The impact of an Achievement for All Pupil Premium Practice Review…

The Pupil Premium (PP) is a great resource when utilised effectively, closing the gap and improving outcomes for children and young people experiencing disadvantage. Ofsted and the DfE require assurance on the allocation and impact; schools need to know that PP is making a difference. Achievement for All (AfA) has a significantly impactful Pupil Premium Practice Review, which, working together with staff makes a huge difference. AfA says: ‘Every child should feel included in school regardless of background, challenge or need. Through participation and learning pupil premium children can join in, can learn. It is our responsibility to ensure that this happens.’

Culcheth High School in Warrington has reduced its KS4 pupil premium gap from an all-time high of 47% in 2014 to 17% in 2016. Peter Groves, the assistant head teacher puts it down to changing their focus from ‘equality’ to ‘equity’; their coach-led Achievement for All Pupil Premium Practice (PPP) Review gave them the confidence to do this.

Almost one fifth of students at Culcheth (11-16 year olds) qualify for pupil premium funding, even though it is in one of the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods of England. Rated good by Ofsted, Culcheth has always done well for its non-pupil premium students, but could not achieve the same for its less advantaged students.

In 2014, with responsibility for pupil premium students in his new role as assistant head teacher, Peter Groves studied the evidence base of what works and came up with areas where he believed change would improve pupil premium student outcomes.

‘Having a baseline pupil premium review with Tony (Achievement for All coach) affirmed that we were on the right lines. It was a very student centric experience. It’s too easy to get weighted down in data and spending money. But you need to say, is it having any impact on student outcomes?’

Before, we thought treating pupil premium students the same as the others was fair. After the PPP review, we realised we were focusing on equality rather than equity; we need to give these students more to get more out. So we changed our focus’.

Peter believes the changes which have had the most impact have been: a student-centred focus on barriers to learning, parental engagement and investing in teaching and learning strategies and staff CPD.

He put together his own training programme for all teaching staff. Presented within the context of ‘what the experts say’ (the Achievement for All PPP review and the research evidence base), staff were keen to be part of the change process. Added to this, the school introduced aid memoires. For example, if you have five pupil premium students in your class put them all sitting on the same table. Go to them first to check they understand the task; give them immediate feedback. Or, when marking books, mark those of the pupil premium students first.

‘Employing a KS4 pupil premium mentor, who only works with those students has had a big impact. And our parental engagement has improved as a direct result of the AfA PPP review. For example, we will be starting Saturday morning maths and science sessions soon for our year 11 pupil premium students. We say to parents, he/she is sitting on 3 and he/she needs to get a 5; parents support us on this. We have good teachers at the school and they take the sessions. Our destination data is showing that more pupils than ever from socio economic disadvantage are following an academic pathway at post 16’.

Peter believes the follow up Pupil Premium Practice Review two years later helped them to further hone their focus, concentrating more on sub-groups and parental engagement. ‘The Achievement for All review was very supportive. You feel you are working in partnership with the coach. And you feel empowered to say what you are doing and what your plans are. It’s a genuine collaboration.’

The Achievement for All Pupil Premium Practice review has supported schools all over England in getting the best outcomes for their most economically disadvantaged students. Quality assured and based on OFSTED expectations and outstanding professional practice, it empowers schools to evaluate the impact and make positive and constructive changes. The process takes 4-6 weeks, culminating in a presentation of the final evidence-based report, including areas of strength recommendations for improvement, to an audience of the school’s choice including senior leadership teams and Governors.

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