

Pupil Premium Review Report

Robert Barclay Academy

Unique reference number	143131
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Type of School Secondary	Comprehensive
School Category	Academy (1/9/16)
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	621
Headteacher	Mr Ced De La Croix
Date of last school inspection	18 th & 19 th June 2019
Date of PP review	23 rd January 2020
PP reviewer	Margaret Chapman, NLE & National PP Reviewer

The purpose of the pupil premium review is to:

- Assess the school's current use of Pupil Premium (PP) funding and its impact on pupil progress
- Assess how this aspect of PP leadership and management may be improved so that the school can refine its strategy in order to have greater impact on pupil progress

Ofsted identified that the school needed to further improve focus on disadvantaged pupils by:

- Ensuring that the additional funding received, including Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium, is bringing sustained and significant improvement to outcomes for pupils over time
- Raising teachers' expectations of pupils, notably disadvantaged pupils and those from higher attaining starting points, most notably, boys

The School's Pupil Premium Statement:

The statement, clearly displayed on the school's website, identifies how funding is allocated for pupil premium students, the exact costs and some indication of how the money is used to close the gap in attainment and progress of disadvantaged students. There is an action plan specifically targeted to raise attainment and progress of PP students, which is reviewed and updated termly.

Information about this review:

Through robust data analysis the school identifies the issues underperformance of disadvantaged students in a document produced for the governors entitled Executive Overview, produced termly and serves as a review of monitoring of student progress and the actions and interventions which have taken place. The school has an identified PP Lead in an Assistant Head as well as a PP Co-Ordinator to ensure a sustained high profile of pupil premium and disadvantaged students across the school.

PP outcomes have been rising over the last three years with the most recent Progress 8 score of -0.02, which is 0.22 above the whole school outcomes for 2019.

Additionally, the focus on attendance has seen a sharp rise from 91.6% in 2017 to 94.5% in 2019 for PP students, with the sustained increase evident in current tracking and monitoring.

The evidence gathered for this review involved discussions with key leaders, governors and students and was used to explore how the school addresses all aspects of disadvantage and vulnerability, which included:

- An overview of how PP performance is monitored and reviewed across the school
- Meeting with disadvantaged students, with samples of their work to determine progress over time
- Discussion with a group of disadvantaged students about how the school promotes aspiration and career development opportunities
- A wider review of books across English, Maths, Science and Geography for Years 7, 8 & 10
- Meeting with the school leader with oversight of school standards and disadvantaged students, Assistant Head, to learn about barriers to learning, the strategy for addressing these needs and the impact of the school's work to date
- Discussion with key staff to learn about strategies in place to improve attendance and punctuality for disadvantaged students
- Meeting with behaviour for Learning Lead, Assistant Head, to learn about strategies in place to support social, emotional and mental health of disadvantaged learners, family support and partnerships
- Guided learning walks in Science, Maths and English lessons to review curriculum experience and learning environments for disadvantaged students
- Discussion with the chair of governors to understand the oversight of the school strategy for disadvantaged learners and how leaders in the school are held to account for the achievement of these students
- Discussions with appropriate staff to learn about the current data picture of disadvantaged learners in terms of most likely outcomes and actions points for improvement

- 181/621 students are eligible for Pupil Premium funding, equating to 21% of the school population. The school is situated in an area of high deprivation.

Key areas identified as emerging strengths of the school's provision:

- The drive to improve standards is evident with the robust monitoring of performance and attendance, both of which are to be highly commended. This is evident at all levels of leadership
- The school's strategy for disadvantaged learners has been thoughtfully constructed and is compliant with statutory requirements. Barriers to learning have been identified and there are appropriate actions in place to address these. If strategies are not working, they are adapted or revised. It is evident that the school knows the students and so the support for each year group is different and tailored to more individualised support. To further improve the impact of this strategy, frequent, timely intervention and reshaping of provision will ensure rapid improvement in outcomes
- The school has set up a series of department bids intended to meet the needs of the disadvantaged learners. Departments can request an allocation of the funding to meet specific needs with case studies shared as impact of the success of the bids, such as use of the Lexia reading programme to extend literacy skills. There is also money for pastoral leads to bid for which is all led by the PP co-ordinator and regularly reviewed to assess impact
- In English the gap in reading ages was noted with literacy a key concern for PP students. With a leadership opportunity for a member of staff, the whole school literacy project DEAR was introduced, and every student now owns a book. Although the impact is not as yet evident in outcomes, research shows that increasing reading in young people has a significant effect on their ability to communicate effectively, raising their oracy skills
- Strong leadership of the strategy for disadvantaged students is evident. In discussion it was clear that rigour, persistence, ambition and effective communication is an important part of the process in planning the provision for the disadvantaged learners. The lead models high expectations and aspiration for all. He will challenge complacency if expectations are not high enough. There is good evidence available, that all teachers have been training in their role in relation to raising achievement for disadvantaged students. They have been provided with key data and guidance information to reflect upon their practice and the emphasis is very much on it being their responsibility to raise achievement for disadvantaged learners
- Useful case study material is evident to demonstrate how the school has intervened to improve attendance for disadvantaged students and across the school as a whole. There has been a relentless drive on attendance with an Attendance Officer, funded across the Trust, who undertakes home visits. Additionally, assemblies focus on the value of attendance with the mantra of raising aspiration for students 'invest in your future, so come in now'. This has provided a clear pathway to success for PP students as

can be seen in significant improvements in attendance figures. The focus on rewards across the school has also had an impact to support increased attendance. Again, this is targeted for all students, whilst PP students especially see the value of these rewards. Attendance workshops work well to engage families and young people as well as the use of attendance reports. Fixed Penalty Notices are utilised once all other avenues are exhausted.

- With the new system to monitor and track attendance the role of the form tutor in monitoring attendance and student progress has been enhanced more recently with form tutors being pivotal in tracking the weekly reporting data for each student and encouraging attendance and achievement through the use of rewards and healthy competition, which the students also commented upon favourably. Attendance intervention is making a difference and a clear 'stepped' approach to intervention is making a significant impact on driving attendance figures forward and therefore, student engagement has hugely improved
- The review of the behaviour policy and the introduction of the C6 consequences system of an 8am-6pm programme has seen a dramatic reduction in Fixed term Exclusions, with work packs supporting students, especially targeting PP students, to improve their learning, provide an addition to the usual curriculum focus from 3-6pm. HOY know their students, especially PP students and have developed good links with home to enable swift actions if home learning is not completed, for example, with compulsory home work club. Through efficient tracking systems, develop by the Behaviour Lead and shared weekly, there is increased capacity for staff to support students more effectively
- For PP students there are clear non-negotiables in the classroom to support their learning; starting with a breakfast club at 7.45am and shoe check to ensure that all have the appropriate uniform, to diminish barriers to school attendance and learning. The four principles evident are:
 - PP students to sit in strategic locations in the classroom
 - All teachers have context packs of data
 - Equipment is checked – pencil cases
 - PP students have their books marked first or separately
- The students have pride in their school. They look smart and behave well in the corridors and moving around the school. Lessons observed whilst on learning walks were engaging and motivational. For example, it was evident in a Year 7 Science lesson that students knew their learning targets, based on securing, developing or mastering their learning; there was a table with SEND students, ably supported by a TA as well as a table with PP students, which the teacher, on each occasion, checked with first. This resulted in a vibrant learning environment where everyone was engaged and enthused about their learning. Additionally, in a Year 11 English lesson, all students were very clear about their targets, what they had to do to improve and spoke confidently about

the support provided by the school in terms of their future progression opportunities and careers guidance

- Behaviour for learning observed around the school, on this snapshot, was good. A positive attitude to learning and a strong desire to improve skills, knowledge and understanding was displayed, demonstrating high levels of engagement in the lessons. This was also evident in all student discussions.
- Students spoke eloquently and passionately about their school. All commented that staff were always helpful if there was a problem. They enjoy the small feel and feel that they know each other, and teachers can help them. They recognised that the school goes 'above and beyond' in support for future career opportunities and aspirations with trips to universities and the Emirate stadium mentioned as providing different goals and opportunities to meet the needs of all students. All student felt that they learned best when lessons were balanced between practical and interactive learning – think, pair, share was cited as an example. Student also commented on the level of support provided by teachers with examples of daily interventions, Saturday morning exam preparations and revision sessions in the lead up to final GCSE examinations. Older students commented that they felt the quality of teaching had increased with more resources available to support the learning and the rules were stricter and more clearly applied so that all were focused. All commented that behaviour had improved which helped them to learn better in the classroom. They liked Edulink as they could see their homework easily and parents could monitor too. All students said that they could speak to a number of members of staff but would start with the HOY if there was an issue or concern as they knew it would be dealt with well. Rewards and consequences were seen as being fair as everyone understood what they meant. One sixth former commented that it would be good to have more consequences at Post 16!
- This is a school that understands the importance of nurture provision underpinning readiness to learn. There is a sharp awareness of the need to reduce and remove barriers to learning for PP students, through revision materials, provided and attendance at after school revision support tracked and monitored; in Year 7, PP students are directed to homework club, if appropriate and they are provided with equipment where required. Year 9 seen as a bridging year, with options in Year 8 to support a breadth of progression opportunities into Post 16 and beyond. Support for career development for disadvantaged students is effective. Using the Gatsby benchmarks, there is a comprehensive strategy to provide quality support and guidance regarding employment and training opportunities available to disadvantaged students and others
- Evidence from the book review for Years 7, 8 & 10 displayed a pride in the students' work and few gaps. For each subject, English, Maths, Science and Geography, there was a clear focus on classwork and homework with diagnostic marking and very good focus on presentation. In Science there was evidence of good use of analysis sheets and the

personal learning assessments on purple sheets in Maths were very helpful with the use of exit tickets a strong indicator of progress within lessons in learning. In Geography there was excellent use of assessment sheets with targeted Attitude to Learning for both homework and classwork. In English, literacy development was noted with excellent diagnostic marking of WWW and areas for development

The governance of the school:

The school has a named governor who has specific oversight of the disadvantaged learners in the school. She has undertaken the relevant training and is highly experienced, understanding with clarity, the role of governors in their leadership and management of Pupil Premium students. There was clarity of understanding of what the school does to target and intervene with underperformance and the interpretation of data to track students is strong, enabling targeted and challenging discussions about student progress. The PP strategy is reviewed by the full governing body and is a standing agenda item for all meetings. An understanding of the activities being undertaken by the school to narrow the gap in achievement was discussed, but the key element that school knows each of the students and is now pro-active in their support was evident through several examples given to support learners, form teachers talking to students, encouraging attendance at parents' evenings to phone calls, information evenings and PTA events, all contributing to getting parents across the threshold and engaging with the educational progress of their child. The website was monitored by governors and is compliant. There was also a clear understanding of the two CLA students and what the school is doing to support them, with case studies of both exemplified.

Recommendations and suggestions for further improvements:

Some of the recommendations below relate to generic leadership and management systems. Others are particular to the spending of the pupil premium. The key phrases for all actions for development include:

- Rigour in systems
 - Relentless focus
 - Timely analysis and intervention
 - High levels of accountability through support and challenge
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- The mantra of Tweak to Transform (Ref: Mike Hughes) should be applied moving forwards, given the enormous positive impact of the steps taken thus far in promoting PP students and ensuring barriers to learning are diminished and recede.
 - Ensure that the examples of best practice in the learning environment, such as in Science, pervade throughout the school and into all classrooms as the vibrancy in key areas and classrooms, as well as in areas outside the classroom such as undertaken by the gardening club, have transformed parts of the school

- Ensure that in all exercise books/folders, there is a clear subject and topic overview so that sequencing of learning can be easily referred to. The key to ensuring high quality outcomes is embedding literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. This is the responsibility of all staff. All areas of the curriculum need to identify clearly where the students have the opportunity to practice these skills which requires that literacy and numeracy corrections are more consistently applied in all subjects and success trackers are in evidence so that students can track their progress consistently within each subject between topics and across all areas of the curriculum
- Consistent opportunities for students to respond to marking and feedback would be beneficial
- Students identified lessons that were least effective is when they had to copy large amounts of information, or when lessons were less interactive. Continuous focus on differing styles of Teaching and Learning would support and scaffold learning to greatest effect. Differing approaches could be shared by post Threshold staff at TLCs or staff meetings
- In line with the re-focus on the curriculum by Ofsted, it is essential for all teachers to consider these questions in the curriculum intent planning, implementation and evaluation:
 - What do you want students to know and be able to do?
 - How do you make sure what you set out for disadvantaged students does not end up looking less ambitious than for the rest?
 - How will you teach them this?
 - How do you make sure that when students fall behind, they end up with teaching and curriculum that is at least as good as other students, and if possible, even better?
 - How will you know if they have learnt it?
 - How will you make sure that you do not use prior attainment as a cap on your belief about what a student can do?
 - How will you make your learning memorable?
- Continue with the clear evidence of action and impact reports in order to demonstrate what has been improved and how this is evidenced
- For the next academic review, utilise the updated PP strategy template in line with most recent DFE guidance
- Refer to NFER and DFE report: what are the most effective ways to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement as further guidance on bespoke activities to focus on PP students
- It is suggested that the school display more openly their successes, with facts and figures about attendance and progress data for students given the journey undertaken and possibly look to apply for the National PP awards given progress over the last three years in outcomes, now above the national average

- Ensure EBacc opportunities for PP students
- Narrow the attendance gap between PP and non-PP students
- Add Post 16 bursary information to the PP strategy
- Research the viability of the mobile library service to increase access to variety of books
- Each cohort of students is different and therefore the relentless bespoke focus is of critical importance here as a strategy that is effective for one student or cohort will not necessarily work for another. It is the rigour and frequency of monitoring that is being embedded will ensure that there is no opportunity for underachievement
- With changes in governance, it is essential that all governors are trained in the breadth and challenge that disadvantages present in schools so that there is a wide understanding of the complexities of the challenge. Benchmarking of performance against other schools would be helpful for governors to strategically measure and assess progress
- Parental engagement is critical. For the most challenging and hard to reach families, getting underneath barriers to engagement and what works in the community around the school are key levers to removing barriers, which have already begun to show impact through attendance across the whole school. Seeking their views on what works for them in a non-threatening way might provide further intelligence on ways to address this key challenge.