

Context

Park Primary school is located in the town of Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway. The school has 10 primary classes, 3 classes for pupils with ASNs and a 94 place nursery. It serves a catchment area which includes an area of high deprivation within southwest Scotland. 69% of pupils fall within SIMD deciles 1 & 2 and the remaining 31% within deciles 3 & 4. The school's handbook and 'visions, values, aims' documentation (1) provides some background to the school, and its key aims and policies.

The school's SIMD profile can be explored using the [SIMD Map](#). FME at park primary is 56%. Indicators of the effects of poverty on attainment include 10%+ of children are Looked After; up to 15% of families receive Social Work support and; a high level of children entering nursery have lower than expected levels of speech and language. The school receives [Pupil Equity Funding](#) as part of the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#). It is using this funding to support a range of interventions focussing on readiness to learn and language development. Self-evaluation processes have identified that interventions are having a year-on-year impact on attainment in literacy and numeracy, with 84% of children attaining expected levels in primary 1. Trends across the school suggest further intervention work is needed to close the attainment gap, particularly across p 4-7. Overall, pupil experiences are relatively limited and there is scope to increase the levels of some pupils' aspirations.

Data Analysis

Data were gathered for each individual learner and included INCAS scores, CfE literacy and numeracy levels. Data were gathered through tracking consultations to review progress of each learner and possible barriers to attainment. The consultations were focused on individual learners. However, this individual focus resulted in the identification of common features across groups of learners. This led to approaches which not only targeted individuals, but also clusters of factors which were acting as barriers to attainment. This process combined focussed interventions around language development and, importantly, wider issues around learner engagement with learning. These wider issues included, for example, attendance, sleep patterns, self-confidence and other factors affecting readiness to learn.

PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL, STRANRAER DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Intervention

Raising attainment through individualised approaches with learners focused on aspects of readiness to learn and language development



Useful information

1. School Handbook & Vision, Values, Aims document.
2. Health & Wellbeing report
3. Fastlane approach documentation
4. Music intervention Exemplification
5. Music intervention exemplification
6. An interactive Yammer Group event with Park Primary will take place on Glow soon: Contact us to be notified when this will take place!

The unfolding story: February 2019

Using a range of data for individual learners, the school began with the question – what are the barriers to attainment? The school considered categories of factors which might affect a learner's attainment. This led to considering interventions which would be focused on individual need. Throughout this process, the school's mantra was, 'start with the individual rather than the intervention'. The approach taken combined quantitative data linked to literacy, numeracy and Health and Wellbeing. This was correlated with qualitative data captured through teacher discussions around each child. This supported the building of a narrative around each child, allowing triangulation of data across a range of factors linked to language development and readiness to learn.

Recurring themes uncovered were that language and literacy levels were not as well-developed as would be expected. In particular breadth and depth of language usage among learners was less well-developed than expected. Learners found it challenging to communicate successfully using appropriate communication norms. For example, a pupil might state 'Boss woman' as their way of identifying the head teacher; they might request a toilet visit to any member of staff with 'teacher, toilet, me sit'. Additionally, some pupils would use only facial expressions or noises to express emotion rather than the appropriate vocabulary. This had implications for reading comprehension and progress in the use of language across the curriculum. These communication difficulties were leading to a widening of the attainment gap amongst specific groups of learners relative to others..

Other themes which arose were; attendance patterns, resilience of and self-confidence amongst learners. It was recognised that learners would benefit from being able to access a wider range of experiences. These would include the development of music skills and programmes exploring the world of work. This would provide real experiences and accreditation for learners. These wider experiences would provide learners with wider benefits linked to raising attainment.

The school began to consider interventions which might be applied to address the issues identified. For example, for language usage, this is developing across two strands: Firstly, targeted interventions with individual learners using the 'Talking, Listening and Questioning' schemes using the Dumfries and Galloway's (3) Fastlane approach. Secondly, staff training programmes to upskill staff to support learners extend and enhance vocabulary. It is hoped that the effect of this will be to continue to support staff having high expectations about language usage amongst learners. This will hopefully result in increasingly sophisticated language usage. In turn, this will support learners to unlock a range of aspects of learning across the curriculum, and so raise attainment.

Additionally, a children and families support worker was employed to explore possible barriers to attendance and how to respond to these. Also, there was a deliberate choice made based on the current skillset of staff which led to an approach focussing on music education. The school carefully explored research around the benefits of targeted music education, which led to working with individual learners. This also took account of the tracking consultations review.. The music education work is proving to be an interesting avenue of exploration in supporting raising attainment (2, 4, 5). School staff have also worked closely with local businesses and organisations to develop enhanced experiences to develop skills for life and work.