

Blackpool Council



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2015 SCRUTINY REVIEW FINAL REPORT

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1.0 Foreword

- 1.1 The Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee initiated a review at its meeting on 17 September 2016 into educational attainment following consideration of the progress and attainment of children in Blackpool at the SAT and GCSE examinations in 2015.
- 1.2 The aim of the review was not to make formal recommendations on how to improve educational attainment, as is often the case in a traditional scrutiny review, but to investigate the reasons behind the results and find out what work was being undertaken to address the underlying issues and barriers to achievement in education.
- 1.3 The scrutiny panel focussed on a number of key concerns including the transition between primary and secondary school, the emotional resilience of children in Blackpool and the quality of teaching and gathered a large amount of information, which is included in this report. I would like to urge all relevant officers and partners to take account of the key concerns raised and continue the hard work already ongoing to address these concerns.
- 1.4 I would like to thank the Members of the Panel and the officers who willingly attended and contributed to discussions.

Councillor Benson
Chairman, Educational Attainment 2015 Review Panel

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 At the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2015, Members noted that the SAT and GCSE results for pupils had been released. Due to the depth of consideration that Members wished to give to the results and the reasons behind the results, the Committee agreed to establish a scrutiny review in order to undertake an in depth investigation.
- 2.2 The Review Panel initially received a training session provided by Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness on the Primary and Secondary Education Profiles of Blackpool and how to understand the data provided in these complex documents. During the training session, Members asked a number of questions about the results achieved in 2015, which led to the development of the Scoping Document for the Scrutiny Review.
- 2.3 During the initial training session, the Review Panel noted the poor attainment at secondary schools in 2015 in comparison to North West averages and the satisfactory but not excellent performance at Key Stage 2 in primary schools. Whilst considering the data and results, Members also focussed on the importance of context around the data and the impact of high levels of deprivation, high levels of Special Educational Needs, high levels of transience (both school to school and from out of area) and the number of children eligible for pupil premium/free school meals on ability to attain.
- 2.4 The Review Panel determined to investigate the context of attainment further after agreeing that little could be done to improve results without first solving the underlying problems and agreed to consider the following specific issues as part of the review:
- Impact of additional funding on attainment
 - Transience
 - Transition between primary and secondary schools
 - The impact of behaviour and attendance
 - Education outcomes for Looked After Children
 - Quality of teaching
 - Aspiration
- 2.5 Members hope that the work they have done in raising awareness of these key issues will impact upon future progress and attainment positively.
- 2.6 The review relates to the Council priority 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.'
- 2.7 **Please note that the 2016 results are due to be released and although they are expected to show an increase in attainment in Blackpool the underlying issues raised throughout this report, although based on 2015 data, are still applicable.**

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The Panel held six meetings to consider all evidence and speak to witnesses. These meetings followed an initial scoping meeting. Details of the meetings are as follows:

Date	Attendees	Purpose
5 January 2016	Councillors Benson (Chairman), Singleton, O’Hara and Hunter Mr Kershaw, Co-opted Member Ms Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager	Training session on interpreting the data contained within the Education Profiles. Completion of scoping document for review.
9 February 2016	Councillors Benson (Chairman), Singleton, O’Hara and Hunter Mr Kershaw, Co-opted Member Ms Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager	General overview of attainment at Primary and Secondary Schools in Blackpool in 2015 and specific school examples.
6 April 2016	Councillors Benson (Chairman), Singleton, O’Hara, Maycock and Hunter Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources (Children’s and Adult’s Services) Ms Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager	The additional funding received by schools and the relationship of the funding to attainment.
26 May 2016	Councillors Benson (Chairman), Humphreys, Maycock and O’Hara Mrs Natasha Armstead, Team Leader, Student Support Mrs Wendy Casson, Headteacher, Educational Diversity Mr Simon Jenner, Principal Educational Psychologist (Special Educational Needs) Mrs Janette Weafer, Head of Virtual School for Children Looked After Mr Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser (Scrutiny)	The attainment of ‘Our Children’, the impact of behaviour and attendance on attainment and the identification of special educational needs.

1 July 2016	<p>Councillors Benson (Chairman), Humphreys and Hunter, O'Hara, Singleton</p> <p>Dr Paul Barker, Education Performance Adviser Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources (Children's and Adult's Services)</p> <p>Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager</p>	<p>The impact of transience and transition and the relationship between funding and progress made.</p>
29 July 2016	<p>Councillors Benson (Chairman), Humphreys and Hunter</p> <p>Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People Dr Paul Barker, Education Performance Adviser Ms Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness Miss Lucy Gregson, Interim Marketing and Campaigns Manager</p> <p>Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager</p>	<p>The recruitment and retention of teachers, quality of teaching and the aspiration of pupils.</p>

4.0 Detailed Findings and Recommendation

4.1 Primary School Results 2015

4.1.1 Members considered the Blackpool Education Profile for Blackpool Primary Schools and the significant amount of data contained within the document. The key stage 1 results for pupils in 2015 in Blackpool at Level 2 + and Level 2B + were very similar to national averages (in brackets in the table below). The gap in attainment became apparent when looking at the Level 3 + results. This is the number of pupils achieving a higher level of SAT result. This could potentially suggest that primary schools are not pushing pupils who might attain higher level results to do so. The pattern follows through to key stage 2 results. However, as this report sets out there are a number of reasons that impact upon attainment and the context of the results needs to be considered alongside the results.

Key Stage 1 (Year 2)	% L2+	% L2B+	% L3+
Reading	89.9 (90.5)	79.4 (82.1)	26.4 (31.9)
Writing	85.9 (87.5)	66.9 (72.1)	13.7 (17.5)
Mathematics	92.2 (92.9)	79.9 (81.6)	21.4 (26.0)
Speaking & Listening	89.4 (90.1)	-	21.9 (25.1)
Science	90.0 (91.1)	-	21.1 (23.3)
Average Point Score	15.7		

Please note the data considered by the Panel in the tables above and below has now been superseded by the published, validated data which was unavailable at the time of the Panel's meetings and considerations.

4.1.2 The table below provides a brief overview of the complex context of pupils attending schools in Blackpool. The context is further investigated throughout the report. The table below demonstrates the high levels of deprivation experienced by children in Blackpool and the higher special education needs (SEN) than national averages. It also shows that the number of pupils from Black and Ethnic Minorities is much lower in Blackpool than nationally as is the number of pupils with English as an additional language.

2014/15	Primary %	Secondary %
Pupil Premium (Deprivation)	40.7 (26.7)	44.0 (28.9)
SEN	16.5 (14.4)	18.8 (14.3)
Black & Ethnic Minority	10.5 (30.4)	7.3 (26.6)
English as additional language	5.9 (19.4)	3.9 (15.0)

4.2 Secondary School Results 2015

4.2.1 The secondary school results had not been validated at the time of consideration by the Panel and the detail in this section is based on the unvalidated results. This also meant that the Panel was unable to compare the results nationally, however, a North West comparison was available for 5 A* - C Including English and Maths (contained in brackets in the table below).

Key Stage 4 – GCSE (Year 11) – 2014/15	Attainment
Pupils achieving 5+ A* - C	50.3 %
Pupils achieving 5+ A* - G	92.0 %
5+ A* - C Inc. English & Maths	41.8 % (56.1)
1+ A* - G	96.0 %
GCSE Total Points	312.6
GCSE Capped Points	285.3

4.2.2 Despite not being able to compare with national averages, it was clear to Members that attainment at secondary schools in 2015 was not as high as expected or desired. Following consideration of the results the Panel resolved to investigate the reasons behind the results. It was considered that attainment could not be improved in Blackpool without first understanding the context surrounding the results and the work that was being undertaken to target and improve the factors contributing to the results. Members considered that ultimately if the issues surrounding context could be somewhat resolved the results would ultimately improve.

4.3 Outcomes for Looked After Children

4.3.1 The Panel received the Annual Report of the Virtual School's Headteacher after considering it important to understand the additional support provided to 'Our Children' and how their attainment compared to looked after children in other areas. This was considered of particularly high importance given the number of children looked after in Blackpool. Despite the high number of looked after children in Blackpool in comparison to other authorities, the cohort of young people is still very small. The Panel was presented with the following information:

- 4.3.2 There were 13 pupils in the key stage 2 cohort of children looked after continuously until 31 March 2015.
- 53.8% achieved the expected level in each area of reading, writing and maths.
 - 46.2% achieved the expected level in reading, writing and maths combined, which was an increase on the previous year.
 - 38.5% achieved the required level in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- Six of the 13 pupils had identified special educational needs (SEN) without a statement or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and five of the 13 had a statement for special educational needs or an EHCP.

4.3.3 With regards to 'Our Children' undertaking examinations at key stage 4, 20 pupils formed the cohort of young people in continuous care for 12 months until 31 March 2015.

- 15% achieved 5 A*-C and 5% achieved 5 A*-C including English and maths.
- Nine of the 20 attended mainstream schools.
- Nine of the 20 had statements of SEN or an EHCP.
- Seven of the 20 attended Special Schools both in and outside of Blackpool.
- Four of the 20 were educated by Educational Diversity.
- Four of the 20 made expected progress in English and maths.
- 11 young people had five or more school placements with one young person experiencing eight school placements and two young people experiencing seven.

4.3.4 Members discussed the information received and considered the progress and attainment of the children in the two cohorts. The Panel considered that progress concerning key stage 4 had been a little disappointing as schools had predicted better results than achieved. Of the cohort, five pupils had been forecast to achieve five GCSEs (grades A*-C including English and Maths) but only one pupil secured the result. This child had been at an independent school. Some schools' predictions had fallen short by two grades. Concern was raised that predications had been inflated due to pressures to secure pupil funding from Government and it was noted that the Blackpool Challenge Board had requested that all schools use real time data when making grade predictions in order to prevent over-inflation.

4.3.5 A discussion was held regarding the additional challenges that 'Our Children' had often faced in particular regard to instability, with some placed at several schools within a short period in addition to a number of different carers. Janette Weafer advised the Panel that national research had highlighted the risks and challenges faced by looked after children with the need for schools to develop resilience to secure good grades. The biggest challenge arguably was the constant change in carers/schools for some children. The impact of transience is discussed later in the report.

4.3.6 The Panel was alerted to the emphasis the Council had placed on ensuring all children had Personal Education Plans (PEPs). The challenge to schools was whether PEPs were specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) and supported other factors such as emotional health and well-being. It was considered that of particular importance for PEPs were the child's own aspirations.

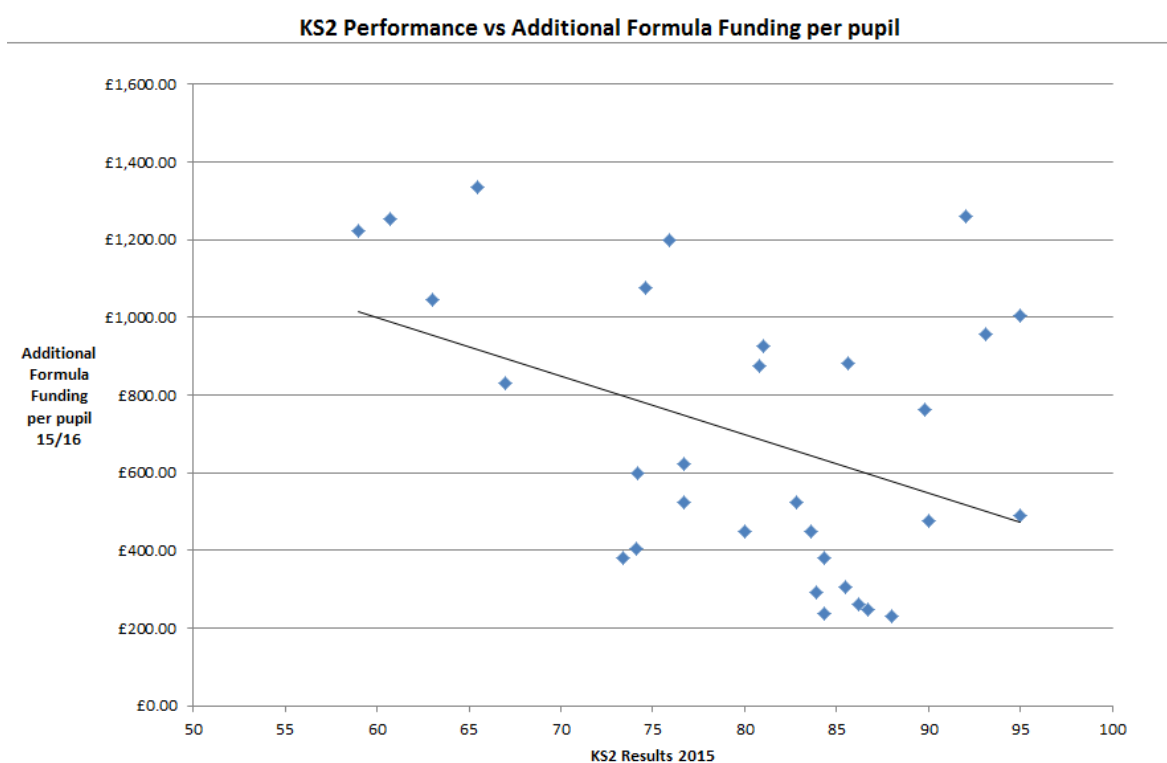
4.3.7 Note: A Personal Education Plan is a school based meeting to plan for the education of a child in care. The government has made PEPs a statutory requirement for children in care to help track and promote their achievements.

4.3.8 In conclusion, the Panel considered that the attainment of 'Our Children' in 2015 had been lower than expected, however, noted the large number of contributing factors. The importance of the right support being put in place for 'Our Children' was discussed, as were the wider issues of ensuring children had stability through attending the same

school and having the same carer, although this was not always possible. Looked after children were also likely to be more vulnerable and less resilient and in need of additional support and the Council must ensure that the support provided to 'Our Children' was as good as any parent would provide to a child in education. It was considered that the Council had already put into place a number of measures to try and address these concerns including the introduction of The Core (a safe place for looked after children to seek advice), the development of the Virtual School and that the Corporate Parent Panel was actively supporting and addressing concerns raised by our children and young people.

4.4 Impact of funding on attainment

4.4.1 The Scrutiny Panel requested an analysis of the impact additional funding had had on attainment and Mrs Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources providing the following breakdown of primary school performance vs additional formula funding. The below figures do not include the basic funding all pupils are entitled to or Pupil Premium.



4.4.2 From the data, the Panel determined that there was no exact correlation between the receipt of additional funding by schools and the attainment of pupils. A number of schools in receipt of large amounts of additional funding performed poorly when compared with schools receiving similar amounts of additional funding but achieving significantly better results. The graph above shows a large spectrum of achievement based on funding received.

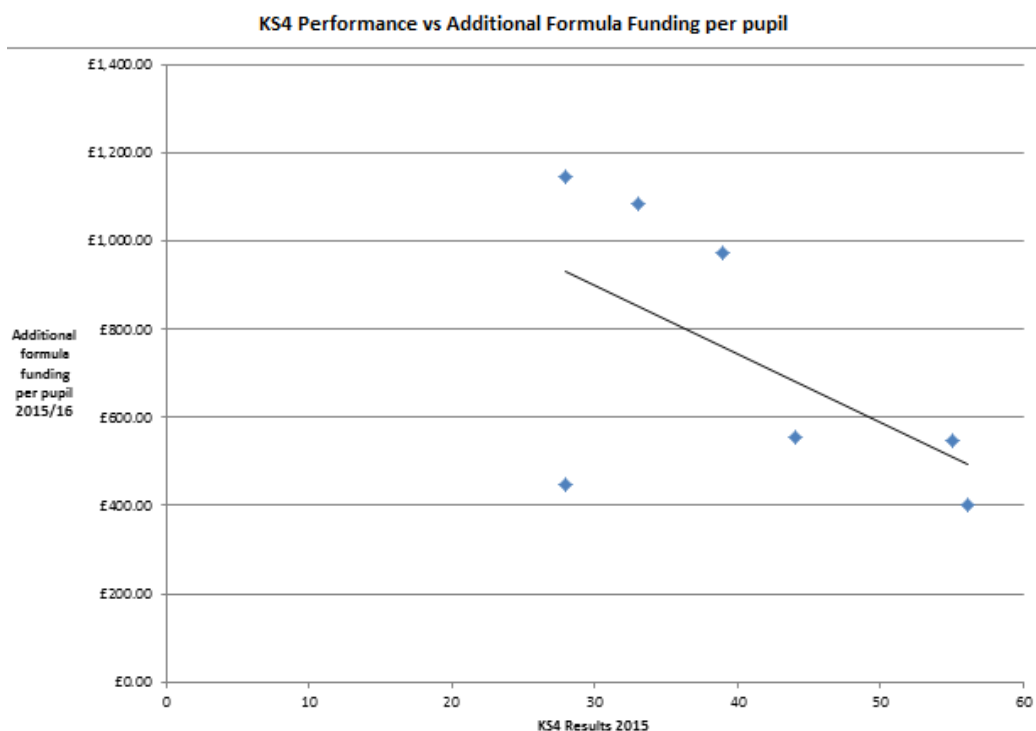
4.4.3 Schools could be in receipt of additional funding for a number of reasons including free school meals, Looked After Children attending the school, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and low attainment grants. In total, this could add up to

as much as over £1,200 per pupil for a school or as little as £200 per annum demonstrating a wide range of funding. The additional funding did not have to be spent in any specific way and it is for the school to determine how it allocates funding. The Council has no control over the allocation of funding in schools.

4.4.4 Members had a discussion as to whether it was feasible that a school in receipt of large amounts of additional funding and achieving high levels of performance could share best practice and learning with schools receiving similar levels of additional funding, but achieving much poorer results. The discussion focussed on how the school was utilising the additional funding and whether practices that had been put in place enabling achievement could be replicated by other schools. Further questions were raised regarding whether schools allocated funding in the best possible way or if improvements could be made by some schools, however, in the current education structure, there was no real opportunity for Members to pose this challenge to individual schools. It was noted that it was part of the role of Governors to challenge the way in which funding was allocated. It was also reported that Ofsted did not measure value for money provided by a school, but that schools must comply with financial regulations and audits.

4.4.5 The Panel was informed that primary schools had formed into 'clusters' often based on the academy trust they were in or their geographical location and through the clusters shared best practice and knowledge. The Blackpool Challenge was also working to improve relationships between schools across the town and had been successful in promoting engagement.

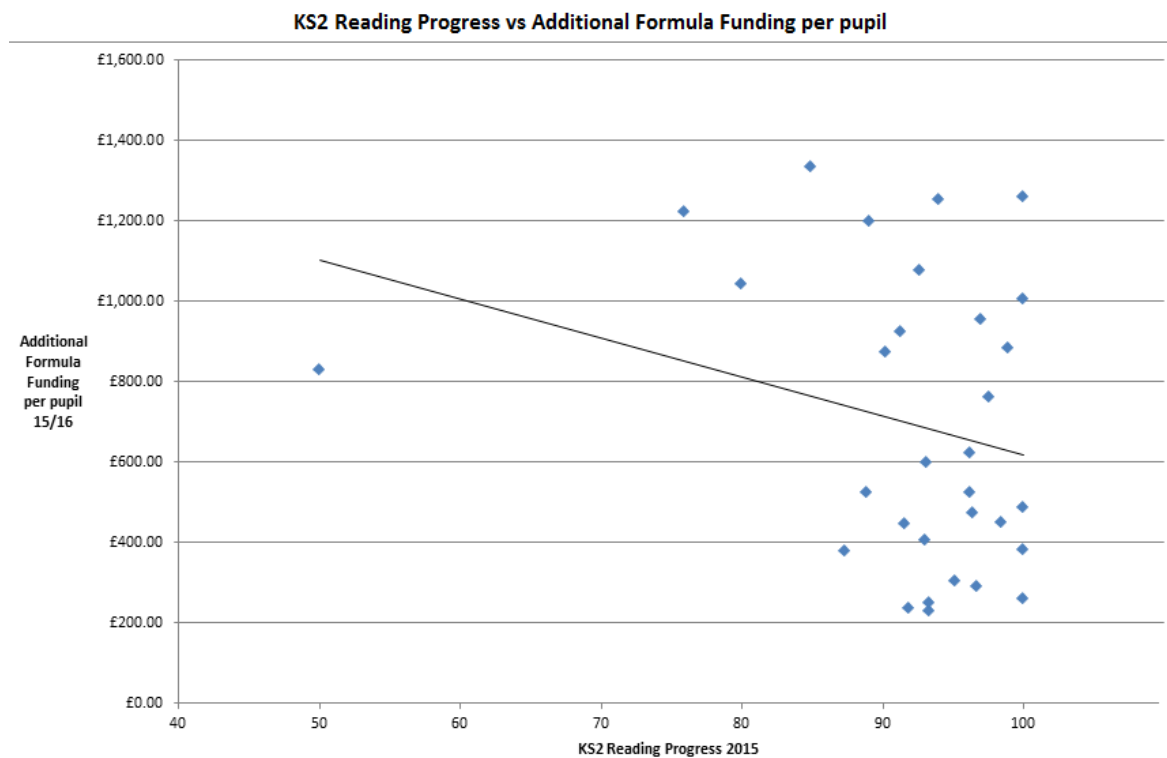
4.4.6 The number of high schools in Blackpool is much lower than the number of primary schools and therefore the dataset is based on a much smaller pool. The following chart demonstrates that there is very little relationship between additional funding and attainment as at primary schools.



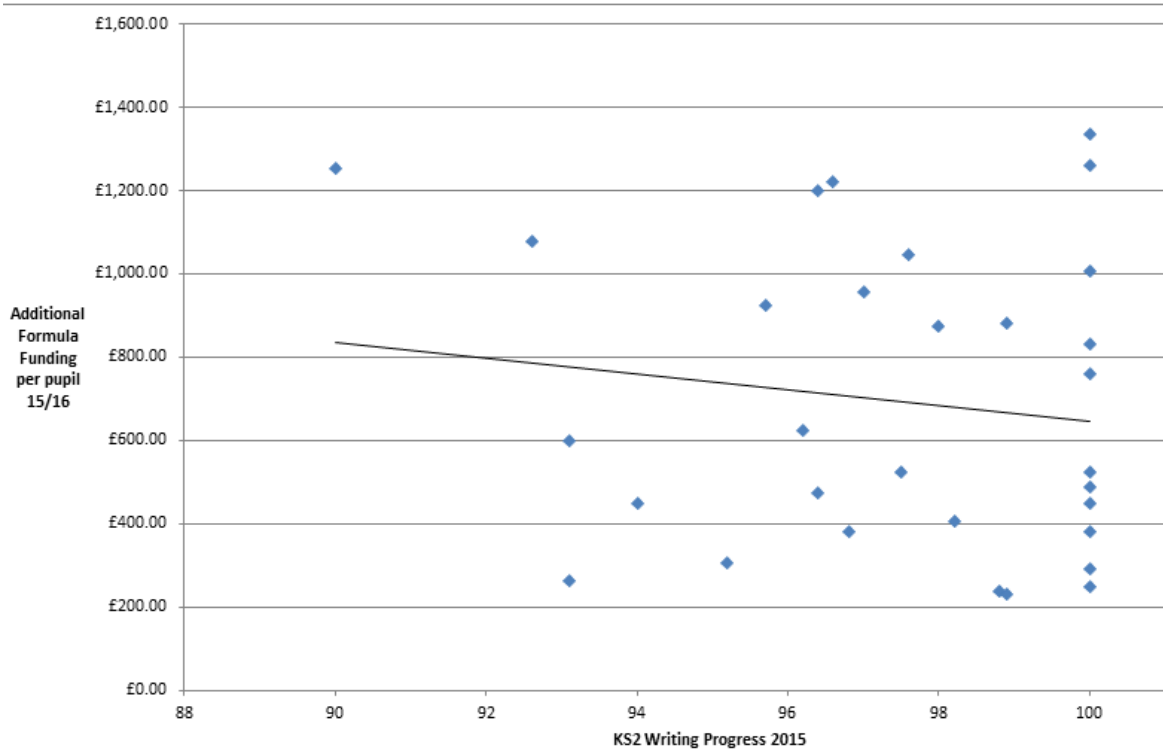
4.4.7 Members also discussed whether the information provided to the Panel was widely known and if schools were aware of the significant differences in attainment based on the additional funding they received. Amanda Whitehead reported that there was an awareness of the differences in funding, however, it was unlikely this had been directly compared with attainment. The report of the Scrutiny Panel would raise awareness of the issue and bring it to the attention of the schools, key officers including the School Improvement Team and Executive Members for appropriate action to be taken.

4.5 Impact of funding on progress

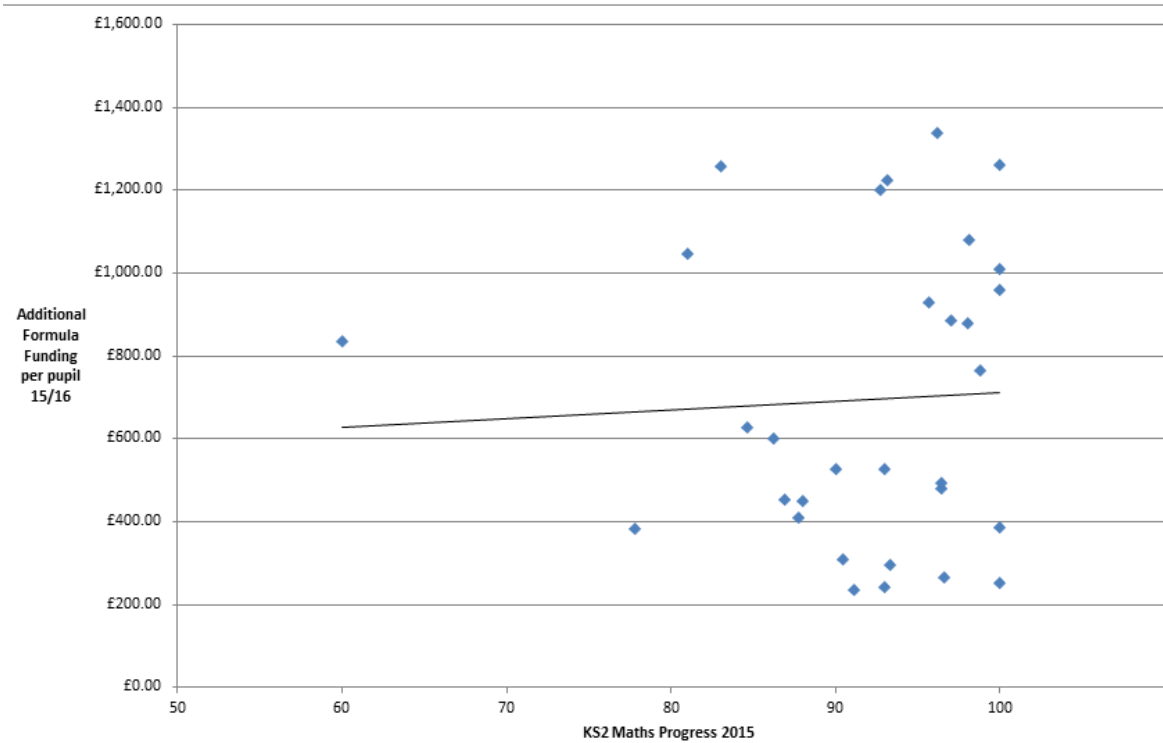
4.5.1 It was also considered important to consider the impact of funding on progress of pupils, therefore considering at what level a pupil started from and what they attained following input from the school. The following three charts show the breakdown of funding vs progress in key stage 2 reading, writing and maths.



KS2 Writing Progress vs Additional Formula Funding per pupil



KS2 Maths Progress vs Additional Formula Funding per pupil



4.5.2 Analysis of the key stage 2 progress vs performance data suggests that no matter the level of additional funding a school is in receipt of there is no direct correlation with progress made by pupils. There are some 'outlier' schools that receive significant levels of

additional funding, but make poor progress and in contrast there are some schools that receive very little additional funding but make good progress. In order to identify the reasons why one school makes progress on the same level of funding and another doesn't further investigation is required into the quality of teaching, aspiration of pupils etc. However, it must be noted that schools attracting high levels of additional funding will have more pupils from deprived areas with potentially less emotional resilience than pupils not attracting additional funding.

4.5.3 Taking progress made with writing as an example, the graph above demonstrates that a large number of primary schools receiving anything from an additional £200 per pupil to over £1,200 achieve 100% progress in writing. However, a different school in receipt of an additional £1,200 funding per pupil achieved 90%. This demonstrates that funding cannot be the only factor in attainment. As previously mentioned, this report touches on a large number of contributing factors, but without an in depth investigation into individual schools it is impossible to accurately identify the individual reasons for poor or good attainment.

4.5.4 The English and Maths progress for pupils at secondary schools in comparison to the level of funding received is very similar making it very difficult to draw conclusions regarding any significant correlation between funding and progress of pupils.

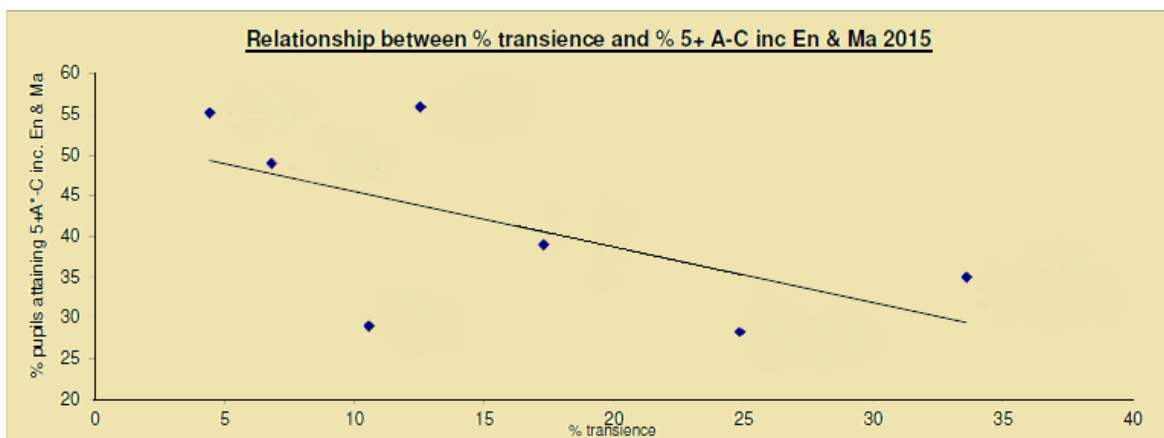
4.6 Transience

4.6.1 Research has recently been undertaken that demonstrates that a number of high achieving pupils at primary school attend secondary school outside of Blackpool. The overall effect of the migration was to lower the number of high achievers entering secondary schools within Blackpool. There could be a number of reasons for this, with the most likely parent choice to ensure their child attends what they consider to be a more successful secondary school. Due to the capacity in secondary schools within Lancashire this has been an option for many. However, the additional capacity in schools in Lancashire is expected to diminish over the next few years. The attendance of higher attaining pupils at secondary schools outside of Blackpool has a negative impact upon attainment, with the results of some of the best pupils in Blackpool achieving their results outside of the area.¹

4.6.2 Blackpool also has historically high levels of transience of pupils from one school to another during the school year and transience into and out of Blackpool. Both of these factors contribute to progress and attainment. This appears to be a fairly unique problem with transience much higher in Blackpool than national and regional averages. However, it is not a new problem and is something that key partners are fully aware of. With regards to transience of families moving into and out of Blackpool, this is not something the Council can exert any direct control over, however, work is being undertaken to improve the housing stock and transform Blackpool into a more desirable place to work for professionals. Factors such as housing, unstable families and migration are all potential reasons for transience.

¹ Year 6 Pupils not entering Year 7 in Blackpool, Dr Paul Barker, February 2016

- 4.6.3 Transience of pupils between schools in Blackpool is something that could potentially be impacted upon and schools are already working together to try and reduce exclusions and the unnecessary transfer of pupils from one school to another. However, if a family choose to move from the north of the town to the south or vice versa then it might follow they would also choose to move the child from one school to another in a more convenient location, if there was an available school place.
- 4.6.4 Despite the limited ability of the Council and partners to reduce transience, the impact that it has on attainment cannot be underestimated. If children regularly move schools the ability to track progress is diminished and although schools work to a curriculum, it is likely that a child will either repeat or miss some work through moving from one school to another. In addition, transience may also impact upon teaching, making it more difficult to plan lessons, and generally have an unsettling effect on classrooms.² Ofsted acknowledged in 2002 that 'all schools with mobility (transience) above 15% have GCSE scores below the national average.' (Transience at Blackpool secondary schools in 2014/2015 ranged from 4% to 33%).
- 4.6.5 The graph below demonstrates the relationship and impact of transience on attainment at secondary schools in Blackpool.



- 4.6.6 There have been many other studies undertaken that demonstrate the detrimental impact of transience on attainment. However, despite the problem being well known potential solutions are not. The issue of transience must also not be considered in isolation with transience often going hand in hand with free school meals, levels of deprivation and emotional resilience.

4.7 Transition

- 4.7.1 The transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7 was also identified by the Panel as a key issue for consideration. For many pupils in Blackpool the difference between attending a small primary school with good support and moving to a large secondary school with minimal pastoral care is a daunting experience and it has been acknowledged by schools that more must be done to support pupils through this process. The Blackpool Challenge Board has supported transition pilot projects to increase the support offered and

² <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002423.htm>

secondary schools and primary schools are working together to improve the experience for children.

- 4.7.2 It is hoped that an improvement in the transition will help to establish children in Year 7 and provide a more conducive environment for them to learn in. This is even more important for some groups of children who are potentially more prone to future attendance and behaviour problems and pilot schemes have been established to specifically target identified groups of young people who, without additional support, might be expected to struggle at secondary school and therefore create a disruptive learning environment for themselves and others.

4.8 The impact of behaviour and attendance

- 4.8.1 The Department for Education (DfE) produced a report in March 2016 that highlighted the link between absence from school and attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4. The report concluded that “Overall the analysis shows that as the level of overall absence across the relevant key stage increases, the likelihood of achieving key attainment outcomes at the end of KS2 and KS4 decreases. When controlling for other factors known to affect achievement, such as prior attainment and pupil characteristics, overall absence has been shown to have a statistically significant negative link to attainment. For both KS2 and KS4, extending the model to assess individual reasons for absence did not provide a greater understanding of the link between absence and attainment.”³
- 4.8.2 The data for Blackpool demonstrates that absence rates at primary schools are in line with national averages, but the absence in Blackpool secondary schools is much higher, in particular relation to persistent absence. It was noted that persistent absence was when a pupil had over 10% absence for the full academic year.

2014/15	Primary	Secondary
Overall Absence	4.0 % (3.9%)	7.5 % (5.1%)
Persistent Absence	2.7 % (2.8%)	12.3 % (5.8%)
Exclusions – Fixed Term	135	1457
Exclusions – Days Lost	274	3951
Exclusions – Permanent	0	35

- 4.8.3 The Panel spoke to Natasha Armstead, Team Leader, Student Support to gather information regarding the recordable impact of absence on attendance and she explained that at key stage 2 good attendance would be expected to result in Level 4 or 5 attainment. If in school, there was a 70% chance of securing Level 4, ie pupils were 1.3 times more likely to attain than if absent. For secondary schools, with good attendance there was approximately 35% chance of securing five GCSE grades A*-C, ie pupils were

³ The Link Between Absence and Attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, Research Report, Department for Education, March 2016

- 2.2 times more likely to succeed than if absent. She added that, statistically, each half day's absence equated to 0.2% less chance of securing Level 4 or 5 for key stage 2, increasing to 1.8% at key stage 4, highlighting the importance of good attendance.⁴
- 4.8.4 As has been the case throughout the report, there are other factors that affect attendance and attainment including being eligible for free school meals, being in specific year groups, special educational needs (SEN), ethnic background and poverty and attendance cannot be considered in isolation.
- 4.8.5 It was reported that nationally, overall absence had increased by 0.2% in 2015/2016 and persistent absence by 0.1%. However, locally schools had invested significantly to improve attendance. In Blackpool, overall absence rates had been maintained and persistent absence rates had improved, which was a good achievement.
- 4.8.6 The Panel considered the stricter guidance introduced by the Government regarding holidays during school term time. Previously ten days had been allowed but now days off in term time were only allowed in exceptional circumstances. Therefore the number of days lost on this basis (term-time holidays) had decreased. However, there was an issue that sometimes schools might not use the most appropriate classification code for recording absence. Also schools might be using other methods for recording children not being in school whilst they were on holiday rather than recording as an authorised absence.
- 4.8.7 Members observed that some parents might try to make up lost ground for absences but this was potentially far less likely for families eligible for free school meals. There was a cultural issue in that some parents failed to recognise the importance of a good education and simply left this responsibility to the school. It was considered that parents might fail to see the cumulative effect of missing half days.
- 4.8.8 The impact of behaviour in the classroom was also considered by the Panel to be a contributing factor to attainment. It was considered that the young person who was behaving poorly would be significantly affected either by fixed term or permanent exclusion making good results much more unlikely, but that their poor behaviour may also prove disruptive to a whole class and thereby potentially affecting all pupils' attainment.
- 4.8.9 There were various reasons for exclusions including poor behaviour and increased exclusions meant more children missing school. Members expressed a concern that certain schools were permanently excluding more children rather than managing behaviour. It was thought that permanent exclusions had been previously high in response to pressure on schools to improve results, but that in the past year permanent exclusions had significantly decreased in Blackpool. However, the number of children in the Pupil Referral Unit (educational Diversity) remained the highest in the country.
- 4.8.10 The Panel noted that it was a key aim of the Blackpool Challenge to promote educational improvement by reducing permanent exclusions and a reduction in exclusions would create more stability for students and potentially better outcomes.

⁴ March 2016, Department for Education Release for 2014/2015 Attendance, National and Local School Data

4.8.11 Members considered the differences in absence between primary and secondary schools and noted the much higher levels in secondary schools. It was considered that primary schools offered more pastoral support and often provided a more caring environment for children potentially encouraging them to attend. It was also noted that due to the age of the students, parents would often take children to and from school or have organised alternative transport for them therefore ensuring attendance. Secondary school children were old enough to travel to school alone. The catchment area of primary schools was often much smaller, resulting in a shorter distance from home to school for many pupils. Members discussed the level of pastoral care provided by secondary schools and noted the work being undertaken by the Blackpool Challenge regarding the transition between primary and secondary school and the care provided to children.

4.9 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

4.9.1 The legal definition of SEN is a *“learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her”* and learning difficulty *“has a significantly greater difficulty in learning, than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents them making use of facilities of a kind generally available...”*. Both of these indicate that SEN will have an impact on attainment. However, it is difficult to predict exactly how in general terms. For instance, the definition could cover a pupil who is visually impaired but achieving at a level where they could access university, with access to Braille, or one who has profound learning needs where good progress in making a choice between two pieces of food, following a dedicated teaching programme.

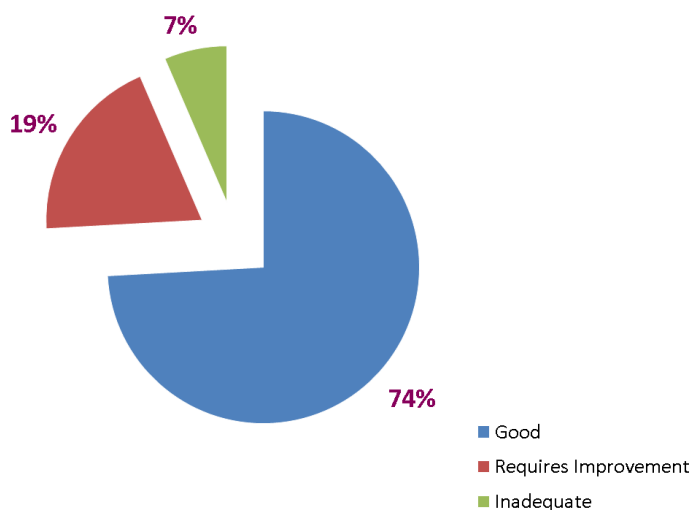
4.9.2 The identified levels of special educational needs in Blackpool were slightly higher than national averages in 2014/2015 with 16.5% of pupils at primary school (in comparison with 14.4% nationally) and 18.8% of pupils in Blackpool secondary schools (in comparison with 14.3% nationally). The percentages of children with SEN at each school in Blackpool do vary. What cannot be determined is how significant the SEN identified is and the exact impact this will have on attainment without much more detailed investigation. What is important, however, is that pupils with identified special educational needs receive the support they need in order to allow progress to be made. The Panel has noted that in Blackpool there has been a significant increase in the numbers in special schools due to increasing need, earlier identification and parental choice for good or outstanding schools and based on the information received it appears the Council is providing a good level of support for children with special educational needs.

4.10 Quality of Teaching

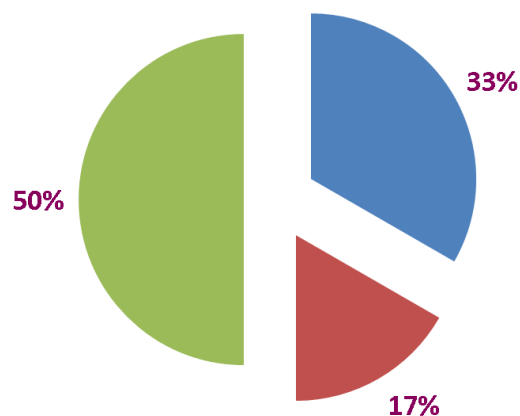
4.10.1 The quality of teaching is clearly an important aspect when considering attainment, it is also difficult to ascertain the quality provided. Quality of teaching is something considered by Ofsted inspections but it is important to note that the judgement is often a snapshot of the teaching on offer at the time of the inspection. Individual schools will offer performance appraisals and would be expected to manage performance in the same way as any other organisation. It was also noted that the Blackpool Challenge had recently undertaken a piece of work to identify the professional development on offer to teachers in Blackpool and transfer this into a concise list of development opportunities.

4.10.2 At the time the Panel considered the data, the following breakdown in Ofsted judgements was reported. Due to inspections that have been undertaken since the consideration of this data, the judgements of individual schools may have changed.

Ofsted Judgements of Primary Schools:



Ofsted Judgements of Secondary Schools:



4.10.3 Although the overall judgements of schools do not give an indication of the individual judgement awarded to teaching in each inspection, it would be very unlikely for a school to receive a good judgement and been considered as having a poor quality of teaching.

4.10.4 The importance of good quality of teaching could not be underestimated when considering attainment. A good teacher will have the ability to inspire young people, to engage and to explain subjects in a manner that it easily understood. All these characteristics are likely to lead to a higher attainment by pupils. The Panel went on to consider how to raise the quality of teaching in Blackpool to thereby help attain improved results.

4.10.5 In order to provide a high quality of teaching it was important to attract the best teachers to Blackpool and the Council had introduced a microsite to try and promote Blackpool as a place and work to prospective teachers. The website highlighted the benefits of coming to teach in Blackpool and the professional development on offer through short videos of existing teachers. It was considered that there was little more the Council could do in order to attract good teachers and that the key was to change the reputation of Blackpool as a place to live and work. The Council was considering a wide range of ways to attract professionals to the town.

4.10.6 A further key concern was the quality of teaching in specific key subjects such as maths and science, it was noted that there was a national shortage of teachers specialising in these subjects and that they were subjects in which a specialism was of key importance.

- 4.10.7 The Panel considered the continued support of Teach First, an organisation that placed the best newly qualified teachers in deprived areas with a view to them developing professionally and obtaining permanent positions. The importance of retention was highlighted and it was noted that many schools in Blackpool did provide challenging environments in which to work and that all teachers required suitable support to enable them to succeed and develop in these environments and it was considered that HeadStart had an important role to play in increasing the resilience of teachers as well as young people. Resilience was of key concern to HeadStart and was a key aim on which funding had been granted.
- 4.10.8 Although mental toughness was not a factor the Panel had determined to focus on in detail, it became apparent during the review, that recent research had highlighted how low the mental toughness of young people in Blackpool was in comparison to other parts of the country. It was reported that mental toughness was essential to help develop good relationships and commit to learning and development.
- 4.10.9 It was reported that moving forward into 2016/2017 the Blackpool Challenge would have four main areas of focus: the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, the transition from primary to secondary school, exclusions and employability/engagement.

4.11 Aspiration

- 4.11.1 The Panel has considered many factors contributing to attainment, many of which are outside the control of the Council. Aspiration is another key factor when considering attainment, and again is something very difficult to impact. The culture in Blackpool to aspire is perceived to be poor and with many parents receiving poor wages or in receipt of benefits there is very little for young people in the town to aspire to. When a parent cannot impart aspiration, it is left to schools and teachers to take on that role and the public and voluntary sector organisations in the town to try and impact upon the culture. In making Blackpool a better place to live and work, the level of aspiration will be improved.
- 4.11.2 A key concern was the lack of careers education and work experience now provided by schools and the apparent 'one size fits all' approach to education with vocational qualifications much less utilised than previously. The Council was offering programmes targeting young people at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) and was promoting apprenticeships but had limited resources to provide any additional programmes.
- 4.11.3 The Panel considered that it would be useful for decision makers to meet with a small panel of representative young people in order to identify what their aspirations were, what the barriers were and how the Council could help.

4.12 Conclusion

- 4.12.1 During the course of the review, it has become apparent that there is not one single factor that alone will improve attainment. There are a number of important and contributing factors to educational attainment as highlighted in the report including transience, quality of teaching and levels of attendance and in order to improve

attainment, all these factors need to be addressed together and by a range of organisations.

- 4.12.2 Recent Government proposals place the emphasis on schools to drive school improvement going forward and the funding that Local Authorities currently receive for school improvement will be eventually removed, leaving the Council with no resource and little power to directly influence education in the town. In Blackpool, a new School Improvement Board to be led by school leaders across the town has been established in order to drive school improvement. The focus of the Council on improving community resilience, quality of housing and employment opportunities will however significantly contribute to the aspiration of young people to achieve and can only be welcomed.
- 4.12.3 The Review Panel has gathered a large amount of useful data and would encourage that its report be shared as a resource with the Blackpool Challenge Board, School Improvement Board and with all organisations who could contribute to school improvement in Blackpool.