

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment
Recommendation Lead:	Gill McCleave

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 6:	Refine teaching strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and ➤ listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of ➤ the individual child.
Recommendation 7:	Developing speaking and listening skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking ➤ and listening skills, for example through debating clubs. ➤ Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills
Responsibility	Gill McCleave
Date: 12 November 2025	November 2025
Agreed Action:	Research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing LA training and support for teachers, with particular regard to speaking & listening and adaptive teaching. • Use data to identify schools (maintained and academy) where the gap in educational achievement is already narrower than the LA average. Identify what makes a difference in terms of teaching strategies. • Gather information on schools/MATs that are already working on developing speaking and listening/oracy in the classroom and/or through clubs. • As it becomes available, integrate information about new national curriculum proposals into future planning. Communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact school improvement leads from the MATs, as part of the research actions identified above, to ensure that they are aware of the aims of the plan and are able to contribute to sharing of good practice, targeting schools, etc. • Share aims of the plan through relevant meetings, particularly Education Matters (primary leaders), Primary English/Maths Subject Leaders Network, Secondary Heads Group and School Improvement

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	<p>Leaders Network. Seek engagement in developing next steps & promote regional and national opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt communication strategy to ensure that training and support available through the LA, with a focus on adaptive teaching, speaking & listening, is effectively promoted – and with a particular focus on targeted schools. <p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Our Children, Our Future' conference – will include input on the importance of speaking & listening, drawing on existing work as part of the 'Stockton-on-Tees Talks' programme Half-termly training and networking meeting for leaders from targeted schools. Launch of revised training and support programme for 25-26 LA debate competition for schools – details to be decided following research and communication activities LA public speaking/poetry by heart festival – details to be decided following research and communication activities. Conference for autumn 2025 – oracy focus
Agreed Success Measure:	<p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research will secure a clear baseline about what is already available across of services and what gaps there may be. Information is used to plan future training and support, aligned to need. Data will show which schools have been successful in narrowing the gap for educational achievement. Visits/discussions with school leaders will identify the strategies that have been most successful in the classroom – and any particular leadership approaches which have been used to secure the pedagogy. The information gathered will be used to develop further strategic plans to promote sharing of good practice Advice and guidance to schools will be up to date, reflecting national requirements as well as local priorities. <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved communication with academies and a more joined up approach to improving the overall quality of education across Stockton – with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in educational achievement. Widespread awareness of the importance of speaking & listening/oracy as part of a strategy in narrowing the gap. Schools engage with planned events. Schools have timely information about the advice, training and support available to them. Participation in training increases. <p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees have increased awareness of what is available to support children and young people to develop their communication skills – through the programme and more widely through Speech & Language UK. Leaders feel empowered and supported to implement change and provide support/challenge to colleagues. Shared evidence of impact. Training programme is easy to access. Training programme reflects the priorities identified and will support the implementation of the new national curriculum.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils from participating schools have opportunities to participate in debate with others – in a non-competitive environment as well as the competition. Raised profile of debate. Pupils from target schools have the opportunity to participate in a range of speaking activities. Increased confidence and enjoyment reported by participating pupils. Opportunities for local schools to showcase good practice. Input from national organisations such as Voice 21, National Literacy Trust, etc.
Evidence of Progress: (12 November 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and data analysis undertaken as planned, although time available limited the amount of opportunity to visit schools that already had a gap between attainment for disadvantaged (DS) and non-disadvantaged (NDS) pupils that was smaller than average. Have maintained emphasis on key recommendations throughout engagement with schools and school improvement leads from MATs, however very limited engagement with some MATs Primary Oracy Network is now well established, but it has not been possible for the Secondary Oracy Network to start CPD programme continues to evolve, and will respond to changes in the National Curriculum and Ofsted inspection framework.
Assessment of Progress: (include explanation if required) (12 November 2025)	<p>2: On track</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Oracy Network has been fairly successful. 30 individual schools have attended at least one meeting, plus members of the central team of 4 MATs together representing 17 schools in Stockton. Data analysis comparing data from 2024 and 2025 shows that on a school level the DS/NDS gap varies widely from year to year – which is likely due to factors such as attendance, SEND needs, etc., rather than quality of teaching. For example, in one large school the gap was - 53.6% in 2024 and +6.6% in 2025. Of 15 schools identified on 2024 data as having a gap smaller than the national average, only 4 are in this position in 2025. Others have all widened, or cohorts are too small to be statistically significant.
Evidence of Impact: (12 November 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oracy is being prioritised in more schools, though still at quite an early stage of development. Several schools are developing policies and structuring curriculum plans to include a focus on supporting oracy development As of 2.12.25, 12 schools are booked to take part in the first 'Big Event' – a Poetry Slam, to be held on 28th January. Schools are increasingly sharing their own case studies as part of the network meetings. This encourages sharing of good practice and resources, as well as highlighting some real impact for individual schools (e.g. oracy to support learning in maths, social and emotional benefits of talk, development of debate skills, changing the reading curriculum to strengthen opportunities for discussion, etc.) Although outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved in reading and are broadly the same as the previous year in maths, outcomes have dipped in writing. As a result, overall, the gap at the end of KS2 remains wider than the national average increasing from 22% to 24%.

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Recommendation 10:	Enhance curriculum development Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment. ➤ Innovate a local curriculum.
Responsibility	Gill McCleave
Date: 12 November 2025	Autumn 2025
Agreed Action:	Research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify strengths and weaknesses in the current curriculum offer, with a particular focus on KS4 and KS5 (link to recommendation 11) and NEET information Link with a number of schools to identify where curriculum planning links to employment opportunities Where this is evident, explore how this supports students aspirations Analyse NEET figures across schools to determine whether there is any link to curriculum or CEIAG offer Clarify the local labour market – projecting 5 to 10 years ahead. Identify likely areas of growth and knowledge/skills needed. As it becomes available, integrate information about new national curriculum proposals into future planning. Communication: Develop a strategy to promote information about the local labour market within the education sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with curriculum leaders and careers leads from secondary schools and colleges to share research findings and AI recommendations. Focus on identifying strategies for moving forward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we complement your curriculum with the local labour market? How can we develop a local/bespoke innovative curriculum offer? Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Link with recommendation 7) Develop bespoke oracy programme to support curriculum links to future employment Pilot project with 2/3 schools & colleges to develop an integrated career/curriculum programme – aimed at ensuring more explicit links between education and future careers. Pilot new curriculum events such as Dragons' Den events – focus is on core students introduction to the world of work.
Agreed Success Measure:	Research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research will secure a clearer overview about what is available in the local area schools and colleges and how this links to future employment Linked with the action above, research will guide subsequent focus areas for development and curriculum links. Advice and guidance to schools will be up to date, reflecting national requirements as well as local priorities.

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	<p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation from schools/colleges serving the most deprived communities in Stockton. • Identified pathway forward. <p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive uptake and feedback from schools participating in the oracy programme. • Positive feedback from schools and CYP involved in the pilot project. • Students can articulate a clearer view of what they need/want to do to achieve career goals.
Evidence of Progress: (12 November 2025)	<p>Much of the planning in this area has been superseded by the Post-16 partnership work.</p> <p>Delivery of the Post 16 Partnership strategy has been refined into four priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers with Business and Industry • Communications and Marketing • Excellence for All • Transition <p>Each priority is aligned to a working group, led by a Post 16/ SBC senior leader. The Careers Working Group is led by the SBC Team Manager for Careers. The Careers Working Group has initiated Careers Network meetings for all secondary and Post Providers, as well as colleagues from our Economic Development team based in the Employment Hub. As a result these networks draw on local, regional and national research to extend Careers Leaders awareness of wide ranging opportunities in Stockton's local labour markets and enhance further curriculum opportunities.</p> <p>Three Skills for Success Pilots Programmes have been designed and delivered which aimed to inspire secondary-aged students who were beginning to disengage from education. Embedded in these programmes were employability skills including a range of oracy skills including presentations and social skills for team building.</p>
Assessment of Progress: (include explanation if required) (12 November 2025)	<p>2: On track</p> <p>A range of positive developments have been made, with specific reference to the Careers Leaders Network and Skills for Success Programme.</p> <p>The voice of the pupils and staff has informed some highly positive evaluations and yielded national recognition from the DfE RISE Bid.</p> <p>We look forward to building on these strengths to enhance and extend these offers further for a wider range of stakeholders.</p>
Evidence of Impact: (12 November 2025)	<p>Initial attendance at the Careers Leaders Network included senior leaders from four of our thirteen secondary schools as well as colleagues from our Employment Hub, local business and industry . This has now increased to eight secondary schools, with all schools including the three special schools and the three private schools in the Borough stating they wish to be involved in the Network. All schools are committed to working collaboratively on the five priorities for the Network: Develop a directory of businesses; develop off-the-shelf resources to embed Careers in the curriculum; develop a Parents' Guide to Careers; explore and develop robust plans for KS3 work experience activities; explore and develop robust plans for KS4 work experience placements.</p>

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	<p>Attendees reported that they were more aware of local business and industry opportunities and were clearer about how school curriculums could be enhanced to reflect this.</p> <p>Skills for Success pilots evidenced strong impact on a wide range of measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance/ punctuality • Behaviour • Engagement • Aspiration • Self-esteem • Confidence • Academic outcomes. <p>As a result of such strong progress from baselines measures, we have successfully secured a £31K bid from the DfE to develop this programme further via the DfE RISE programme.</p>
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Recommendation 13:	<p>Enhance skills to respond to special needs</p> <p>Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools. ➤ Promote vocational opportunities.
Responsibility	Gill McCleave
Date: 12 November 2025	November 2025
Agreed Action:	<p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the research already conducted as part of the appreciative enquiry to identify what schools feel they need to enhance the skills of staff in these areas. • Build on the research already conducted as part of the appreciative enquiry to identify patterns of concern through SENDIASS contacts. • Identify existing LA training and support for teachers, with particular regard to SEN, CPP and EBSA. Identify any evidence of impact, including uptake. • Review school/MAT participation in available training against other available data (attendance, suspensions/exclusions, performance) • Identify the vocational opportunities already available to pupils in KS3 – KS5 <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt communication strategy to ensure that training and support available through the LA, with a focus on SEN, CPP and EBSA is effectively promoted – and with a particular focus on targeted schools. • Signpost schools with a low uptake of existing training and concerns identified in the data to specific training. • Share available training and support with School Improvement Leads from MATs, as well as with SENCOs, through regular network meetings.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share key messages from SENCo briefings with Headteachers/Principals <p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Our Children, Our Future' conference – will include input on the link between mental health and disadvantage, providing some links to Young Minds Change the format of SENCo briefing so that there are increased opportunities for sharing expertise across schools
Agreed Success Measure:	<p>Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools' needs reflected in future training/support offer Clear overview of the nature and content of training available to schools from a range of services. <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have timely information about the advice, training and support available to them. Participation in training increases. Evidence of impact increases. Improved strategic support for SENCos <p>Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees have increased awareness of what is available to support children and young people with SEND and/or ACEs, and the links with disadvantage. SENCos are better informed about what is working well and are able to network and share more effectively.
Evidence of Progress: (12 November 2025)	<p>Training programme in place – funded by DBV. Marketing improved. Format of SENCo briefing has been improved to promote discussion and there has been a move towards working in clusters. More regular feedback to HT (who attend Education Matters)</p>
Assessment of Progress: (include explanation if required) (12 November 2025)	<p>2: On track A wide-ranging programme of continuing professional development (CPD) was offered to all staff in all schools and early years settings across Stockton on Tees. Delivered at no cost to participants, this training was made possible through grant funding received via the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. From January 2025, when marketing of the programme was improved, there has been generally good and certainly increased uptake of the CPD available.</p>
Evidence of Impact: (12 November 2025)	<p>In total, 469 people have attended training delivered through the programme. Feedback on CPD has been generally positive but there are a number of key areas where the programme needs to be developed more fully. Sustainability also needs to be more fully considered when the DBV funding is no longer available.</p>

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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