

Literacy & Numeracy Taskforce Report 2010/11 – DE response to Recommendations

	Key Challenges	Status	Detail
1	<p>Most schools already collect data in some form but its use is unsystematic and varied so benchmarking performance with other similar schools is very difficult. A 'value-added' system, which takes a detailed look at the context of each school, would help schools determine realistic targets for action and would reassure them if they are on the right track. Evidence from recent inspection reports is emerging that some schools are beginning to heed this message and are now using data analysis in a more structured and systematic manner. Linking this with school and pupil self- assessment programmes and some form of standardisation of the assessment process across all schools would be beneficial.</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Planning & Performance Management</p>	<p>The effective use of data is a central element of both the school improvement policy and the literacy and numeracy strategy and is already beginning to have an impact in schools, (e.g. the positive response to workshops, following up on video case studies of good practice, organised by the USID group).</p> <p>The Department already provides benchmarking data to support schools in comparing their performance with schools in similar circumstances and setting targets for improvement.</p> <p>We have a commitment to develop 'value-added' measures. The new assessment arrangements for communication, using mathematics and using ICT, being introduced from September 2012, will provide a value-added measure of the progress that pupils make between various stages of their education. With regard to contextual value-added measures, we want to take the time to consider the use of such measures, as we are concerned to ensure that the measures we use do not create perverse incentives or embed low expectations and underachievement.</p> <p>The Department requires primary schools to use InCAS in Years 4-7, which provides diagnostic assessment information to inform teaching and learning. Schools are free to use other assessment tools if they find this useful and many do so. We have also stressed the importance of supporting teachers in using their own professional judgement in monitoring pupils' progress at class and individual level and in taking action to build on and develop strengths and to tackle areas for improvement. We are clear that what matters is not how many assessment tools a school uses, rather how effectively they use the data they have to improve outcomes for their pupils.</p>
2	<p>Development of an individual plan for every child based on the outcomes of standardised diagnostic tests and teacher assessment conducted within the school. This should include better provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) because the present situation is not conducive to raising standards and requires urgent and thorough review. Some finance is available for material</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/</p>	<p>The literacy and numeracy strategy sets out the role of class teachers in supporting pupils in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers' planning will include setting individual targets for raising achievement, differentiating provision appropriately, employing a range of effective pedagogies to meet the individual needs and learning styles of pupils, monitoring progress and intervening early to address underachievement.</p> <p>Within the current SEN Framework, an individualised education plan (IEP) is</p>

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	<p>resources and the modification of school buildings but very little is made available for human resources to support the education process. Classroom assistants and teachers are not adequately trained to meet the specific needs of statemented pupils, which impacts greatly on achievement in literacy and numeracy for pupils with SEN. As a Taskforce, we still have not received definitive answers to the level of support that will be available to these pupils in the future, the level/extent of training for classroom assistants and class teachers to best address the specific needs of pupils. At present no substitute cover is provided for teachers involved in any professional development for SEN. This is an area of great concern for teachers and principals, as it is becoming increasingly more difficult to access external resources. In addition, looking more closely at effective teaching styles and strategies to re-engaging disaffected pupils would have an impact, as it is likely that a substantial percentage of D grades achieved are a result of pupil disengagement, rather than low ability.</p>	<p>Access, Inclusion & Well-Being</p>	<p>drawn-up for children placed by the school on the SEN register. The IEP sets out revised strategies for supporting the child's development, including specific targets, and arrangements for monitoring and reviewing.</p> <p>The Department's Review of SEN and Inclusion underwent public consultation from August 2009 to January 2010. Responses are currently being analysed, with a view to the publication of a summary of the responses within the next few months. The Review of SEN and Inclusion proposes that, under a revised framework, provision and outcomes for all children with SEN would be monitored, either through a Personal Learning Plan, which would be school-led, or a Coordinated Support Plan, which would be ELB-led.</p> <p>A capacity building programme for children with SEN will include workshops on teaching literacy and maths to children with SEN. The content of the workshops will be available on-line through C2K and schools will be encouraged to use the materials with all staff, including classroom assistants.</p> <p>A SEN Resource file has been issued to schools, to be available to all members of staff providing guidance on strategies for use in the classroom to support pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. ELBs currently run a wide selection of training for classroom assistants including Specific Literacy Difficulties, 'catch-up' programme training such as LTSS, Reading Partners and Toe by Toe, and Specific Numeracy Difficulties training.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Development of a 'shared good practice' culture across all schools is essential and inexpensive but as yet there appears to be no clear strategy or desire to introduce a systematic in-service programme to make this happen.</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards</p>	<p>Promoting the sharing of best practice is a central element of both the school improvement policy and the literacy and numeracy strategy. We have asked the Boards to put sharing of best practice at the centre of their plans for providing school improvement support to schools. We have also supported the establishment of ESaGS.tv, a web-based portal showcasing video case studies of outstanding and very good practice identified through school inspections.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Evidence shows that establishing an internal school culture for analysing and sharing pedagogy which works is also highly effective. Clearly a strong correlation exists between teachers' knowledge, enthusiasm, ability to motivate, confidence, competence and the quality of lessons they teach. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators play an</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/</p>	<p>The school improvement policy and the literacy and numeracy strategy emphasise the importance of promoting the sharing of good practice within and between schools and set out the role of the principal and senior management team in embedding a culture of sharing good practice within the school. The Literacy & Numeracy Strategy also sets out the role of literacy and numeracy co-ordinators and stresses the importance of them being given time, authority and support to fulfil their role.</p>

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	<p>important role and they must be able to lead, to ensure ongoing discussion between staff concerning teaching approaches, to identify and disseminate good practice, to effectively plan and resource the maths and English curriculum and to assess pupils' learning.</p> <p>It is essential that literacy and numeracy co-ordinators in primary schools demonstrate a strong background in maths and English respectively and ideally are specialists in the respective areas.</p>	<p>Education Workforce Directorate</p>	
5	<p>Teacher quality is central to pupil attainment. We must attract, and support the development of, highly effective teachers. It must become a priority to ensure that trainee teachers have a more than satisfactory grasp of numeracy and literacy skills. The current entrance requirements (Grade C in GCSE Maths and English or equivalent) are, in the view of the Taskforce, too low, and this may impact on the effectiveness of the teaching profession here. DE should give urgent consideration to the raising of this entry requirement or to following the example of England, Scotland, Wales and requiring applicants for teacher training places to pass basic literacy and numeracy tests.</p>	<p>Being addressed through the Review of Teacher Education (DEL/ Education Workforce Directorate, with input from Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards).</p>	<p>Under the 1999 Transfer and Assignment of Functions Order, DEL has statutory responsibility for determining qualifications and selection arrangements for entry to ITE. The draft "Teacher Education - A Strategy for the Way Forward", being taken forward by DE and DEL on foot of the responses to the Teacher Education Review consultation process, proposes that DEL should undertake a review of the selection process and entry requirements to ITE. It is envisaged that an EQIA would be undertaken on the review recommendations and a 6 week consultation would be undertaken on the proposed changes. The proposals will be subject to approval by both the DE and DEL Ministers.</p> <p>Whilst the current minimum qualifications for entry to ITE courses (as set out in DE Circular 2010/03 and agreed by DEL) are (in terms of English and Maths) GCSE Grade C or equivalent, the ITE providers invariably take higher grades due to the number of high quality and well qualified applicants they receive.</p>
	<p>Improving the quality of mentoring that trainee teachers receive whilst on teaching practice must also be a priority.</p>		<p>Improving the quality of mentoring that trainee teachers receive whilst on school experience (teaching practice) will be integral to the Early Teacher Education objectives being taken forward as part of the Teacher Education Review.</p>
	<p>To attract more able newly qualified teachers, schools should consider enhancing the criteria in their job descriptions by considering the standard of the applicants' literacy and numeracy skills.</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Education Workforce</p>	<p>The selection criteria for the appointment of teachers are developed by the Board of Governors in line with the needs of the school.</p>

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		Directorate/ employing authorities.	
6	Substitute teachers are an essential part of the teaching workforce and they, especially those in long term temporary employment, should have opportunities for professional development on the same basis as for permanent teachers.	Being addressed through existing policies. Education Workforce Directorate.	Substitute teachers are already entitled, where practicable, to the same opportunities for professional development as permanent teachers. In addition, the Department's response to recommendation 5 of the 2010 PAC <i>Follow-up Report on the Management of Substitute Cover for Teachers</i> fully supported the PAC's views on good practice in relation to support and professional development for substitute teachers. The Education and Library Boards (ELBs), in response to the original 2002 PAC Report, published and disseminated, in 2005, good practice guidance to schools on "The Management of Substitution Cover of Teachers" which included guidance on access to professional development opportunities.
7	The Taskforce is also concerned that the Chief Inspector's Report 2008-10 continued to identify poor quality teaching as an area for improvement in one-fifth of primary schools and in more than one-quarter of post-primary lessons. Swift action must be taken to improve poor teaching to enable pupils to achieve good outcomes in literacy and numeracy.	Being addressed through existing policies. Education Workforce Directorate, with input from Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards.	<p>Formal procedures drawn up jointly by the employing authorities in consultation with the Department provide Boards of Governors with the mechanism for dealing with teachers, principals and vice-principals whose work is evaluated as unsatisfactory. Where there are concerns regarding a teacher's work, the Principal, in consultation with the employing authority, arranges a training and support programme designed to address those aspects of the work which have been deemed unsatisfactory. The programme of support is drawn up in consultation with the teacher concerned and implemented within a specified time frame, normally within three months. The length, format and intensity of this programme depend upon the nature and seriousness of the weakness(es) in the teacher's work. The existing procedures are currently under review by the Teacher' Negotiating Committee.</p> <p>The work of a teacher may be evaluated as unsatisfactory as part of a school inspection carried out by the Department's Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). The Department requires schools to put in place action plans to address any areas including the quality of teaching or leadership, identified through the inspection as being in need of improvement. The Department evaluates the quality of the school's action plan and monitors and evaluates progress against its implementation through the ETI. Where the provision is evaluated as satisfactory or as less than satisfactory, schools routinely have a follow-up inspection and the report is published on the ETI website.</p>

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8	A need for early targeted interventions and more consistency (which will hopefully be addressed by the recently introduced literacy and numeracy strategy) in the leadership and management of literacy and numeracy to prevent some children being left behind. The Taskforce feels that the most cost effective form of intervention is early intervention. Development of literacy and numeracy is not just a job for DE employees. The foundations upon which these core skills are based need to be in place by the time a child enrol in school. This necessitates intervention (targeted at disadvantaged/ at risk families) by other agencies.	Being addressed through existing policies. Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Inclusion, Access & Well-Being/ Families & Communities	Early intervention, including by schools working in partnership with other relevant agencies, is at the heart of all DE policies for raising standards and tackling underachievement, including the school improvement policy, the literacy and numeracy strategy, the Way Forward for SEN & Inclusion and the draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy.
9	<i>Count, read: succeed</i> gives clear guidance to those responsible for the strategic governance of schools but the Taskforce still feels that it is vital that school governors should ensure there is a literacy/numeracy 'thread' running through all aspects of the work of the school so that it is clearly viewed as a priority. It is possible for governors, especially those who are new to the process, to be unsure of their legitimate areas of responsibility, so the development of 'key questions' for Governors to ask of the school leaders about assessment, actions and outcomes ought to be introduced. These could be offered as part of the Governor training programme and would help to ensure that matters of literacy and numeracy are constantly part of the agenda.	Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Planning & Performance Management	The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy emphasises the importance of a whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy, including within the SDP, arrangements for PRSD, whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy and teachers planning and working within the whole-school approach. The revised school development plans regulations and supporting guidance 2010 put greater emphasis on promoting of standards in literacy and numeracy. DE published a handbook for governors to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The Boards also provide support and training for governors in relation to raising standards in literacy and numeracy and plans for 2010/11 included the development of key questions for governors.
10	It is very difficult for any school to raise standards of literacy and numeracy in isolation and it is clear that a culture must be developed, which strives to create an appropriate nexus between home and school, parent and child. Many other countries have already implemented successful home-school intervention models which have proved effective but the current process is weak here. Often teachers take the understandable view that school	Being addressed through existing policies. Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Families &	Promoting greater engagement between schools, families and communities is embedded as a priority within the school improvement policy and literacy and numeracy strategy. DE's Extended Schools programme is targeted at schools serving the most disadvantaged communities. Extended Schools work in partnership with other schools and statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations, to provide a range of services and activities beyond the school day to help meet the needs of children, families and the wider community.

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	<p>should be an 'island haven' separated from home or outside influence but this is an approach which is, in the view of Taskforce members, not based on sound educational principles. In order to move things forward we need to introduce strategies which 'blur the edges' where traditional schools stop and where outside communities begin and to promote greater engagement and involvement of parents in their child's education. A great deal of urgent work needs to be done in this area.</p>	<p>Communities</p>	<p>ETI published an Evaluation of Extended Schools June 2010, which informed the development of a revised Circular and examples of best practice, published by DE in November 2010.</p> <p>DE is also working through the BELB and CCMS to pilot Full Service provision in North and West Belfast. The Full Service School is a fully extended school offering substantial additional programmes and activities, not only for pupils, but also the local community. An evaluation was published in March 2010 and the Minister announced that funding would continue in 2011-2015.</p> <p>DE recognises that learning takes place outside the classroom and although not specific to literacy and numeracy, non formal education provided by youth work in education can reduce barriers to learning such as low self esteem and low aspirations which can then lead to improved educational outcomes.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Parents, business, commercial organisations, charitable organisations and other interested stakeholders should be invited and encouraged to be part of the overall push to improve literacy and numeracy.</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Families & Communities</p>	<p>Effective links with the community, including business, statutory and voluntary agencies and others, is a key part of the school improvement policy and literacy and numeracy strategy.</p> <p>Raising standards requires action beyond normal classroom provision. The "Priorities for Youth" will provide the youth service with a clear vision of how it should be contributing to the DE strategic objectives of raising standards and over overcoming barriers to learning, which will include working in partnerships with other education providers and local communities to ensure that young people fulfil their potential.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Public attitudes to numeracy also need to change and the media especially should be encouraged to promote mathematics in a more positive way. This is a huge area for development which potentially could have a substantial impact.</p>	<p>Being addressed through existing policies.</p> <p>Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards/ Communications Team</p>	<p>DE has provided funding in support of Maths Week Ireland (£5k in 2009/10, increased to £20k in 2010/11). The programme is well established in the south and is increasing its profile in NI. Maths Week aims to promote awareness and understanding of Maths for all and to foster more positive attitudes among pupils and the wider community.</p>