



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST JUNE 2012

SUBJECT: THE CAERPHILLY SKILLS STRATEGY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING & LEISURE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report is to inform Members of the most recent developments within the Caerphilly Skills Strategy.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 These plans link to the Local Authority's duty to monitor and improve standards of education and the strategies for doing this described in the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14, the Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure Directorate Plan 2011-12, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015 and also the Learning, Education and Inclusion Service Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 These strategies link to the Welsh Government's School Effectiveness Framework (SEF).

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 In the Spring of 2008, the development of a structured and coherent county-wide strategy for skills became an urgent priority. Despite an improving trend in core subjects at the end of KS1, 2 and 3, additional data together with school reviews, strongly suggested a need to address basic skills. Audits of literacy and numeracy were carried out and confirmed the hypothesis.

A Steering Group was established and the strategy document was produced. This went through a consultation process, including the involvement of the Youth Forum.

The following elements were identified in the delivery of Phase One :

- A working party, led by a headteacher foundation phase specialist and an adviser, produced support and guidance for the structured development of literacy skills. Training to accompany the resource pack will be delivered to all Foundation Phase staff (on closure days) by July 2012.
- All teachers of KS2, including those on regular supply, have accessed a 1½ day programme on the teaching of reading. A 'mop up' session is arranged termly for all newly appointed teachers.
- All schools have completed a 2 day training programme on addressing the underachievement of boys. The two training days were a term apart and followed an action research model. The second day provided an opportunity to share good practice through case studies. A formal evaluation has been completed. Please see Appendix 1.

- All classroom assistants in KS2 and 3 will complete an adapted version of this in June 2012.
- Performance in writing across the curriculum in Year 7 was targeted and training was provided by Mike Haines. Please see Appendix 2.
- Professor David Hopkins has worked with senior leaders and teachers from all schools to develop the understanding of what makes consistently good teaching and learning experiences. He has worked closely with a small group of teachers and headteachers to trial the 'Theories of Actions' and various models of 'Instructional Rounds'.
- Professor Hopkins has carried out instructional rounds in 9 of our schools and more than 150 teachers have participated.

The work has been disseminated and guidance, illustrated with examples from Caerphilly teachers, has been shared. An evaluation of the training has been completed. Please see appendix 3.

- 3.2 In order to assess progress, in May 2011 all schools agreed to complete a standardised reading test (All Wales Reading Test). This data was collected centrally and collated. All pupils were banded A-E and interventions were allocated. This summer, the tests will be carried out again and the data will be analysed in order to assess the progress made and to allocate support.
- 3.3 In order to further secure the success of this strategy, progress has had a sharp focus within our Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention programme. In addition to the core termly visits, ESIS advisers carried out literacy reviews in the spring term.
- 3.4 In order to celebrate and further promote the strategy, schools have participated in a 'Literacy Olympics Week', which took place in May 2012. All learners were given opportunities to focus on different literacy tasks which were linked to an Olympic theme.
- 3.5 Phase Two of the strategy(2012-13) will focus on key stage 3, numeracy and further developing the links with families. Although quantitative data will not be available until July, 2012, early qualitative data indicates strongly that this sharply focused strategy has had a very positive impact on pupils' reading ages. What is already very evident is that headteachers and their staff are taking this challenge very seriously and are working tirelessly to address the skills' deficit, acutely aware that learners need this additional support in order to be successful in realising their ambitions. Some aspects of numeracy have also been implemented and evaluated. These include the Numeracy Toolkit and a training programme for data handling.
- 3.6 Many aspects of the ICT strategy, which forms part of the overarching Skills Strategy, have been implemented successfully. All primary schools have been trained on SIMS Assessment Manger and the LA tracker. The tracker enables greater degree of identification of vulnerable groups of learners (all data that is identified through the PLASC returns) and supports the embedding of good skills' teaching across the curriculum for learners of all ages and abilities.
- 3.7 The Teach Meet event (organised in conjunction with NGfL Cymru) was held in February 2012 and focused on how ICT had been used to raise the skill levels of all learners. 120 teachers from all phases took part in the event. The event was streamed live over the internet so teachers can watch the presentations at any time.
- 3.8 Following this successful event a range of twilight sessions have been held in the IT Training Room to allow teachers to learn new skills in the delivery of IT software and hardware.
- 3.9 A new IT Training Room has been created in Enterprise House that showcases examples of how IT has been used as a tool in our schools.

- 3.10 Through the ICT Implementation Strategy all but 1 of our schools have bought into the wi-fi solution offered by the LA. By December 2012 all of the schools will have wi-fi installed across their sites.
- 3.11 The IT Conference followed on from the Teach Meet event to showcase best practice in the use of ICT to facilitate and engage learners. Nearly all headteachers attended this successful event.
- 3.12 Visits have been facilitated with staff from Ystrad Mynach College to a number of Primary schools across the LA to share the best practice that exists.
- 3.13 A pilot project has been started for the SIMS Skills Tracking framework in one of our primary schools with the aim to roll this facility out to all primary schools in the next academic year. this should facilitate more effective tracking of skills acquisition and coverage.
- 3.14 All schools have access to a training package delivered by staff at ESIS and through the Corporate IT Services to develop their Moodle sites.
- 3.15 Examples of excellent practice in this area have been shared in the twilight sessions and also through regional HT meetings.
- 3.16 All Secondary schools have access to Partnership exchange which allow parental access to view pupils progress.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Successful implementation of the Skills Strategy will have positive implications for groups or individuals who fall under the categories identified in Section 6 of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. As noted already in this report, literacy issues and the underachievement of boys are areas being tackled for example, both of which have clear links to Equalities issues.
- 4.2 Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken on action plans in future to ensure that the monitoring of achievement of all children and young people (regardless of their individual circumstances and backgrounds) fully considers the range of Equalities issues as factors in levels of achievement.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All planned expenditure will be funded from within core budget and grants received.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific personnel implications

7. CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 As detailed below. All comments have been reflected in the report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members are asked to consider and note the report.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 Formal evaluation of Boys' Underachievement
Appendix 2 Evaluation of Yr 7 Writing Projects
Appendix 3 Evaluation of training provided by Professor David Hopkins