

Tackling underachievement

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires schools to take action to address achievement gaps for minority ethnic pupils.

Who are underachieving groups in southwark?

Whilst pupils from all backgrounds achieve academic success in Southwark, local schools data, supported by national data, shows that:

- compared to Southwark pupils as a whole, pupils of Black Caribbean heritage, as a group, are underachieving at the later key stages
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils consistently score worse than all other groups at every key stage in every subject
 - there is the risk of underachievement for mixed heritage (White/Black Caribbean) pupils
- At secondary age two groups of EAL learners are recognised to be at particular risk of underachievement:
- new arrivals with interrupted previous education
 - some more advanced EAL learners whose specific literacy needs are being overlooked

A whole school approach

Pupils who are at risk of underachieving benefit from an inclusive school ethos where all school staff have high expectations of them. A clear lead from the headteacher on raising the attainment of BME pupils is essential to developing a whole school approach.

Schools need to be sensitive to where there may be tension between cultural or family values held by the parents or carers of pupils and the values of the school. By ensuring every pupil's entitlement the school can ensure the pupil is effectively supported.

Schools need to:

- recognise the needs of BME pupils and respect their cultural heritage
- engage BME pupils with a curriculum that is relevant to, and reflects the perspectives of, their communities
- develop effective teaching and learning strategies and make early interventions to tackle underachievement
- promote positive attitudes through the participation of BME pupils in all aspects of school life and the involvement of parents where their views are actively sought
- regularly provide staff with training on the achievement of BME pupils with performance management targets that specifically relate to the achievement of BME groups.



Targeted interventions

Targeted interventions are programmes or activities that focus on particular individuals or groups of pupils because they are at risk of under-achieving. Such interventions can make an impact on teaching and learning in a variety of ways, for example through:

- developing opportunities for partnership teaching and coaching
- providing additional support
- offering academic tutoring, especially small group tutoring
- catch up and booster classes
- focused enrichment activities
- mentoring programmes.

By identifying underachieving groups of pupils, schools can develop targeted interventions to close any achievement gaps.

Tips for developing effective targeted interventions

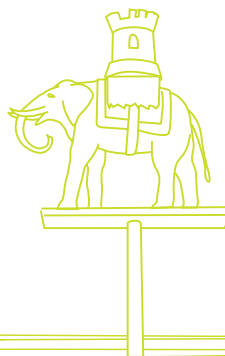
- Identify performance trends in relation to subjects, key stages, year groups or classes. Analysis by ethnicity, gender and first language in relation to overall pupil achievement helps identify any underachieving groups
- Agree a focus on a particular group and draw up an intervention plan to address any weaknesses that the pupils share
- Adapt teaching plans and schemes of work
- Set challenging targets and put support in place. Pupils need to be aware of what they have learned and what they need to learn next. Curricular target setting should inform this process
- Monitor by tracking pupils' progress and evaluating the impact, so that adjustments can be made to ensure effectiveness

A strategic approach to targeted interventions can ensure coordination and that any improvements are secured and embedded. Interventions need to be linked to objectives and strategies in the school improvement plan (SIP), inform the SEF and have a clear leadership structure.

➔ **GO the** *Using Data to Promote Achievement* **booklet for further guidance.**

Reflection

- In what ways do you consult and involve parents and carers to ensure any targeted intervention to raise attainment of a particular group is effective?



Partnerships with parents, carers and the community

Effective partnership with parents, carers and the community is a central requirement for the success of any programme to raise attainment. However, some BME parents feel that schools often ignore their views. Parent forums have proved to be effective ways of consulting parents and enlisting their support and participation. Close liaison and coordinated approaches with supplementary schools and community education initiatives have also contributed to increased parental involvement in targeted programmes.

When working with outside agencies and community organisations, always ensure proper accountability and continuously evaluate the impact of the partnership work.

➔ **GO TO the *Partnerships with Parents, Carers and Community* booklet for further guidance.**



Need more guidance?

Raising the Attainment of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Turkish heritage Pupils: A Management Guide
(DfES Secondary National Strategy, 2007)

Ensuring the Attainment of Pupils Learning English as an Additional Language: A Management Guide
(DfES Secondary National Strategy, 2007)

DCSF The Standards Site: Ethnic Minority Achievement
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/raising_achievement

Key links to current national strategies to raise the attainment of minority ethnic pupils.

Born to be Great: A Charter on Promoting the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys (National Union of Teachers, 2007)
www.teachers.org.uk/resources/pdf/Black-Youngsters.pdf

Understanding the Needs of Mixed Heritage Pupils
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/links_and_publications/Mixed_Heritage_Pupils_Rsch_04

DCSF sponsored research into the needs of White/Black Caribbean pupils.

Southwark's Agencies Supporting Schools Programme (ASSP)
www.assp.org.uk/Index.asp

The ASSP website provides useful guidance for schools working with outside agencies, including:

- Citizenship and PSHE – Working with External Contributors: Guidance for Schools
- Healthier School Partnership's Quality Assurance Framework – A Joint Planning and Evaluation Tool for Agencies and Schools Working Together

Case study: Surrey Square Junior School

Three-quarters of Surrey Square Junior Schools' pupils come from BME backgrounds, the largest group being of Black African heritage. More than a quarter of the pupils are at the early stages of learning English.



The school is committed to developing effective intervention programmes to raise achievement and closely monitor pupils' progress to identify pupils at risk. This includes the monitoring of data about attainment, attendance and behaviour, as well as the attitude and approach of the pupils. Through this process the school identified a group of boys in year 6 as being particularly vulnerable to underachievement.

Working in partnership with Hillna Fontaine, who also runs Black Young Enterprise (BYE), the school launched the pilot of Hillna's Skills for Life programme. The programme involves using sports coaching and 'emotional intelligence' techniques to teach skills that help the pupils develop positive attitudes about home, school, and learning.

As a part of the project, Hillna tests the children's capabilities around key emotional intelligence indicators, for example self-awareness and emotional management. Hillna uses this information to set targets and measure progress. This information is then used by the sports coach

to meet the individual needs of the participants. The basketball coach, Coach Grant, witnessed remarkable results:

"It's amazing just how much change I've seen in these boys over such a small timeframe. Their teamwork skills and self-confidence continue to blossom week in and week out."

Headteacher Liz Robinson thinks the project is highly effective:

"They were a very challenging group indeed and we are seeing significant changes in their behaviour, attitude and motivation."

Ofsted commented on how the school's strong links with the community are used to introduce black boys to positive role models, and also how staff at Surrey Square create interesting and lively opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and positive attitudes.

For students and their families this isn't just a project. It's a life-changing journey.

Hillna Fontaine