

Select Committee on Children's Services - 14 September 2009

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Progress and Achievements in Early Years Foundation Stage

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Select Committee on Children's Services of the progress and achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Background

2. The new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) became statutory in September 2008. Over 2000 practitioners received training on the implementation of the framework and Headteachers were invited to a half day briefing.
3. Single Point of Entry for all children in Reception was introduced in September 2008. Preparation for this included sessions on summer born boys and the learning environment. A vast amount of other support is provided to improve outcomes in Early Years. These include:
4. Communication, Language and Literacy Programme
11 schools have been targeted including:
 - their pre schools'
 - nurseries;
 - reception classes;
 - year 1 classes.

Focus on:

- teacher knowledge and skills;
- teaching assistant knowledge and skills;
- pace of delivery;
- tracking progress of children.

Aspects

- synthetic phonics
- simple view of reading
- guided reading
- guided writing

5. This is continuing for another year with 9 new schools joining the programme. The key messages are being disseminated through network cluster meetings for all band 1 schools. Phase 1 phonics revisited through universal offer for Private, Voluntary and Independent and maintained nurseries. Our work on this programme has been acknowledged nationally as best practice. Early Reading Connects congratulated Dudley in a National Newsletter for having 128 schools and settings enrolled. Nationally the average for a Local Authority is 18/19. Significantly this shows the commitment to early reading in Dudley. Dudley has been invited to work with the National Literacy Trust on an Early Reading Connects Project. Eighteen settings taking part.
6. Every Child a Talker has been introduced to narrow the gap of children from less advantaged homes who tend to start reception class with significantly lower vocabulary than their peers. Speech therapists and consultants are working to increase the subject knowledge and skills of practitioners to develop Early Language Lead Practitioners who will be able to disseminate best practice in their own setting and other local settings.

Settings involved:

- 17 Children's Centres;
- special schools;
- specialist provision;
- 2 primary schools.

The programme will continue until August 2010.

Nine new settings will join the programme in September 2009.

7. Looking Glass Centre
In order to help practitioners across Dudley to understand the impact that the learning environment can have the Early Years Advisory Team developed The Looking Glass Centre, an exemplar setting to showcase specific aspects of Learning and Development. Launched in September 2008 with the Booktime book Harry and the Dinosaurs, it show cased how the book (which was gifted to every reception child in Dudley in November 2008) could be used in all areas of the curriculum both indoors

and out. This exhibition changed in January 2009 to Mark Making (writing) from birth to 5 years.

8. In excess of 2000 Practitioners have accessed the centre for Booktime and Mark Making. Over 800 practitioners visited in the past 3 months. There is evidence in settings of promoted aspects being adopted. Regionally the National Strategies requested a presentation about the centre at a CLL meeting in Coventry. Black Country Authorities and West Midlands Advisory Group have requested visits. School Improvement Partners and headteachers access the centre. Excellent feedback from Headteachers and practitioners.
9. Young Children's Voice Project
Engagement of the child's voice is a statutory requirement. This is a difficult task with babies and very young children.
Working with National Children's Bureau (NCB) Dudley is a lead authority in documenting and disseminating ways of working to other Local Authorities across the country. A case study from a Dudley Day Nursery taking part in the project was recently published in the National Children's Bureau guidance on 'Listening as a way of life'. May 2009 Dudley exhibited work at Tate Modern to an invited audience of eminent professionals. Exhibition has moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne July 2009. It has been very well received.
10. Dudley Record Keeping Toolkit
Dudley Record Keeping Toolkit developed to support settings in developing assessments processes in line with Early Years Foundation Stage and National Assessment Agency (NAA). Significant interest from other Local Authorities wishing to purchase the toolkit.
11. Dudley Great Outdoors Toolkit
Dudley has designed a Great Outdoors Toolkit to support the development of outdoor learning space in line with requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There has been significant interest from the National Strategies, other Local Authorities and School Improvement Partners wishing to purchase and use the document. Intensive network group has been established for the Great Outdoors Programme, twenty six schools have taken part as well as settings. We are delighted that one school has been nominated for a national award for their developing outdoor curriculum.
12. Peers Early Education Programme (PEEP)
Dudley is developing this programme by working with Parents, engaging them in their child's early learning. Dudley has developed this as an accredited module for lead practitioners. This is also strong network of settings.

The team is also working with Looked After Children Education Services team to develop Peers Early Education Programme.

Sixty two Practitioners trained. We have a waiting list for next training. This is linked to Communication Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme and Every Child a Talker.

13. Childminders Network have access to:

- Looking Glass Centre;
- Saturday Conferences;
- Full Training Programme;
- Early Years Foundation Stage evening surgeries.

40% of our childminders have been judged outstanding by OfSTED the national average is 4%

14. Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scales (ECERs)

Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scales is an audit tool used in Effective Pre School Provision Evaluation (EPPE) which underpins and influences the Governments 10 Year Strategy for Early Learning and Childcare is used effectively in Dudley.

Dudley launched the high profile inaugural British Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scales Working Party. Currently 3 Dudley Auditors are undertaking in depth training for Gold Standard. This will ensure consistency across all audits.

47 Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scales audits have been undertaken.

Impact evidence over a 12 month period through required levels of support, Ofsted judgements and improved practice as evidenced in Early Childhood Environmental Ratings Scales.

15. Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in Foundation Stage

In 2008/09 there were 20 Newly Qualified Teachers in Foundation Stage and 21 teachers new to Reception classes. This is a large percentage of 78 Primary Schools, and reflects the norm in Dudley. In 2007 a network was established to support the Newly Qualified Teachers in Foundation Stage with the complications presented in this key phase of education. This was very successful and working with Newman College the work was accredited at Masters level. In 2008/09 11 Newly Qualified Teachers undertook the Masters delivered by Dudley in conjunction with Newman.

16. Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Ratings

National Strategies and Government Office of West Midlands evaluate the work of the Local Authorities Early Years Foundation Stage implementation and Communication, Language and Literacy and Every Child A Talker programmes.

All RAG ratings are Green.

17. Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes

In 2007 targets were first set for Foundation Stage. Nationally these targets were randomly set as there has been no prior data and no guidance on trajectories. It should also be noted that assessments against the Foundation Stage Profile scale points was not secure.

In Dudley there was a significant dip in 2007 thought to be related to security of assessments.

The targets require each strand of Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and each of Communication, Language and Literacy to achieve 6+ scale points.

Early indicators of invalidated data suggest that the overall median score appears to have risen and the target for narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest was exceeded by 1%. Dudley very nearly met the inspirational target for Communication Language and Literacy Development. Personal, Social, Emotional Development (PSED) improved by 2.9% however early indications suggest that Emotional Development is probably low. This aspect has suppressed the outcome of Communication Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) at 6+ and Personal, Social, Emotional Development (PSED) at 6+ with the percentage achieving 78 points. Time will be invested to improve this area over the coming years.

	2006	2007	2008	2009 results unvalidated	2009 targets
% scoring 6+ CLLD	43.2	37.3	41.2	46.9	47
% scoring 6+ PSED	72.6	64.6	64.5	67.4	75
% scoring 6+ PSED and CLL	41.7	34.9	37.7	42.8	45
% with 78 points or more	69.9	60.2	63	67.4	70
% gap	42.1	40	39.5	35.6	36.6

Finance

18. The Council maintains schools under the provisions of the Children and Education Acts and may do anything incidental to, conducive to, or which facilitates the discharge of that function under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Law

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Equality Impact

20. This report takes into account the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy.

Recommendations

21. It is recommended that the Select Committee notes and comments on the developments that have been put in place to improve outcomes for Foundation Stage Pupils the contents of this report.

It is recommended that the Select Committee request reports on future progress.



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List of Background Papers