do we need to improve?**

1 Twelve outstanding secondary schools – excelling against the odds (Ofsted, 2009)

## No excuses: developing a culture for success

'Culture is the shared beliefs and values of a school: what people agree is true and what people agree is right. However, such beliefs become entrenched and can persist after changes in the school's environment can render them irrelevant or harmful. Culture is therefore both a resource and a risk.'<sup>2</sup>

Successful leaders focus on the central place of teaching and learning but they are also in the business of developing the relationships and conditions for success. Culture, in its broadest sense, is popularly defined as 'how we do things round here'. There is no escape from it. It shapes what we think, how we behave and what we value. For many schools, this is the starting point for work to narrow gaps.

Consciously or otherwise, leaders and managers develop cultures around them. They may articulate what they believe is important but their behaviours show what really matters to them and are modelled by others across the organisation. What is tacitly accepted or ignored also impacts on the behaviours of others. Effective leaders model a strong and consistent alignment between what is said and what is done.

Schools are often clear about their values and beliefs. The most effective ensure that these carry through to the behaviours of every member of staff and every pupil. Shadow cultures or tacit belief systems are systematically challenged.

Culture is particularly powerful in relation to NtG as it is likely to have the greatest impact on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. If a commitment to success for all is undermined by shadow cultures – for example, groups of people or teams which label pupils entitled to FSM as less able, undeserving or lacking commitment, these pupils are likely to be further disadvantaged. By contrast, a culture which insists that everybody values individuals and personal opportunity, builds self-belief and focuses on the core business of learning, is likely to increase success.

The explicit development of a culture conducive to success is a key responsibility of all headteachers and senior leaders. Indeed, without this attention, action for improvement is likely to founder. Workshop 1 (page 15) provides activities which focus on the particular challenges and importance of school culture for disadvantaged pupils. It is designed to help schools reflect on the culture they explicitly or tacitly develop and consider how this interacts with the cultures of pupils and local community.

Overleaf we have also set out the principles underpinning the work of the National Strategies to narrow gaps, along with comments and references. School leaders can also use this as a stimulus to staff to articulate their principles for narrowing gaps or, alternatively, ask staff to identify resonances and dissonances – the activities that support the principles and those which appear to conflict with them.

<sup>2</sup> Provided by kind permission of Hay Group © 2004

## Principles

<p>NtG is <b>everyone's responsibility</b> and can be delivered through mainstreamed action and a common vocabulary.</p>	<p>This is a fundamental commitment and high-impact strategies to support SLTs in NtG are explored throughout this guidance.</p>
<p><b>Good teaching</b> can (and does) narrow gaps through personalised provision linked with effective planning, Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), good pedagogy and appropriate intervention.</p>	<p>Materials are available on the National Strategies website to support all schools in the development of QFT and appropriate pedagogy – follow Leadership and then School improvement: <a href="http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies">www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies</a></p>
<p>The engagement of <b>school and local authority (LA) leaders</b> is fundamental – school leadership is second in importance only to the quality of teaching.</p>	<p>This is addressed in detail in this guidance on leadership and management and its associated resources and links.</p>
<p>NtG is an integral part of the <b>Every Child Matters</b> agenda and needs to include wider strategies including family and parental involvement (fathers, mothers and carers) as well as home and community learning, all focused on raising achievements and promoting high aspiration.</p>	<p>Various National Strategies resources and the DCSF website materials are identified in the Resources section on page 14 of this document. Configuration of leadership and management to provide strong links with other agencies is vital.</p>
<p>A <b>no excuses</b> culture must prevail, supported by a relentless focus on visibility, learning and progress drawing on what we know works well.</p>	<p>The culture of the school and that of the community it serves is a very significant factor. This guidance includes a workshop to investigate cultures in depth.</p>

## Questions for review

**Which principles match with our beliefs?**

**Are there any we disagree with?**

**From our school perspective, are there any others we need to add?**

**Where do we need to improve?**

## Strategies for success

The four quadrants below illustrate the sequence of actions schools need to take if they are to narrow gaps. They can be used to describe practice and also as a template for evaluation. See pages 9 to 13 to explore each area in detail. Workshop 2 (page 18) uses the quadrants to inform review of selected pupils' learning, attitudes and progress.

### Using the four quadrants

This section sets out the key actions leaders need to take to ensure effective leadership and management to narrow gaps.

Narrowing the gaps: Strategies for success	
<p><b>Know the gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse data and identify gaps (FSM, G&amp;T, SEN, Black and minority ethnic, gender)</li> <li>Understand the gaps</li> <li>Make gaps visible – identify groups/pupils in school now</li> <li>Promote use of data</li> <li>Build data confidence</li> </ul>	<p><b>Celebrate success!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrate/promote gap-narrowing</li> <li>Capture and share what works well</li> <li>Gain a positive Report Card</li> <li>Achieve successful Ofsted outcomes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Narrow the gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take action to accelerate pupils' progress</li> <li>Focus on QFT and personalised planning to overcome barriers</li> <li>Be clear about what works (specialist pedagogy)</li> <li>Provide intervention where it is needed (e.g. one-to-one tuition, Every Child a Reader)</li> <li>Work with parents/carers and families</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mind the gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review tracking data for each child to confirm impact or change approaches</li> <li>Make timely use of assessment (APP)</li> <li>Use challenge from SIPs, LAs and governors to sharpen focus</li> <li>Focus relentlessly on gap-narrowing</li> <li>Aim for stretch targets</li> </ul>

The questions set out below can be used to structure discussion of each stage and inform planning for improvement.

### Questions for review

**What are we doing already?**

**Is it working?**

**How do we know?**

**What else needs to be done, by whom and when?**

## Know the gaps

The first stage of the cycle requires secure data analysis to identify target groups of underperforming, disadvantaged pupils including G&T pupils, looked after children and minority ethnic groups.

To secure this, leaders and managers have to:

- use historic data to identify patterns that repeat themselves year after year and that need intervention in relation to pupil groups, teachers, subjects or courses
- test these patterns against live data, tracking pupils in school now
- drive analysis down to groups and individual pupils, to target action to support improvement.

Through this process, schools are able to identify target groups and draw up a list of pupils in each class, subject and/or year whose progress needs to accelerate if gaps are to narrow. This requires schools to:

- **analyse and evaluate** – identify groups and list underperforming, disadvantaged pupils
- **agree priorities** – determine what needs to be done to accelerate progress
- **set objectives** – agree progress targets for individual pupils and underperforming groups.

Detailed guidance on this process and how to use data effectively is available in the National Strategies publication *Narrowing the gaps: from data analysis to impact – the golden thread*. To access this content visit the National Strategies web area ([www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)) and search using the reference 00792-2009PDF-EN-01. Data workshops and e-learning materials are also available for download to provide tools to review and strengthen approaches to data analysis, including effective use of interactive RAISEonline.

## Six key actions

1. Complete a regular analysis of attainment, including pupil tracking data –  
Use historic data to be clear which groups have underachieved (by FSM, subject, year, gender, ethnicity, teacher) and identify and complete a comparative review of live tracking data for similar groups in the school.
2. Evaluate the results of the analysis –  
Identify and discuss likely causes and effects with subject and curriculum leaders, class teachers and/or tutors.
3. Increase visibility and sharpen focus –  
Identify specific progress groups and individuals, ensure every teacher knows and can tell you which pupils are eligible for FSM and, in particular, those who need to accelerate their progress if gaps are to be narrowed.
4. For each pupil, agree clear success criteria to inform monitoring and review. Ensure that all staff are aware of gaps and their responsibility and accountability for narrowing them –  
Targets and outcomes for each of the target group of underachieving FSM pupils are agreed and understood by all. They provide a focus later for assessing progress against tracking data and judging success.
5. Provide effective professional development for staff –  
CPD offered includes analysis of data and its use in tracking and improving performance.
6. Engage and empower governors –  
Governors are briefed on the NtG agenda, the data analysis that has been completed and the implications for the school. Data is checked against the self-evaluation form (SEF), challenged and confirmed through governors and SIPs.

## Narrow the gaps

Explicit, focused and effective action is the hallmark of stage two. Once the targeted pupils have been identified, the school should:

- establish what is likely to make most difference for each pupil in accelerating progress to narrow the gaps
- ensure they receive QFT
- engage targeted pupils in a dialogue about their learning and progress and act on what they say
- be clear about their barriers to learning and, where appropriate, design personalised intervention to overcome them
- identify who will lead and be accountable for the accelerated progress of the identified pupils and how progress will be monitored and evaluated.

Consistency and quality, a sharp focus on improving pedagogy, action to reduce variation between subjects and development of a shared understanding of what makes most difference in helping pupils overcome barriers to learning, are key leadership activities here.

## Seven key actions

1. Place a high premium on QFT and emphasise that effective action to narrow gaps begins with children's learning and progress in lessons.
  - Deploy the most effective teachers to support pupils with lowest attainment.
  - Expect teachers to know their pupils well, identify potential barriers to learning of FSM pupils and plan to maximise their progress.
  - Provide appropriate and timely support when lack of progress is evident.
  - Ensure subject and senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and the impact of interventions.
  - Build review and sharing of good practice in planning for progression for these pupils as a regular feature of line management and staff/department or year meetings.
2. Put in place timely and appropriate interventions for underperforming pupils and monitor the difference they make.
  - Identify, allocate, manage and evaluate support for targeted children.
  - Ensure middle and senior leaders keep an overview of interventions and that they are aligned, appropriate and effective.
  - Use intervention early and recognise language and literacy barriers faced by some disadvantaged pupils, from early support for reading, writing, speaking and listening through to explicit teaching of thinking skills and academic language.
  - Analyse use of interventions and, in particular, one-to-one tuition, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and looked after children have at least their share.
3. Engage pupils in helping to improve their learning.
  - Establish a purposeful dialogue with FSM pupils targeted for accelerated progress so they know what is expected from them and are clear about planned support and personal targets. In turn, ask about their interests and experiences of learning and give feedback to their teacher(s).

4. Make effective use of tutor support.
  - Review and confirm the approaches you use to ensure target pupils are supported and feel a strong personal commitment to and accountability for learning. This can be through the current class teacher or form tutor, a senior member of staff, or a nominated progress leader who has dedicated responsibility for a progress group.
  - Establish a well-managed plan of support for individuals to meet their needs, including 'learning conversations' built into the week for the pupils.
5. Engage and empower governors.
  - Inform governors of actions planned by the school.
  - Identify a governor to liaise with the SLT lead on NtG and report back.
6. Work with parents/carers and the community.
  - Build relationships with parents/carers of target pupils so they are aware that the school has identified their children and are working to improve their attainment.
  - Engage parents in the work that the school is doing with their children.
  - Establish a network of adults from the community (including if possible some who were pupils) to provide positive role models, showing what can be achieved.
  - Offer out-of-hours support and work with families.
7. Develop a culture which is pupil-centred and failure-free.
  - Establish or restate a 'no-excuses' culture that maintains high expectations and insists on success.
  - Insist that staff model the behaviour they wish to promote in a culture of mutual respect.
  - Define non-negotiable standards of behaviour for the pupils and staff.

## Mind the gaps

Systematic and regular action to monitor the progress of the target group and the impact of intervention is the hallmark of stage three. In summary, this is where leaders and managers look at the difference their work to narrow gaps is making, whether progress is accelerating and, where necessary, what else needs to be done.

Stage one should have provided clarity as to how and when the school will measure success through targets, milestones and success criteria. This is vital in providing a context for review.

## Five key actions

1. Ensure there is clarity about who is responsible and accountable for the progress of the target group in terms of overall progress, subjects, years, among teachers, middle and senior leaders.

A member of the SLT takes overall responsibility for achievement of FSM/disadvantaged and underperforming children. Every teacher knows they are responsible for progress and how and when they are accountable.

2. Agree clear success criteria to inform monitoring and review.

Targets and outcomes for each in the target group of underachieving FSM pupils are agreed and understood by all. They provide a focus for assessing and tracking progress and judging success.

3. Make sure the school tracking system is robust and provides accurate analysis which is used to inform review and planning.

Progress is monitored against success criteria and milestones agreed at stage 1. Tracking data is supported by well-informed teacher assessment through APP and test results. It is used regularly, frequently and effectively. It leads to rapid feedback to pupils and all concerned and, where necessary, informs review.

4. Put in place management systems to ensure consistent action to monitor, support and hold staff to account.

Line management meetings between senior and middle leaders focus regularly on FSM and target group progress. Action to narrow gaps through focused and timely action is evident in the school improvement plan. Personal action to narrow gaps, where appropriate, is reflected in performance management objectives.

5. Ensure governors and the SIP are regularly briefed on progress of FSM pupils and other groups through reports of analysis of tracking data.

Detailed analysis is provided showing where gaps have narrowed and where further improvement is required.

## Celebrate success

The fourth stage of the NtG cycle celebrates successes both for individual pupils and for the school. It is the opportunity to acknowledge achievements, to build on the success, to reflect and plan ahead.

For schools, celebrating success is a natural activity at all levels from the class teacher praising the individual to the school display boards in the entrance containing certificates, prizes, posters and identifying details of leavers and their destinations. For pupils entitled to FSM and, in particular, those in the target group, this is an important activity. It is demonstrated in work from the *Extra Mile Project* where there may be a cultural barrier of low aspirations and scepticism about education.

An important challenge for NtG is to develop celebration of success systematically across the school and capture and share what works well. An important part of this celebration of gap busting is that the successful strategies become fully embedded in the ways of working within the school.

### Four key actions

1. Children's successes are identified and celebrated.

Pupils feel valued and proud of their achievements and pupils in the target group have their success recognised in a personal way. Younger pupils are aware of the successes and see that they can achieve similarly. All in the school from the teaching assistant to the most senior member of staff celebrate with the pupils and are more confident and motivated to continue to narrow the gaps.

2. Governors are informed and involved with the celebration.

The NtG/FSM link governor briefs other governors on successes. Improvement in NtG is celebrated at meetings and reported to parents/carers.

3. SIPs, LAs and other partners are informed about the successes.

Headteacher reports identify the areas of improvement and school improvement plans and Ofsted SEF records the outcomes and reasons for improvement.

4. The school dedicates continuing professional development (CPD) time to review of case studies.

This enables staff to share successful work through individual case studies, including progress data, outcomes, pupil voice and feedback from observation. These sessions allow the school to identify high-impact actions to feed into work with subsequent target groups, reiterate high expectations and identify opportunities for further development.

## Resources

The National Strategies' website provides a wide range of resources grouped under the four NtG headings. You can use this to search for additional materials to support development. In addition, key resources are summarised below.

For wider approaches to school improvement:

- the **Improving Schools Programme** (ISP) offers a supported whole-school improvement programme for primary schools
- for secondary schools, **Stronger Management Systems** provides a range of elements linked to quality standards, including tracking, line management and assessment
- **Core Plus** provides subject materials for English, science and mathematics, including guidance on pedagogy, intervention, planning and tracking
- **Stronger Governance Systems** is a complementary publication to strengthen the role of governing bodies
- **Guidance for SIPs: Supporting and challenging improvement in learning and teaching** sets out the school improvement cycle of audit, target setting, pupil tracking, planning, action and review.

## Know the gaps

Developed through SIP workshops, the NtG data booklet ***The golden thread*** sets out a systematic approach for the use of data for all schools.

## Narrow the gaps

A wide range of resources is available, including:

- the **renewed primary and secondary frameworks**, providing online support for planning in core subjects
- **The Extra Mile Project** offering case studies of school-based work to raise aspirations and attainment in secondary schools serving deprived communities (see [www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/schoolstandards/extramile](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/schoolstandards/extramile))
- materials to **Ensure the attainment of more advanced learners of EAL** which can also be used to support the language development of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and include resources to develop higher-order thinking skills, academic language and register and improve extended writing
- G&T quality standards, offering useful guidance for disadvantaged pupils with G&T potential
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) including strategies to promote positive behaviour for learning.

## Mind the gaps

The wide range of APP materials and resources, available in the **APP focus area** provides a structured approach to in-school assessment which enables teachers to make judgements about their pupils' attainment, keyed into national standards.

**Tracking for success** offers useful material for secondary schools, including workshops for whole-school, subject and curriculum leader use.

# Professional development Workshop 1: school culture

## Participants

This workshop is for use with all members of the school staff and should involve the leadership team. It can also be adapted to be used with subject/year teams, governors and other stakeholders/partners.

## Objective

- To explore and articulate what is conducive to the development of a culture that is effective in closing FSM gaps:
  - within the professional context of the school
  - for pupils and their communities.

Intended outcomes are:

- sharpened and shared understanding of key aspects of good practice in narrowing gaps in schools
- clarity about the methodology of successful school improvement for narrowing gaps
- identification of the importance of culture in establishing conditions for school improvement
- identification of key actions to inform and support their own role in narrowing gaps in schools.

## Resources

PowerPoint presentation

Flipchart paper

Marker pens

Sticky notes

## Introduction

**10 minutes**

Set out the objectives for the session and introduce the topic using the text in Handout 1.1 (also provided as a PowerPoint presentation).

Explain that the workshop explores two specific aspects of culture:

1. Professional school culture  
What are the messages that the school gives about its aspirations for all pupils and how are these communicated?
2. Pupil and community culture  
How do pupils view the school and what it offers them? Do they feel valued, supported and challenged?

## Group discussion

30 minutes

Divide into groups of three to six people.

Ask each group to discuss and record on flipchart paper what they consider to be the vital elements of a culture that is conducive to NtG for FSM pupils for either:

- professional school culture
- pupil/community culture.

The groups should:

- Limit themselves to the three or four key elements.
- Consider if they are describing rhetorical generalisations or tangible factors.
- Consider whether what they are describing is different from the current prevailing culture.
- Identify if there is a shadow culture that sits alongside your desired culture and can be working in opposition to it (for example the school may effectively promote achievement for all and high aspirations but the dominant culture in the local community may give the message that education is worthless).
- Identify the actions that are needed to make this culture a reality.

After ten minutes each group identifies an 'envoy' to take the flipchart sheet to a new group. The envoy has two minutes to outline the findings of the group. The members of the new group then have the opportunity to question the envoy to seek clarification and challenge the ideas (using the prompts above). They may also add to the list.

Circulate again after ten minutes and after questioning and editing, the third group is to identify the three key aspects of culture which have been identified as leading to sustainable improvement and gap narrowing.

## Plenary

10 minutes

Each group feeds back the three key aspects they have agreed.

Key questions to consider:

- How well do we understand the culture of our schools and pupils in relation to their suitability for gap narrowing?
- Are we aware of the shadow cultures that are present?
- What are the specific actions that we should take now to create our preferred culture?
- Should we engage our pupils in this discussion? If so, how?

## Handout 1.1: school culture

If we accept that sustainable improvement is built upon skilled staff, effective systems and positive culture then we also have to accept that improvement is only sustainable while these three are in place. While it is the case that an effective head can build all of these where they are not present, it is equally the case that an ineffective head can rapidly lose systems, resulting in decline in culture and loss of staff. In other words no matter how sustainable a school's improvement is, it always requires effective leadership to continue to be sustainable.

Schools have established many systems and skill sets that have been effective in narrowing attainment gaps for many groups of pupils. These can also be effective when applied to FSM pupils. However in order to be effective it is vital that schools have established an appropriate culture to support the work.

Culture is the **shared beliefs and values** of a school: what people agree is true and what people agree is right. However, such beliefs become entrenched and can persist after changes in the school's environment render them irrelevant or harmful. Culture is therefore both a **resource and a risk**.

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## Workshop 2: issues, approaches and impact

### Participants

This workshop can be used in a range of contexts, including:

- NtG workshops with all staff
- Department or year meetings.

The workshop has been developed to require two sessions of one hour each but timings and focus can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual schools. In larger schools, it may be advisable to run the launch session with all staff and the second session in smaller subject, year or phase groups.

### Objective

To provide opportunities for teachers to review the effectiveness of school approaches to accelerating the progress of underachieving disadvantaged pupils and, in particular, those eligible for FSM.

### Resources

PowerPoint presentation

Copies of Strategies for success (page 8)

Handout 2.1: the issues (page 21)

Handout 2.2: school approaches (page 22)

Handout 2.3: pupil impact (page 23)

### Session 1

**60 minutes**

This workshop provides opportunities for groups of staff to: take stock of their work in narrowing gaps; focus on how the school supports, monitors and holds them to account; and plan improvement.

### Introduction (presentation, groups, feedback) 15 minutes

Provide an overview of objectives and share the Starting points slides/Handout 2.1 with all staff. Ask them to consider, in small groups:

- What are the key messages here?
- Why does this matter?
- How well are we doing in our school?

Following brief feedback, focus on the idea of 'everyone's responsibility' and separate the rhetoric of commitment from action which makes a difference. You may find it helpful to draw an analogy with the unwashed coffee cups in some staff rooms, where everybody has responsibility but nobody does anything. Ask groups to consider:

- Of all the work we do, what are the actions that make the biggest difference for disadvantaged pupils and, in particular, those eligible for FSM?

Slides 15 and 16 provide a brief summary of what we know works.

### Strategies for success (presentation)

10 minutes

Present **Strategies for success** (slide 17) – offer this as a structure to evaluate and develop practice to narrow gaps. Drawing on **Leadership for impact** and the PowerPoint slide presentation, summarise how each of these contributes to narrowing gaps and emphasise that each aspect needs to be present.

### Review (triads)

30 minutes

Introduce staff to **Handout 2.1** as a means to think about what the school currently does and how each member of staff contributes to narrowing gaps. Ask staff to work in triads and spend time considering their work in each quadrant, summarising what they do and how it could be developed further. Emphasise that this will lead later to more detailed pupil-focused work.

### Conclusion and Next steps (plenary)

5 minutes

End the session with a plenary to identify:

- What we do well.
- Where we need to focus improvement.

Provide a briefing on preparation for session 2 and issue **Handout 2.3: pupil impact** (see page 23).

## Session 2

60 minutes

This workshop builds on the first by focusing on the impact of the school's work on the learning and progress of a small number of named pupils on FSM. It is important to flag up with staff in advance that this discussion is to take place – it is a challenging and productive exercise that requires preparation. Those participating should be asked, before the next session, to consider the questions on **Handout 2.3: pupil impact**.

It is important to consider in advance how many pupils are to be reviewed and how they are selected – approaches are likely to vary from school to school. Two possible approaches are set out below:

1. Year or senior leaders identify a small group of FSM target pupils and all staff are asked to consider their work with them. Senior staff talk to the pupils about their attitudes to and experiences of learning in advance, visit lessons and collect their books/folders to review as part of the meeting.
2. Teachers identify two FSM pupils in their classes and are asked:
  - to have a discussion with the pupil concerned
  - to bring examples of work to the discussion.

## Introduction

5 minutes

Connect with outcomes of workshop 1 and the objective here, to consider the detail of classroom practice.

## Review

40 minutes

Ask staff to work in triads to consider:

- What is effective?
- How can provision be improved?

## Plenary

15 minutes

This opportunity to share thinking should lead to identification of good practice and areas/actions for development. It may lead to discussion of how good practice can be shared, further CPD needs and wider review of systems.

## Handout 2.1: the issues

These three quotations create a context for personal reflection or discussion. Follow-up questions have been included for use in staff, subject or other meetings.

'Not gender, not ethnicity, not the season of birth, not language, not school, not LA, not religion, not region, not class size, but socio-economic background is the prime link to attainment. No surprises here for teachers!'<sup>3</sup>

'Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be concentrated in primary schools with high FSM proportions; this is less true in secondary schools. About half (48%) of pupils entitled to FSM are to be found in the third of schools with greatest concentration of disadvantage, and the other half are spread across the other two-thirds of schools. Nearly a third (28%) are in schools with below average deprivation. So to break the link between deprivation and attainment, it will also be essential for schools which have less deprived intakes than average to secure good progress for their deprived pupils.'<sup>4</sup>

'At the same time that standards have risen across the board, the most deprived areas and the most deprived schools have made the most progress. Yet there is still far too strong a link between family income and achievement at school. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals – roughly the poorest 15% – who get five or more good GCSEs including English and maths has gone up from under 15% in 2002 to 23.5% in 2008, and they are narrowing the gap with other pupils at both primary and secondary school. But they are still less than half as likely to get these good GCSE grades as children who are not entitled to free school meals.'<sup>5</sup>

What are the key messages for leaders and managers?

- What others would you add?
- What are the implications?

3 Sue Hackman (Chief Adviser on School Standards at the Department for Children, Schools and Families), 'The Extra Mile E Newsletter', September 2009 (Crown Copyright 2009)

4 Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment – everyone's business – DCSF 00357-2009BKT-EN, DCSF 2009

5 Ed Balls (Secretary of State for Education), introduction to 'Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment – Everyone's Business – DCSF 00357-2009BKT-EN, DCSF 2009

## Handout 2.2: school approaches

These questions are designed for discussion and reflections from the perspective of your main role in school:

- Class or subject teacher
- Form tutor or year leader
- Subject leader or head of department
- Senior manager

### Narrowing the gaps: Strategies for success

- What part do you play in narrowing gaps and maximising progress of pupils eligible for FSM?
- How is your work monitored?
- How and when are you held accountable?
- What support do you receive?

### Know the gaps

- How well do FSM and other pupils do in your class/subject/school?
- Are you clear who the FSM/disadvantaged pupils are?
- Do you have a list of FSM pupils – a target group of pupils you expect to make faster progress to narrow gaps? How was this developed?
- Have you discussed this with the targeted pupils and agreed progress targets? Is this consistent with what happens in other parts of the school?

### Celebrate success!

- What do you do to recognise the success of the targeted pupils?
- What opportunities do you have
  - to share good practice you have developed in narrowing gaps
  - to work with and learn from others' good practice
  - to share and explore approaches, for examples through staff or other meetings
  - to engage in CPD to develop your skills in this area?

### Narrow the gaps

In relation to targeted FSM pupils:

- What are you doing that is making a difference?
- Are you clear about what other people are doing?
- Is there agreement across the school about what makes most difference?
- How do you take account of these pupils' needs in your planning?
- What interventions are in place and why?
- How do you/the school work with parents/carers and families of these pupils?
- How do you/the school talk to the pupils about their teaching and learning, barriers and opportunities?

### Mind the gaps

In relation to targeted FSM pupils:

- How do you use assessment and dialogue to form a picture of strengths and barriers?
- How often do you review tracking data for each child?
- How and when are you supported and held accountable for this?
- Can you give an example of where this has led to changes of approach?

## Handout 2.3: pupil impact

These questions are designed to focus discussion on up to four pupils eligible for FSM to test the quality of planning and provision. Take each pupil in turn, discuss the overview in the top box, and then move through each stage of the diagram in turn.

<p><b>Narrowing the gaps: Strategies for success</b></p> <p>For each pupil</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What does tracking tell us about progress?</li> <li>● What does the pupil tell us?</li> <li>● What does observation tell us?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Know the gaps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why is each pupil targeted to accelerate progress?</li> <li>● What do data on prior attainment tell us?</li> <li>● What targets have been set?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Celebrate success!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do you do to recognise the success of the targeted pupil(s)?</li> <li>● What else does the school do?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Narrow the gaps</b></p> <p>In relation to targeted FSM pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the pupils' strengths and barriers to learning?</li> <li>● How do you take account of these in your planning? What are you doing that is making a difference?</li> <li>● Are you clear about what other people are doing?</li> <li>● What interventions are in place and why?</li> <li>● What contact have you/other members of staff had with parents/carers and families of these pupils?</li> <li>● Have you/other members of staff discussed with pupils what would help?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mind the gaps</b></p> <p>In relation to targeted FSM pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What assessment information do you have?</li> <li>● From your tracking data, is the pupil making the progress you expect? If not, what will you do that's different?</li> <li>● How often do you review tracking data for this pupil and with whom?</li> <li>● How and when are you supported and held accountable for this?</li> <li>● Has this led to any changes of approach?</li> </ul>

# Acknowledgement

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