Hampshire County Council
Improvement and Advisory Service

Project 27+

An Equity Enquiry Programme for School Leaders

Putting the lived experience, strengths and aspirations of pupils impacted by disadvantage at the heart of school improvement

This innovative five-session leadership project has been designed to help schools move beyond analysing attainment gaps and towards a deeper understanding of the experiences, strengths, opportunities and systemic factors that shape the lives of pupils who are impacted by disadvantage.

Through a structured process of collaborative enquiry, school leaders will work alongside colleagues from other schools to explore a simple but powerful question: *How do pupils who face disadvantage experience learning, belonging and success in our school?*

This builds on, but is different to, previous iterations of this offer. It will include the learning and impact from past schools' involvement whilst adding new foci and input. Everyone is welcome!

Why this programme?

Research consistently highlights two critical points in a young person's educational journey:

Year 7

The transition into secondary school can be a pivotal moment. Evidence suggests that for many pupils, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, maintaining engagement, participation and a strong sense of belonging can become more challenging during the first two terms of secondary education.

Year 11

For pupils approaching GCSE examinations, understanding and addressing factors that may affect attendance, engagement and achievement can have a significant impact on future opportunities and pathways.

This programme adopts a unique 'split-screen' approach, enabling schools to simultaneously:

- Improve outcomes for current Year 11 pupils whose attainment can still be influenced in the short term.
- Strengthen engagement, belonging and participation for Year 7 pupils to prevent future attainment gaps from emerging.

What Schools Will Gain

Participating schools will:

- **Develop Deep Understanding:** Gain a richer understanding of the lived experiences, strengths and aspirations of pupils experiencing disadvantage, alongside the factors influencing engagement and achievement.
- **Learn Through Collaborative Enquiry:** Work alongside leaders from other schools in a supportive professional network that values openness, challenge and shared learning.
- **Use Evidence to Drive Improvement:** Draw on research, local evidence and pupil perspectives to identify meaningful areas for change.

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- **Test and Refine Approaches:** Design, implement and evaluate small-scale, high-impact changes within their own setting.
- **Create Sustainable Change:** Leave with practical, evidence-informed and practical impactful approaches from this programme that can be embedded into whole-school improvement planning.

Programme Overview

Based on evidenced principles, the programme supports school leaders to investigate barriers, test solutions and embed sustainable improvements.

Session	Focus	Key Question
1 – In person *Wed 30 Sep: 13:30 – 16:30*	Understanding Lived Experiences	What is it like in our school for pupils who face disadvantage?
2 – Online *Tus 3 Nov: 15:30 – 17:00*	Focusing and Developing Understanding	What factors are influencing success and participation for these pupils?
3 – In person *Tue 1 Dec: 13:30 – 16:30*	Learning and Designing Action	What might make the biggest difference?
4 – Online *Wed 3 Feb: 15:30 – 17:00*	Taking Action: Testing What's Working	What are we learning from implementing change?
5 – In person *Tue 23 Mar: 13:30 – 16:30*	Checking, Scaling and Leading for Equity	What have we learned and how will we embed it?

Expectations for impact review

Each school will review the impact of involvement in Project 27+, sharing their approaches and reflecting the voices of pupils in their schools. Participants are making a commitment to strengthen our collective efforts to improve experiences, participation and outcomes for pupils experiencing disadvantage.

Who Should Attend?

- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Assistant Headteacher
- Leaders with responsibility for disadvantage, inclusion, attendance or school improvement

We recommend two senior leaders from each school to maximise impact and sustainability.

Programme cost: £400 for whole programme (inclusive cost for two participants per school)

To sign up, complete this form by Wednesday 23rd September 2026.

Project 27+ offers a rare opportunity to step beyond data, hear the voices behind the numbers, and develop practical solutions that build on the strengths, experiences and aspirations of young people experiencing disadvantage.

Contact chris.vaudin2@hants.gov.uk if you have any questions.