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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EQUALITY IMPACT
ASSESSMENT:**

**‘EVERY SCHOOL A GOOD SCHOOL: A
STRATEGY FOR RAISING ACHIEVEMENT IN
LITERACY AND NUMERACY’**

June 2008

SEEKING YOUR VIEWS

The Department has decided to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on its draft consultation document, 'Every School a Good School: A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy.' You are invited to give your views on this draft assessment. The purpose of the consultation is to obtain:

- Consultees' views on this draft assessment of the equality impacts of the strategy; and
- Any further information which could be useful in assessing those equality impacts.

When considering your response, the following questions may offer a useful guideline:

- Do you have any views on any of the aspects of equality covered in this draft assessment?
- Are there any other issues that have not been addressed? If so, what are these?
- Do you have any views on how the delivery of the Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy should be taken forward to effectively address inequalities and differentials?
- Are there any measures that should be implemented to mitigate against an adverse impact on people in the Section 75 equality groups?

We would welcome any additional information and comments that you feel would help inform our equality considerations of the draft Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy.

We would like to receive your comments by **30 November 2008**.

You can contact us by writing to us at the address below or by

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This document is also available on the following Internet site: www.deni.gov.uk

Should you require this document in an alternative format please contact the above address.

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON PROPOSALS FOR A REVISED LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Department of Education, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- people with different religious beliefs;
- people from different racial groups;
- people of different ages;
- people with different marital status;
- people with different sexual orientations;
- men and women generally;
- people with or without a disability;
- people with or without dependants; and
- people with different political opinions.

In addition, but without prejudice to duty above, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups.

This legislation requires public authorities to conduct an equality impact assessment where a proposed policy is likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity. In response to this, the Department of Education (DE) has decided that its draft consultation document, 'Every School a Good School: A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy' requires an equality impact assessment.

This document is therefore the prepared Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for 'Every School a Good School: A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy'.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE REVISED LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGY

The purpose of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is to improve achievement, and tackle underachievement, in literacy and numeracy through learning and teaching strategies designed to help young people acquire and develop core literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, they can then benefit from the educational and other opportunities encountered in the years of formal education and beyond, and contribute positively as adults to society.

This revised strategy is intended to build upon the strengths, and address the areas for improvement, of existing approaches to improving achievement in literacy and numeracy. It is informed by local, national and international research; by inspection findings; and by the good practice already evident in most schools here.

Standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy: an ongoing challenge

In 1998, a new strategyⁱ for the promotion of literacy and numeracy in schools here was launched. It identified the need in every school for well-defined literacy and numeracy policies and highlighted the importance of early intervention and classroom practice that addressed “*directly the quality of teachers’ interactions with pupils*”. It drew attention to the importance of Reading Recovery, to the leadership of senior management and to links with parents.

In addition, the strategy noted that insufficient use was made of school performance information and the outcomes of diagnostic testing to influence future teaching approaches and remediation strategies. In advocating the need for the more systematic use of data, the strategy recommended the setting of targets and the need for benchmarked data cross-referenced to free school meals bands and disaggregated data for boys and girls. It also emphasised the need for a stronger focus on literacy and numeracy in initial teacher training and in continuing professional development.

In short, many of the key elements necessary for the successful implementation of a literacy and numeracy improvement programme were contained in the 1998 strategy. The strategy also led to improvements, notably by higher-attaining pupils. Despite this, it did not impact sufficiently to raise the overall attainment in literacy and numeracy, particularly among socially disadvantaged pupils and, in some cases, boys.

The limited success of the 1998 programme to bring about a substantial improvement in literacy and numeracy standards across all ability groups was the subject of considerable criticism in recent reports by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)ⁱⁱ and by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (PAC)ⁱⁱⁱ. These reports drew attention to the significant number whose attainment in literacy and numeracy fell well below expected levels and highlighted the urgent need for the further improvement of literacy and numeracy standards.

While the PAC accepted that, in socially deprived areas in particular, many factors influence adversely educational attainment, it concluded that *“progress in literacy and numeracy levels has been manifestly unsatisfactory”*.

1. DEFINING THE AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aim of this draft strategy is to raise achievement levels in literacy and numeracy through learning and teaching strategies designed to help young people acquire and develop core literacy and numeracy skills. It will be taken forward in a much changed education system that puts a child at the centre and is driven by the core principles of equality and fairness.

Despite the significant strengths evident in the current educational system, there exists a real need to improve achievement in literacy and numeracy within our schools, particularly among lower attaining pupils. Concerns are also recognised about achievement in literacy and numeracy particularly, but not exclusively, on those areas most affected by the impact and aftermath of the conflict of the past four decades, and by significant levels of social and economic disadvantage.

This is not to imply that a strategy to improve literacy and numeracy standards should address only the needs of lower-attaining young people and of disadvantaged communities. It is essential that schools equip all young people with levels of literacy and numeracy that prepare them for adulthood and leave them well-placed to interact with and make a positive contribution to society and the economy.

The specific aims of the strategy are to:

- Raise the levels of attainment for all young people in literacy and numeracy;
- Narrow the current achievement gaps, including those for boys; girls and travellers and between those most and least disadvantaged; and
- Narrow the gap between the highest performing and lowest performing pupils and schools.

Based on these aims the test of the strategy's success will be measured in relation to the following identified targets:

- 70% of students gaining a Level 2 qualification, including GCSEs A*-C in English/Maths (or equivalent) by the time they leave school by 2020;
- 65% of students with entitlement to Free School Meals gaining 5 or more GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths by the time they leave school by 2020;
- 95% of students gaining GCSE A*-G in English and Maths (or equivalent) by the time they leave school by 2020.

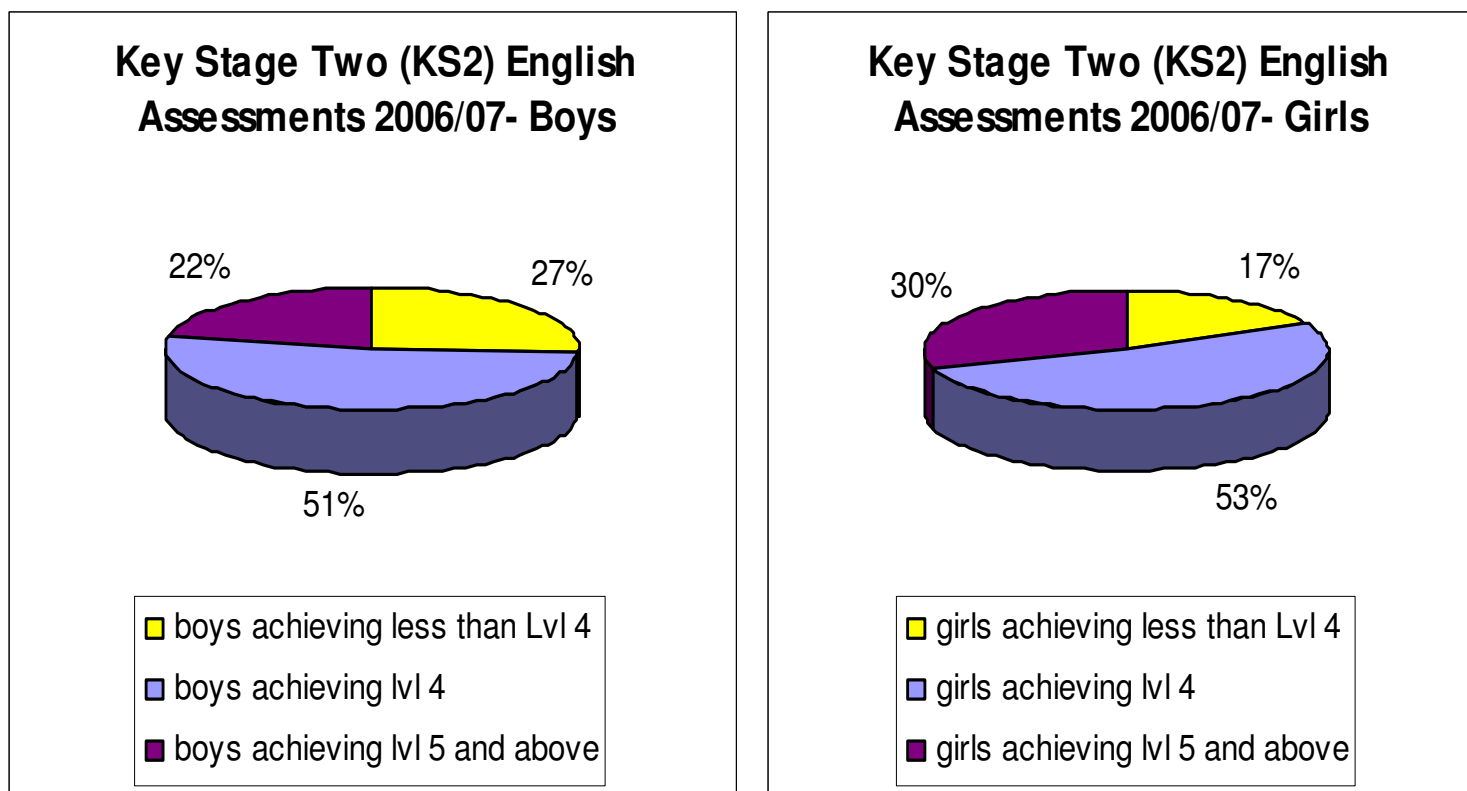
2. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

In carrying out this EQIA, the Department considered a range of quantitative and qualitative data on attainment levels in literacy and numeracy. This was reinforced by the recent reports by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts which drew attention to the significant number whose attainment in literacy and numeracy fell well below expected levels and highlighted the urgent need for the further improvement of literacy and numeracy standards. On the basis of these reports and their recommendations the following pages contain a series of graphs looking at levels of attainment between boys and girls; RC maintained schools and controlled schools and in recognition of Northern Ireland's growing foreign national population a breakdown of achievement by ethnic origin.

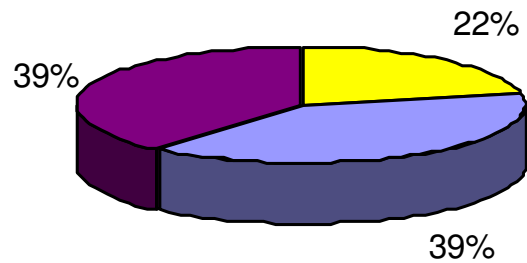
Differing Attainment Levels between Girls and Boys

The pie charts below clearly identify the attainment gap at Key Stage 2; Key Stage 3 and GCSE achievement between boys and girls:

Key Stage Two

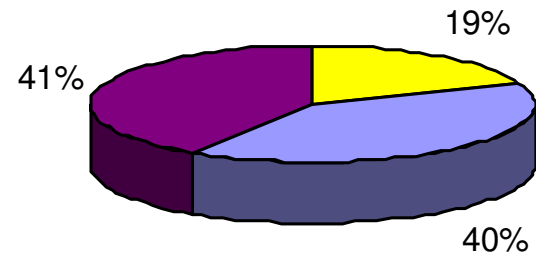


Key Stage Two (KS2) Maths Assessments 2006/07- Boys



- boys achieving less than Lvl 4
- boys achieving lvl 4
- boys achieving lvl 5 and above

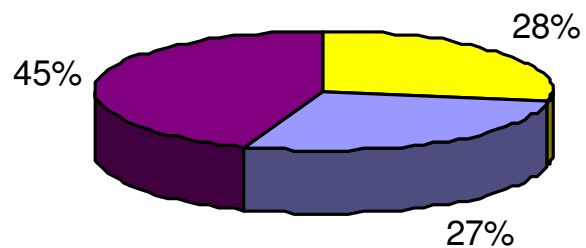
Key Stage Two (KS2) Maths Assessments 2006/07- Girls



- girls achieving less than Lvl 4
- girls achieving lvl 4
- girls achieving lvl 5 and above

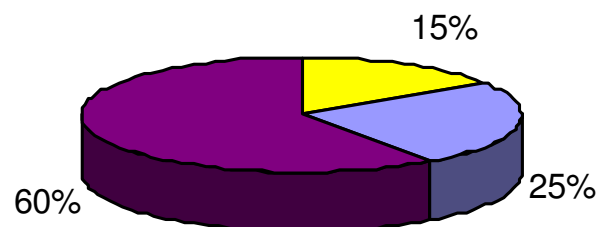
Key Stage Three:

Key Stage Three (KS3) English Assessments 2006/07- Boys



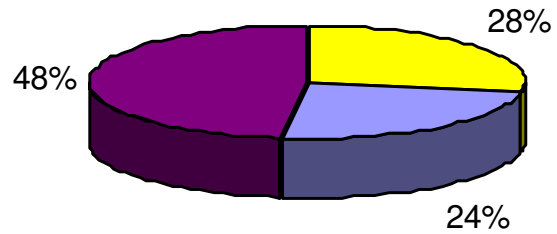
- boys achieving less than Lvl 5
- boys achieving Lvl 5
- boys achieving Lvl 6 and above

Key Stage Three (KS3) English Assessments 2006/07- Girls



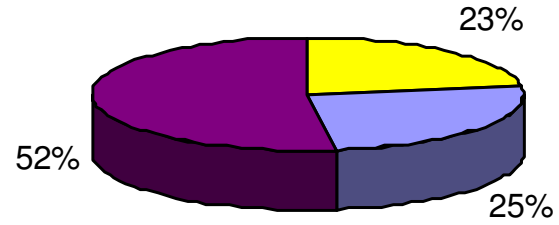
- girls achieving less than Lvl 5
- girls achieving Lvl 5
- girls achieving Lvl 6 and above

Key Stage Three (KS3) Maths Assessments 2006/07- Boys



- boys achieving less than Lvl 5
- boys achieving Lvl 5
- boys achieving Lvl 6 and above

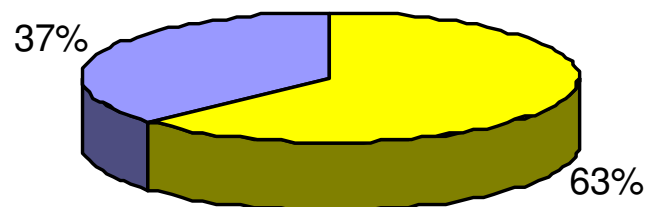
Key Stage Three (KS3) Maths Assessments 2006/07- Girls



- girls achieving less than Lvl 5
- girls achieving Lvl 5
- girls achieving Lvl 6 and above

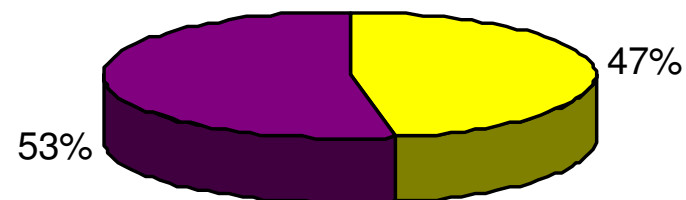
GCSE:

**Percentage of Year 12 Boys
achieving 5+ GCSEs
Grades A*-C (or equivalent)
2006/07 - Non-selective**



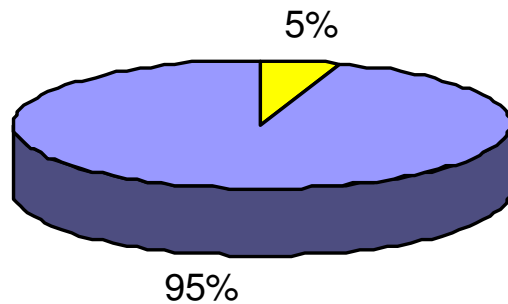
- boys not achieving 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C
- boys achieving 5+GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C

**Percentage of Year 12 Girls
achieving 5+ GCSEs
Grades A*-C (or equivalent)
2006/07 - Non-selective**



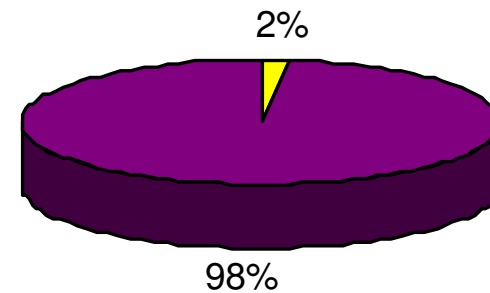
- girls not achieving 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C
- girls achieving 5+GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C

**Percentage of Year 12 Boys
achieving 5+ GCSEs
Grades A*-C (or equivalent)
2006/07 - Grammar**



- boys not achieving 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C
- boys achieving 5+GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C

**Percentage of Year 12 Girls
achieving 5+ GCSEs
Grades A*-C (or equivalent)
2006/07 - Grammar**



- girls not achieving 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C
- girls achieving 5+GCSEs (or equivalent) Grades A*-C

Differing attainment levels between pupils from different religious backgrounds

KS2 Assessments - English & Maths by Management Type - % of pupils achieving level 4 and above

KS2 % of pupils achieving Level 4 and above			
	Key Stage 2 Assessments	2005/06	2006/07
RC Managed	English	77.6	77.2
	Maths	79.5	78.7
Other Managed	English	78.2	78.7
	Maths	80.3	80.2

KS3 Assessments - English & Maths by Management Type - % of pupils achieving level 5 and above

KS3 % of pupils achieving Level 5 and above			
	Key Stage 3 Assessments	2005/06	2006/07
RC Managed	English	77.7	79.3
	Maths	73.6	74.6
Other Managed	English	75.5	77.4
	Maths	72.2	74.3

All Post-Primary Schools GCSEs by Management Type

Management	Achievement	2005/06
RC Managed	5+ GCSEs Grades A*-C (or equivalent)	63.6
	5+ GCSEs Grades A*-G (or equivalent)	89
	No GCSEs	4
Other Managed	5+ GCSEs Grades A*-C (or equivalent)	62.5
	5+ GCSEs Grades A*-G (or equivalent)	91
	No GCSEs	3

GCSE English and Maths results for NI school leavers by Ethnic Origin⁽¹⁾ 2006/07

	White (2)		Minority Ethnic Groups (2)	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
GCSE English A*-C	15894	64.9	158	52.1
GCSE Maths A*- C	14680	59.5	153	50.5
GCSE English and Maths A*-C	13609	55.5	137	45.2
GCSE English A*-G	21972	89.7	225	74.3
GCSE Maths A*-G	21841	89.1	224	73.9
GCSE English and Maths A*-G	21235	86.7	212	70.0
Total Leavers	24500	100.0	303	100.0

HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS BY ETHNIC ORIGIN⁽¹⁾

	2005/2006	
	TOTAL	
	Numbers	%
WHITE⁽²⁾		
A levels		
3 or more (or equivalent) ⁽³⁾	9555	39.0
2 (or equivalent) ⁽³⁾	1360	5.6
1 ⁽³⁾	633	2.6
GCSEs		
5+ A*-C (or equivalent) ⁽⁴⁾	4353	17.8
1-4 A*-C (or equivalent) ⁽⁴⁾	4885	19.9
Other grades (1+ D-G) ⁽⁵⁾	2791	11.4
5+ A*-G (or equivalent) ⁽⁶⁾	10237	41.8
1-4 A*-G (or equivalent) ⁽⁶⁾	1792	7.3
No GCSEs ⁽⁷⁾	923	3.8
No Formal Qualifications ⁽⁸⁾	717	2.9
TOTAL WHITE	24500	100.0
MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS⁽²⁾		
A levels		
3 or more (or equivalent) ⁽³⁾	125	42.6
2 (or equivalent) ⁽³⁾	16	6.4
1 ⁽³⁾	9	2.8
GCSEs		
5+ A*-C (or equivalent) ⁽⁴⁾	44	15.2
1-4 A*-C (or equivalent) ⁽⁴⁾	50	15.6
Other grades (1+ D-G) ⁽⁵⁾	33	9.2
5+ A*-G (or equivalent) ⁽⁶⁾	102	31.2
1-4 A*-G (or equivalent) ⁽⁶⁾	25	8.9
No GCSEs ⁽⁷⁾	26	8.2
No Formal Qualifications ⁽⁸⁾	24	7.8
TOTAL MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS	303	100.0

The numbers of pupils in individual ethnic groups are not sufficient to support any meaningful statistical analysis.

NOTES

- 1 Excludes special and independent schools.
- 'Minority Ethnic Groups' includes Irish Travellers. The 'White' figures do not include Irish Travellers.
- 2 Includes AVCE qualifications.
- 3 Includes Grades A*-C only and GNVQ Intermediate qualifications.
- 4 Includes Grades D - G only and GNVQ Foundation qualifications.
- 5 Includes GNVQ Intermediate and GNVQ Foundation qualifications.
- 6 Includes those who undertook no GCSE examinations or obtained no graded results but who obtained other qualifications such as RSA, Pitman, City and Guilds etc.
- 7 Includes only those with no qualifications of any kind.

NB The non-shaded rows sum to the total. Figures in the shaded rows overlap with other rows. In addition, there are 24 pupils for whom an Ethnic group was not given.

In response to these issues the Department commissioned PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to undertake the following two pieces of research:

- ‘Literacy and numeracy of pupils in the north of Ireland’, which considered the outcomes in literacy and numeracy at school-level, explore the international literature on boys’ underachievement and examine the differences between high and low performing schools; and
- ‘Good practice in literacy and numeracy in British and Irish cities where the level of social deprivation is comparable to, or worse than, Belfast’ which sought to identify the measures which are working successfully in delivering better literacy and numeracy outcomes in comparator cities elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland.

Main Findings

In an analysis of school performance in English and Maths by location and sector, there was evidence that there are some clusters of underperformance in schools in Belfast and in the controlled sector. However, while the analysis identified specific issues in regard to some schools in the controlled sector, it should be remembered that the factors impacting on attainment are complex and interactive (including socio-economic context and gender) and that generalisation is therefore difficult.

In discussion with school principals, it was suggested that reasons for the ‘long tail’ of underachievement included:

- A lack of parental involvement in their children’s education;
- A perceived lack of value placed on education in certain areas, particularly deprived Protestant areas;
- A shortage of positive role models;
- The impact of the conflict’;
- A decline in the readiness for schooling of pupils entering primary school in recent years (e.g. in terms of behaviour, linguistic development etc);

- A lack of baseline data on young children, hindering early intervention in schools;
- The transition between pre-school and primary and between primary and post-primary schools; and
- A lack of strategic direction and consistency of approach at the system level.

In the local authorities and cities identified as having similar levels of Free School Meals (FSM) entitlement as Belfast, social deprivation and a lack of parental involvement in their children's education were thought to be the main factors impacting upon attainment. Gender was also an issue, with many respondents identifying the performance of (some) boys as an area of concern.

Boys' Performance

In 2006, the NI Audit Office and House of Commons Public Accounts Committee identified boys' performance as a key issue in the North of Ireland. The gender gap in educational attainment to the benefit of girls is a feature of many developed countries. PwC's review of the current national and international literature demonstrates that there is no single explanation for the attainment gap between boys and girls. Furthermore, while not all boys underperform, those from more deprived socio-economic backgrounds are more at risk. The most commonly cited factors include:

- Perceptions of literacy activities as 'female';
- Gender stereotyping on the part of teachers;
- The greater vulnerability of boys to poor teaching;
- The greater likelihood that boys are less ready to commence formal schooling;
- A greater proportion of learning activities which require a prolonged attention span;
- Changing patterns of employment and higher expectations of girls;
- Peer group cultures;

- A greater incidence of behavioural problems such as ADD/ADHD amongst boys; and
- A lack of male role models including fathers and male teachers.

Measures to improve boys' performance, based on good practice from international literature were identified as follows:

Individual approaches:

- Individual target-setting; and
- Mentoring (older boys, adults in school or wider community).

Pedagogical approaches:

- Flexing style to meet needs of individual;
- Setting aims, objectives and targets, building on previous learning;
- Using a variety of activities, including practical work, use of ICT (including interactive whiteboards) and 'real situations';
- Use of texts (fiction and non-fiction) that appeal to boys; and
- Positive and forward-looking feedback.

Whole-School approaches:

- All teachers acting as literacy teachers;
- Roles and responsibilities of school leadership;
- Ethos of high expectations;
- The effective use of data;
- Single-sex groupings for some subjects; and
- Strategies for parental involvement.

System-Wide approaches:

- Early intervention;
- Professional development;
- The role of the inspectorate in disseminating best practice; and
- The dissemination of best practice.

What are the lessons from the comparator cities?

Throughout this research, respondents stressed that 'one size did not fit all' and that the more successful local authorities and schools cherry picked those aspects of national strategies which best suited their circumstances. There is some evidence from the literature however that a more faithful adherence to the implementation of improvement initiatives is linked to better outcomes.

Findings suggest that while there is a broad range of literacy and numeracy initiatives and strategies that were reported to support improvement, there are a number of common characteristics to these approaches, including:

- Raising self-esteem and expectations through, for example, having high expectations of all learners and demonstrating the value of learning to children at an early age;
- Using data effectively to track and monitor pupils' progress and to set challenging targets for all pupils including those with SEN, EAL, looked after children, minority ethnic groups and those who are socially or economically disadvantaged;
- Linking self-evaluation and school development planning to pupil achievement data;
- Focusing on high quality teaching and learning. Effective and improving schools have a clear work scrutiny system for regularly reviewing the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders in these schools regularly observe lessons, give feedback to staff on the quality of teaching and learning and provide support to teachers who may be experiencing difficulties;
- Personalising learning, through focusing on the pastoral needs of pupils and by tailoring teaching to individual learning needs (as informed by effective data analysis), styles and preferences;
- Focusing on family learning and engaging parents as partners to encourage parental involvement in their children's schooling and by stimulating their interest in their own learning;

- Making learning fun by using games, competitions, events, visits and play as a basis for learning in literacy and numeracy;
- Exploiting the potential of ICT through whiteboards and computer games and other resources; and
- Taking a whole-school approach, emphasising the importance of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and consistency in teaching methodologies both within and between phases. In Ireland, for example, there is a drive to ensure that every primary and post-primary teacher has a SEN role.

These research reports are available for download from the Department of Education website (http://www.deni.gov.uk/no_49-2.pdf http://www.deni.gov.uk/no_50-3.pdf). The findings and the data which supports them have been fed into not only this EQIA but also the revised Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

3. CONSIDERATION OF IMPACT

In accordance with the guidelines, the Department is required to assess whether there is a differential or adverse impact on the Section 75 groups. In making this assessment the Department is aware that the duty goes beyond the necessity not to discriminate (either directly or indirectly) in respect of the groups.

An assessment of the possible impacts of the Department's revised Literacy and Numeracy policy is set out below:

(i) Religion

As noted above, in the research undertaken by PwC, there was evidence that there are some clusters of underperformance in schools in the controlled sector. However, while the analysis identified specific issues in regard to some schools in the controlled sector, it should be remembered that the factors impacting on attainment are complex and interactive (including socio-economic context and gender) and that generalisation is therefore difficult.

The draft Literacy and Numeracy Strategy seeks to raise attainment, not only, within these clusters of underperformance in the controlled sector, but across all schools. The Department does not believe that the strategy will adversely affect pupils of different religious beliefs.

(ii) Political opinion

The Department does not believe that the strategy will affect young people adversely as a result of their political opinion.

(iii) Racial groups

The Department does not believe that the strategy would have an adverse impact on pupils of different racial group. We believe that the strategy will promote equality of opportunity for young people from different racial

groups, particularly Travellers and those whose first language is not English.

(iv) Age

The strategy is applicable to all young people between the ages of 4 and 19 and the Department does not believe that it will have any adverse impacts on any group within these age ranges.

(v) Marital status

The Department does not believe that the strategy would have any adverse impact on pupils regardless of their marital status as it is focused on pupils during their compulsory schooling which ends at 16.

(vi) Sexual orientation

The Department does not believe that the strategy would have any adverse impact on pupils of differing sexual orientation.

(vii) Gender

As noted above the PAC report highlighted the underperformance of (some) boys as an issue to be addressed and the Department has incorporated the research findings and recommendations from PwC – to this end the impact upon boys will be positive, however this will not be to the detriment of girls, rather the strategy is seeking to reduce the attainment gap between boys and girls by improving the performance of some boys. The Department does not therefore believe that the strategy would have an adverse affect on pupils because of their gender.

(viii) Disability

The strategy applies to all pupils and to all grant-aided schools. Provision is made within the education system for pupils with special educational needs and this, together with the actions arising from the strategy will help ensure that pupils with a disability are helped and supported to be literate and numerate.

(ix) Persons with dependants

The Department does not believe that the content of this strategy will have a different or adverse affect on persons with dependents.

4. CONSIDERATION OF MITIGATION AND ALTERNATIVES

Introduction

The Department's assessment is that the strategy will have positive impacts because it includes provisions to:

- Raise overall standard of literacy and numeracy;
- Narrow the gap between those schools and pupils achieving high outcomes and those which do not;
- Is targeted specifically at those with greatest need – the socially deprived and those who are struggling below expected levels.

The Department does not consider that the strategy will have any adverse impacts, however should consultees think that the strategy would be likely to have any adverse impacts, the Department would welcome suggestions on mitigations and alternatives that might better promote equality of opportunity.

5. FORMAL CONSULTATION

The Department wishes to consult as widely as possible on the potential equality impacts of the 'Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy'. Officials have already held preliminary meetings, and during the consultation period the Department will:

- issue a consultation document along with a consultation response form to schools, educational interest groups, religious groups, Section 75 groups and to any members of the public on request;
- Put a copy of the consultation documents on DE's website and the Consultation NI website, together with an on-line consultation response form;
- Make the consultation documentation available in alternative formats for those who require it;
- Arrange consultation meetings on request with individuals or representatives of particular interest groups, taking account of any special requirements they may have;
- Deal with any queries in a prompt manner.

The consultation is being co-ordinated by School Improvement Branch and the closing date is 30 November 2008.

6. DECISION BY THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

The Department of Education will analyse the responses to the consultation and consider the findings of the EQIA before making any final decisions on the 'Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy'.

7. PUBLICATION OF RESULTS OF EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The results of this EQIA will be published when decisions are announced. A copy of the results document will be sent to those who respond to the consultation and will be posted on the Department's website. It will also be made available in alternative formats when requested.

8. MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT IN THE FUTURE AND PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS OF SUCH MONITORING

The Department will establish a process to monitor the future impact of the 'Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy' on relevant groups. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and the results will be published on the Department's website. If this monitoring reveals any adverse impacts or opportunities to promote greater equality of opportunity, the Department will ensure that the policy is revised. The results of the monitoring process will be published in the Department's Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission NI.

REFERENCES

ⁱ *A Strategy for the Promotion of Literacy and Numeracy in Primary and Secondary Schools in Northern Ireland* (DE 1998)

ⁱⁱ *Improving Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (NIAO 2006)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Improving Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (PAC 2006)