

# Impacting attainment

## MIND THE GAP

# through data analysis

*'Schools need a clear, coherent, consistent set of evidence and data locally and nationally to help them to self-evaluate and plan further improvements to achieve excellence and equity for every child in their care.'*

(National Improvement Framework, page 22)

## Introduction

The *National Improvement Framework*, published by the Scottish Government in January 2016, highlights the importance of schools having a range of data and information to support them in raising the attainment of all pupils:

*'We all need more robust and consistent evidence which will help us in raising attainment and closing the gap. We need to know the size of the attainment gap at different ages and stages, across Scotland, in order to take the right action to close it... Improved data on children's progress at key stages, including differences between those from the least and most deprived areas, will allow for planning further interventions to ensure that all children achieve as well as they can.'*  
(National Improvement Framework, pages 16 & 17)

However, *the National Improvement Framework* also emphasises that simply *having* information is not enough to bring about improvement. Rather, it is how information is interpreted, used and acted upon that ensures effective change and sustained improvement.

This document is designed to support Head Teachers and schools in analysing the data they have on pupils and to use this analysis to plan and implement appropriate interventions to raise the attainment of all pupils as well as take effective action to narrow the attainment gap.

Regular, systematic analysis of data, including trends over time, will allow schools to:

- track and monitor the ongoing progress of all pupils
- promptly identify pupils who are falling below their expected milestones or whose progress is beginning to slow
- identify and support more able pupils
- identify the gap between the performance of year groups and individual pupils, compared with CfE levels and national standards
- measure the impact of interventions designed to raise and narrow gaps in attainment

## Know the Gap, Address the Gap, Mind the Gap, Share Success

A simple mnemonic, **KAMS**, is suggested in this document to help Head Teachers, schools and families of schools develop and embed systematic and effective approaches to analysing and responding to data:

**Know** the gap (good data analysis that leads to action and impact)

**Address** the gap (having a clear plan for progression, ensuring highly effective learning & teaching, personalised pupil support and intervention)

**Mind** the gap (regular, systematic assessment, monitoring and tracking)

**Share** and scale-up success (move ideas around, scale-up interventions that work)

The North Lanarkshire electronic monitoring and tracking system provides all schools with access to a range of up-to-date core data on pupils (e.g. attendance, SIMD, standardised assessment scores) and also allows schools to import and edit more in-depth pupil-level data such as additional support, specific interventions and information on health and wellbeing.

When embarking on monitoring and tracking the attainment of pupils, there are several important points to bear in mind:

- A pupil's starting point needs to be established. In some cases, this may involve carrying out a baseline assessment.
- Consideration should be given to a pupil's prior attainment as this may give some indication as to the pace of future progress as well as the level of intervention which may be required.
- No matter a pupil's starting point or prior attainment, it is vital that no ceiling is put on the progress a child is able to make. Expectations must be realistic but high.
- Specific interventions need to be provided for pupils who have under-performed historically and the progress of these pupils needs to be accelerated if the attainment gap is to be narrowed.

In his 2015 publication, *'What works best in Education: the politics of collaborative expertise'*, John Hattie highlights the need for educators to reach an agreement on what a year's progress looks like. When teachers have differing expectations of what progress looks like, Hattie argues, this can have a negative impact on the progress of pupils. In contrast, where teachers and school leaders collaborate and engage in moderation (i.e. use their 'collective wisdom'), the variability in teachers' understanding of challenge and progression is greatly reduced which, in turn, leads to greater consistency in the expectations and progress of pupils. It may sound like Hattie is stating the obvious. It is, nonetheless, sound advice: schools need to be clear about what they mean by *good* progress.

How much progress do we expect pupils to make from the beginning of Primary 1 to the end of Primary 3? How much progress should pupils make during the course of Primary 5? What about the progress of a Primary 7 pupil in a single term? Schools will need to draw on a variety of sources to answer these sorts of questions. This may include comparing pupils' attainment with local and national averages, engaging in moderation activities within and between schools, having a working knowledge of the CfE benchmarks or referring to the school's programmes of study.

The remainder of this document provides a bank of challenge questions to support schools (Head Teachers, senior managers and classroom practitioners) to analyse and interrogate data and – more importantly – to act upon this by implementing appropriate evidence-based interventions for their pupils. The list of questions sent to schools by Graeme Logan at the end of the 2015/16 session and the questions used in the 2016 visits to the CANcan Literacy Layer schools have also been included.

It is hoped this short document will support schools in asking the right sorts of questions in relation to data and the attainment of pupils. What follows is not intended as an exhaustive list; schools are free to adapt these questions and, indeed, encouraged to come up with their own.

# CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Is there early identification of SIMD 1-3 pupils who are likely to make slow progress (e.g. by looking promptly at CEM results for new Primary 1 intake)?
- Is every teacher in every class aware of the SIMD data (along with other relevant information) on their pupils?
- Have teachers set out the expected progress for each term, and the year as a whole?
- Are sufficiently ambitious targets set for SIMD 1-3 children? If children meet their targets, will this result in an actual narrowing of the gap between disadvantaged groups and their peers?
- Does good attainment overall in your school hide underachievement by particular groups?
- How well do SIMD 1-3 children do compared to the school average for all children?
- How does the attainment and progress of a particular class compare with the attainment of pupils at the same stage in previous years?
- How well do SIMD 1-3 children attain compared to national averages?
- Is the poverty-related gap narrowing or getting wider compared to previous years?
- What are the particular characteristics of pupils who make slow or accelerated progress across a given stage?
- How much variability is there in attainment between numeracy and literacy?
- In what ways are children in SIMD 1-3 who are under-performing being targeted for additional support? How are you measuring impact?
- Look closely at all potential barriers to the learning of underperforming pupils (quality of learning and teaching, appropriateness of resources, home circumstances, etc). What evidence-based interventions can you put in place to support these pupils in reaching their full potential?
- Which groups of children have made expected or better progress, but still fail to reach important milestones? What action now needs to be taken?
- Identify specific strategies/interventions which have made a measurable difference in terms of closing the attainment gap. Are you able to pinpoint the specific aspects that made the difference?
- Look closely at the marking of written work: are pupils provided with quality, focused feedback which is precise about what has been done well and clear about what needs to be done better. Are there clear, focused targets for the next piece of work? Do teachers follow up on these?
- Evaluate the criteria you use when forming classes. Are there any ways classification could allow vulnerable pupils to experience learning and teaching more tailored to their particular needs?
- In June, look back at the attendance of all children who did not meet their expected milestones in, for example, reading or phonics. Is there any relationship between their attendance and their attainment? What action do you need to take?
- Evaluate the interventions and support you have put in place. Have they proved value for money in terms of the progress pupils have made compared to the time, resources and staffing

you have allocated to them? Should you continue with these, or are there alternative interventions which would offer better value and result in greater impact?



### **Questions sent to schools by Graeme Logan**

Please consider the following challenge questions when developing your improvement plan for 2016/2017:

- What action are we currently taking to ensure excellence and equity for all learners? Which attainment gaps exist in our school? What action do we need to take to close these gaps? What data will we use to monitor progress?
- What action are we currently taking which will address the four priorities in the NIF? How good are our children's outcomes in these areas? What further targeted interventions do we need to plan next year to improve outcomes for key groups of learners?
- How well are we improving across the 6 key drivers in the NIF? How good are we now? What do we need to improve further?
- Which approaches to change will we use to ensure progress and impact with our key priorities?

Actions for you to take as a result of this professional advice:

- Engage your school team in the NIF using the materials which were issued in February
- Self-evaluate progress made this year with your key priorities for 2015/16
- Identify your priorities for session 2016/17, taking into account the outcomes of your own self-evaluation, NIF key priorities and drivers and your local needs.



## Literacy Layer School visits 2015/16

### Current attainment levels

#### *Closing the gap*

#### Your children living in poverty

- How many are there?
- Where are they (which stages are they in)?
- How are they currently progressing? (data – on-going assessment e.g benching marking, active literacy assessment, standardised assessment, information gathered from jotter monitoring, learner dialogues, curriculum for excellence levels, moderation of learning, personal learning plans, attendance and exclusion)
- How is the 'gap' currently quantified? How will improvement be measured?

#### *Raising attainment for all (universal)*

- What are the attainment levels of all children? How do you know?
- How are they currently progressing? (data – on-going assessment e.g benching marking, active literacy assessment, standardised assessment, information gathered from jotter monitoring, learner dialogues, curriculum for excellence levels, moderation of learning, personal learning plans, attendance and exclusion)

#### *Planning for improvement*

- What is your plan for raising attainment in literacy (both in terms of closing the gap and raising attainment for all)?
- What have you prioritized this session?
- How do you intend to use the additional staffing?
- Who will lead this work? Is staff development required? If so, what?
- How will you know it is making a difference?

#### *Family learning / engagement*

- What is your plan to support families / children living in SIMD 1-3?

- What has the school put in place to ensure that high-quality teaching, challenge, support, and intervention are provided for all pupils?