

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on progress for the 'Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2' Scrutiny Review.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the meeting of Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th September 2008, the Work Programme for the Committee was agreed. One item on the programme was Literacy levels at the time of the children leaving primary schools (end of Key Stage 2).
- 1.2 It is recognised that the 2008 Key Stage 2 SAT results for English (including Reading and Writing) in Wirral are above the national average. Clearly, there are many examples of good practice in Wirral, which is contributing to the attainment of these results. However, there remain a number of children who do not achieve the recognised standard of Level 4 in reading and writing.
- 1.3 At the meeting of Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th November 2008, the Scope Document for the review was agreed. A copy of the scope document is attached as Appendix 1. The three spokespersons (Councillors Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle and Tony Smith) were also appointed as the members of the Literacy Level scrutiny panel.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the progress of the review and, in particular for new members to the Committee, provides the background to the review.

2. Evidence Gathering

The Panel members are using a number of methods to gather evidence for the review:

- 2.1 **School visits**
Four primary / junior schools have been visited to discuss relevant issues with head teachers, teachers, school governors and school councils. Each of the visits took half a day. All of the visits were very constructive and highlighted issues relevant to the review.
- 2.2 **School questionnaire**
Panel members want to enable other schools to have an input into the review. Therefore a short questionnaire has been sent to the head teachers of all remaining primary and junior schools in the borough. Responses are currently awaited, with the deadline being early June.

- 2.3 Meetings with officers
Individual meetings have taken place with a number of key officers within the Children's Services Department of Wirral Borough Council. Prior to the meeting, each officer prepared a short briefing paper. A meeting has also taken place with an officer from Wirral NHS specifically to discuss the Speech and Language therapy service.
- 2.4 Relevant documents
Information is also being gathered from SAT results, previous committee reports and relevant reports into literacy issues.
- 2.5 Comparative information
Comparative information is being gathered from national data and from statistical neighbours.
- 3. Plans for the remainder of the review**
- 3.1 It is envisaged that the evidence gathering stage for the review is coming to a close. The draft report from the review will be produced during the summer and the final report will be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17th September 2009.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee note the progress of the 'Literacy Level at Key Stage 2' Scrutiny Review.

Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle, Tony Smith
Panel Members
'Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2' Scrutiny Panel
Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 1 : Scope Document for the Literacy Levels (Key Stage 2) Scrutiny Review

Date: 27th October 2008
 Review Title: Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2

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| Scrutiny Panel Chair: Cllr Sheila Clarke | Contact details: 0151 608 1154 mobile: |
| Scrutiny Officer: Alan Veitch | Contact details: 0151 691 8564 |
| Departmental Link Officer: Marie Lawrence | Contact details: 0151 666 4335 |
| Panel members: Cllr Sheila Clarke Cllr Frank Doyle Cllr Tony Smith | 0151 608 1154 0151 652 9488 mobile 07734 414789 0151 677 1384 |
| Other Key Officer contacts: | |
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| <p>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>1.1 To raise the aspirations of young people - Raise overall educational attainment, particularly lower achieving young people</p> | |
| <p>2. What are the main issues?</p> <p>2.1 The review will include both reading and writing.</p> <p>2.2 Why are levels of achievement so much lower in writing than in reading?</p> <p>2.3 Why are there a number of primary schools below the national average for % of children reaching Level 4 for reading at Key Stage 2?</p> <p>2.4 Why are there a larger number of primary schools below the national average for % of children reaching Level 4 for writing at Key Stage 2?</p> <p>2.5 What interventions are in place in schools where a significant number of children do not reach Level 4?</p> <p>2.6 What interventions are in place in schools where only one or two children do not normally reach Level 4?</p> <p>2.7 Are schools satisfied with the support that is available?</p> <p>2.8 Is there a gender issue regarding attainment levels?</p> <p>2.9 How do deprivation levels affect the attainment levels of children?</p> | |
| <p>3. The Committee's overall aim/objective in doing this work is:</p> <p>3.1 To ensure that as many children as possible leave primary school with adequate reading and writing skills.</p> | |
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4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:

- 4.1 Better understanding by members of the issues relating to literacy levels at Key Stage 2.
- 4.2 Agreement that adequate interventions are available and are used by schools.
- 4.3 Determination that underachieving individuals and groups have access to the appropriate support.
- 4.4 Confirmation that the Council achieves value for money from the current intervention plans.

5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

- 5.1 To recommend any changes which would lead to the outcomes listed in section 4 above.
- 5.2 To raise the overall standards of literacy in primary schools.

6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

- 6.1 Cabinet
- 6.2 Other councillors
- 6.3 Primary school head teachers / governors

7. Duration of enquiry?

Final report to be submitted to Children Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the current municipal year (that is, by 16th March 2009)

8. What category does the review fall into?

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|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Policy Review | Y | <input type="checkbox"/> | Policy Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| External Partnership | Y | <input type="checkbox"/> | Performance Management | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Holding Executive to Account | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?

The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic.

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| 10. What information do we need? | |
| <p>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</p> <p>10.1.1 Need KS2 SAT results for 2003-8 for each primary school (reading and writing) in order to track where improvements have occurred.</p> <p>10.1.2 Ofsted reports - How do other councils compare?</p> <p>10.1.3 Comparative information with the national average and with Statistical Neighbours</p> <p>10.1.4 Relevant reports into literacy issues</p> <p>10.1.5 Previous Committee / Cabinet reports regarding literacy levels / strategies</p> <p>10.1.6 Scrutiny reports from other councils into similar issues</p> | <p>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</p> <p>10.2.1 Briefing paper to cover the major issues</p> <p>10.2.2 Interviews with key officers</p> <p>10.2.3 Interviews with head teachers, teachers, governors at selected schools</p> <p>10.2.4 Feedback from parent governors.</p> <p>10.2.5 Feedback from school councils.</p> |
| <p>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc). council officers to include:</p> <p>Marie Lawrence, Early Years & Primary Education Strategic Service Manager, WBC.</p> <p>Bridie Sharkey, Primary Manager for English 0 - 19, WBC.</p> <p>Jenny Richmond, English consultant for Key Stages 1 and 2, WBC.</p> <p>Catherine Kerr, Principal Manager for Early Years, WBC.</p> <p>Pauline Cunningham, Communications Language & Literacy Development for Early Years, WBC.</p> <p>Bev Greathead, Head teacher / Coordinator of the Poulton Lancelyn Writing Network (initially a written report)</p> <p>Deirdre Smith, Principal Manager, Study Support, WBC (possible)</p> <p>Sarah Howarth, Lifelong Learning Advisor (+ Family Literacy project), WBC (possible)</p> <p>Statistical Neighbours</p> <p>Head teachers / governors of four selected primary schools</p> | <p>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <p>10.4.1 What lessons can be learned from the many examples of good practice that already exist? Does the authority have the processes in place to facilitate the spread of good practice?</p> <p>10.4.2 What intervention packages are available to schools?</p> <p>10.4.3 What else can be done to help improve literacy levels in primary schools?</p> |

11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits / observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).

11.1 Individual meetings with key officers listed in 10.3 above

11.2 Visits to a number of primary schools (head teacher, teachers, governors)

11.3 Desk research

12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).

12.1 School councils will be invited to comment

12.2 Parent governors will be included in the review

12.3 There is no plan to involve public meetings or Area Forum meetings.