

Equity in Education Newsletter

Volume 1
Autumn 24



no learner left behind

Welcome from Jon Chaloner

In March 2024, I was appointed as the Independent Chair of the Surrey Education Partnership (SEP) and it has been a privilege to work with so many leaders who are committed to the county's ambitious *Lifetime of Learning Strategy* for 2030.

There is obvious strength in the present Surrey education system and you, our learning providers and partners, are individually committed to transforming the educational experience of all learners. As our outcomes show we serve most learners well.

However, whilst the majority thrive, this is not true for all. The evidence is clear across all ages - too many learners are not meeting their potential or succeeding as we would want them to.

Our education institutions are central to helping create a fairer society, seeking to reduce economic inequity and increase educational equity. But we all need to take collective responsibility – parents and carers, teachers, leaders, support practioners across all sectors.



The (SEP) members believe that we will make more progress through collaboration rather than in isolation, or in competition. The work of the SEP is to promote a culture of openness, trust, partnership, and professional collaboration that improves outcomes, shares best practice, and contributes to system-led improvement under the banner of Educational Equity for All.

And that's what this termly newsletter is all about - supporting our learning providers and others to ensure no learner is left behind. Each edition will contain articles, features and links to great initiatives happening across the county and beyond. We hope that you will find our newsletter interesting, informative and impactful. We welcome your feedback via e.johnston@schoolsallexcel.com

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A Manifesto for Change

Our Aims

Education is an investment in the future. We are committed to ensuring that **everyone** in Surrey benefits from the right education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life at the time they need it.

Currently this is not the case for every learner in Surrey with too many left behind and not achieving their potential. Our aim is simple - to change this so no learner is left behind.

Call to action

We are calling on all education providers and partners to commit to placing equity and inclusion at the heart of their work, decision-making, policies and accountability



- no-one left behind
- no-one excluded
- no-one misses out
- no-one faces unmitigated barriers
- no-one gets less than a fair deal

Our Approach

Our current education system with autonomy for education settings requires a collaborative approach. Our approach is based on three principles:

- We will make more progress by benefiting from the strengths of collaboration rather than in isolation or in competition. Our solution needs to be bigger than any one institution.
- We need to see the journey through the lifetime of the learner including their experiences in and outside education from early years to post-16
- Removing the barriers to academic success for some learners are complex and resources require the engagement of many partners.

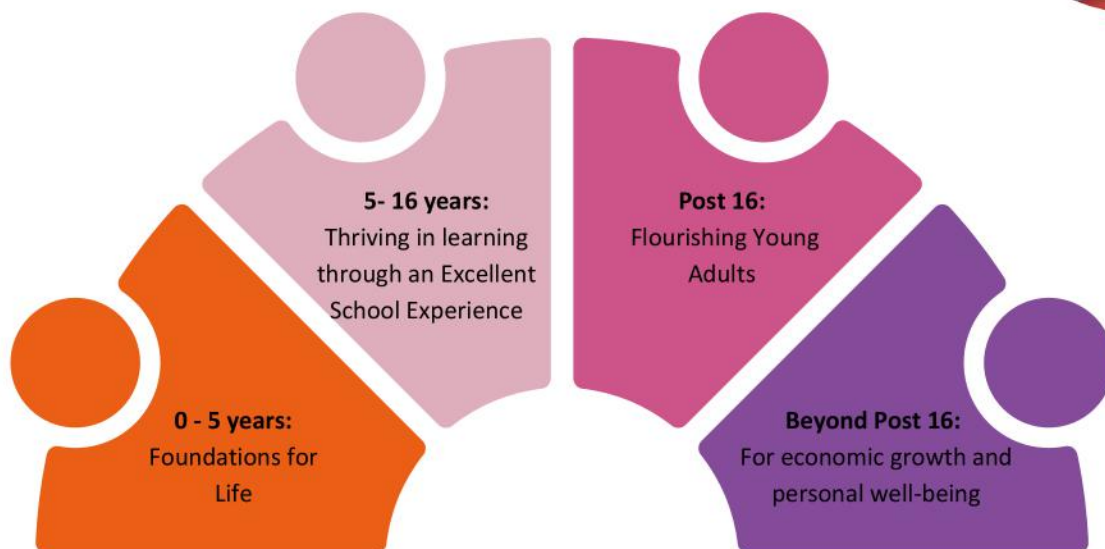
Principles of Surrey Education Partnership Board



A Lifetime of Learning

What is the strategy?

The Surrey Education Partnership's Lifetime of Learning Strategy aims to provide the best education for all, ensuring every learner thrives, regardless of background or need. Focused on fostering education equity, the strategy ensures no learner is left behind by embracing opportunities for lifelong learning.



This ambitious plan unites partners across education and skills sectors, at every stage of learning.

Education Equity

'Equitable education systems ensure that everyone can achieve their educational potential regardless of their personal or social circumstances.' OECD

Our Priorities

Improving communication, language and literacy across all ages and phases for all groups.

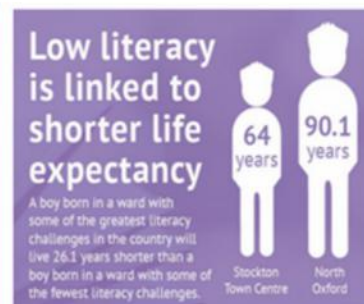
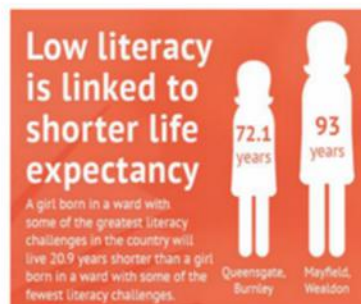
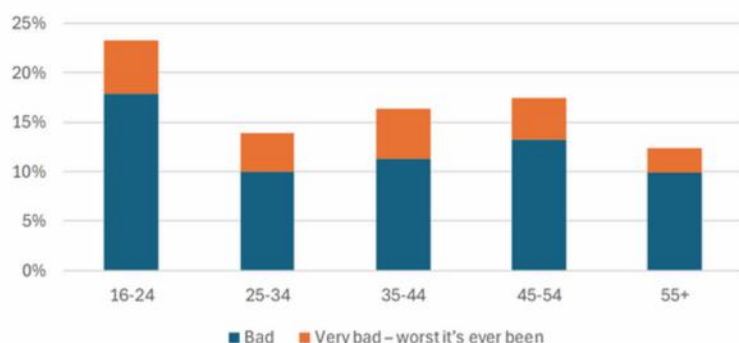
Literacy and communication skills have a significant impact on all-round achievement and progress throughout all phases of education and beyond.

Whilst we do well for many of our vulnerable children in Surrey, young people and adults continue to struggle to achieve the key skills needed to succeed in education and life.

Ensuring education settings have the skills, confidence and understanding to support children, young people and adults' emotional wellbeing to enable them to thrive and learn.

In the wake of the pandemic and the realities of our current society, the physical and mental health of our children, young people and adults is more challenged than ever. Nearly a quarter describe their mental health as either bad or the worst it's ever been.

Self-assessment of poor mental health by age in the UK, 2024



Recruit, retain and grow the best teachers, practitioners, and leaders, providing them with high quality continuing professional development opportunities through their careers.

We will not achieve our ambitions without ensuring we have sufficient education practitioners and experts across all phases and ensuring deep and long-term support to improve the quality of leadership and teaching.

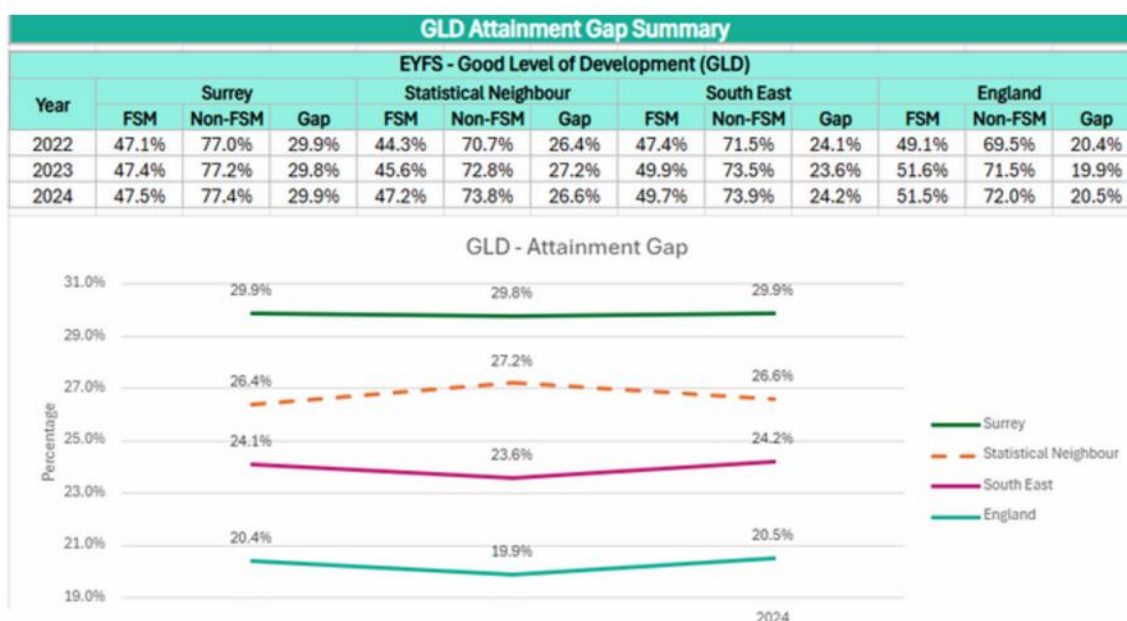
Understanding and addressing issues that result in low and non-attendance and engagement in education settings.

Regular attendance and engagement are crucial for giving children the best start in life, ensuring they benefit from valuable learning opportunities and can contribute positively to society. Poor attendance can significantly hinder academic progress and lead to social isolation, low self-esteem, and disengagement.

Early Years & Primary Data Gap

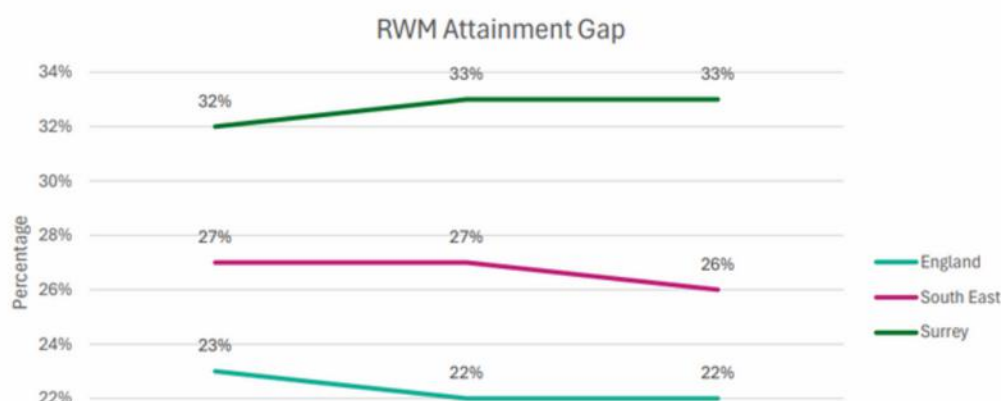
The disadvantaged attainment gap remains a critical issue amongst our youngest learners in Surrey.

In EYFS, around 48% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) reached Good Level of Development (GLD) compared to 77% of those not eligible.



Key Stage 2 Attainment Gap Summary

Year	Surrey			South East			England		
	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap
2018-19	40%	73%	33%	43%	70%	27%	48%	69%	21%
2019-20									
2020-21									
2021-22	37%	69%	32%	37%	64%	27%	42%	65%	23%
2022-23	37%	70%	33%	38%	65%	27%	44%	66%	22%
2023-24	38%	71%	33%	40%	66%	26%	45%	67%	22%



The trend continues into KS2, with only 38% of pupils eligible for FSM meeting the expected standards for Reading, Writing and Maths, compared to 71% of those not eligible.

Surrey are placed 145th out of 149 Local Authorities in terms of the disadvantage gap at end of KS2

Boost adult maths skills with Multiply

Multiply is a government-funded initiative with £560 million allocated to improve numeracy skills for adults across the UK over the next three years.

By 2030, the programme aims to significantly increase the number of individuals completing high-quality skills training. Sessions are designed to enhance people's ability to use maths in everyday life, work, and home.

Multiply is open to learners aged 19 and over without a GCSE in maths (grade C or equivalent). The courses, available for beginners, are free, flexible, and auto-marked, with no formal assessments. Surrey residents are able to apply and complete the training until March 2025.

[Click here for more information](#)



A Healthy Approach

To make a real impact on the emotional wellbeing of our children and young people, a focus on mental health needs to be built into the ethos, curriculum and practices of our early years, school, college and post-16 life.

The Surrey Healthy Schools approach is an initiative designed to support schools in promoting the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of students. It encourages whole-school involvement by embedding health and wellbeing into every aspect of school life, including the curriculum, policies, and school environment. Full training is available to all Surrey schools.

Central to the approach is the free Self-Evaluation Tool, which aids schools in identifying and implementing effective practices. Schools that participate have praised the tool's value in helping them focus on best practices, ensuring policies are in place, and validating the positive steps they are already taking.

[Find out more here](#)

Nurturing Surrey

Across the county, 100 schools are currently in the process of embedding a nurture approach to support learners with social, emotional and mental health needs through the Surrey Nurturing Schools Programme. SAE, working with the schools-led Inclusion Innovation Working Group and the Mental Health Investment Fund, has partnered with national charity nurtureuk to deliver this fully funded training over the course of 18 months.

With an almost 50% increase in the number of primary-aged pupils in Surrey suffering social, emotional and mental health challenges in the last year, the nurture approach provides evidence-based tools and resources to support schools to understand and respond to challenging behaviour, ensuring that all children and young people can learn.

Alongside this programme, Surrey County Council are commissioning 24 Locality Nurture Hub provisions, designed to support pupils from schools in the area with social, emotional and mental health needs. Currently 12 schools have been selected and are undertaking training from nurtureuk, with more LNHS expected to be assigned in October.



Civic Agreement for a more inclusive Surrey

Surrey County Council, alongside Royal Holloway University, the University for the Creative Arts, and the University of Surrey, has launched a Civic Agreement to collaborate for the benefit of the Surrey community. Signed in September, the agreement focuses on four key areas: economic growth, health inequality, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment. The aim is to create a more inclusive and resilient Surrey by 2030.

This partnership brings together the universities' expertise and resources to drive innovation and foster long-term growth. The universities will work closely with local government, businesses, and community groups to ensure that no one in Surrey is left behind.

[More details can be found here](#)



Early Years Evidence Store

Why the evidence is our “best bet”

Giving every child access to great learning and development opportunities in the early years is crucial to combatting education inequality. Early years professionals play a central role in this mission. But, with the sector facing a number of immediate challenges, they shoulder a huge amount of responsibility in their day-to-day working lives.

This is where education research can make a real difference. Using evidence can help to create great learning opportunities for all children, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who we know stand to benefit most from high-quality early education.

The Education Endowment Fund's Early Years Evidence Store is a summary of evidence-informed approaches to help educators to understand and reflect on their practice. The approaches are illustrated with practices that typically make up the approach and a range of examples of what these might look like in practice.

More information on how to make use of the Evidence Store is provided in the how-to guide.

[More details can be found here](#)



AI - supporting inclusion

AI has the potential to help make education better for all schools and learners but particularly those that are underserved and in the process of improving equity and inclusion. But there are also significant risks that if we are not careful AI may exacerbate existing education inequality. Education leaders have a critical role to play in ensuring that the changes benefit learners, teachers, lecturers and society. By embracing equity-centred AI, addressing the digital divide, and promoting collaborative teaching approaches, we can harness the transformative power of AI to create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape for all learners. The AI in Education initiative is a brilliant way of staying informed and connected. For example the recent AI SEND hackathon at NESOT provided SENCOs with the opportunity to interact with AI specialists and fellow SENCOs, to broaden their understanding of AI's role in education and produce actionable advice and practical support tailored to the unique needs of SEND professionals.

[Find out more about AI in Education here](#)
[and the SEND Hackathon here](#)



Spotlight on... Warlingham

Paul Kinder, Senior Deputy Head at Warlingham School & Sixth Form College, reflects on their educational equity work with Marc Rowland:

"Having had the privilege of working with Marc Rowland for almost four years now, the mantra 'The language gap is the disadvantaged gap' is now one which is firmly established at Warlingham. For our staff, school culture has developed around the core understanding that, as Marc champions, "There is no such thing in education as a golden ticket but developing students language is as close as you are going to come". The focus of the last three years has thus rightly been about teachers prioritising the eradication of the language gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

It has, put simply, meant staff at the school adopting a clearly defined approach in the classroom to ensure that we all proactively develop oracy and writing skills and build on language ownership and application. In terms of socio-economically disadvantaged students, it was clear that building staff competence and confidence in this area, along with targeted interventions, would support all students but benefit the disadvantaged most.

Post covid, another clear priority was emerging alongside our core focus, namely student attendance.



The connection between school attendance and educational outcomes has always been clear but with our persistent absence rate spiking, our data showed that our identified underserved cohort were disproportionately represented in these absence figures. Whilst we had assumed that good attendance would result in success at school, it became clear that the reverse was indeed true – it was success at school that would lead to good attendance. It was ensuring that students genuinely felt like they belonged that would draw our young people back.

For the underserved, equity not equality was required. A joined-up understanding by key stakeholders of the whole families lives' in their specific contexts was essential, as was an understanding of the barriers they faced and the provision of a joined-up package of responses. In short, knowing our students but also ensuring that they feel seen, heard, understood and safe is the pivotal requirement. Marc Rowland has been clear on this. A second golden ticket."

[Click here to read the full article](#)

Spotlight on...

Surrey Music Hub

James Pinchen, Inclusion Manager for Surrey Arts, shines a light on their work with sanctuary seekers:

"Surrey Arts started working with sanctuary seekers (individuals who have fled their home either due to violence or persecution, or continued insecure status at home) around 2018 when we were asked to provide music lessons for a small group of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who were being cared for by the local authority at the time. The need for us to support displaced communities and the local people who host them has since expanded exponentially as global events impact on the demographics and needs of our children and young people. In order to respond to this need we have developed a workforce who have the skills, languages, resources and training needed alongside securing external funding to respond to this need. Surrey Arts is proud to support other organisations in our sector at a regional, national and international level by sharing our learning and resources.

Our work over the last 3 years has been largely funded by Youth Music and through these funded programmes we have worked with more than 800 sanctuary seekers.

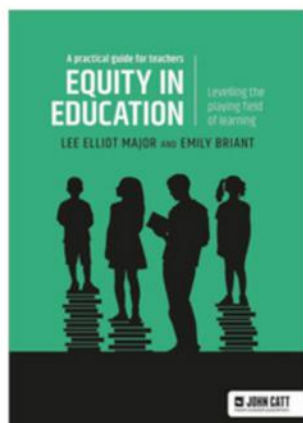
The initiatives have achieved several positive outcomes, including creating career opportunities in music education for people from refugee backgrounds. The programmes emphasise trauma-informed approaches, inclusive practices, and diverse musical training, benefiting both children and young people from displaced and non-displaced backgrounds.

Through music events in areas with high asylum seeker populations, the programmes foster social cohesion, while initiatives like the I Speak Music schools programme and the World in Music ensemble help promote inclusivity. Additionally, Surrey Arts has made its internal systems more accessible and diversified its repertoire and workforce.

Evaluations of the programmes highlight significant improvements in participants' mental health, well-being, and music skills. Participants have developed empathy, cultural awareness, and resilience while building new friendships and professional partnerships. These initiatives have also led to increased self-confidence and strengthened connections between diverse communities."



Book Look



Equity in Education

**Lee Elliot Major
and Emily Briant**

Equity in Education by Lee Elliot Major and Emily Briant tackles the persistent disadvantage gap in education, highlighting how inequality endures despite numerous reforms. The authors show the difficulty of addressing this issue yet the book remains hopeful, emphasising that teachers can still make a meaningful difference in students' lives.

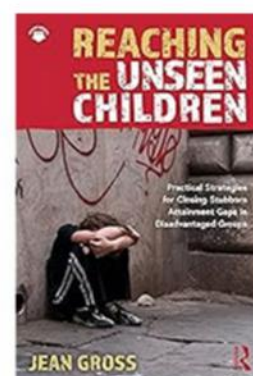
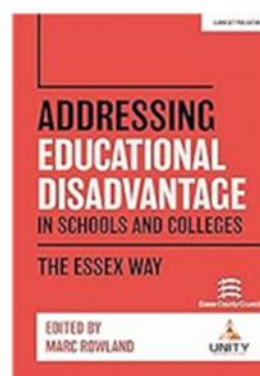
Elliot Major and Briant advocate for a balanced approach, avoiding two extremes: the belief that schools cannot overcome societal inequalities and the view that focusing on deprivation equates to low expectations. Instead, they promote working within the "messier in-between," where progress, though imperfect, is possible. They use the pandemic's magnification of educational inequalities to illustrate how schools can still mitigate some of these effects.

The book is divided into an overview and two practical sections aimed at both teachers and school leaders, providing actionable advice at various career stages. The authors emphasise strategies rooted in four key principles: equity over equality, focusing on capacity rather than deficits, fostering deep relationships, and recognizing diverse talents.

Briant's personal teaching experience adds a relatable perspective, particularly in her reflections on the impact Early Career Teachers can have. The final section broadens the scope, exploring global approaches to education, while stressing that solutions depend on societal context.

Equity in Education is a thoughtful mix of theory and practical guidance, offering a clear call to action for educators. It reminds readers that even small victories in the quest for educational equity can make a lasting difference.

Similar reading:



Support for Governors

Governing boards have a crucial role to play in ensuring that pupils in their schools and trusts who are economically disadvantaged receive the support they need to achieve great outcomes. Governors and trustees are expected to “consider how the school is going to raise standards for all children ... [including] ... those receiving free school meals and those who are more broadly disadvantaged.” (The Governance Handbook)

We have come across two sets of resources that we think are useful in providing support for governors and trustees in doing this. The Education Endowment Fund (EEF)'s recently updated Pupil Premium resources now include discussion prompts for governors and trustees.

The National Governance Association (NGA) has produced a suite of resources called Widening the Lens to support governors and trustees in exploring what disadvantage means in their context and in identifying pupil groups who may need additional support. The Widening the lens on disadvantage guidance includes '25 Top Tips for addressing educational disadvantage', developed from the work of Marc Rowland. The Poverty Toolkit has been produced in conjunction with the Child Poverty Action Group and provides governing boards with a wealth of resources to use to ensure that all school leaders are considering how poverty in its broadest sense, beyond pupil premium eligibility, impacts their school or trust community.

[Get the resources here](#)



[Get the guide here](#)



Contact us

The SEP is a partnership of schools, colleges, early years, HE, skills and adult learning settings along with Surrey County Council, Schools Alliance for Excellence, the DfE, Dioceses and other partners. If you want to find out more or have any comments or thoughts please email SEP care of Emma Johnston e.johnston@schoolsallexcel.com