

Pupil Premium Strategy 2018-19

The MCA way: Responding to educational disadvantage: developing a long term multi-faceted strategy to mitigate the impacts of disadvantage on children's outcomes

In 2017, MCA was in the top 20% of school's nationally for progress with students eligible for pupil premium funding achieving a progress 8 score higher than national 'other'. This is expected to continue in 2018.

We now want to develop a longer term approach to supporting students and reduce the burden of end loaded 'intervention'. We aim to support an equitable approach that supports students and their families, is rooted in education excellence, wide ranging support and is transformational for their future.

Background and aims

MCA serves a highly disadvantaged residential community in North Manchester, with the overwhelming majority of pupils living locally to the school. Levels of disadvantage within the community are reflected in the school's high proportion of pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium (PP) funding – a central government programme which provides additional per pupil funding for pupils who are in receipt of free school meals (or have been so at any point in the last six years) or are in the care system. This funding is intended to support schools in mitigating the impacts of disadvantage on eligible pupils' outcomes, and schools have some flexibility as to how they spend PP to meet their pupils' particular needs. In recent times, we have observed an increase in the challenges that our community experience. We aim to support our students and their families in every context by poverty proofing all aspects of Academy life, whilst also supporting basic needs.

Since opening in 2010, MCA has pursued a wide ranging programme of activity which is intended to mitigate the impacts of disadvantage on children's educational and wider outcomes, and to which PP funding contributes significantly. Underpinning this programme, there is an understanding that the school cannot simply focus on addressing the symptoms of disadvantage as revealed in the classroom and through educational attainment measures. Rather, we recognise that if it is to make sustainable longer-term gains, we must also focus on addressing the 'social determinants' – or the causes of the causes – of these poor outcomes, as they arise and are experienced in pupils' individual, home and community contexts. Therefore, in addition to investing in short-term interventions which are designed to achieve particular targeted outcomes, we are also developing a wider 'social investment' strategy which can engage with the complex range of interacting disadvantages students may experience outside school and which are likely to impact on their education – for instance, experiences of food and fuel poverty, unsuitable temporary housing, chronic ill-health and unemployment. This has involved MCA investing in a wide range of measures, from providing free school uniform, to employing nursing and counselling staff, to supporting a community food-bank, to adult education and training. MCA has, furthermore, recently introduced a pastoral tracking system which allows it to create intensive, individually-tailored and holistic programmes of support for pupils' experiencing particular vulnerabilities, and it is also developing a

‘family zone’ offer, which involves local schools working together on an area-wide basis to provide additional support for children in their home, school and community contexts. How this full range of activity aligns with, and may be supported by, wider strategic developments in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, is also beginning to be explored.

Over the next 3 years, MCA is adopting a different approach to how we support disadvantage in our context.

What we set out to do

- i. Develop a rich understanding of the nature of disadvantage as experienced by pupils and their families, and how this impacts on pupils’ educational experiences
- ii. to map MCA’s strategies and actions to address disadvantage and how these relate to the understandings revealed
- iii. to understand how MCA’s strategies and actions are intended to work over time to mitigate the impacts of disadvantage on pupils’ education, and the outcomes they are intended to achieve
- iv. to explore how a sample of pupils and their families engage with, experience, and are impacted upon by MCA’s strategies and actions to mitigate disadvantage
- v. map and provide an evidence-based rationale – from wider research evidence and local empirical research – for its wide ranging programme of activity to mitigate the impacts of disadvantage on children’s educational and wider outcomes
- vi. to reduce short term ‘quick fix’ approaches, reducing intervention, and ‘more of’ approaches, replacing them with long term sustainable approaches
- vii. to maintain a clear focus on effective teaching and learning, identifying learning gaps with immediacy and reducing end loaded year 11 intervention
- viii. to understand the circumstances of those not eligible for pupil premium funding. Are their needs greater?

Ultimately, the key objective is to:

Use Pupil Premium funds to maximum effect to help mitigate the impacts of disadvantage on our pupil’s school experiences and educational and wider outcomes.

We will develop a research approach that aims to answer the following research questions:

- i. How is disadvantage understood and experienced by MCA’s pupils and their families?
- ii. What is MCA doing to address disadvantage, why, and what does it hope to achieve?
- iii. How are its strategies and actions intended to work over time to mitigate disadvantage?
- iv. How does this relate to pupils’ and families’ understandings and experiences of disadvantage?
- v. What evidence is there that MCA’s strategies and actions are working as anticipated for a sample of pupils and their families, and what factors account for this?
- vi. What does this suggest for the development of MCA’s provision for mitigating disadvantage and its use of Pupil Premium funding?