Department for Education

What are the most effective ways to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement?

Evidence for Excellence in Education

Research undertaken by NFER has identified seven building blocks that are common in schools which are more successful in raising disadvantaged pupils' attainment.

1. Whole-school ethos of attainment for all: Schools have an ethos of high attainment for all pupils and avoid stereotyping disadvantaged pupils as all facing similar barriers or having less potential to succeed.

2. Addressing behaviour and attendance: Schools ensure effective behaviour strategies are in place, respond quickly to poor attendance and provide strong social and emotional support, including through working with families.

3. High quality teaching for all: Schools emphasise 'quality teaching first' and provide consistently high standards by setting expectations, monitoring performance and sharing best practice.

4. Meeting individual learning needs: Staff identify each pupil's challenges and interests. They seek the best strategies to help each pupil make the next step in his or her learning. Schools provide individual support for specific learning needs and group support for pupils with similar needs.

5. Deploying staff effectively: Schools devolve responsibility to frontline staff, use their best teachers to work with pupils who need the most support and train teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.

6. Data driven and responding to evidence: Teachers use data to identify pupils' learning needs, review progress every few weeks and address underperformance quickly. They have manageable Assessment for Learning systems, which provide clear feedback for pupils. Schools use evidence to make decisions about their support strategies.

7. Clear, responsive leadership: Senior leaders set ever higher aspirations and lead by example. They hold all staff accountable for raising attainment, rather than accepting low aspirations and variable performance. They share their thinking and invest in staff training.