
Decision Maker: Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 11 September 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **DECLINING LITERACY IN EARLY YEARS**

Contact Officer: Sue Mordecai, Head of Learning
Tel: 020 8461 6236 E-mail: sue.mordecai@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Tessa Moore, Assistant Director (Education)

Ward: Borough wide

1. Reason for report

1.1 In 2011 the results for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) indicated that Bromley LA was below the National Average in the % of pupils scoring 6+ on the EYFS profile; of particular concern was Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL). The Head of Learning drew this to the attention of Members when the 2011 Annual Standards Report was presented to the PDS Committee. Consequently, Members requested a report on literacy in the Early Years.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **That Members of the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee:**

- **note the reasons for improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage results in 2012;**
- **consider and comment on the challenge for Schools and Early years settings as a new Early Years Foundation Stage Framework is introduced.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre:
 4. Total current budget for this head: £
 5. Source of funding:
-

Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
 2. Call-in: Applicable
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 Introduction

Attainment and Achievement in Bromley schools is generally well above the National Average at all Key Stages. However, in 2011 the Local Average for the Early Years Foundation Stage profile fell just below the National Average for the first time. A very detailed analysis was carried out by Learning and Achievement and Research and Statistics in order to target where support was needed the most. The 2012 results show a significant improvement overall.

3.2 The Early Years Foundation Profile for Communication, Language and Literacy

In 2011 the results for Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 all showed a local average which was above the National Average. However in the Early Years Foundation Stage the Local Authority average was below the National overall with a particular concern raised about Communication, Language and Literacy.

The 2012 results show an encouraging upward trend, although continuing gaps between boys and girls and those eligible for Free School Meals. For comparison the 2011 national figures are used as the 2012 national data is unavailable at present.

The following are of note:

- The overall Local Authority % score of 6+ points for the Foundation Stage Profile has increased from 57.9% in 2011 (National average 59%) to 68.2% - an increase of 10.3% which will almost certainly be above the National Average for 2012.
- Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) has increased from 60.5% in 2011 (National Average 62%) to 70.3% in 2012, an increase of 9.8%.
- The following table indicates the breakdown of CLL.

Communication, Language and Literacy

	Local 6+ 2011	National 6+ 2011	Local 6+ 2012
Language for communication and thinking	85.8%	86%	87.1%
Linking Sounds and letters	77.3%	79%	85%
Reading	75.3%	76%	81.7%
Writing	66.4%	67%	75.2%
All	60.6%	62%	70.3%

- The 2012 results continue to show variations between groups of pupils although the gaps are closing at a significant rate:
 - in reading 85.1% of girls scored 6+ points compared with 78.4% of boys, a gap of 6.7% compared with a gap of 11% in 2011
 - in writing 82.7% of girls scored 6+ points compared with 67.9% of boys, a gap of 14.8% compared with a gap of 20.4% in 2011
 - those pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) scored 67.5% for reading compared with 84.4% for those not eligible for FSM, a gap of 16.9% compared with 23.6% in 2011

- those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) scored 58.1% in writing compared with 78.4% for those not eligible for FSM, a gap of 20.3% compared with 23% in 2011

3.3 Reasons for Improvements in the EYFS Profile 2012

There are several reasons why there have been significant improvements in literacy in the Early Years:

- In September 2011 Spring and Summer born children were able to start school across the LA for the first time in Bromley. As a result all children, when developmentally ready, were able to access daily phonic sessions, shared and guided reading and writing sessions from the Autumn term. This has had a positive impact on reading and writing as the children have had the phonic knowledge readily available to them to start to apply these skills to their reading and writing across the Autumn term. In previous years many children started school in January and did not access a daily discrete phonic session or shared/guided reading and writing until late January/ February, therefore they were not applying their skills until well into the Spring term, which in turn had an impact on the EYFS Data, which is collected in June.
- An extensive programme of training was organised by the Local Authority Early Years Team. In addition, through EYFS school leader forums and individual support, schools were supported across the Autumn term to plan for a differentiated curriculum that both met the needs of the younger children, while providing a rich literacy environment, provision and activities for these children to apply their phonic and early reading and writing skills.
- In September 2011 the EYFS provision within schools was categorised according to need. Therefore, schools that required a high level of support to improve outcomes for their EYFS children were targeted for intensive support from the LA Early Years Team. The support was particularly targeted at EYFS leaders in schools in order to build capacity within schools and involved intervention strategies for children who were borderline to achieve 6 points on the EYFS profile. The support has resulted in the targeted schools achieving improved outcomes for CLL in 2012 compared with the 2011 data. In total 34 schools were targeted for some form of support and 31 improved their outcomes. In the 12 schools which were targeted for intensive support, all improved on their outcomes with 8 improving by more than 15%. One school in Special Measures improved from 34% to 60%
- The 'Every Child a Talker' (ECAT) and the Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) projects were introduced into the PVI sector, nurseries and schools from 2009 to 2011. The impact of these initiatives has contributed to the increases in the 2012 EYFS Profile results. Both projects have now ceased.
- The Early Years Team from Learning and Achievement has worked closely with the PVI Sector and this has been significant for example Phase 1 letters and sounds are now embedded in many of our pre-schools and day nurseries and practitioners understand the importance of developing children's language and communication as a key factor for school readiness.

3.4 Challenges for the future

- From September 2012 there is a new statutory Early Years Framework which covers from birth to 5 years of age. There are significant changes to some areas of learning and development, in particular for mathematics as well as raising expectations in the Early Learning Goals. There is a legal requirement for schools to report to parents whether or not their child is achieving 'age appropriate' expectations in the prime areas of learning. If children are not achieving these expectations then the school must put in place an action plan to say how it will work towards achieving these expectations.

The prime areas for learning are:

- Communication and Language
 - Physical Development
 - Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- There is Statutory assessment at the end of reception - still known as the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile but this is significantly different to the current EYFS Profile. The EYFS Profile handbook and exemplification will not be published in detail until the end of Autumn term 2012. This will require significant training and support to schools
 - The support that targeted schools received from the Early Years Team was funded from the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) for the academic year September 2011 to July 2012. However from September 2012 the Early Years support will be a sold service to schools. Furthermore the Early Years Team which supports schools has been reduced from 5 FTE to 3FTE. However, there is capacity to offer a comprehensive training programme to support schools with the statutory assessment. We are confident that schools will make this a priority for their professional development needs. For comparison, a costed training programme was offered to schools to support their teaching of phonics in preparation for the 2012 Phonics assessment. 73 schools (plus 12 from out of borough) attended central training on phonics –a total of 315 Bromley teachers. In addition, a number of school chose to buy in additional training which was school based.
 - Currently there is not enough capacity within schools to support others as part of the school to school improvement agenda. Those schools that are judged to be 'Outstanding' in their early years provision tend to have fewer vulnerable children, particularly those who are eligible for Free School Meals or have Special Education Needs. The Early Years per se is the most vulnerable across all phases because of the complexities of the changing landscape of the early years education agenda. The challenge for the Local Authority is to build capacity within our schools so that there is sustainable support from outstanding schools for those schools in challenging circumstances. Meanwhile the Early Years team remains focussed on supporting schools in the implementation of the new changes to the EYFS Framework and assessment and the rigours of the new Ofsted framework.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy Implications Financial Implications Legal Implications Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	