

Stonehouse Park Infant School Diminishing the Difference Strategy 2018-2019

At Stonehouse Park Infant School we strive to provide the BEST start for every child so that every child can be the best that they can be.

Belonging Encouraging Succeeding Together

We believe socio-economic disadvantage should be not a barrier to educational success. We have high expectations of and aspirations for all of our children and seek to diminish any differences in achievement between those children who are disadvantaged and their peers. The number of children who are eligible for the Pupil Premium grant at our school is above both local and national levels.

% of children who qualify for pupil premium (2015-16)	
Our school	32.65%
Gloucestershire	17%
National	25.2%

The majority of our children live in the ward Stonehouse 4, which is in the top 30% of deprived wards nationally and the top 20% locally. Stonehouse 4 is the joint top most deprived ward in the Stroud locality.

What is the difference between the achievement of our disadvantaged children and their peers? How does this compare to the achievement of children locally and nationally?

By the time our children leave our school they achieve levels in line with and above both Gloucestershire and all schools nationally for all groups including disadvantaged children. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged children and their peers is wider at the end of YR compared with Gloucestershire schools & nationally, however this gap was narrowed considerably in 2017. By the end of Y2 the gap has been reduced & is less than Gloucestershire schools & nationally. The gap was reduced significantly in maths and reading in 2017. This data shows clearly the positive impact of our diminishing the difference strategy on outcomes for our disadvantaged children. However, we know that we need to continue to strive to reduce this gap further through earlier intervention, with a particular focus on communication & language development and personal, social & emotional development.

Gap between attainment of disadvantaged children & their peers	Our School	Gloucestershire	Nationally (All children 2017)
Achieving a Good Level of Development	26% (43% 2016)	21% (24% 2016)	16%
Passing Y1 Phonics Screening test	17% (18% 2016)	20% (16% 2016)	14%
Achieving age expected levels in reading Y2 SATs	22% (20% 2016)	20% (20% 2016)	16%
Achieving age expected levels in writing Y2 SATs	12% (20% 2016)	24% (22% 2016)	18%
Achieving age expected levels in maths Y2 SATs	1% (17% 2016)	20% (20% 2016)	17%

What do we mean by 'disadvantage?'

"Disadvantage is a complex issue. It can affect children from birth and, left unchecked and unchallenged, can impact negatively on every aspect of a child's life. Poverty is often the driving force, influencing the quality of parenting and home environment that children experience, which in turn shapes their outlook on life. As such, disadvantage can have a long-term grip on families and communities, holding them back generation after generation. Ensuring that the home, health and educational experiences of young children are of the highest quality provides opportunities to reverse this long-term cycle of deprivation"

Unknown children- destined for disadvantage?" Ofsted July 2016

We understand that disadvantage has a wider definition than that purely of a monetary value linked to eligibility to free school meals or qualifying for certain benefits. We define children as being disadvantaged because they are vulnerable due to the unique circumstances surrounding an individual child, group of children or family. These circumstances may act as barriers to learning, making children more at risk of poor health & well-being and so a reduced chance of going on to lead happy, healthy, successful & fulfilling lives.

Potential Barriers to Learning

Our own school and national research indicates that the following barriers to learning must be overcome to ensure successful outcomes for our vulnerable and disadvantaged children:

- Not all disadvantaged children access their entitlement to 15 hours a week of early years education from the age of 2. For many of those who do access this early intervention, attendance is cause for concern.
- Poor attendance at nursery which can then carry on into school.
- At least 80% of children entering nursery and reception classes have development below that of their chronological ages, with 30% significantly below. Specifically Personal, Social & Emotional Development, Communication & Language, Literacy & Maths.
- Children who enter nursery and school with complex emotional difficulties e.g. attachment disorder.
- Children and or their siblings or parents who have a significant physical or mental health problem or disability.
- Children who live in violent households
- Children whose parents have drug and or alcohol misuse.
- Children whose parents are young and vulnerable themselves, who do not have a support network.
- Parents who do not feel confident to support their child's learning at home.
- A community with low aspirations and low levels of adult training & education.

Our Approach: Informed by National Research and Stonehouse Park Infant Action Research

Our belief is that every child should have the opportunity to flourish in their personal development, well-being and in their learning. To this end we take best practice advice from the most effective schools nationally e.g. The Education Endowment Fund Toolkit. We also share best practice across our own school and with our partner learning cluster schools. All approaches and interventions are trialled and rigorously evaluated first before being adopted consistently across the whole school, including our nursery.

We believe that every child has the entitlement to receive teaching & care of the highest quality. The significant impact a good teacher can make on a child's achievement is now well established. This is particularly so for our children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. One school year under the care and guidance of an excellent teacher is worth 1.5 years of learning compared to 0.5 years with a poorly performing teacher. In other words for disadvantaged children the difference between an excellent and a poor teacher is a whole year of learning.

The well-being, progress and attainment of all children is carefully tracked and evaluated from a rich field of assessment data, observations and recorded learning in order to draw conclusions and then plan the next steps. Each room leader/class teacher meets with the headteacher every term to discuss their children and examine the best way forward for each individual. This way concerns are identified early and appropriate intervention implemented promptly.

The Ofsted survey, 'Unknown children- destined for disadvantage?' and evidence based research from the Education Endowment Fund demonstrates that the most important factors to consider in developing effective strategies to narrow the gap in achievement for disadvantaged children and their peers are as follows:

- The earliest intervention possible as the gap begins to widen from the age of 2.
- The home learning environment to include positive parenting and raising aspirations.
- Children developing self-regulation skills, being able to manage their feelings, their behaviour and their own learning.
- Children developing good language and communication skills. The number of words a child knows by the time they are 3 is an accurate indicator of their future academic achievement.
- Widening children's life experiences.
- Children developing an understanding of the learning process and being able to reflect upon and talk about their learning from an early age.
- Teachers, TAs and practitioners talking to the children about their learning, providing clear feedback so children celebrate their achievements and understand their next steps.

Since April 2017 the nursery provision on our site has come under the governance of our school. This provides us with the opportunity to establish effective seamless and consistent support and early intervention to reduce the barriers to learning for the disadvantaged children and their families in our community from the age of 2.

(Refer to our Pupil Premium reports to see the programme of activities and interventions we deliver and the evaluation of their impact.)

Our Top Five to Ensure Everyone Thrives!

1. Clarity of Vision and Strong Leadership

Our overarching aim is to provide the BEST start for every child so every child can be the BEST they can be. This is underpinned by a set of clear aims and values which are fully embedded in every aspect of school life and inform all decision making. We are proud that every visitor into our school comments that this vision is alive everywhere they go. We have full commitment to our vision by governors, staff and parents because they created it and review it every year. We also ask parents to evaluate whether we have achieved this vision for their own child when they leave our school to move onto the next stage of their education.

Alongside our vision we have established a genuine commitment to improve the lives of the children in our school. We have a culture where we 'never give up on anyone'. All staff are committed to 'going the extra mile' to ensure that the needs of every child are met, but particularly so for our disadvantaged children.

Governors and senior leaders are committed to continue to strive to reduce inequalities, build aspirations and secure positive outcomes for all children irrespective of their family backgrounds, starting points, additional needs or barriers to learning. We have established a governor and senior leader Diminishing the Difference committee. This committee's purpose is to monitor the effectiveness of the deployment of Pupil Premium and SEND budgets to reduce inequalities, reduce the barriers to learning and so narrow the gap in achievement.

2. Focus on the child

We believe that our most important role is to be the voice of the child and to ensure that their voice and their needs are paramount. This is important for every child but crucial for our most disadvantaged children whose needs and voices can be lost when life at home is chaotic and the needs and voices of their older siblings and parents seem more pressing. We take a holistic view of every child and involve them in planning & evaluating provision. Our starting point is to ensure that every child feels safe and happy in school as unhappy children do not learn and will not thrive in our setting. We also take an individual approach. What works for one child or group of children will not work for another. We take time to get to know our children as individuals and so we can identify the precise difficulties they are experiencing promptly. We are then able to plan interventions to overcome those difficulties. Intervention and support programmes are evaluated for each child. We never continue with strategies that are not effective. Children are always part of this evaluation.

We have high aspirations for every child. Our aim is for every child to leave us at the age of 7 loving learning, full of confidence to take on their next stage of education, believing they can achieve their dreams if they try their best. To achieve this our school exudes a positive ethos. Every success or next step achieved is celebrated, no matter how small. For our most disadvantaged children this is especially important. Celebrating small steps are key to continuous progress.

3. Partnership with Parents.

Our first priority is to establish positive relationships with every family joining our school at whatever point in their learning journey. We expect every member of our staff team, whatever their role, to be committed to working in genuine partnership with parents. We carefully plan every child's induction into our provision by having individual meetings with parents at home and in school. This way we begin to learn every child's story before they start nursery and school. We then plan in time at the beginning of every school year for teachers to meet individually with the parents of their new classes to learn about their children & to begin to form good relationships. Feedback from parents tells us that families appreciate this individual approach. Because we prioritise establishing positive relationships with all of our parents we develop mutual respect and earn their trust. This means parents feel safe and comfortable sharing important information about their family which may be having a negative impact on their learning & behaviour in school. We are able to signpost parents to support in the community or make referrals for support on their behalf.

We ensure that every family experiences a warm welcome in our school by every member of staff that they have contact with. We operate an open door policy and so parents know that they can raise any concerns or worries with confidence. They know that staff will listen, value their point of

view and most importantly find out what has gone wrong and put it right if they can or refer on to someone else with the appropriate expertise to help.

We have high expectations of and aspirations for our families. We encourage them to volunteer in our setting and will then support them to access training and employment. We recognise that in our local community we are one of the largest employers. Many of our staff are current and former parents. We are proud that we 'grow our own'.

4. Committed Staff Team and Consistent Practice

We believe that working with our community is very rewarding but it can also be very challenging and demanding. We have high expectations of our staff team and expect total commitment to our vision to provide the BEST start for every child. However, we know that to achieve this vision we need to bring out the very best in every member of our team. We believe that schools should nurture their staff just as they expect their staff to nurture the children.

We continue to develop a culture where every member of staff, whatever their role, feels valued for the important contribution they make to secure positive outcomes for children. We encourage all staff to be leaders of learning, contributing to planning and assessment and sharing their ideas to meet the diverse learning and well-being needs of individual and groups of children. We have established a reflective culture where all staff are continually evaluating their provision and refining it in order for children to flourish and make progress.

We plan in time every term for staff at all levels to share best practice and to learn from each other. We enable our staff to visit other schools and host visits here in order to learn from the best and also to share our practice to support colleagues. We invest in good quality CPD and also ensure regular supervision for staff who are working with our most vulnerable children. We take a team approach so that every member of staff feels well supported. When incidents occur or things go wrong we always take time to discuss what happened and why so we can learn from experience and have plans in place to prevent this occurring again. Through this open and honest process we are able to support the well-being of our staff as well as identify priorities for staff CPD.

5. Partnership with Professionals and Community Groups

In order to meet the diverse range of learning, health, well-being and family needs in our community we make it a priority to establish respectful relationships and strong partnerships with outside agencies and local groups. Our setting has an excellent reputation for effective partnership working and a Team Around the Child/Family approach in order to reduce barriers to learning. We run intervention programmes and parent groups collaboratively with colleagues from health, Barnardo's, local churches etc. We pool funding with other schools to extend the range of support services we are able to provide and provide our building free of charge to other agencies and organisations so that parents can access the service in their own community.

By working in partnership with colleagues from health, social care, educational psychologists, special schools etc. we are able to learn new skills and gain new knowledge so that we are in a better position to reduce barriers to learning for our disadvantaged children.

"I want to say what a humbling and inspiring experience it was to spend time in your school and with your staff. So many of you display levels of professionalism, compassion and creativity that I do not often encounter in my work in schools. Your pupils are extremely fortunate to have such people in their lives" External Behaviour Support Consultant.

