

# **Fresh Start Schools**

## **Raising Attainment Plan Guidance**

*“ ... an improving school is one which improves its effectiveness over time – the value added it generates for pupils rises for successive cohorts.”*

Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, et al 1999

**DfEE March 2001**

# **Key features**

**Based on evidence**

**Focussed – no more than 4-5 goals**

**Practical**

**Monitored and evaluated**

# **Raising Attainment Plan**

## **1.0 What is a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP)?**

A Raising Attainment Plan charts the key goals and associated processes which will be implemented over a period of time to enable the school to achieve and sustain higher levels of attainment for all pupils. For secondary schools this also means meeting the 2006 target of 25% 5 plus A\*-C grades at GCSE. It is a strategic tool to guide and focus energy on strategies which improve attainment throughout the school, with a specific focus on the end of each Key Stage. The revenue grant provided via the Fresh Start support programme should be used to implement the RAP.

## **2.0 What is the target audience?**

The five key audiences are:

- senior managers and staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the school;
- the governing body;
- the LEA;
- the Department for Education and Employment; and
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

## **3.0 What is the lifespan of the RAP?**

The plan should normally cover the first three years of the new school, reflecting the fact that Fresh Start revenue grant will normally be available for a maximum of three years.

## **4.0 Creating the RAP**

4.1 The RAP should be easily identified from the current school development/improvement plan and the previous school's Ofsted Action Plan. The goals and targets, which are the school's major priority for raising attainment, should be extracted and costed in detail. The RAP should also cover any other areas funded through the Fresh Start revenue grant. You may wish to use the proforma template and timeline provided in the attached example.

4.2 Your goals should be based on the current priorities identified through self-evaluation, data analysis, LEA advice, or Ofsted feedback.

4.3 The focus for improvement will be the classroom, and targets are likely to include:

- specific improvements in pupil outcomes;
- developments in teaching and learning strategies; and
- the development of leadership skills and management arrangements to ensure changes in teaching and learning can occur.

- 4.4 The revenue grant must be used in ways which are likely to lead to sustained improvements in attainment after the three-year period of the initiative. It is not acceptable to use the funds to employ additional staff, enhance teachers' salaries, buy new equipment, or make alterations to the building *unless* it can be clearly demonstrated that these initiatives will directly lead to sustained pupil attainment, *or* that is the only realistic way to recruit and retain staff to establish the school. For instance, employing ASTs or supernumerary staff over the period of the initiative to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in clearly defined and measurable ways would be an acceptable use of the grant.
- 4.5 School improvement research and the Pilot Partnership Initiative for Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances (2000/2001), involving over 80 schools, emphasise the value of partners in enabling schools to raise attainment. You should consider including a partnership aspect to your plan, particularly to check the suitability of your targets, and your strategies to achieve them. Your partner or partners could be another school, a consultant, the LEA or (for secondary schools) an FE or HE institution. Your LEA might be able to suggest appropriate partners.
- 4.6 The RAP must be achievable, so we suggest limiting yourself to four or five main goals over the three-year period, ensuring that each one has a direct impact on raising attainment.
- 4.7 You may need to build up a capacity for sustaining success by seeking to develop a belief amongst *all* members of the school community that *all* pupils can attain higher standards and that the educational failure of *any one* pupil is unacceptable.
- 4.8 Your targets, activities and success indicators need to relate to one another to ensure that there is a relationship between the intention, the input and the outcome. Success indicators need to be allied to increased attainment; if they are not, then the target and activity may not directly result in raised attainment, and therefore should not be included in the RAP. Check that your activities occur in a logical sequence.
- 4.9 The sharpness of the success indicators is important, as they will be your tool for measuring progress and ultimate success. The availability and good management of relevant data about your pupils will make this task easier. Your targets should also relate to, and complement, other initiatives involving the school, eg the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and the *Excellence in Cities* initiative. ***In particular, each RAP should complement and link with the implementation of the school's Key Stage 3 Strategy as described in the School Development Plan.***
- 4.10 Actions should be costed in both time and money. You may decide to spend funds from other sources (eg other Standards Fund grants or the core school budget) in addition to your Fresh Start revenue grant. If you decide to do this, please indicate clearly the items funded through each grant.
- 4.11 Develop a time line (see Appendix 2) to check how the actions relate one to the

other and whether you can accomplish them in the time available.

- 4.12 The development of the plan is likely to be a senior management team/governing body task, in collaboration with the LEA and any other partner. However, during the draft stage relevant staff should be consulted and, on completion, the plan should be explained and shared with all members of the school community. It should be maintained as a high priority.

## **5.0 Monitoring and evaluating actions, and progress towards targets and goals**

- 5.1 A member of the SMT should take responsibility for the implementation of the RAP, but other staff and governors should be involved in monitoring and evaluating. In addition, you may wish to involve staff from another school, a consultant or the LEA. You will also gain feedback from Ofsted's regular monitoring visits (and you should thus ensure that Ofsted have a copy of the RAP well before they visit).
- 5.2 Your actions in relation to each target need to be monitored and evaluated regularly and rigorously. If the strategies are progressing well, you might wish to increase your targets, but if they are not successful, you will want to revise them.
- 5.3 It is good practice to identify not only the individuals responsible for achieving the targets, but also the processes used to monitor progress towards them. Processes such as the testing and analysis of pupil data, pupil questionnaires and interviews, and lesson observations will enable you to monitor your progress accurately. They also constantly highlight the importance of the exercise and develop the skills of those involved.
- 5.4 Plan opportunities to share progress with staff – and students and their parents. Also, seek views on how to eliminate any weaknesses. You may decide to publish indicators of progress by displaying data and annotated pupils' work and including items in school newsletters.

## **6.0 The Role of the LEA**

- 6.1 Although the Fresh Start revenue grant is paid to schools (via the LEA), the LEA has a responsibility to ensure that the school has identified appropriate targets in order to satisfy itself that the Standards Fund grant is being spent appropriately.
- 6.2 The LEA is also responsible for monitoring progress towards the targets and will be invited to feedback discussions held with Ofsted.
- 6.3 The LEA should ensure that schools use the grant constructively, and not to eliminate existing or planned deficits.

## **7.0 The Roles of Ofsted and the DfEE**

Ofsted will provide feedback on the school's RAP during their monitoring visits. The Fresh Start Policy Team at DfEE will continue to offer advice on the development of RAPs on request. We may also wish to agree amendments to

the RAP on specific issues. In these circumstances, we shall inform the school within one month of receipt of the RAP.