PROFORMA FOR A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title
Your child, your school, our future: building a 21st century schools system

Description of the policy
The 21st century schools White Paper aims to set out our broad strategy and expectations for the school system going forward; set the policy direction for developing greater partnership working in the system and position the new School Report Card within a renewed and integrated accountability and school improvement framework

The evidence base

21st Century Schools: A World Class Education for Every Child

21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child Analysis of responses to the consultation documents

These are public documents and are available at http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem

This is in addition to the wide body of evidence on equality held and used by the Department on an ongoing basis.

What the evidence shows – key facts
There is a significant variation in educational outcomes within and between groups of children, frequently associated with their social and economic circumstances. As a consequence many children, often concentrated into particular disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, fail to fulfil their potential.

The White Paper introduces policy changes that intend to narrow the gap in educational outcomes for all children.

Disability:

With 20% of all children identified as having a special educational need (SEN), all mainstream schools will be concerned with achievement for this group, particularly as outcomes are well below those of children without SEN. Traditionally, children with SEN and disabilities have suffered from low
expectations and their parents are less likely to be satisfied than other parents with their engagement with schools.

Children with special educational needs can make outstanding progress through high quality teaching and an inclusive environment (Ofsted, 2006a);

Ethnicity

In recent years there have been big improvements for all the major minority ethnic groups that were previously underperforming. The performance of the major census groups, Black, Asian and Mixed has improved faster than the cohort average at both primary and secondary levels over the past five years. For example the gap between the Black pupils performance and average performance narrowed considerably. However the absolute achievement for some minority ethnic groups still lags behind the cohort as a whole.

Established initiatives such as full service extended services have been shown to have positive impacts in a range of ways, including pupils’ engagement with learning, family stability, life chances, exclusion rates, intake, and pupil attainment (Cummings et al., 2007). Minority ethnic groups and vulnerable children and young people are benefitting from the extra support provided by schools (Cummings et al., 2007). The provision of study support can impact on pupil’s motivation, attainment, behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning (MacBeath et al., 2001; MORI, 2004b).

The differences in attainment are reflected in the NEET rates. Amongst 16-19 year olds in 2005, 13 per cent of African-Caribbean people were NEET compared with eight per cent of ‘white British’ and four per cent of those of Indian heritage. (Connexions CCIS data Dec 2005)

Gender

- The attainment gap by gender is marked at Key Stage 4 and widened dramatically in favour of girls between 1986 and 1998. Subsequently girls are more likely to be in post-compulsory education and training
- Of all permanent exclusions recorded in 2005/06, the overwhelming majority were boys and this has remained the case since late 1990

Challenges and opportunities

Reducing educational inequality and ensuring every child and young person reaches their full potential is the aim of this White Paper. We believe the changes it will introduce will do this by:

- Closing the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds
• Making it equally possible for a good school serving a disadvantaged community and a good school serving a less disadvantaged area to obtain a high score on the School Report Card.

• Including indicators for narrowing gaps in pupil performance category along with pupils’ progress to measure how well a school enables every child to reach its potential.

• We are committed to the SRC containing a measure which reflects schools' success in securing positive outcomes for children with SEN, as well as reflecting the views of pupils with SEN and their parents. Evidence points to using measures which focus on the progress of the lowest achievers, the majority of whom are identified as having SEN; considering how the reducing disadvantage measure could be used; and separating out satisfaction results for pupils with SEN and disability and their parents, and comparing them to other pupils and parents.

• Introducing an early intervention framework will ensure that children have their needs met earlier and before they can develop into bigger problems.

• Schools working closely in partnership with other children’s services, including co-location of multi-agency teams with a cluster of schools, will mean that the needs of children and young people are more effectively identified and met.

• Ensuring a greater range of professionals work in and with schools, and continuing to ensure a high-quality workforce will better meet pupils' needs and lead to better outcomes.

• Improving the quality of personalised learning, ensuring all children have an excellent personalised education will mean that, regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability can reach their potential.

• Improved school improvement will mean that every pupil gets to attend an excellent 21st century school.

Equality impact assessment

We have taken many different steps to be inclusive in the consultation process, and to focus closely on equality evidence and issues in our analysis. The consultation and accompanying analysis have both strongly informed the proposals in the White Paper.

The White Paper sets out DCSF’s strategy to deliver its Departmental Strategic Objectives through schools, which include specific commitments to narrow achievement gaps, increase participation and ensure that young people stay on the path to success, thereby improving outcomes for all children and young people.

Next steps
The White Paper will be followed up with action to implement those policies set out, along with further development in those areas indicated as a signal of intent or where further work is needed. These emerging policy areas will be reviewed to assess where further EQUIAs are needed.