

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2004 at 10.00A.M.

Agenda Item No.

4

FINAL REPORT OF THE KEY STAGE 2 ACHIEVEMENT TOPIC GROUP

Report of the Director, Children, Schools and Families

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Members of the Topic Group: David Billing [Chair]
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Executive member: Robert Gordon, Education

1. Purpose of report

To provide the Scrutiny Committee with the final report and recommendations of the Key Stage 2 Achievement Topic Group.

2. Summary

2.1 The Group has met three times and considered:

- Data on Key Stage 2 achievement
- The Primary National Strategy, including The Primary Leadership Programme, The Intensive Support Programme and The English as an Additional Language Programme.
- Evidence from three Primary Head Teachers and a Head of Year 7

2.2 The members were clear that whilst this was a complex issue a number of key themes emerged, which are outlined in paragraph 5.2 of this report.

3. Conclusion

The Group considered that this scrutiny had provided insight into the issue of raising achievement at Key Stage 2, and is making recommendations about the CSF Leadership Programme, the need for further reports on the Primary National Strategy and transition from primary to secondary school (see paragraph 6).

No further meetings of the Topic Group were considered necessary, as annual monitoring of KS 2 results by the CSF Scrutiny Committee could be used to trigger any further work.

4. Background

The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2004 set up a Topic Group to scrutinise Key Stage 2 Achievement.

5. The Work of the Topic Group

5.1 The Topic Group met on three occasions:

- (i) On Thursday May 13th, to receive data on Key Stage 2 Achievement, including:
 - value added
 - floor targets
 - gender differences
 - ethnic origin
 - looked after children
 - free school meal bands
 - performance by district
 - performance by school type

- (ii) On Wednesday June 30th, to receive information on:
 - the Primary Leadership Programme
 - the Intensive Support Programme
 - detailed analysis of the difference in performance with different communities
 - breakdown of the lowest performing schools
 - correlation between absolute performance and value added
 - breakdown of ethnic origin groups
 - progress of Looked After Children
 - schools 'bucking the trend'

- (iii) On Wednesday July 7th, to receive information from expert witnesses from 4 schools:
 - the heads of two higher performing schools in lower performing areas
 - the recently appointed head of a lower performing school
 - the head of year 7 from a secondary school with well-established primary/secondary transfer procedures

5.2 Based upon this information the Topic Group drew the following conclusions:

- (i) Effective and perceptive leadership of the school is the most vital requirement, and so therefore is the leadership and career development of heads, deputies and other leaders.

- (ii) Staff development contributes to a culture of high expectations and success. Staff development activities should promote reflective practice and teamwork, focused on improving learning and teaching.
- (iii) The continuing development of teachers' subject knowledge and teaching strategies is important, as is the consistent use of clearly understood pupil tasks and criteria for success, formative assessment and target setting.
- (iv) Coherent and consistent behavioural management is essential to underpin effective learning and teaching.
- (v) Workforce remodelling should be used creatively to enable teachers to focus on learning and teaching in their classrooms. Identification of examples of good practice should be promoted and these disseminated.
- (vi) Early, prompt and sustained support for children with special needs is vital; expectations for pupils with SEN need to remain high.
- (vii) Access to speech and language therapy remains a major problem.
- (viii) Working with parents is important to develop their understanding of the school's educational and behavioural aims, and their expectations and motivation of their children. This is particularly the case in areas of complex social need.
- (ix) While a focus on years 5 and 6 is the most effective short term strategy to accelerate progress, an investment in the early years and at KS1 is more likely to impact on attainment in the longer term.
- (x) Well-developed procedures for secondary transfer are essential to ensure continued progression into Key Stage 3, and examples of good practice should be identified and disseminated.

5.3 The scrutiny also found that the Primary National Strategy is providing a major impetus and significant funding for raising achievement at Key Stage 2. The Primary Leadership Programme is supporting leadership development and other programmes, in particular the Intensive Support Programme, are ensuring targeted support at lower achieving schools. All programmes emphasise the improvement of learning and teaching strategies.

6. Recommendations to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee

- (i) That the LEA's leadership programme, currently under review by the Standards and School Effectiveness Division, emphasises the development of leadership capacity at all levels.
- (ii) That the Scrutiny Committee should receive future evaluations of the various programmes within the Primary National Strategy.
- (iii) Once the new national Foundation Stage profile is established, the LEA should explore the feasibility of constructing and supporting a value added measure covering all primary years, i.e. from Foundation Stage profile to KS2, since interpretation of the KS1-KS2 measure can be distorted by KS1 performance.
- (iv) That the process of transition from primary to secondary school (not the rules) be considered as a possible scrutiny item, in order to ensure that the processes from the families' point of view are straightforward, transparent, timely and as unstressful as possible.
- (v) That the best practice website maintained by the SSE Division includes examples of good practice on transition from primary to secondary school.

7. Access to Service Implications

Not applicable to the report subject matter.

8. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications at this stage.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report:

Minutes and reports to Key Stage 2 Topic Group

If you would like to know more about the issues referred to in this report please contact: Clive Mitchell, Head of School Effectiveness (Primary), 01582 830360 or Brigid de Rivaz, Primary Strategy Manager, 01582 830326