



Equity Case Studies

Dawlish College: Weighted Entitlement (WE) List

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A practical tool to prioritise resources more equitably



At a glance

Context: Secondary 11–16 school (c 784 pupils) in coastal town in Devon, part of the Ivy Education Trust

Equity focus: Prioritising school resources towards pupils most “entitled” to them, including pupils from under-resourced backgrounds who may be missed by standard proxy measures

Key strategy: A termly Weighted Entitlement List combining internal performance and participation data with key contextual indicators

Who led it: Headteacher, with increasing leadership from senior and middle leaders (Progress Leaders/ Heads of Year)

What changed: Clearer prioritization/sharper targeting of resources, stronger focus on “doing less but better”



The challenge we were trying to solve

Since conversion to an academy in December 2019, pupil numbers have grown (from 540 to 784) and both pupil premium and SEND proportions have risen to above national averages.

Currently, 31.63 per cent of pupils are supported by pupil premium funding. Just over a quarter (25.51 per cent) are identified as having SEND, including 5.23 per cent with an Education, Health and Care Plan. A further 4.34 per cent of pupils are multilingual learners (formerly recorded as having English as an additional language).

Disadvantage in Dawlish is multifaceted. Like many coastal towns, there are economic challenges, including limited or seasonal employment and constrained access to services. Families facing these challenges are not always captured by standard metrics such as eligibility for free school meals or pupil premium funding.

Leaders faced a tightening constraint: the challenge was growing, but resources were not.



What we did

The school created a “Weighted Entitlement (WE) List” a practical tool to help staff prioritise time and resources towards pupils who are most “entitled” to education, based on how well pupils are currently doing at school, not only on proxy labels.

A pupil’s entitlement to additional educational resources is in inverse proportion to their current level of success.

The WE List is created by applying a score to each pupil using a defined set of criteria. It combines three elements:

- Quality internal data about performance (attainment/progress against curriculum expectations)
- Participation indicators (especially attendance)
- Contextual factors that are strongly linked to barriers to learning (e.g., safeguarding involvement, reading)



Why this mattered for equity

The WE List was designed to tackle a structural problem schools face when resources are constrained:

Proxy measures (including pupil premium eligibility) are helpful but limited. Some pupils from under-resourced backgrounds are missed because they do not meet eligibility thresholds, while some pupils who meet thresholds may be thriving and require less additional resource.

A more equitable approach requires schools to weight decisions towards pupils who are not currently thriving, regardless of label.

In short, the WE List aims to shift educational advantage away from those who already benefit most, and towards those who would benefit most.



What made it work

Quality data (not more data)

This is not an abandonment of proxies, but a focus shift towards reliable and valid internal data about how much pupils know of the curriculum (attainment), and what this represents relative to expectation (progress).

For this to be meaningful, schools need strong quality assurance processes in place, including scrutiny of the assessments used to generate data, consistency and accuracy in teacher evaluation, and care in how information is recorded and interpreted.

Putting competence first

A culture shift away from a default mode of therapeutic support, towards learning-focused support that improves progress – grounded in the insight that low motivation at school can be a logical response to repeated failure at school.

A tool staff can use

The list is not just data – it is a work prioritisation tool, designed to provide clarity and focus, especially for Progress Leaders (Heads of Year) and welfare/pastoral teams.

Defined criteria

Each pupil receives scores across a set of defined criteria. The school debated and refined weightings carefully. Social care involvement is treated as a significant global indicator of barriers. Reading ability shapes access to the whole curriculum and is therefore a major limiter of educational success.

SEND identification is significant, but often already has support attached. The school's core job is ensuring pupils make progress in their learning; therefore academic progress is weighted most heavily.

Criteria (simplified)

- Academic status: each subject “below track” contributes a score (highest weighting overall)
- Reading status (NGRT): larger weight for lower standardised scores because reading affects access to the entire curriculum
- Safeguarding status: involvement with social care carries a significant weight as a global indicator of likely barriers
- Participation status: attendance bands contribute different scores (e.g. <90% carries more weight)

- Pupil premium status: yes/no weighting
- SEND status: yes/no weighting (with the logic that additional support already exists, and “below track” will raise entitlement anyway)
- Multilingual status: yes/no weighting
- Attitude status: a smaller weighting via a scaled score (passive/resistant)

The maximum total score is capped (e.g. 50). The list is updated termly when internal reporting data is captured.



Barriers and challenges

Schools are often already relatively good at directing resource towards known groups with proxy labels (pupil premium, SEND). But many pupils from under-resourced backgrounds are missed because they do not meet the criteria; and some pupils who do meet the criteria are succeeding despite other circumstances.

The tool depends on the reliability and validity of internal assessment and reporting processes.

Weak internal data undermines fairness.



What changed

The WE List brought a sharper sense of prioritisation: doing less but doing it better and weighting support more equitably towards pupils who are least well-served by the system.

It also forced productive professional conversations about:

what counts as “progress” in practice

the reliability of internal assessment

the difference between entitlement based on label and entitlement based on need



Project sustainability

The work has been led by the Headteacher, but is sustained within existing school structures, requiring no additional funding beyond planned administration and CPD time. Responsibility is shared across senior, middle and pastoral leaders, supporting long-term embedment rather than reliance on individual roles.



How impact was measured

Qualitative feedback from Progress Leaders and key staff on whether the tool improves prioritisation

- Equity Scorecard survey data, particularly pupil responses
- Tracking the evolution of the list (who rises/falls termly, and why)
- Triangulating with verifiable data such as attendance, attainment and progress outcomes for individuals and groups



What we'd do differently/advice to others

Treat internal data quality as the foundation – there is no shortcut.

Use proxies, but don't rely on them. Pupils from under-resourced backgrounds can be missed.

Expect the tool to create discomfort: it forces clarity about who is prioritised and why.

Build the list with the staff who will use it, and quality assure anomalies each cycle.

Keep returning to the purpose: do less, do it better, and weight entitlement more equitably.

