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| 17 September 2021 |
| Ref: Challenge Board 202122 001 |

Dear Headteachers and Chairs of Governors,

**From Mitigation to Success: Tackling Educational Disadvantage in Buckinghamshire**

In partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation’s Unity Research School, the Buckinghamshire Challenge Board have developed a plan for an exciting and innovative programme of support to enable schools across Buckinghamshire to raise the achievement and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

Over the last year, Buckinghamshire schools who have engaged with the Buckinghamshire Challenge Board’s ongoing online development programme have established an enhanced knowledge of and understanding about tackling educational disadvantage.  In order to maintain this momentum, we have devised a new and bespoke programme that will enable us to continue to build on last year’s experience and learning.  We have made progress, but there is still much to do.

**The Aims of the Programme**

For all schools across Buckinghamshire:

1. to understand the impact of educational disadvantage on their own pupils,
2. to understand how to best address long term disadvantage and the challenge of the pandemic on pupil attainment in their own schools,
3. to build a long term, sustainable, schools-led source of knowledge, experience and application in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Buckinghamshire.

Our programme in 2021-22 will be rooted in research evidence and seeks to provide opportunities to learn from successful practitioners and schools. By focusing sharply on schools’ own strategies, we will consider:

* What are the controllable factors impacting on the learning of disadvantaged pupils?
* What is within our gift to address these issues?
* How can we ensure strategies and activities are evidence informed ‘best bets’?
* How can we ensure that strategies and activities are implemented well?

**The Offer to Schools**

The programme will contain two key elements:

1. **Universal Offer** – a conference and workshop programme for all schools in Buckinghamshire.
2. **Targeted Offer** – focused support for one school per liaison group, to cascade learning.
3. **The Universal Offer**

At the end of the Universal Offer programme, all participating schools will have robust strategies for addressing disadvantage. It will align and support schools with DfE expectations on the use and impact of Pupil Premium and national good practice.

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| **Training Session 1***Lessons learnt, culture, curriculum & assessment.***1 October 2021****2.00-4.00pm** | **Training Session 2***Teaching, teacher development, intervention & wider approaches.***31 January 2022**  | **Intersessional Task** | **Training Session 3***Effective implementation and evaluation.***20 May 2022**  |
| * What have we learnt about the impact of educational disadvantage in Buckinghamshire schools during 20/21?
* Emerging plans to address this - successes and challenges.
* The active ingredients of an effective strategy.
* The importance of culture & curriculum.
* Assessment - diagnosis over assumption.
* Accountability update.
 | * Evidence informed teaching with a focus on - metacognition and self-regulation, vocabulary, oral language, attention and memory.
* Embedding evidence informed teaching through high quality. teacher development.
* Effective intervention strategies.
* Wider approaches and the evidence for them.
 | * Submitting strategy plan for individual feedback.
* Signposting on system wide support.
 | * Refining our implementation plans.
* Effective evaluation.
* Governance.
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| **Workshop Meeting 1****1 November 2021****11.00am – 1.00pm** | **Workshop Meeting 2****11 February 2022**  |  | **Workshop Meeting 3****10 June 2022**  |
| Following day 1, schools with a similar focus will meet to:* Discuss new strategies and approaches that are being trialled.
* Share successes and challenges in terms of reach, acceptability and fidelity.
* Agree next steps.
 | Following day 2, schools with a similar focus will meet to:* Review the strategies and approaches that are being trialled.
* Share successes and challenges in terms of reach, acceptability and fidelity.
* Agree next steps
 | Following day 3, schools with a similar focus will meet to:* Share and discuss their implementation plan.
* Focus on how this will be evaluated.
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These sessions are online, available to all schools and will last two hours each. Schools will be asked to nominate a member of staff to attend all 6 sessions throughout the academic year, commit to undertaking the required intersessional tasks and disseminate the learning throughout their school.

1. **Targeted Offer**

The aim of the targeted offer is to develop a network of skilled and expert **Side by Side Disadvantaged Champion Schools** across the county, who have successfully implemented strategies for addressing disadvantage in their own schools. These Side by Side Disadvantaged Champion Schools will provide a long term, sustainable, schools-led source of knowledge, experience and application in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Buckinghamshire, targeted at (but not limited to) supporting schools within their liaison group.

Each liaison group will be asked to nominate a school to become the **Disadvantaged Champion School** for their group. The School Improvement Team will be asking liaison groups for both a preferred school and a second-choice school so that they can review and select a range of school age-phase, sizes, characteristic and geographical locations across the county. This will be discussed in more detail at the first round of liaison groups this autumn term.

**Disadvantaged Champion Schools**

**The Benefits for a Disadvantaged Champion School:**

* Each Disadvantaged Champion School will benefit from an individual **‘Disadvantaged Strategy Progress Review’** in the Spring (or Summer) term of 2021/22. This will entail:
	+ A whole day school visit by the Unity School Partnership Adviser for Improving Outcomes for Disadvantaged Learners and Project Lead, Marc Rowland, with involvement from a Buckinghamshire Council School Improvement Adviser.
	+ A focus on how the school can make the best use of Pupil Premium and support wider efforts to address educational disadvantaged.
	+ A next steps plan for the school.
* Accreditation as a **Side by Side Disadvantaged Champion School**, in December 2022, following successful completion of all aspects of the programme.
* Training for the school’s nominated staff member as their **Disadvantaged Pupil Champion,** to become an ABLE (Astra & Buckinghamshire Leader of Education) within the Side by Side model of school support.

**The Commitment Required of a Disadvantaged Champion School:**

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| **A Named Disadvantaged Pupil Champion**  | * Provide an individual named lead within the school to participate in the programme and become the school’s Disadvantaged Pupil Champion, preferably the Pupil Premium/Disadvantaged Pupil Lead for the school or a member of the SLT. The named lead to undertake ABLE training.
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| **Universal Sessions** | * Active participation and engagement at all sessions from the above, named member of staff.
* Pre and post session tasks completed by the named member of staff with participation from SLT.
* Participation from other members of staff and governors (particularly the Pupil Premium governor) is encouraged.
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| **Disadvantaged Strategy Review**  | * A self-evaluation to be complete prior to the visit.
* Full participation in the day, led by the named lead but to also include senior leaders, a governor, a small group of teachers, a small group of support staff/anyone involved in pupil premium funded activity, a small group of pupils and a small group of parents (if possible).
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| **Shared Learning** | * The Champion School will be required to share the learning from the Disadvantaged Strategy Review with their liaison group and more widely with schools across Buckinghamshire. This will require the sharing of the review findings, the school’s subsequent final Disadvantaged Strategy document, governor input and evaluation of strategy impact through:
	+ Contribution to a publication ‘*Addressing disadvantage in Buckinghamshire. What are they key principles we need to see in schools to effectively address this issue’?*
	+ Presentation at a conference on the same theme in Autumn 2022.
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| **Side by Side Disadvantaged Network Groups** | * Participation by the school’s Disadvantaged Pupil Champion at termly Side by Side Disadvantaged Network Groups, led by Buckinghamshire Council, for at least 2 years.
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| **Champion Deployment** | * Deployment of the named Disadvantaged Pupil Champion to support at least one other school within the liaison group, to raise the attainment and achievement of pupil premium/disadvantaged pupils.
* If/when deployed through the Buckinghamshire Council Side by Side program, the Champion School will be compensated in line with Side by Side deployment rates.
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| **Liaison Group Project 2021/22** | * To be the lead school within the liaison group, co-ordinating the delivery of the liaison group project for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
* The focus for this project will be on raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, particularly focusing on implementing an element of learning from the 2020/21 Closing the Gap conference and workshop programme that particularly meets the needs of local learners.
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**Champion School Criteria:**

* Represent the 18 liaison groups across Buckinghamshire,
* Not be graded inadequate,
* Have a stable Senior Leadership Team,
* Have a gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers,
* Primary, secondary and special schools are all welcome to participate.

**Project Outcomes**

As a result of this project, the following key outcomes will be delivered:

1. Publication of a **Buckinghamshire Disadvantaged Strategy** – ‘**Addressing Disadvantage in Buckinghamshire’**. This will set out the key principles for schools to effectively address this issue. It will be co-authored using local and national expertise. This will contain the learning from:
* the conferences and workshops,
* the outcomes and (short term) evaluations of impact from the 18 Disadvantaged Strategy Reviews,
* the findings from the year one liaison group projects, and
* case studies from schools (including a governance focus).
1. A **conference** during Autumn term 2022 to launch the Buckinghamshire Disadvantaged Strategy and share the learning across all schools in Buckinghamshire, with input from local schools, national good practice and expert input.
2. The establishment of a **Side by Side Disadvantaged Champion Network**, with coverage across all 18 liaison groups, to provide long term, sustainable schools-led source of knowledge, experience and application in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils in Buckinghamshire, targeted at (but not limited to) supporting schools within their liaison group.
3. The establishment and development of **Side by Side Disadvantaged Network Groups**, for the Champions to regularly meet, share learning and support best practice in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils across all schools.

**ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND LIAISON GROUPS TO TAKE NOW**

1. **Universal Offer:** The School Improvement Team will be sending out a survey to all schools within the next week asking you to sign up to the universal offer; the Buckinghamshire Challenge Board would encourage all schools to take up this offer. Please add the dates outlined in the table above into your diary, **the first conference is at 2.00-4.00pm on Friday, the 1st October.**
2. **Targeted Offer:** The School Improvement Team will be asking schools to consider a first choice and reserve school to become your liaison group Side by Side Disadvantaged Champion School. More information on this will be available in the liaison groups.

The Buckinghamshire Challenge Board and Unity Research Schools are delighted to be offering such a comprehensive and research-based programme of support, and we look forward to working together as a community of schools to build on last year’s development programme and collectively raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, both for now and the future.

Yours sincerely,

**Gareth Drawmer**

Head of Achievement & Learning

Buckinghamshire Council