

To: Leadership Board

On: 17 February 2016

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Tackling Poverty Strategy - Literacy Development Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1. A Tackling Poverty Commission was set up by Renfrewshire Council to look at evidence around causes and impacts of poverty, and particularly child poverty. Sixteen Commissioners from different backgrounds were represented on the committee. The committee made recommendations to Council and Community Planning Partners in early 2015.
 - 1.2. Renfrewshire Council is working in partnership with Strathclyde University to deliver a range of training programmes involving head teachers and class teachers across primary and secondary schools. The programme is an evidence based, high quality professional learning opportunity to enhance the knowledge and skills of our teachers in teaching a broad range of literacy skills. The programme will build capacity across the service in addressing closing the educational attainment gap between children from low income families and their better off peers. The programme will offer Masters level credits for those teachers who wish to pursue their interests further in this area as part of career long professional learning.
 - 1.3. Strathclyde University will carry out ongoing evaluation and provide a final report on the programme. This will involve collection of data, interviews with staff and recommendations will be made to inform next steps for the programme.
 - 1.4. Very good progress has been made in the implementation of the programme and in the engagement of head teachers and class teachers across Renfrewshire. Early evaluations are positive and have identified next steps in developing the programme further.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Leadership Board is asked to note:

- Renfrewshire Council's Children's Services' progress to date in the implementation of the Literacy Development Programme.
 - the allocation of £990,000 provided by the Council (from the £6 million tackling poverty fund) to support closing the educational attainment gap across Renfrewshire.
 - the positive impact from initial evaluations and next steps for development.
-

3. Background

- 3.1. We know that the distribution of poverty is widely spread across Renfrewshire and it is not only an issue for high poverty areas but is an issue that needs to be owned and addressed by every school and every teacher. Our approach to this training is such that we are training every head teacher from our primary/secondary schools and a significant number of class teachers. This will ensure that within every primary school there will be a level of knowledge and understanding in how to improve children's attainment in reading. This will be a step in the right direction in closing the poverty attainment gap.
- 3.2. A number of workstreams in partnership with Strathclyde University are being implemented in response to the recommendations of the tackling poverty commission:
- **Workstream 1 – The Literacy Clinic**
This involves the training of 49 head teachers and class teachers across all primary schools. This includes a 10 week programme on developing skills in analysis and use of data, diagnostic testing of reading, running reading records, use of observation tools in the teaching of reading, use of literacy language and raising awareness of intervention programmes that work. Teachers will work in collaborative groups facilitated by university staff to identify appropriate interventions to support children facing barriers to reading;
 - **Workstream 2 – Broad Rich Curriculum**
This work stream will involve 6 primary schools identified from the literacy clinics. This does not involve head teacher training. Two class teachers (P4-7) will be released from the same school to attend training sessions delivered by university colleagues. This training will provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and develop their current teaching approaches to focus on the environment and experiences required to support the development of literacy in particular with reading. This will involve analysis of data, interventions and devising a bank of lesson plans that will support teachers;
 - **Workstream 3 – Fresh start into S1**
This work will focus on the smooth transition from P7 into S1. An advisory group from Strathclyde University will work with senior leaders in secondary schools. Pupil attitudes and engagement will be measured and interventions used to support groups of identified pupils; and

- Workstream 4 – Literacy across subject disciplines
The ‘disciplinary learning’ approach to literacy is based on recognising the need for secondary (and upper primary teachers) to teach literacy skills that are specific to particular disciplines. To be truly literate, older pupils must understand the reading mind-sets, behaviours and specialised language conventions (text structures, syntax, vocabulary) that apply to specific disciplines. The approach also recognises that the ‘literacy’ requirement varies from subject to subject, and that the development of these required skills is the responsibility of those specific curricular areas.

3.3. The success measures within the programme include:

- successful training in coaching models and evidence collection;
- establishment of cross – school communities of practice;
- reflective and confident practitioners in the teaching of reading;
- successful training in whole-class coaching models and genre pedagogies;
- analysis of curriculum requirements and fit with genre pedagogies;
- development and trialling of materials;
- analysis of individual and vulnerable groups; and
- increased pupil attainment in reading.

3.4. This literacy development programme sits very well with other ongoing activities in our schools e.g Families first, Families and schools together project (FAST), PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills) and School Improvement Partnership Programme in partnership with West Dunbartonshire.

4. Progress to Date and Impact on Staff

4.1. Workstream 1. The Literacy Clinic
34 primary schools have participated in the programme and are currently engaged in the literacy clinic. This has been well received. 15 schools are scheduled to begin the programme in mid February 2016. This is two months behind schedule due to supply staff difficulties. This will not affect the projects’ reach but may affect timelines for impact.

Data

30 participating head teachers have been interviewed about the programme. Interviews lasted 30-90 mins and covered:

- impact on their own thinking;
- views on literacy teaching, management & policy issues for their school improvement plan; and
- future professional learning needs and issues.

Interviews were transcribed and subjected to iterative thematic analysis and categorization of future needs. This has been helpful in identifying where head teachers want to develop the programme further in school and how the university colleagues can support this.

The technical interventions to deliver the programme aims have been well-received. They are:

- ensure the text level is correct so the child has agency in the task (instructional level to push boundaries; easy level for confidence and fluency) – running records;
- prepare for reading that focuses on HOW to work words out, not ‘preparing *this text*’;
- ensure that the teacher first hears the child read a text. Parents hear second readings for confidence and fluency;
- coach for strategies and cue-use *whilst* children read to the teacher; review strategy-use after reading;
- maximize time on task rather than ‘reading round the group’;
- use the reading scheme as ONE resource for teaching reading – alongside essential levelled books and free reading opportunities to add breadth and depth, promote ‘have a go’ attitudes and a reading culture;
- read to the class to promote: reading as relaxation; expose them to complex, challenging stories/information, vocabulary and syntax they could not access alone; introduce new and exciting authors;
- make reading for pleasure a central part of the social fabric of the classroom through: book corners (and time to use them), book blessings, children sharing books and book recommendations; and
- the curriculum must foster ‘growth mindsets’ in reading (not a ‘race’) and children’s identity and satisfaction as readers.

Head teacher management tools:

- class teachers keep regular running records and miscues so head teachers can check at a glance the book levels is right and that children are being taught to use a range of cues/strategies well;
- head teachers sampling 3 sharings; book corners; book stock; time on task; teachers reading to class;
- attainment levels;
- engagement survey;
- purposeful sampling of children’s views about their reading experiences; and
- planning tools and discussions.

4.2. Workstream 2. Broad Rich Curriculum
This project will not commence until August 2016.

4.3. Workstream 3. Fresh start into S1
This project commences in February 2016. Johnstone High school, St Benedict’s High School and St Andrew’s Academy are involved in this project.

- 4.4. Workstream 4. Literacy across subject disciplines.
This project commenced in November. Four meetings have been planned. 35 Secondary teachers, representing Physics, Biology, Chemistry, History, Art, RME, English, Geography, Mathematics, Modern Foreign Languages and Food Technology attended the first meeting. The second meeting is due to take place at the end of January. The project sits well alongside current initiatives to make the implications of SQA exam language explicit in each subject area. It will involve secondary teachers trying out new pedagogies aimed at increasing the quantity and complexity of reading in their subject area in broad general education classes, teaching pedagogies that enable all pupils to access the text, targeting specific teaching input at the disciplinary mindset; explicit teaching of the text type; structure; syntax and lexical knowledge, and linking writing to reading.
-

5. Next Steps for Development

- 5.1. 15 schools have still to participate in the literacy clinic. This will commence in February 2016.
- 5.2. Establishment of focused networks based on head teacher feedback from interviews. The networks will focus on whole school management and classroom exemplification of key aspects related to the project aims. Each network will contain a mixture of school types, sizes, compositions and expertise. The networks will run from March 2016 – May 2017.
- 5.3. School level support including:
- head teacher opportunities - 3 or 4 weeks in another school. Head teacher selected through **purposive, data-driven selection and matching**;
 - after school 'Drop-in Reading Clinic' - class teachers can bring pupils for assessment, help and advice. To build capacity it would be available only where a senior manager and 2 class teachers attend for discussion;
 - professional learning – rolling programme to widen reach
 - Offering the 3 development sessions for interested teachers as after-school CPD and on in-service days (as a separate contract from Strathclyde).
 - Classroom Assistants –integrated into the next (15 schools) stage of the project.
 - Educational Psychology Service staff integrated into the next (15 schools) stage of the project.
- 5.4. Renfrewshire Council Policy Development
- Build principles into specific Renfrewshire Literacy policies and school priorities.
 - Establish baseline assessments, data handling, analysis and good practice for use.
 - Write a formal theory of change for project.
 - Plan bids for additional funding – all schools; network schools; summer-schools; evaluation.

- Strategic planning support (clear priorities from Renfrewshire - less clutter, fewer meetings, and wider agency for head teachers).
-

Implications of this report

1. **Financial Implications**

Renfrewshire Council has committed £990,000 to support schools in closing the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and high income households.

2. **HR and Organisational Development Implications**

Recruitment of teaching staff

3. **Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

Children and Young People

- Pupil attainment in reading will improve and will support closing the educational attainment gap between children from low-income families and their better off peers.

4. **Legal Implications**

None.

5. **Property/Assets Implications**

None.

6. **Information Technology Implications**

None.

7. **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. (Report author to arrange this).

8. **Health and Safety Implications**

None.

9. **Procurement Implications**

Contract for this work was awarded to Strathclyde University

10. **Risk Implications**

Recruitment and retention of teaching staff.

11. **Privacy Impact**

None.

List of Background Papers

Not applicable.

Children's Services

LMcA/LG/GMcK

3 February 2016

Author: *Laura McAllister (Education Manager)* laura.mcallister@renfrewshire.gov.uk. 01416187301