

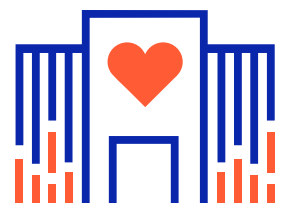


YOUTH
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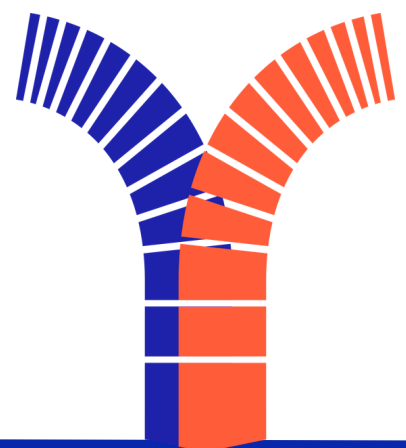
Tackling Disadvantage through Community Engagement



Well Culture.

Brief Summary for School Leaders

Hear from Manchester Communication Academy as they describe their work to engage and support their community as part of their Well School Journey.



This resource has been designed based on the Well Schools Well Culture pillar.

Key Messages

1. Start with context, not assumptions

The discussion begins with a detailed picture of the community: health, deprivation, housing, local services and patterns in pupil outcomes. The leadership lesson is that disadvantage is not a single label. It is experienced through interacting barriers that vary between neighbourhoods, families and pupils.

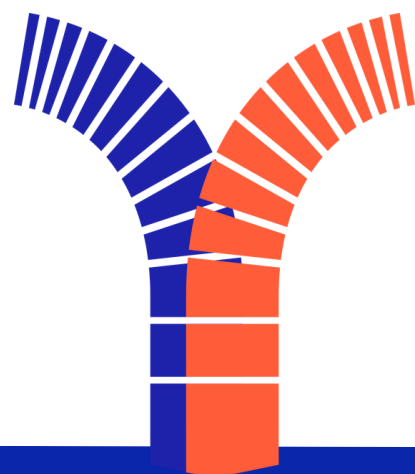
- Use local and school-level evidence together: attainment, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, health and participation.
- Look beneath averages. Identify which groups, places and transition points carry the greatest risk.
- Combine quantitative data with pupil, parent and staff insight. Lived experience often explains what the dashboard cannot.

Leadership question

What is it like to be a child or family in our community—and which barriers are within our influence?

2. Keep the “why” visible

A clear moral purpose anchors the work: schools cannot remove every cause of poverty or inequality, but they can reduce the way those conditions shape educational experience and future opportunity. This avoids both fatalism (“the school cannot change this”) and overclaiming (“the school can solve everything”).



Key Messages

3. Define impact broadly—but precisely

The discussion links disadvantage to educational outcomes and psychological wellbeing. A credible strategy therefore tracks more than attainment alone. Strong schools monitor the conditions that enable learning as well as the final outcomes.

Consider measuring the following:

Belonging & Wellbeing

Attendance & PA

Metrics for pupils feeling safe, happy & healthy

Strength & confidence in relationships and their trusted adults

Access & Participation

Curriculum & extra-curricular participation

Enrichment access & leadership opportunities

Physical activity and health

4. Build the strategy around a strong universal offer

The case study does not present pastoral provision as a substitute for teaching.

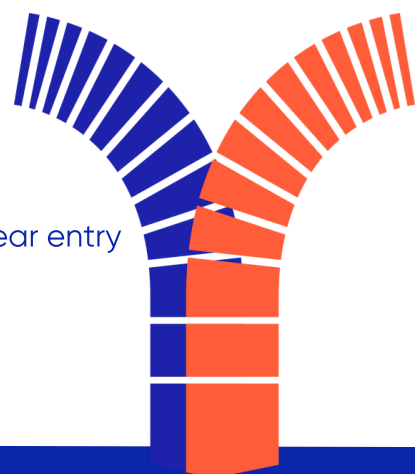
“Excellent curriculum” sits alongside a wider set of supports. The most sustainable model is layered: a high-quality universal offer for every pupil, early help for those at risk, and targeted or specialist support where need is greatest.

- Protect curriculum quality, literacy, attendance routines and inclusive behaviour systems as the core offer.

- Design enrichment and physical activity so disadvantaged pupils participate,

rather than simply making activities available.

- Use targeted interventions as part of a coherent pupil journey, with clear entry and exit criteria.



5. Treat families and partners as part of the delivery model

The discussion highlights community partnerships and a practical range of family-facing responses, including home-from-home provision, physical and mental health support, food-related activity, housing support, crisis support, young carers groups and intergenerational activity. The transferable principle is not to copy a menu of initiatives; it is to construct a local ecosystem around identified barriers.

A useful test:

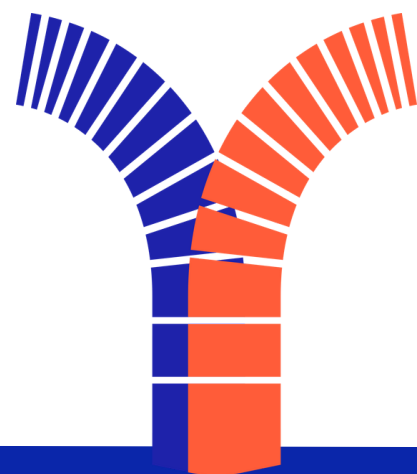
Can leaders explain what each partnership changes for pupils, who owns the relationship, how referrals work and how impact is reviewed?

6. Organise around assets, not deficits

The later discussion turns to assets, systems and resourcing. An asset-based approach begins with what already exists: trusted staff, pupil leadership, facilities, clubs, community organisations, local expertise, parent networks and existing funding. Leaders then align those assets behind a small number of priorities.

7. Learn, adapt and stop

A whole-school response can easily become a crowded list of projects. The discipline is to define the intended change, monitor reach and quality, and decide what to sustain, adapt or stop. Impact measures should be proportionate and should include pupil experience, participation and implementation—not only end-point outcomes.

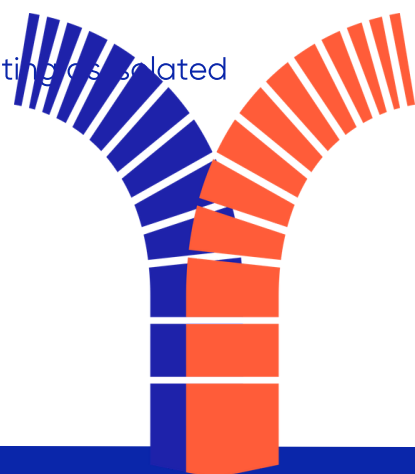


A Practical Leadership Model

1. Understand the local story and identify the most significant barriers.
2. Agree a small number of pupil-centred outcomes.
3. Map the universal, targeted and specialist provision already in place.
4. Identify gaps, duplication and unequal access.
5. Align people, partnerships, facilities and funding behind the priorities.
6. Review implementation and impact at planned intervals.

Questions for senior leaders and governors

- Can we describe disadvantage in our context without relying on a single eligibility measure?
- Do our disadvantaged pupils experience the same quality of curriculum and enrichment as their peers?
- Which pupils are not reached by our current provision—and why?
- Are attendance, wellbeing and belonging treated as enabling conditions for learning?
- Does every initiative have an accountable leader, an intended outcome and a review point?
- Are partners integrated into a coherent strategy rather than operating as isolated projects?
- What will we stop or simplify to protect staff capacity?





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