

Equalities Monitoring Education and Learning

Annual Report – 2023/24



Published:

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1. Introduction and service overview

Education & Learning sits within Bracknell Forest Council's People Directorate and aims to ensure that children, young people and adults achieve the best possible outcomes for their lives through education, advice and guidance, promoting lifelong learning and securing access to support and, where necessary, specialist placements.

The strategic direction and work of service areas within Education & Learning in 2023-24 is underpinned by the Learning Improvement Strategy, which sets out clearly how we will all work together to make a real, positive and lasting difference for all children and young people in Bracknell Forest.

The strategy is centred around seven themes:

- Access Inspirational Leadership
- Get the Best Start in Life
- Access a High -Quality School Place
- A bespoke Curriculum for our children
- Thrive in Learning and not be 'left behind'
- Be proud to Succeed
- Develop Skills and Raise Aspirations at Post 16

The strategy was co-produced with school leaders and governors setting out the key roles and responsibilities for all which are tightly focused on the key areas which we believe will 'unlock opportunities' for all children and young people in Bracknell Forest.

Key priorities within the Learning Improvement Strategy

There is an acknowledgment of the need to further raise expectations through improving the following priorities:

- Diminishing the Difference for Disadvantaged Pupils
- Continuing to raise outcomes at all stages so that they are above the national for all pupils.

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure that the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents. This report looks at the work of each service area within Education & Learning, considering access to service, outcomes of data analysis where appropriate, how services have ensured due regard to our equality objectives, as well as how key equality and diversity issues highlighted are being addressed.

2. Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

Early Years' Service

Introduction

The Early Years service consists of 4 teams.

- Early Years Quality Improvement
- Early Years Business and Family Information service
- Child Development Centre (CDC)
- Information, advice and support service (IASS)

The services delivered by these teams are for:

- Early Years and Childcare settings (circa 175)
- Children aged 0-14 (0-25 for CYP with SEND) and their families.

Both statutory and non-statutory duties are undertaken

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

The Early Years Quality Improvement, Business and family information services are universal. These services offer equality of opportunity to all to access.

Leaflets and information for families are available in other languages on request.

All documents and agreements published on the Bracknell Forest website related to childcare and the free entitlements have been accessibility checked and, in some cases, rewritten to ensure they are accessible for all.

Preparation for the expansion to early years and childcare commenced in preparation for new duties in 2024/25.

The below tables details the ethnicity of children accessing the early years entitlements.

Row Labels	Count of ETHNICITY
ABAN - Bangladeshi	0.72%
AIND - Indian	0.15%
AOTH - Any Oth Asian b'ground	3.33%
APKN - Pakistani	2.00%
BAFR - Black African	0.45%
BCRB - Black Caribbean	1.13%
BOTH - Any Oth Black b'ground	0.11%
CHNE - Chinese	0.53%
CHNE - Chinese	0.57%
MOTH - Any Oth Mixed b'ground	3.44%
MWAS - White and Asian	1.55%
MWBA - White and Black African	0.72%
MWBC - White & Black Caribbean	0.79%
NOBT - Info not yet obtained	5.03%
OOTH - Any other Ethnic Group	1.36%
REFU - Refused	1.59%
WBRI - White British	70.26%
WIRI - White Irish	0.34%
WOTH - Any Oth White b'ground	5.90%
WROM - Gypsy/Roma	0.04%
Grand Total	100.00%

The Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported over 700 children offering them the opportunity to access a range of activities that they may not have been able to access without it. This included 3 groups specific for children with SEND.

'My three girls had an amazing week they loved it so much said it was best week of their life , they want to go every holiday now all I can say is a massive thank you from bottom of my heart brough confidence to my kids and show the so much love and support and gave me such relief knowing they were in the best care while I had to work and we will see you all again soon.'

'Both my children have SEN needs so it's always worrying for me to take them to a new place and especially when I'm leaving them. They absolutely loved their day with the xxx so much, so they wanted to go the next day. The staff were amazing with both my boys. I could not praise them enough for making my children feel included and welcome. I am so grateful for these programs especially as a single parent and money being tight, so my children could enjoy a new experience I am trying thankful and grateful for them to have this wonderful opportunity and to enjoy it as much as they did.'

The Quality Improvement team have also recently started delivering parent sessions to support children's personal, social and emotional development (5 to Thrive). Below are some comments from attendees.

'Really useful training on a new school of thought about systemic changes to behaviour and really understanding how you can help your child. Kind and empathetic trainers who have vast experience in early years - grateful for their wisdom.'

I found it really engaging and so helpful. Everything was explained really well with lots of tips and examples to take away. I also really enjoyed hearing the science behind the model and learning more around how children's brain develop. Overall I found this such great talk and really relevant, I learnt a lot. I've already put some of it into practice since the talk!

CDC

The CDC is a referral service for children aged 0-5 years with or potentially with SEND. Referrals are accepted from professionals supporting the family or families can self-refer. Key aims of the service are to support effective early identification and intervention and advance equality of opportunity for both the children and families using the service. The service continues to see an increase in referrals.

Open cases:

Q1 2023-24 -286

Q4 2023-24 – 312

Work is undertaken to support children access their early years entitlements and undertake successful transitions from home to early years and from early years to reception.

Ethnicity of service users:

Ethnicity	%
African	2.033898
Any other black	0.677966

Any other ethnic	0.677966
Any other mixed	2.711864
Any other white	3.728814
Bangladeshi	1.016949
Chinese	0.338983
Indian	2.711864
Nepalese	3.728814
Not known	12.20339
Other	1.016949
Pakistani	1.694915
White Black African	1.694915
White Asian	2.033898
White black Caribbean	2.372881
White British	60.67797
White Irish	0.677966
Total	100

The CDC regularly receives feedback from parents/carers, below are examples of these:

'I recognise how much you do for us. Words cannot describe how grateful we are to have you. Thank you for all your support. I don't think both myself or R would have known where to start. You have guided us through the unknown and not always with positive vibes'

'Such a fantastic service. That is very much needed when you start your journey with a SEND child. R has been our star on some very challenging day and I couldn't be more thankful for the support and help along the way.'

IASS

Home - Bracknell Forest IASS

IASS provides free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support to children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs/disability and their parents/carers in a confidential setting so they can make informed decisions.

The service is self-referral and is widely promoted across education settings, health establishments, internal council services and voluntary organisations. There is a close link with the Bracknell Parent Carer Forum (PCF).

Numbers accessing the service are reported in academic years:

September 2023-120 cases were currently still open

New referrals September 2023-August 2024 = 447

Supporting CYP with SEND to access services and achieve their potential is key to the service.

Below are examples of compliments received:

To have a point of contact who you can turn to and ask what the legalities are of any child/school related situation has been a huge benefit to me,

I feel like I always have someone there to guide me and it's a HUGE deal in the SEN world, to always have advice and support.

I'm truly blown away by your service and the level of commitment you gave to me.

Early Years service summary:

The activities undertaken by all teams within the service aim to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Some services are designed for specific groups of children and families to intentionally support the less advantaged, for example, HAF.

Services delivered at the CDC offer opportunities for parents and children to meet and develop relationships in a safe secure environment, enabling confidence to access a range of universal services.

IASS ensure parents of children and young people (CYP) with SEND and CYP with SEND have access to information , advice and guidance to enable them to ensure they have access to ensure they are able to have their needs met and have equality of access to services.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a significant increase both nationally and locally of children with SEND. This is reflected in the number of referrals received by both the CDC and IASS. These services are well respected and valued by parents as they place the child and young person at the heart of everything they do, supporting them to access the right services at the right time and achieve their potential.

Standards & Effectiveness

Introduction

The Standards & Effectiveness Service consists of a team of Standards & Effectiveness Partners (STEPS) and a Governor Services team who work closely with schools not only to ensure fulfilment of the council's statutory duties in promoting high standards but to work in partnership with schools to identify ways to improve outcomes, share best practice and contribute to system led improvement. The roles and responsibilities of the service contribute to all seven areas within the Learning Improvement Strategy.

All maintained schools have access to a universal offer of school improvement support services. Schools of concern, including those in an Ofsted category, receive additional support tailored to their needs, planned and agreed with the local authority and the school. Schools and settings have the option of purchasing additional support to meet their own specific needs and priorities through a Service Level Agreement.

The priorities for the reporting year are set out below:

1. Ensure all **targeted schools are on track to achieve good or remain good at their next inspection** and schools confident with the Ofsted framework, through ongoing cycle of school improvement visits and universal and bespoke training.
2. Continue to **raise expectations** across the borough for all pupils, particularly our **most vulnerable, disadvantaged learners** and high prior attaining pupils through training aimed at raising expectations, and through bespoke reviews of provision for SEND and PPG pupils.
3. Ensure **all schools in Bracknell Forest are inclusive to all pupils through a comprehensive SEND peer review programme**, built on successful EEF trial of secondary SEND reviews.
4. Further enhance the quality of EYFS provision in school settings and **ensure effective transition into the EYFS**.
5. **Ensure gaps in learning resulting from the pandemic are addressed** through responsive teaching and effective curriculum design in schools.
6. Maintain a sharp focus on the implementation of a **coherent, broad and rich curriculum** which enables pupils to achieve well and is enhanced by effective support for transition. Focus on the development of subject expertise and the role of the subject leader.

Within all of these priorities, there is a focus on equality, but priorities 2 and 3 specifically aim to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for those with a protected characteristic, those who are vulnerable, and those who are disadvantaged due to low family income.

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

For the reporting period 2023-24:

The Standards and Effectiveness service has met the three general aims of the equality duty through the delivery of the priorities set out above. Throughout the reporting year, all school effectiveness activities have been delivered through the lens of those pupils who

may experience barriers to their progress and outcomes, in order to ensure that *all* pupils have equal access to opportunity and are free from discrimination.

Key activities to address this have included:

- Continued focus on reading as gateway to success in all subjects and lever for social justice.
- Second year of delivery of an OU/UKLA Teacher Reading Group to improve reading for pleasure, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes in reading remain above national.
- Training delivered to primary and secondary school headteachers on effective teaching of reading, particularly for the lowest attaining pupils.
- Headteacher briefings focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, including through effective transition, followed up with school visits to discuss the schools' work to achieve this and make recommendations.
- Termly Pupil Premium networks were well attended and positively received, focusing on best practice on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and creating a sense of belonging in our schools.
- 24 schools participated in the SEND peer review programme, carrying out a thorough self-evaluation and a peer review with a partner school to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to provision for pupils with SEND, and all 24 schools have created an action plan to improve provision. Seven of 10 schools inspected since January 2023 received very positive comments re: provision or ambition for pupils with SEND, and one noted improvement. 84 per cent of schools reported value in terms of improving provision for pupils with SEND.
- EYFS, English and mathematics network meetings to have a strong focus on addressing identified gaps and needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Spring term STEP visits had had a focus on ensuring that all pupils see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and in the literature used in schools, drawing on the CLPE annual 'Reflecting Realities' reports.
- School games development plan focuses on widening opportunities for pupils with SEND, and increasing participation of under-represented groups in sport.

Breakdown of outcomes via key pupil groups:

Comparisons have been made below with outcomes for different pupil groups within Bracknell Forest, and the same group nationally. It should be noted that where these comparisons relate to a *nationally underachieving group*, these need to be viewed with caution. It is also important to compare the outcomes for these groups with those for 'all pupils'.

Some of the cohort sizes within ethnic groups are very small, e.g. black pupils, and are subject to cohort-based fluctuations.

Primary attainment 2023

Key Stage 2 Combined reading, writing and mathematics

Indicators	BF average %	National average %	BF Above or below national
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All pupils	61.6	59	+2.6
Male	58.3	55.7	+2.6
Female	65	62.5	+2.5
Disadvantaged	34.8	43.9	-9.1
Non-disadvantaged	66	66.2	-0.2
EHCP	12	8.4	+3.6
SEN support	26.7	23.5	+3.2
Asian	80.2	66.2	+14
Black	78.1	59.7	+18.4
Mixed	66.3	60.8	+4.9
White	59	58.5	+0.5
Any other ethnic group	48.6	54.6	-6

At key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils continue to be a key priority. Attainment for pupils with SEND is higher than that of the same group nationally, but remains significantly lower than that of their peers. Asian pupils continue to achieve strong outcomes, and outcomes for black pupils in 2023 are high, but this figure has fluctuated over the past three years and is based on a small cohort.

Secondary attainment and progress 2023

Indicators	BF average	National average %	BF Above or below national
Attainment 8			
All pupils	46.3	46.3	0
Male	44.7	44.1	+0.6
Female	48.1	48.6	-0.5
Disadvantaged	33	35.1	-2.1
Non-disadvantaged	49	50.3	-1.3
EHCP	17.6	14	+3.6
SEND support	32.9	33.2	-0.3
Progress 8			
All pupils	-0.01	-0.03	+0.02
Male	-0.12	-0.17	+0.05
Female	0.12	0.12	0
Disadvantaged	-0.63	-0.57	-0.06
Non-disadvantaged	0.12	0.17	-0.05
EHCP	-0.99	-1.12	+0.13
SEND support	-0.46	-0.45	-0.01

At key stage 4, the progress and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils continue to be a priority. While the progress and attainment of pupils with EHCPs is above that of the same group nationally, this is a nationally low attaining group, and continues to be a priority.

Indicators	BF average	National average %	BF Above or below national
Attainment 8 by ethnic group:			
Asian	59	53.4	+5.6
Black	47.5	46.7	+0.8

Chinese	-	-	-
Mixed	47.2	46.8	+0.4
White	45.1	45.1	0
Progress 8 by ethnic group:			
Asian	0.68	0.53	+0.15
Black	0.15	0.22	-0.07
Chinese	-	-	-
Mixed	0.03	-0.04	+0.07
White	-0.07	-0.14	+0.07

(Where numbers are less than 5, data has been excluded to maintain confidentiality)

The progress and attainment of Asian pupils in Bracknell Forest continues to be higher than their Asian peers nationally, and higher than all other ethnic groups in Bracknell Forest. White pupils have the lowest attainment and progress.

Conclusion

The delivery of training and professional development for schools provided by the service will continue to focus on addressing the underperformance of key groups. Ongoing analysis of pupil progress and the evaluation of provision and practice will inform the work of STEPs in addressing individual school priorities. The team will continue to work in close partnership with school leaders to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, and that barriers to progress are tackled.

SEND and Specialist Support Services

Introduction

SEND and Specialist Support Services work with children & young people who either have SEN and Disabilities within the 0 – 16 age range, and in need of additional support (SEND Support) or are a child looked after and in the care of Bracknell Forest Council. Statutory SEND services work with children and young people up until the age of 25.

The Services contributes to achieving the Council's priority to 'Thrive in Learning and not be left behind'. The Service consists of:

- Statutory SEND Team
- Educational Psychology Service
- SEMH and Behaviour Team
- Support for Learning
- Autism Support & Outreach
- Access to Education
- Safeguarding our Schools

The services adopt a co-production and person central model of working with parents and carers and works in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations to achieve improved outcomes for the children & young people we support and their families.

Access to Service

All services work closely with schools, particularly SENDCos, Designated Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads to support them in ensuring they have access to resource and support needed to effectively meet the needs of children and young people. The Bracknell Graduated Approach has recently been updated and relaunched to all education providers to provide a structure of ordinarily available provision that should be provided for all pupils at SEND support level.

Children with more complex needs in mainstream school, receive additional support tailored to their needs, planned, and agreed with the local authority and the school through the assessment and EHCP process.

Schools and settings have the option of purchasing additional support to meet their own specific needs and priorities through various Service Level Agreements.

The priorities for the reporting year are set out below:

- Ensure Compliance with Statutory Deadlines:

Prioritise meeting all legal deadlines for statutory processes, such as completing Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) within the required 20-week period. Regular monitoring and reporting of progress to ensure accountability are essential.

- **Promote Inclusive Practices Across All Schools:**

Ensure all schools in the local authority are equipped to create inclusive learning environments that support the needs of pupils with SEND. This includes providing adequate training for staff, ensuring reasonable adjustments are made, and encouraging a culture of inclusion.

- **Effective Multi-Agency Collaboration:**

Foster strong partnerships between schools, health services, social care, and other relevant agencies to ensure coordinated support for children and young people with SEND. Establish clear lines of communication and regular review meetings to keep all stakeholders engaged.

- **Improved Early Identification and Intervention:**

Strengthen early identification processes for children with SEND through better assessment and intervention in settings. This ensures that children receive timely support before issues escalate, reducing the need for more intensive interventions later on.

- **Parental Engagement and Co-production:**

Actively involve parents, carers, and children in decision-making processes concerning SEND provisions. Promote co-production and person-centred planning by consulting them in designing services, gathering feedback, and ensuring they have access to clear, timely information about their child's progress and support plans.

Across all these priorities, there is a strong emphasis on equality. However, priorities 2, 3, 4 and 5 specifically focus on eliminating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for pupils with protected characteristics, those who are vulnerable, and those disadvantaged by low family income.

These priorities ensure that inclusive practices and collaborative support systems actively work to reduce inequality and create fair access to education and services for all.

Views of our customers/service users

Give examples of any feedback gathered from individuals via feedback forms, surveys consultations etc:

Attainment data has been provided in the Standards and effectiveness section of this report.

a) Customer engagement and consultation

Below are examples of feedback received from across the SEND and Specialist Support Services

Co-production activities in conjunction with the parent and carers forum have occurred in numerous Written Statement of Action tasks; including SEND statutory process mapping, Graduated Approach relaunch and The Autism Transition support team.

Officers have been trained in person-centred planning and approaches. This has ensured improved engagement and consultation with children and young people, and parents and carers.

b) Customer satisfaction and learning

“I know you probably already know this but XX (Autism Transition Worker) has been fantastic. She has been pro active, efficient, flexible, nurturing and hit the ground running and we are so grateful. Not actually sure how we would have managed without her!” [Secondary SENCO]

“Just wanted to refer to our earlier meeting today with XX’s mum. As you know mum said she had the local [specialist] Association look over the Draft Plan. The comment from them was that this was one of the best Plans they had looked at – it was clear and not ambiguous.”

“I’d also like to say that in recent weeks (and thanks to you, XX and XX) I now feel that I am working collaboratively with BFC in an effort to help XX, rather than adversarially, and I haven’t felt that since XX left almost 2 years ago. Thank you.”

c) Complaints activity and learning

Complaints received that are regarding the SEND and Specialist Support Services are regularly reviewed by the Heads of Service and learning is discussed during departmental meetings. This learning impacts on future planning. For example, complaints regarding timeliness of EHC needs assessments have risen over the previous year. As a result of this, new processes have been put in place which ensures that decision making occurs at the earliest opportunity.

Conclusion

The delivery of bespoke training and professional development for schools across the borough will continue to incorporate focused sessions to develop the workforce and address the underperformance of key groups. Ongoing analysis of SEND pupil data and the evaluation of provision, will inform the work of the children’s support services and working closing with the STEPS team, will support schools in identifying priorities. The team will continue to work in close partnership with school leaders and the wider integrated services to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced, and ambitious curriculum.

The Virtual School

Introduction

The Virtual School consists of two teams:

- The Virtual School – supporting Children Looked-After (CLA), Previously Looked-After Children (PCLA), and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW).
- Elevate track and monitor all 16/17 year-olds living in Bracknell who are identified as being at NEET or risk of NEET.

Key Priorities

The Virtual School team works in accordance with the statutory guidance published in February 2018, to discharge its duty to:

- promote the educational achievement of its Looked-After Children (CLA) from age 3-18 and Previously Looked-After Children (PCLA); and
- to ensure that these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential.

The Virtual School Head role was extended in September 2021, giving them strategic responsibility for children with a social worker (CWSW). The Virtual School has developed a Strategy to:-

- Make visible the disadvantages that CWSW can experience, enhance partnerships between education settings and local authorities, including children's social care, and help all agencies to hold high aspirations for these children;
- Promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting is an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm; and
- Work with schools to level up children's outcomes to narrow the gap so every child has the opportunity to reach their potential.

Funding for the work to support CWSW currently ends in March 2025.

In accordance with the statutory guidance for local authorities in relation to the participation of young people in education, employment, or training (April 2024), Elevate's primary role:

- to track and monitor the participation of our post-16 young people (16/17year olds living in Bracknell (September Guarantee, Annual Activity and MI); and
- to identify those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or those at risk of NEET (RONI) and source additional support.

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

The Virtual School and Elevate have met the overall aims of the equality duty through the delivery of the priorities set out above. Throughout the reporting year, support has been delivered to our cohort who may experience barriers to their progress and outcomes, to ensure that *all* pupils have equal access to opportunity and are free from discrimination.

Key activities to address this have included:

Virtual School

- CLA (early years through to the end of Year 13) have one Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting per term, involving key stakeholders;
- For CLA, the annual review of the EHCP has either been combined with one PEP per year or attended separately by the Virtual School;
- Progress and attendance have been monitored and barriers identified to ensure that appropriate support is in place to address any challenges;
- The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) has been allocated on a needs driven basis to work towards closing the gap between CLA and their peers.
- Previously Looked-After Children (PCLA) have been supported through our offer of advice and guidance to education providers and parents. One PEP per year, upon request from parents has also been provided.
- In partnership with the Education Welfare Support Team, the VS has introduced the Studybugs attendance monitoring system enabling the LA to monitor the attendance of CWSW and other disadvantaged group.
- Training has been provided to all stakeholders to support the understanding of the needs of our cohort and support them effectively.
- A short-term alternative provision has been providing suspension and mentoring support to our CWSW at risk of permanent exclusion and to keep them safe when suspended and provide access to tuition.

Elevate

NEET Projects have been in place for the year to support young people who are NEET or at risk of NEET. 150 places have been offered to our NEET cohort providing support as follows:-

- **1:1 Mentoring** – a 5–10-week programme to provide unique opportunities to each YP with sessions based around their interests.
- **Services Programme** - a 5-week programme choosing either trades, anything creative or sports, the focus being to develop skills. The YP experience sessions in the chosen service to enhance their skills and knowledge.

The support will continue to be offered until November 2024, at which point an evaluation will be undertaken to explore impact.

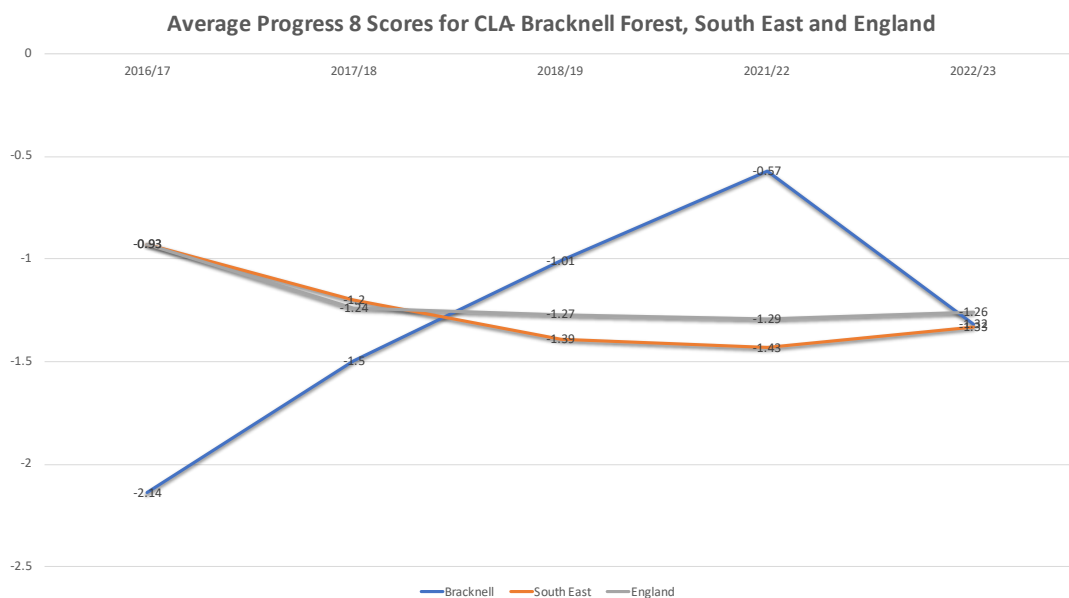
Overall, there has been a steady increase in progress for our CLA cohort since 2017, which evidences that we now are in line with other CLA cohorts both in

the southeast and nationally. In comparison with our statistical neighbours, Bracknell Forest CLA have made the most consistent progress.

The progress data for our CiN children shows that they have consistently made more progress than their counterparts in the southeast and nationally, whereas our CP children have increasingly made progress since 2019 and are now above the southeast and national data.

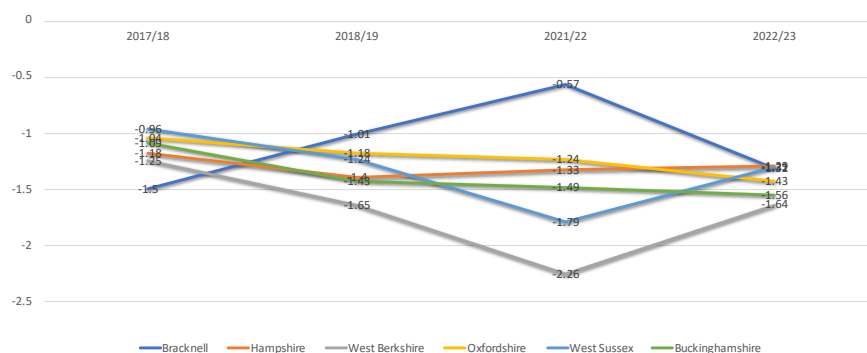
Cohort sizes differ greatly within these groups of children, CLA being the smallest group and tending to have a higher proportion of children with EHCPs leading to them often being placed out of borough, with the CiN cohort having a higher number.

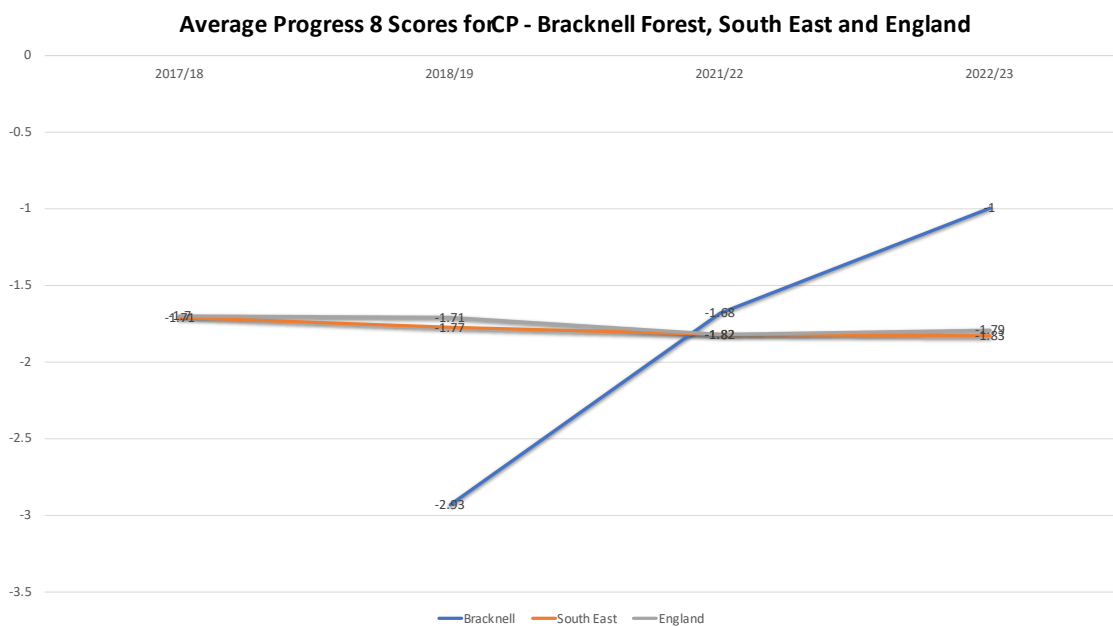
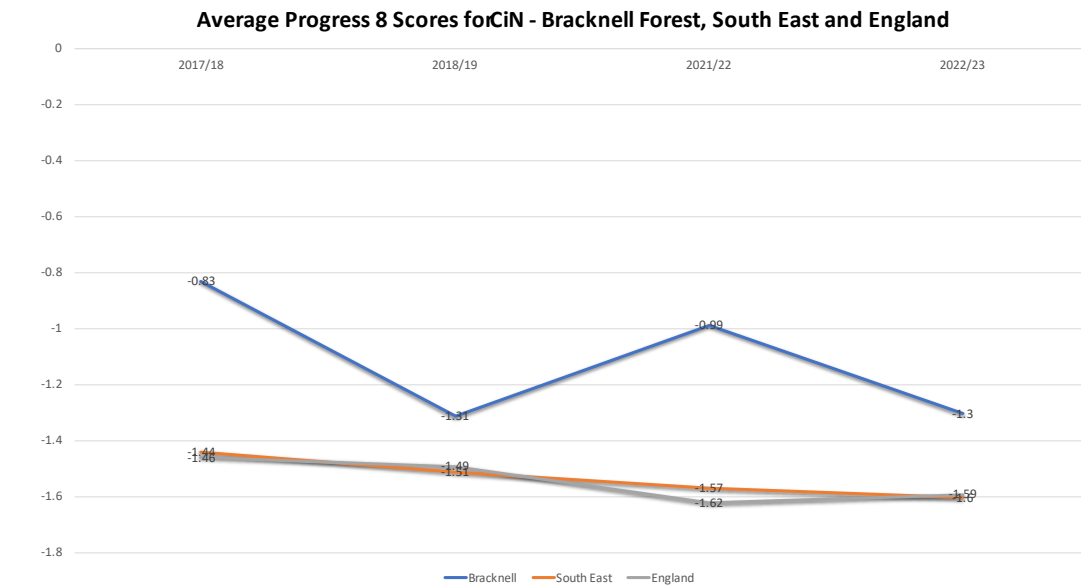
Despite the improvement, the gap between our CLA, CiN and CP children and their peers still needs to reduce and the work of the Virtual School continues to support this ambition.



Average Progress 8 Scores for CLA

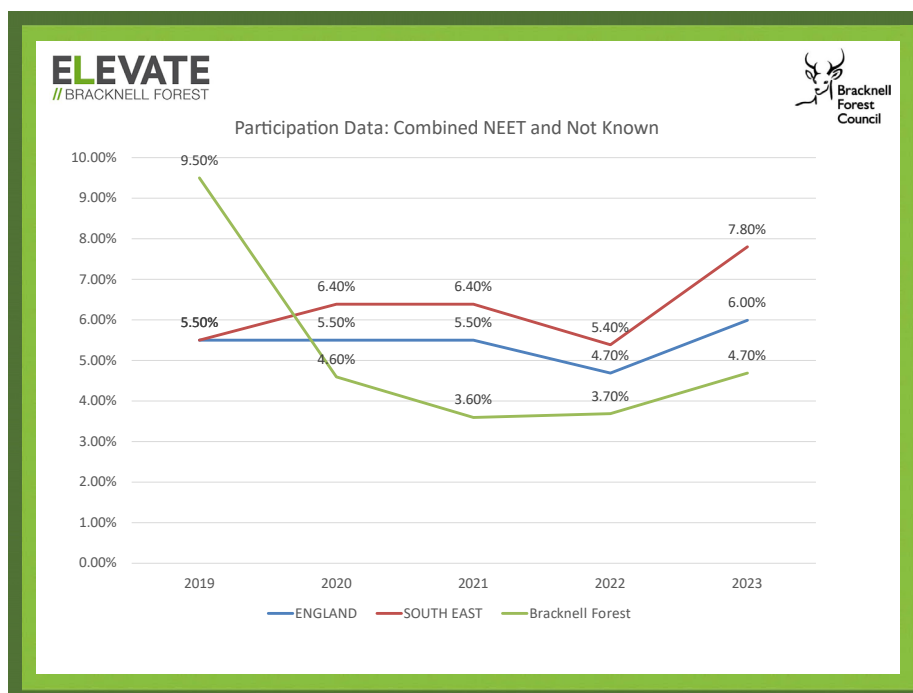
Bracknell Forest and Statistical Neighbours





NEET data

The NEET data for Bracknell Forest has shown significant improvement since 2019, evidencing effective tracking and monitoring of our 16/17 year-old cohort of children. Whilst the NEET figures have risen in 2023, we are still below the southeast and national data.



Views of our customers/service users

An external review of the Virtual School was undertaken in June 2023 which concluded that:

“the Virtual School is delivering better outcomes than it was in 2017 and better outcomes than most Virtual Schools across the country

External Review of the Bracknell Forest Virtual School – June 2023 – Dr Alun Rees

The Virtual School and Elevate have received positive comments from schools, foster carers, children’s social care, parents and, more importantly, our children.

“My immediate thought was “not another one of those courses” (we’ve all been there!). How wrong I was! It was very informative, and despite attending similar sessions, I did actually learn some surprising facts and useful strategies to help us along our bumpy road. delivered his presentation in a jargon-free way, and the format was easy to follow. He is exceptionally compassionate, relatable and knowledgeable, and his enlightened approach was inspiring.” – Feedback on A&T training.

“I just also wanted to thank you personally for all the work you have done on X’s behalf. I know that you have pushed hard for this and we all really appreciate your commitment to his cause. Everyone is, needless to say, delighted that X is able to have this opportunity so thank you again.” - Feedback for VS from a Foster Carer.

“The team were so supportive & he really enjoyed his time there. They managed to get him a job, he’s been working with xxxx for about 2 months now. He seems to be getting on well & is picking up a lot of skills.” Feedback for Elevate following additional support with our projects.

Community Learning

Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council's adult and community learning service is managed by Community and Continuing Education. Its mission statement sums up its approach:

Learning together to build strong communities.

The service provides opportunities for those who live, work or study in Bracknell Forest to improve their skills, well-being and communities. It helps to develop volunteering skills; employment skills; English language and communication; literacy, numeracy and digital skills; health and well-being; and families learning together.

This approach enables people to improve life chances and encourages active and healthy lives and communities.

To enhance the breadth of engagement with adults who may not have otherwise participated in adult education, the service sub-contracts to a community organisation and partners with others such as schools and Family Hubs.

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

The service provides both a universal and a targeted offer. Where appropriate, it charges fees to enable public funding to be focussed on people who most need it. It has effective safeguarding, and learners report feeling safe when they attend classes.

The service has a substantial ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision, which is successful in fostering strong relationships between people of different backgrounds and cultures. English, mathematics and preparation for employment courses help disadvantaged learners learn new skills and gain employment.

Breakdown of customers/service users

(Where numbers are less than 5, data has been excluded to maintain confidentiality)

Adult Learners by Sex (Academic year 2023-24)

	Adult Learners	%	Bracknell Forest Adult population* %	Variance
Female	1509	76%	50%	+26%
Male	501	24%	49 %	-25%
Total	2091			

*ONS 2021 Census

The split between female and male learners using the service is largely in line with adult learning across nationally. This ratio has remained broadly similar over several years even though the gender split across Bracknell Forest, South East and the UK is 51% female to 49%.

Adult Learners by Age band (Academic year 2023-24)

Age ranges	Adult Learners	%	Bracknell Forest Adult population* %	Variance
19-24	54	3%	5%	-2%
25-34	340	16%	14%	+2%
35-49	1194	57%	22%	+35%
50-64	371	18%	19%	-1%
60 plus	130	6%	13%	-7%
Total	2091			

* ONS 2021 Census

The service supports people of all eligible age groups (19 years and above). A focus on supporting people to improve work and employability skills, as well as family learning, means the largest group of learners engaged continue to be in the 25–59 age group. By far the largest single group is 35 to 40, which again reflects the service's aims.

Adult Learners by Ethnicity (Academic year 2023-2024)

	Adult learners %	Total Bracknell Forest population* %	Variance
African	2.1%	1.7%	+0.4%
Any other Asian background	4.6%	2.5%	+2.1%
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	0.4%	0.4%	0%
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	0.4%	0.4%	0%
Any other ethnic group	1.4%	1.1%	+0.3%
Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	1%	0.8%	+0.2%
Any other white background	11.2%	7.2%	+4%
Arab	0.5%	0.2%	+0.3%
Bangladeshi	0.4%	0.2%	+0.2%
Caribbean	0.4%	0.4%	0%
Chinese	5.5%	0.7%	4.8%
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	56.1%	77.8%	-21.7%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.0%	0.1%	-0.1%
Indian	2.4%	3.0%	-0.6%
Irish	0.6%	0.8%	-0.2%
Not provided/unknown	11.4%		
Pakistani	0.4%	0.8%	-0.4%
White and Asian	0.6%	1.1%	-0.5%
White and Black African	0.4%	0.5%	-0.16%

*ONS Census 2021

The service has seen a significant increase in engagement from members of the Hong Kong community as they take up opportunities to improve their English and employability skills once they arrive in the UK, as well as becoming part of the learning community offered by the service. (Note: Applications for Hong Kong BN(O) route opened in 2021)

Adult Learners by Disability (self-declaration) (Academic year 2023-24)

	2023-24		2022-23	
	Adult Learners	%	Adult Learners	%
Has a learning difficulty / disability	229	11%	222	10%
Does not have a learning difficulty / disability	1860	89%	1745	82%
Unknown	1	0%	167	8%
Total	2091		2134	

Percentage of learners declaring a learning difficulty or disability remains consistent.

Outcomes

Achievement rates for people enrolling in adult learning courses are measured by them successfully meeting course objectives. For recognised qualifications, such as English, Customer Service, Food Safety, Health & Safety and Emergency First Aid at Work, achievement criteria are set by the relevant awarding body.

Performance against equality objectives

Data on achievement suggests future work to investigate disparities in achievement would be beneficial. This is particularly true for the youngest and oldest learners, as well as those declaring a disability, although the small number of learners involved in some of those groups may see a variance every year.

Views of our customers/service users

Learners are asked at the end of each course to evaluate their learning progression on a scale of 0 to 10. During the academic year 2023-24, learners on average have progression of 8 increments across all learning categories.

Learners who enrolled on a Work Skills course have evaluated themselves as having a progression of 8 increments.

Learners who enrolled on an Arts and Well-being course have evaluated themselves as having a progression of 9 increments.

Learners who enrolled on an IT and digital courses have evaluated themselves as having a progression of 9 increments.

Parenting courses average a progression of 7 increments and Family Learning in Schools have an average progression score of 8.

Learner feedback is generally positive; a selection of comments is below:

“I feel more confident facing an interview”

“I found it a personal challenge to return to study but equally I was met with great support from teachers and admin staff”

“I enjoy the learning journey and also find that course can help me to set up clear directions and next steps in my life”

“Sharing time with my child whilst learning in school”

Negative comments about the service are around length of courses (too long or too short) but are usually individual comments. Across the board learners rate the pace and length of the courses to be just right.

The service reaches a wide range of learners with the different programmes and sessions we have on offer.

The service receives very few complaints. Those we do receive tend to be about facilities, such as a busy car park.

Conclusion

The service provides a universal and targeted offer, which is accessed by a good number of the Bracknell Forest population. Whilst achievement generally remains strong, current data suggests areas for investigation to explore why some groups of learners are more likely to achieve than others.

School Property and Place Planning

The School Property Team provides the School Asset Management Plan which includes all maintained school sites and buildings and administers the school maintenance programme. Where significant obstacles are identified or a pupil need changes, School Property and Places will work with the school to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made.

Access to Service

Key issues

- Disabled Access to maintained school sites and buildings.

Who is and isn't using the service?

- All pupils, parents and staff in maintained schools access our school buildings.

Data

The Council monitors the physical accessibility of its maintained school buildings in the School Asset Management Plan. As part of this each maintained school is subject of an access audit to identify issues with physical access into and around the site and buildings. The access audits provide estimated costs for any identified compliance works and prioritise the identified need as follows:

- Priority 1 Severe barrier or hazard for disabled people
- Priority 2 To provide a service or facility under the Equality Act
- Priority 3 To eliminate a problem or provide a service/facility
- Priority 4 Management solutions to access issues

A summary of identified need for disabled access works from the access audits of maintained schools is set out on the table below:

Prioritised Identified Need for Disabled Access from Access Audits

School	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Total
Ascot Heath Primary School	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
College Town Primary School	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Cranbourne Primary School	£10,660	£8,775	£9,990	£4,000	£33,425
Crowthorne Primary School	£30,180	£32,100	£7,030	£8,300	£77,610
Fox Hill Primary School	£2,740	£12,925	£3,200	£1,425	£20,290
Garth Hill College	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Harmans Water Primary School	£26,155	£81,850	£52,340	£6,600	£166,945
Holly Spring Primary School	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Meadow Vale Primary School	£10,550	£67,450	£86,240	£21,000	£185,240
New Scotland Hill Primary	£2,050	£47,120	£38,105	£600,00	£87,875
Owlsmoor Primary School	£6,500	£68,700	£63,270	£6,250	£144,720
Pines (The) Primary School	£6,850	£26,600	£7,065	£5,500	£46,015
Warfield Primary School	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Whitegrove Primary School	£12,200	£37,385	£180,500	£10,400	£240,485
Wildridings Primary School	£39,640	£39,455	£22,820	£12,495	£124,410
Winkfield St Marys Primary School	£7,160	£40,550	£22,150	£3,350	£73,210
Wooden Hill Primary School	£2,180	£34,275	£9,155	£5,000	£50,610
Total	£156,865	£497,185	£501,865	£84,320	£1,250,835

There is currently £1.250m of physical access work identified at maintained schools of which £0.15m is priority 1.

The Council maintains CAD floor and site plan drawings of maintained school sites and buildings which provide the frame of reference for the access audits. These plans are periodically updated following completion of significant building works or physical alterations at each school.

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

Under the Equality Act the Council has a legal duty to ensure that disabled pupils, staff, and adults can access our school sites and buildings.

This is achieved in two ways, firstly by ensuring that any physical alterations to school buildings comply with disabled access requirements through the Building Control process. In this way school buildings become more accessible over time as compliant current standards become enhancements to the existing accommodation.

Secondly the Council has prioritised funding for disabled access works required for individual disabled children, young people, and adults in its schools. Under the School Asset Management Plan schools can flag up where individual pupils, staff or visitors have specific physical access needs with the building which allows the Council to implement physical alterations as required to meet the individual's needs. It is these works which become a first call for funding on the Councils annual School Planned Works Programme.

In terms of outcomes for disabled people, recent past examples of these access works have included:

- Installation of a lift
- Provision of ramped access
- Fitting automatic door opening devices

Given the wide spectrum of disability the needs of an individual may differ greatly from another which is why this individual-centric approach has been adopted.

Conclusion

The Council monitors the accessibility of its school sites and buildings by way of access audits, and most are accessible to disabled people. Construction works to our schools are implemented in accordance with the requirements for disabled access set out in Building Regulations, and in this way, accessibility is enhanced every time that new construction works are undertaken.

In addition, where individuals have issues with physical access there is an established response procedure that makes funding available to implement any physical alterations that may be necessary straight away.

School Admissions

Introduction

The School Admissions Team administers the school admissions processes whereby parents apply for a school place for their children in schools. This includes the main phases of applying to start primary school for the first time and transferring from primary to secondary school. Additionally, the service processes In Year applications throughout the year for those wishing to transfer schools.

Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the council's equality objectives

For the reporting period 2023-24:

The School Admissions process encompasses all children and young people in Bracknell Forest schools. This process is highly regulated and needs to be effectively communicated and accessible to people of all backgrounds.

The School Admissions process takes account of equality issues by:

- Ensuring all annual admission arrangements are set in line with current legislation and are fair and transparent to all.
- Ensuring that the annual guides for, Primary, Secondary and In Year Applications are available in foreign language versions on request.
- Ensuring that all the School Admission pages on BFC website are available as spoken word documents using ReadSpeaker. And all content including attachments are all accessibility checked.
- Providing a telephone service for applicants who may have difficulty understanding the written word to help them to apply for a school place.
- And in addition, the School Admissions also meet with some applicants face to face either in the Council Offices or at Children's Centres to help them with their application/s.
- All interactions with parents and carers are treated equally with the same level of respect and courtesy.
- Ensure all applicants are given an equal right to appeal for a school place and to attend the hearing.

Customers/service users

Parent and carers, resident inside and outside of Bracknell Forest, use the school admissions service to secure a school place for their children.

Views of our customers/service users

Below are some examples of recent feedback the School Admissions Team have received:

I would just like to mention the stellar performance and great customer service I recieved from XX, the admissions assistance. She has been patient, considerate and very helpful throughout the entire process. The level of committment that she invests in her job is amazing.5 stars to XX. She has truly represented Bracknell Forest Council exceptionally well.

- i. Finally, thank you to you and your colleagues who have always been prompt and helpful in replying to my various emails sent over the past three weeks.*
- ii. I have to say I am extremely impressed by the responses I have received; it has made the process much easier.*
- iii. Again, our deepest thanks to you all. You have been our bedrock throughout this process & never failed to communicate with us whenever we needed it. We are extremely humbled.*
- iv. Also I must say whenever I have emailed school admissions the response is always really quick and it's really appreciated, thank you!*
- v. I wanted to thank you for the speedy replies and contact and help on the phone.*

Conclusion

The school admissions process has been made accessible to everyone including minority groups, by making sure that applicants have the written procedures in their own language and/or have access to the School Admissions Team staff on a one to one basis if necessary, to assist and advise them in making an application. The School Admissions Team strive to ensure all service users feel they are treated equally with the same level of respect and provided with the same level of in depth information in order for them to not only use the service with ease, but to gain the best outcome from their application.

3. Key issues for 2024/25:

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and those that currently present as vulnerable remains the highest priority for Education and Learning. The gap between pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, CLA, CP and CiN pupils, and pupils with SEND and their more advantaged or non-SEND peers remains wide.

The new Learning Improvement Strategy is currently under development, but the overarching aim is to improve outcomes for children as detailed above. This includes disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils who are looked after, those with a social worker, those who may be discriminated for any protected characteristics, and any other pupils that are identified by professionals as being potentially at risk of not achieving strong outcomes.

1. Promote a culture of inclusion and equity.
2. Support the development of an ambitious curriculum to raise standards and equip children and young people for a healthy and prosperous future.
3. Support children to develop better physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, social skills and strong relationships.
4. Work in partnership to ensure that all pupils attend a high-quality school or setting and have access to the provision they need.
5. Support all our children and young people to reach ambitious outcomes including through strong transitions from birth to adulthood.
6. Support the development of a skilled, knowledgeable, and confident workforce that is equipped to meet the needs of its pupils.

A full programme of engagement with key stakeholders is planned for the autumn term of 2024.

Each of the service areas within Education and Learning have planned key actions and mitigations to address these priorities.

4. Actions and mitigations planned for 2024/25

A very high proportion of the activity planned within education and learning is driven by the primary aim of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for children and young people in Bracknell Forest, particularly for disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils, and those with SEND, and to promote an inclusive culture within our schools and settings.

The following planned actions directly address this aim:

Provision for pupils with SEND

- Continue to promote and implement the Bracknell Forest Graduated Approach in all schools and settings, so that all children have access to an excellent curriculum.
- Continue to embed the work emerging from the SEND Peer Review programme and build a SEND community of practice across Bracknell Forest.
- Continue to work with schools and settings to focus on the principle of inclusive pedagogy, addressing the values, attitudes and approaches that ensure mainstream classrooms are geared towards supporting those who find learning difficult.
- Increase provision locally for our more complex children and young people through the expansion of SRP and specialist spaces.

Provision for disadvantaged pupils or those who currently present as vulnerable

- Direct schools to the Department for Education and Education Endowment Foundation guidance and recommendations around the effective use of pupil premium funding to improve the outcomes of children that are experiencing disadvantage.
- Continue to focus on reading as a key lever for advantaging the disadvantaged in all phases and key stages, including through The Imagination Library, ongoing development of phonics teaching, reading for pleasure and reading across the curriculum.
- Termly STEP visits to continue to have a strong focus on addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils through all school improvement activities.
- EYFS, English and mathematics network meetings to have a strong focus on addressing identified gaps and needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupil Premium Network meetings planned to support schools in addressing the challenges of ensuring disadvantaged pupils' needs are met, and to provide leaders with access to current best practice.

Supporting inclusion

- Review Bracknell Forest's alternative provision, to ensure it meets need and supports inclusion across the sector, and ensure that the processes surrounding its use are robust and effective.
- A renewed focus on ensuring that reduced hours provision, and alternative provision use is appropriate and effective in meeting pupils' needs, including increased monitoring and scrutiny of their use.
- Refine the use of data so that schools, settings and services have a true picture of the equity of their policies, procedures and curriculum, including data relating to attendance, the use of alternative provision, reduced hours provision, suspensions and exclusions.

Provision specific to the Early Years

- Promote the Early Years Professional Development Programme and Dingley's Promise inclusion programme to support the most disadvantaged children in the EYFS.
- Continue to promote '5 to Thrive' for both practitioners and parents.
- EYFS quality team to continue to provide support and challenge around the EYFS curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils and promotes good outcomes.

Provision specific to pupils within the Virtual School and those at risk of NEET

- To continue to identify our 'at risk of NEET' and provide additional support.
- To continue to embed the work of the Virtual School, including:
 - a new CLA tuition hub;
 - a conversation club for our UASC (unaccompanied asylum seeking children);
 - a focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills for our CLA through subscriptions to Storytime and Letterbox, and music lessons through the Berkshire Music Trust (also available to our PCLA and CWSW).
- A speech language and communication support and training package will be available to schools throughout the academic year 2024/25, raising awareness of the need to support our CLA, PCLA and CWSW.
- Kinship Care families will be supported for the academic year 2024/25, in line with the extension to the Virtual School Head role – this will mirror the offer in place for PCLA.
- Provide effective training for schools and settings to develop attachment and trauma informed practice.

Wider support for families

- Ongoing delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food programme.
- Deliver an effective family learning programme to support parents and families in their role of bringing up their children, including in supporting with anxiety.

School admissions

- To continue to ensure that school admission arrangements are fair and transparent to all; that all communications are fully accessible to all service users; and that all interactions with service users reflect the same level of respect and courtesy, ensuring equal rights and access to important information.

5. Overall conclusion

There is evidence that Education and Learning have undertaken a broad range of actions to advance equality of opportunity for those who have a protected characteristic, or who are otherwise likely to be disadvantaged. Measures are in place to create a culture and services that are inclusive, accessible, fair and equitable. The gap between pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, CLA, CP and CiN pupils, and pupils with SEND and their more advantaged or non-SEND peers remains wide, and therefore, as noted above, this remains of the highest priority within the service.