

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS AT GLADESMORE

Gladesmore is a comprehensive school and the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils are varied. Being in receipt of disadvantaged funding is no indicator of ability nor does this set any limit on achievement. Children, and their personal circumstances, vary very significantly, many have very supportive backgrounds and high ambitions others less so. However, common barriers to learning might include low self-esteem, poor parenting, limited access to language, poor literacy levels, poor attendance, low aspirations, low expectations, narrow experience of life outside school.

For some children issues can also include, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, mental health, physical health issues, poor social and other skills and a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Analysis of the challenges faced by our disadvantaged pupils include listening to pupils, shadowing pupils, book trawls, learning walks, talking to parents and staff and data analysis of progress, attendance, behaviour and involvement in extra-curricular activities. The use of Pupil Premium funding is designed to address these very broad challenges faced by our disadvantaged children.

Attendance

Pupils cannot learn if they are not at school and low attendance is a major barrier to achievement. Our analysis shows that our disadvantaged pupils are less likely to have good attendance. They are more likely to have time away from school. There is strong research to suggest that well-targeted support to improve attendance is an effective use of disadvantaged funding and we have strategies in place to address these.

Attitudes to learning

Pupils in receipt of disadvantaged funding are more likely to become passive or reluctant learners. Analysis of learning walks, pupil response to feedback and observations show that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to take risks with their learning and less likely to be resilient when responding to improvement targets. Pupils in receipt of disadvantaged funding are more likely to engage in off-task behaviours in lessons. They are also less likely to participate in reading, trips, visits or other enrichment activities. They are less likely to voluntarily participate in additional tuition sessions, after school, Saturday and holiday study sessions.

Social and emotional

Improvements have been noted through working with to pupils' social and emotional skills and their key skills. These being barriers to learning and this is why we have used some of the funding to support pastoral intervention and provision.

Aspiration and Ambition

Some disadvantaged pupils are less likely to have focused and ambitious career targets to work towards. They are less likely to have plans for post-16 study and often do not value education as a key to a more fulfilling life after school.

Curriculum and Teaching quality

No analysis of barriers to achievement could be complete without a continued focus on the quality of the teaching pupils receive. At the heart of our ethos is that we strive to improve and this applies just as much to teachers as their pupils. High quality learning and teaching must be at the core of all pupil premium work.

For this reason, many of our disadvantaged achievement strategies have consistently focused on improving the quality of learning. We are mindful of implementing strategies that make the most difference and impact on all disadvantaged children. Class sizes and the arrangement of classes, are fundamental to helping address the challenges children have with their learning. We see this as our central to providing high quality provision for disadvantaged children. The additional investment in teachers in core subjects has facilitated.

Curriculum adaptations

We have made adaptations to provision and adapted the curriculum to benefit disadvantaged pupils. One size does not always fit all and pupils work best in subjects that they can access. For some pupils this is best served by traditional subjects within an academic pathway but for a few a more vocational offer is needed to overcome barriers to achievement.

Resources

Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to purchase optional revision materials such as study guides, have a variety of reading books at home or buy specialist equipment such as sports equipment. As a result, they are less likely to take part in optional enrichment opportunities.

Difficulties of studying at home

Some disadvantaged pupils reported that home does not always provide a conducive learning environment for them either because of a lack of family engagement in education, not having a space to learn or because there are too many distractions at home.

Academic confidence and resilience

Teachers report that many of our disadvantaged pupils lack resilience when things did not go well and do not have the self-belief that is more common in non-disadvantaged pupils. They are far less likely to have family role models who have high academic achievement through hard work and determination.

Conduct

Our behaviour analysis shows that disadvantaged pupils at Gladesmore are more likely to engage in both low level and more serious behaviour incidents. They are more likely to receive both fixed term exclusions. Teacher observations suggest that disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be negatively influenced by other pupils with poor behaviour; bad behaviour by a few key pupils can lead to worse behaviour by others around them. The impact of this has been a failure to reach their academic potential.