

17 May 2017

Sent by email to:

All Headteachers and Principals of South East Schools

Dear colleague

Last year, we wrote to all headteachers and principals in the south east region to explain the importance of our focus on disadvantaged pupils during inspections. Since then, we have done two key things: reviewed our inspections to look at the ways inspectors are gathering evidence for this aspect; run a number of events looking at what school leaders have done which has had a strong impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. I am now writing to update you and to share the results of this work. I hope you will see this as a clear signal of our commitment to working together to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.

### **Inspection practice**

After reviewing a range of inspections, the following are approaches inspectors are using to ensure the evidence they gather leads to reliable and clear judgements:

- focusing at least one key line of enquiry on provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- listening carefully to leaders' judgements and assertions and testing these out during the inspection
- considering the school's own current performance information for disadvantaged pupils carefully, comparing this with historical outcomes and other inspection evidence
- gathering evidence when observing in lessons about disadvantaged pupils' learning over time
- talking to disadvantaged pupils and scrutinising the quality of their work
- gathering evidence about the effectiveness of any additional provision
- evaluating the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils

Of course, every inspection is different, so this is certainly not a checklist. However, leaders have often agreed that such approaches have led to fair, balanced and clear judgements and, when relevant, accurate areas for improvement.

### **Approaches to improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils**

The events we have run over the last sixth months have involved a wide range of people, including:

- school leaders
- local authority leaders

- representatives from multi-academy trusts
- school improvement officers
- leaders of teaching school alliances
- diocesan representatives

Those involved have developed a number of resources aimed at supporting schools in improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. I am pleased to be able to share these with you in the attached file. They come to you not as 'Ofsted-approved' approaches, but as a set of resources created collaboratively by education professionals across the region. I would like to sincerely thank all of those involved for their contributions.

The materials comprise the following:

- *Features of practice in schools*: this is a distillation of the practice in a number of case study schools which were judged outstanding over the last year or so. It aims to synthesise the sorts of characteristics and actions which, in these schools, led to strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This information is presented in slide format in the hope that this might be useful for using with governors, leaders and staff teams.
- *Questions and activities to support self-evaluation*: these could be used by school leaders at all levels and school improvement professionals who work with schools.
- *Thinking template*: these resources are aimed at developing a long-term, strategic approach in schools or across groups of schools which is responsive to specific local contexts.
- *Working with parents and pupils*: some ideas for improving engagement and involvement.
- *Self- or peer-review – ideas for a toolkit*: a workbook which leaders at any level, including governors, might use; equally, leaders from different schools could collaborate to review each other's practice.

These materials are offered to you in an electronic format so that you can adapt and use them in any way you wish.

I hope these resources are useful and I send you my very best wishes for your work to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes further. We intend to continue this work, so if you have any further thoughts or ideas about how we might do this, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read "Chris Russell".

**Christopher Russell HMI**  
Regional Director, South East