



Addressing Poverty Through Leadership and Governance in Schools

Contents

Introduction	2
Questions To Ask Your School	2
Leadership and Visibility	3
What Citizens Say	3
What Your School Can Do?	3
Barriers	3
Guidance.....	3
Case Study.....	4
Understanding Community Needs	5
What Citizens Say	5
What Your School Can Do?	5
Barriers	5
Guidance.....	5
Case Study.....	6
References	7



Introduction

Leaders play an important role in implementing a whole-school approach to reducing the impacts of poverty (Child Poverty Action Group, 2021). Having a school ethos that is actioned by all staff demonstrates a school's efforts to reduce poverty. It can support families in overcoming stigma, allow them to seek support, and ultimately unlock the conversation around poverty in the community (Child Poverty Action Group Scotland, 2021).



Children North East, identified two areas within this context that need further work.

54% of governors **did not complete the Poverty Proofing© Questionnaire.**

23% of school staff where **not consulted or aware of Pupil Premium spend.**

Use this document to consider the impact of leadership and governance within your school with an income inequality lens.

Questions To Ask Your School

	Question	Page
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively do we create a poverty-aware culture within our school? To what extent do all staff share a commitment to anti-poverty strategies? How well do we show this commitment to families who may be struggling financially, through written communication and staff attitudes? 	<u>4</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What opportunities are there for pupils to talk about their life experiences and the impact of this on school? Do you know which families are finding things difficult financially? What are the impacts of poverty on the lives of children and families in your school? 	<u>6</u>



Leadership and Visibility

What Citizens Say



'Parents see the school as a social care hub and there is a high level of trust.'
(teacher)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers

Families don't know when they can talk to school and worry, they are too busy.

Staff don't feel like they have the time to prioritise anti-poverty work.

Families are worried to say they are struggling as **they think they will be treated differently.**

Staff are unaware of how decisions around pupil premium are made to inform what it is spent on.

Guidance

- **Senior Leaders being visible** in the morning at drop off and in the afternoon at pick up.
- **Cohesive messaging across all communication platforms** like newsletters, letters, emails, and through staff attitudes.

- Ensure it is a **priority for leadership** at a senior level, involving governors and Head Teachers.
- **Designating a "poverty lead".**
- Set up a **working group** to implement, monitor, and review activity.
- **Build in time to share insights, reflections and training.**

- A **'universal, targeted' approach** to reduce stigma so everyone who needs it can access support.
- There is a clear **expectation for academic achievement** for all children.

- **Share with staff how decisions are made about the Pupil Premium spending.**
- Do staff get the opportunity to **share any ideas they might have about Pupil Premium?**



Case Study

Bradford School



In the survey responses, **governors clearly understand their accountability to pupil premium** funding and can clearly describe the approach school takes.

They are always looking to gather the views of parents and staff to ensure that school continues to support families and raise expectations and aspiration. It is clear that Governance is a strong aspect of leadership.

There is a commitment to offering **educational visits for all children** at as low a cost as possible, despite increased costs of transport, as part of the ethos of raising aspirations and broadening horizons.



Understanding Community Needs

What Citizens Say



'The school's priority is that all children that leave our school having had the best start in their life, giving them opportunities to see the world and giving them first class resources to be able to make them independent. This goes for all children, regardless of their background or where they are in school.'
(governor)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers

Guidance

No families complain about costs and people seem to manage them.

- **Make no assumptions.**
- Lots of families don't disclose they are struggling and may go to great lengths to hide that they are short of money.
- Assumptions can mean asking families for money they can't easily afford.

Families are worried about talking to teachers as think they will be **judged by other parents.**

- When having conversations ensure discretion, invite families inside to **somewhere private where they can talk or book a follow-up.**
- Make families aware conversations are **confidential.**
- Communication style, have **an open and proactive approach** to talking with families.
- Be **non-judgmental** when having conversations with families.

Families assume school will not be able to help.

- Communicate to families the support available.
- Ask your school community **how they want to receive information.**
- Identify additional external funding, **Countryside Trust, Cinderella Project** and **Yorkshire Children Charity.**

The staff are **unsure of the impact** of the work they do, on the families in school.

- Evaluate if your changes are working.
- One way to do this is by **surveying** children or asking for feedback from parents.



Case Study

Bradford Schools



Leaders often go the extra mile in their support of families and children who have additional needs. Leadership in EYFS has a **focus on settling families into school life with an emphasis on language and food.**

Leaders have commissioned additional support in speech and language to address issues throughout the school and have invested in a sensory room the children with high needs. There is **additional pastoral support for SEND** children as they move into Y7, which helps to identify and remove barriers related to attendance.



References

Child Poverty Action Group, Children North East & National Education Union, (2021). *Turning the Page on Poverty: new resource for teachers and school staff* | CPAG. [online] Available at: <https://cpag.org.uk/news/turning-page-poverty-new-resource-teachers-and-school-staff>.

Child Poverty Action Group Scotland. (2021). Talking about Costs and Money at School A Cost of the School Day resource. Available at: https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/Talking%20about%20Costs%20and%20Money%20at%20School_1.pdf.



If you have any feedback on this document or good practice that your school is doing, **we would love to hear from you.**

Please email schools@mylivingwell.co.uk.

