



Neighbourhood Renewal in Birmingham:

Closing the gaps in localities by accelerating achievement

(Birmingham's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy commits the variety of agencies across the city to work in ways that close gaps between localities and raise city outcomes to above/near national levels)

What works in raising achievement levels in underachieving groups/pupils

The following activities are drawn from a wide variety of national 'what works' documents plus the outcomes from local work on raising achievement for specific groups. The lists focus on classroom practices and the processes that support those in terms of organisational management, professional development and community support.

The lists could form a set of triggers for thinking at school level; could be used in staff discussions; could be fed into a range of support and development activities etc.

Sustained, high quality teaching and learning

- focus of in-class activity and in-school 'routine' activity is on appropriately managed learning and supporting achievements for individuals
- well-planned lessons, with ability to positively change direction if lesson is not working out as planned
- knowing each learner (in terms of aspirations, abilities, contexts etc)
- tracking each pupil's progress against sets of skills/ knowledge/ attitudes/ abilities; with early identification of need to design strategies to 'correct'/ accelerate learning
- clear teaching strategies; objectives shared at beginning of lessons/ or negotiated/defined by pupils through discussion
- variety in teaching style, pace but within an overall consistency
- presenting each task as having a clear purpose within the overall lesson
- using interesting language/ extended vocabulary to maintain engagement with lesson, but without creating confusion
- using structured talk as part of the learning process; prioritising speaking and listening as a prelude to reading/ writing (giving time to rehearse words)
- thinking aloud and explaining working out are seen as valuable parts of learning
- individuals able to participate in group discussions and activities
- higher level communication skills encouraged ; thinking about thinking and language (meta-learning/ reflection on meanings etc)
- learning linked to bigger pictures; everyday world
- appropriate matching of teaching styles and learning styles
- emotional literacy processes worked on; immediate behaviour worked on
- well-scaffolded activities to reinforce learning; routine and repetition positively used to emphasise sense of achievement
- use is made of 1:1 and small-group peer explanations/ peer tutoring
- explicit clarity and consistency re assessment; prompt/ detailed/ formative; pupils involved in assessment

- ❑ assessments feed into lesson planning, but also used to give information to learners in ways they can understand/ is meaningful to them
- ❑ use is made of peer-assessment against criteria; learners setting own goals for achievement over short timescales; 'green/amber/red' type assessment of own skills by pupils; learners encouraged to take responsibilities around own learning

Curriculum and school environment appropriate to pupils' learning and development

- ❑ there is an ethos of respect all round – individuals valued across the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes
- ❑ defining children as 'readers', 'writers' and providing motivations for reading/ writing – to change learners' expectations of themselves; value put on drafting/ redrafting/editing etc as well as on extending writing/ vocabulary / finished products etc.
- ❑ pupils' able to have their voices heard (i.e. influence what happens) in appropriate ways
- ❑ culture of the group/pupils recognised in way that enriches the curriculum, and is incorporated within interactions in the school
- ❑ awareness of potential impact of home language, body language, sustained eye contact etc

Focus on changing those things that reinforce underachievement

- ❑ pastoral systems/individual mentoring etc focus on particular issues relating to increasing achievements
- ❑ continued emphasis on progress with all learners (as opposed to only focusing on those likely to achieve/ who contribute to key targets etc)
- ❑ identification of learner needs in terms of specific skills-gaps not simply as 'underachieving'
- ❑ wider achievements of individual pupils are tracked and planned for (not just academic/key subjects)
- ❑ high (but not unrealistic) expectations - support/ challenge for each child to reach higher potential; celebrating successes as well as setting targets to improve
- ❑ frequent opportunities are taken to make positive reinforcements of self-esteem; pupils given positive 'access to significance'
- ❑ pragmatic approach taken to using/minimising effects of peer groups; establishing buddy systems where useful; 'success' promoted as a positive thing
- ❑ strong monitoring of practices re impacts and outcomes for specific groups/pupils; balance between coherent all-school policies and flexibilities of teachers to respond as needed
- ❑ academic mentoring/learning support etc available
- ❑ clear, extended use of language (full sentences etc) encouraged – inside and outside classroom (school routines etc seen as learning contexts)
- ❑ small-group support available for those at risk of falling behind in early years (as part of 'personalisation of learning')
- ❑ early interventions to raise achievements are used in sustained ways (i.e. don't simply 'fade' or be over-reliant on a keen enthusiast), are appropriately targeted, and are followed by 2nd and 3rd chances to catch up
- ❑ pupils use repeated story-telling and re-reading of familiar texts/books to rehearse strong language patterns; balance between 'consolidation' and 'moving on'

Organisational consistency

- consistency of teachers; minimisation of irregular supply teachers
- appropriate use of discipline; consistency of behaviour practices with this group/these pupils; clear behaviour policies – no unnecessary use of exclusions; staged approach to sanctions
- attendance expected/stressed/acted upon
- emphasis put on each individual making appropriate progress as move across Key Stages, instead of single focus on school aggregate target
- language development/bilingual support available, across whole school i.e. targeted at broad group as part of regular classroom practices
- commitment to systemic change to improve outcomes for large numbers of pupils (i.e. beyond projects/ pilots/ case studies)
- coherent and transparent strategies (whole school coordinations) are understood and implemented by teachers/ other adults, with support for implementation

Staff have access to up to date discussions about practice

- effective practices (related to improving outcomes for these pupils) shared across similar settings (not just used as 'self-promotion'); learning exchanged across staff
- teachers feel able to discuss issues associated with the group/pupils
- reasons for underachievement, and how to counter it, form part of continuing professional development support to teachers
- focus, within lesson observations, is on supporting teachers to improve outcomes for children/ young people
- identification of those aspects of pupil achievement that may be located in culture, attitudes to learning, etc and those aspects that may be located in the effectiveness of the teaching and learning experienced
- focused internal professional discussions take place – sometimes supported by external 'consultant'; teachers sharing positive experienced and reflecting on difficulties (not 'failings')
- 'What really works' knowledge is created and shared cross-phase, and cross-organisations
- teachers use national and local websites/ networks etc to discuss teaching and learning, and seek out solutions to problems

Community and parental support for improving achievement

- community learning organisations (such as supplementary schools; sports groups; drama groups etc) are actively linked with as valued partners in learning
- value is put on home and community activities that support learning; these are used as the basis for some in-class learning
- there is promotion of a continuing motivation to learn outside school (use of libraries/ visit exhibitions/events etc)
- learning resources/ activities/ games are available to be taken home
- there are good opportunities for parents to actively engage with the learning/curriculum; parents' perceptions of schooling are taken into account and worked with
- parents and community members are able to contribute to out-of-hours learning
- good information to parents on specific skills that pupil's need to rehearse out of school

- ❑ information on pupil progress, attendance, behaviour etc fed back to parents where changes are needed; contact with parents is about positive things (not only on negative issues)