

## Governor Visit Record

<b>Date</b>	06.07.2023	<b>Governors</b>	Gill Finch, Karyn McMahon
<b>Objectives</b>			
<p>Whole school and governing body to consider the wider context of poverty and disadvantage within the context of the ongoing cost of living crisis and as an additional response to the school's monitoring of the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG).</p> <p>The school SIP has recently placed 'poverty proofing' on the agenda to address and articulate school's approach as part of the 5-Year Strategic Plan.</p>			
<b>Links with 5 Year School Development Plan</b>			
<b>Background preparation</b>			
<p>Karyn had begun some scoping work around children in poverty in the North East, including reading reports from the North of Tyne Combined Authority Child Poverty Prevention Programme consisting of 30 schools. This included consideration of the value of a recent 'Community Update' from a Blyth primary school which had been part of the pilot.</p> <p>There were 3 pillars to this programme:</p>  <p>The logo for the Child Poverty Prevention Programme features three stylized columns. Each column has a blue top section with the number 1, 2, or 3 and a white building icon. The middle section is dark blue with white text. The bottom section is dark blue with white icons. The three pillars represent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1 POVERTY INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS</b> (Icon: School building)</li> <li><b>2 WELFARE SUPPORT THROUGH THE SCHOOL GATE</b> (Icon: Open door)</li> <li><b>3 WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS TO TACKLE CHILD POVERTY</b> (Icon: Two people)</li> </ul>			
<p>The document was well intentioned; aiming to position the school as a community hub and source of welfare and support for families, however, we became alert to the danger of positioning community focused 'poverty proofing' activities as leading towards some damaging stereotypes in some of the language choices or types of activity described.</p> <p>Examples included 'Freeby Fridays' and 'breaking the cycle of families experiencing third generation unemployment' or claiming that recycling uniform 'seems to have reduced the stigma associated with second hand'.</p> <p>These were examples of claims and offers of support that were difficult to evaluate as providing evidenced sustainable impact.</p>			

#### **Scope of visit / Breadth of visit scrutiny**

In addition to the focus on financial disadvantage and hardship, we considered, as part of the school-based PPG, meaningful, enduring and accessible support that the school could potentially extend to families in the wider school community.

Gill asked about any allocations of funding for FSM which a pupil might miss due to sickness absence: is there a scheme to return any of this money to them? A campaign was launched by Citizens UK in 2019 to highlight this concern. Karyn explained that school receives an annual Universal Infants Free School Meal Grant that goes directly to support the cost of providing FSM for all children in Reception, Y1 and Y2.

PPG is used to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. FSM is a marker of disadvantage, along with being a Looked After Child or in a family where a member is in the armed services.

School are also in partnership with the government funded charity, Magic Breakfast, who provide a free breakfast (cereal, porridge, toast, bagels) for all children.

Karyn explained that due to unforeseen circumstances resulting in one of the partner organisations that school has used in recent years to help deliver a summer school on the premises not being able to deliver this summer, along with the significant costs incurred and requirement for large numbers of staff, no activity programme is being offered in school for the summer 2023. She explained that this has led to some parental disappointment which has been articulated on the school's social media channel. To mitigate some of the disappointment being expressed and felt by families, we agreed that it could be helpful to collate and share the many and varied activities with families that are taking place across Northumberland. We acknowledge that it can be difficult to find out what is available to families of children with SEND.

A Padlet of activities, events and resources was created and shared with all families during the last week of summer term. This included SEND specific as well as mainstream activities and a section for those who 'need more help'.

#### **Governor Observations and Comments**

We are aware of ways in which the school mitigates the effects of poverty or financial crisis for pupils; this includes ensuring that children will have gifts to open at Christmas or applying to the Eat, Sleep, Play, Learn fund for items such as outdoor learning clothing. None of this activity is strategically planned or forms part of a community engagement or poverty prevention plan. It happens in response to perceived need.

This is more difficult than in the case of the mainstream school, whose plan we based our visit on, as their school has a geographical 'catchment' and local neighbourhood with which to identify and for whom to make the plans they have regarding poverty prevention. While Cleaswell Hill School has a high proportion (50+%) of FSM eligible pupils; the communities to which they belong are disparate and may all require and benefit from different types of support.

Karyn has contacted the North of Tyne Combined Authority to express interest in taking part in the Child Poverty Prevention Programme and Education Improvement pilot project 2023-2024 if further resource to support this extension can be found. Being successfully recruited would provide access to potential grants to assist with any plans the school made to better serve the needs of the community.

#### **Issues to be raised with the Full Governing Body (if any)**

Is a poverty prevention strategy something that Cleaswell Hill School should consider, in addition to the strategy that is already in place for spending the PPG?



**Plans for Follow-up Visit** It would be good to revisit this theme in 23/24 academic year if any other governors are interested in progressing with the plan.

**Date reviewed at FGB:**