

**Renfrewshire Council
Scrutiny Board**

Early Intervention

APPROVED

**By Renfrewshire Council
2 February 2006**

Report 7: 2004/2005

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**Renfrewshire Council
Scrutiny Board**

Early Intervention

Approved by Renfrewshire Council: 2 February 2006

Convener: Councillor Terry Kelly (Labour)

Depute Convener: Councillor Nan Macgregor (Liberal Democrat)

Board Members:
Councillor Ronnie Burns (Labour)
Councillor John Hood (Labour)
Councillor Sam Mullin (Labour)

Lead Officer:
John Trainer
Area Manager (Renfrew)
Department of Social Work

Council Report

Review of the impact of the early intervention strategy on under achievement in primary 1 to primary 3

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Recommendations**
- 3. Witnesses**
- 4. Background to the review**
- 5. Consideration of the evidence provided**
- 6. National Test Data**
- 7. Best practice**
- 8. Conclusion**

Scrutiny Board

Report on the review of the impact of the early intervention strategy on under achievement in primary 1 to primary 3

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 February 2005 the Scrutiny Board agreed to include the review of the impact of the early intervention strategy put in place by education and leisure services to address under achievement in primary 1 to primary 3 as part of the annual programme of reviews for 2005/2006.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Board agreed the scope of the review as follows:
- (a) consideration of the main issues relating to early intervention,
 - (b) examine the developments and strategies implemented in relation to early intervention from 1997 to the present time,
 - (c) examine the evidence gathered from performance in the national test results at primary 3 and primary 4 over the period of the early intervention strategy and to examine the national test results in primary 6 and primary 7 in the later stages of the strategy implementation period,
 - (d) examine comparable information from other local authority areas and national Trends,
 - (e) review best practice identified within schools in Renfrewshire and from other council areas across Scotland, and
 - (f) agree an action plan which builds on existing good practice, a strategy for sharing best practice and identifies other areas for future development.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Board considered evidence from a range of staff from education and leisure services involved in the early intervention programme, heard evidence around national test results and considered information from other local authorities. It was hoped that witnesses from other local authorities would attend and present their evidence however this was not possible so information was passed to Board Members for consideration.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Council is asked to:

- (a) note the findings of the review as set out in this report,

- (b) leisure services maintaining this team to ensure that the staff development and training programme and the development of new teaching materials remains available to schools,
- (d) instructs education and leisure services to considers how best the gains in attainment achieved are maintained for children as they pass through the upper primary classes,
- (e) instructs education and leisure to explore how staff tutor time can be made available for the upper school to ensure that programmes to maintain improved attainment are developed and implemented,
- (f) note that children are now supported in developing the core skills to allow them to achieve their full potential in education and instructs education and leisure services to investigate the support made available for children transferring from the primary sector to the secondary sector with the aim to ensure that children are supported at the right level to allow them to continue to use the skills they develop in primary and build on these to achieve their potential in secondary Education,
- (g) instructs education and leisure to review the supports available for pupils at all levels of the primary sector and secondary sector to ensure that gains as a consequence of early intervention have a positive impact on attainment in relation to performance in standard and highers grades, and
- (h) instructs the director of education and leisure services to develop an action plan over the next 12 months showing how it will deliver the recommendations contained within this report.

3. Witnesses

3.1 The Scrutiny Board met to consider evidence in this review on three occasions hearing evidence from the following:

Senior Advisors Curriculum and Performance Management,

Principal Psychologist,

Head Teachers at Craigielea Primary, St. David's Primary,

EIS Negotiating Secretary,

Staff Tutors Early Intervention Literacy and Numeracy, Special Educational Needs and Early Years, and Head of Centre at Johnstone Nursery.

3.2 The Scrutiny Board is grateful to the witnesses for the time taken by them in preparing for and submitting their evidence for this review. The Board wishes to acknowledge the helpful contribution to the review from those who

presented evidence and acknowledge the enthusiasm demonstrated by all of the witnesses in relation to their work and contribution to the education of children across Renfrewshire .

- 3.3 This report attempts to summarise the evidence presented to the Scrutiny Board and makes the links from the evidence to the recommendations made in paragraphs 8.9 to 8.14.

4. Background to the review

- 4.1 In August 1997 the council's education committee considered and approved the recommendations contained in a report entitled "Early Intervention: Raising Standards in Primary Schools". The committee noted that the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department had agreed to provide the council with a grant of £255,100 per year for a three year period to assist in the development of a programme of early intervention with children in primary school to address the issue of under achievement in the core skills required to allow children to develop their full potential in education.
- 4.2 During 1998 the Scottish Executive announced that the funding available for early intervention programmes would be extended for a further two years allowing education authorities to develop a five year programme. At the same time as the announcement of the programme extension the Scottish Executive announced additional funding would also be made available from the financial year 1999-2000. In Renfrewshire the additional funding amounted to £115,649 .
- 4 From 2000-2001 the funding available to Renfrewshire for early intervention in primary schools was £447,759 per annum. The specific funding for early intervention was moved from project based funding to mainlined funding in 2002-2003.
- 4.4 Renfrewshire's early intervention programme commenced in the school session 997-1998 and involved 23 of the 52 primary schools. The initial programme was delivered in the Priority Partnership Areas. The early intervention programme was extended to involve all primary schools within Renfrewshire in the school session 1998-1999.
- 4.5 The Scrutiny Board review considered the development of the early intervention policy, how early intervention was delivered within Renfrewshire, the staff development programme for teachers and the services offered to children in schools and nurseries. The review also looked at practice in other local authorities. The review concluded with consideration of the value of the programme for Renfrewshire's children.

5. Consideration of the evidence provided

5.1 Senior Advisor (Curriculum)

- 5.1.1 The Scrutiny Board heard evidence from the Senior Advisor (Curriculum) who provided the early intervention programme in Renfrewshire in a national context. She advised the Board that Renfrewshire's early intervention programme was introduced in 1997 as a response to the Scottish Executive's initiative aimed at raising literacy standards in primary 1 and 2. The programme initially focussed on reading and writing skills and was funded for a three year period. The Board was advised that the programme was initially established in 23 primary school in Priority Partnership Areas within Renfrewshire using funding made available from the Scottish Executive.
- 5.1.2 The Senior Advisor (Curriculum) advised that the programme was extended to all primary schools across Renfrewshire in 1998 when additional funding was made available by the Scottish Executive. The additional funding allowed the programme to extend from the initial focus on literacy skills to include a focus on numeracy skills. In addition the Board was advised that the Scottish Executive announced the early intervention programme was being extended from three to five years. In 1998 one pre-5 centre was linked into the early intervention programme and in 1999 it was extended to include all pre-5 centres.
- 5.1.3 The Board was advised that the programme of early intervention in Renfrewshire commenced with an assessment to establish the starting level for all children in primary 1 and primary 2 of the participating schools. This information was used to inform the evaluation of how successful the early intervention programme was in improving the children's skills in reading and writing. Further assessments were carried out on the initial participants on the early intervention programme in primary 3, 4 and 5.
- 5.1.4 The Board was advised that additional teaching staffing was provided to each of the participating schools to allow the development of teaching approaches, liaison with parents and co-ordinating the programmes within each school. In addition nursery nurses were deployed in primary 1 and primary 2 classes to assist children who had additional nurturing needs, assist children to settle in primary school and to build on the children's pre-5 experiences. In addition this allowed the transfer of information from the pre-5 service to the primary schools to be improved resulting in better outcomes for children around the planning of their learning support.
- 5.1.5 The Senior Advisor (Curriculum) informed the Board that the Renfrewshire approach to early intervention included a widespread programme of staff development for teachers and nursery staff. These programmes focussed on reading, writing and numeracy skills, on targeting boys for additional support and on managing behaviour to improve the learning environment. A staff tutor was appointed to support the programme and develop best practice across the authority. An additional staff tutor was appointed to assist staff in working

with children with special educational needs. A range of programme material was developed for use with children in school. In addition supports were developed for parents, including material they could use in the family home to support their child's learning.

5.1.6 The Senior Advisor (Curriculum) informed the Scrutiny Board that all schools continue to have additional resources to allow the early intervention programme to be delivered, that staff have access to continual professional development time, access to materials and support for working with parents in maintaining the children's learning in the family home. She concluded her evidence by advising the Board that the reports back from schools indicate that the impact of the early intervention programme has been positive, that schools are reporting increased pace of learning in the upper primary school, that resources have been developed for use in schools and the family home and that partnership working with parents is a key element of the early intervention strategy.

5.2 Senior Advisor (Performance Management)

5.2.1 The Senior Advisor (Performance Management) advised the Board of the attainment data available to consider the impact of early intervention on children's education performance. He explained the methodology used to examine performance around the early intervention programme. He then discussed difficulties in making direct links between the improved attainment and any individual aspect of the early intervention programme.

5.2.2 The Senior Advisor (Performance Management) made the point to the Scrutiny Board that the starting point for improved attainment is good teaching. He indicated therefore that a central plank of the Renfrewshire approach to early intervention was the continual professional development support offered to staff in schools. This support includes the development of teaching and learning tools for the use by classroom teachers with children and their parents.

5.2.3 The Senior Advisor (Performance Management) informed the Board of the process used to gather statistical information on the performance of children involved in the early intervention programme during the school sessions 1999/2000 to 2003/2004. The testing process for children in the original 23 schools considered their attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. The testing and tracking process meant that the same children were reviewed at primary 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 stages.

5.2.4 The Senior Advisor (Performance Management) advised the Board that the results from the assessment and review of attainment showed that against the schools not involved in the initial programme the children involved in the programme made significant progress in reducing the gap. The gap between attainment in all three areas of intervention was reduced for children involved in the early intervention programme from the outset. He confirmed that the roll out of the programme had benefited all children but that the children in the initial areas continued to close the gap.

5.2.5 The Senior Advisor (Performance Management) closed his evidence by informing the Board that the national test results for children in Renfrewshire show good progress being made for all children and are better than the national average Performance.

5.3 Principal Psychologist

5.3.1 The Principal Psychologist in evidence advised the Board that Renfrewshire has robust standards for monitoring the progress of children in terms of their educational attainment. He indicated the general approach to support for learning across Renfrewshire whereby a phased intervention process is used. This approach is used in all of the primary schools within Renfrewshire to identify children who require additional support over an above that offered to all children.

5.3.2 The Board was advised that the initiatives used across Renfrewshire's primary schools included the early intervention programme, the early intervention screening project, the pre-5 transfer of information process and the performance indicators in the pilot primary schools. The Principal Psychologist advised the Board of the screening approach used to identify learning needs for children, discussed the baseline assessment data from the original pilot schools and the findings from the first and second evaluations.

5.3.3 The Principal Psychologist indicated that the baseline for children in the first 23 schools was lower than that for children in the other primary schools across Renfrewshire. He indicated that Psychological Services were involved in devising an assessment and evaluation framework as none was available on a national basis. One area of significant delay identified in the first group of primary schools was in the language skills of the children assessed. He indicated that in the baseline studies girls performed better than boys.

5.3.4 The Principal Psychologist concluded his evidence by advising that the initial schools participating in the programme narrowed the gap between them and other schools not involved, that the gaps between schools did not widen when the programme was extended, that all children benefited from the early intervention programme, that more early and intensive intervention results in more progress for the children involved and that staff involved in the programme are better skilled and more confident than prior to the programme being introduced.

5.4 Head Teachers, Craigielea Primary and St. David's Primary

5.4.1 The Scrutiny Board heard evidence from the Head Teachers at Craigielea and St. David's Primary Schools. The Board was provided with a view from schools of how the early intervention programme works on the ground and the impact it is having for children.

5.4.2 The Head Teacher from Craigielea Primary discussed the impact of the early intervention programme on staff development including a raised awareness and implementation of strategies for improved teaching and learning, more accessible resources for staff to use with children, the impact of the use of phonological awareness, the use of a spelling framework, accelerated mathematics programme, story packs, maths games, the framework for writing and the increased parental involvement in their children's learning. She concluded her evidence by advising the Board that the view of front line teachers is that the early intervention programme has had a positive impact on children's learning and attainment. This is evident she reports later in the primary sector where children now have better understanding of the core skills of reading, writing and numeracy making the teaching move at a quicker pace.

5.4.3 The Head Teacher from St. David's Primary indicated that she agreed with the evidence provided by the Head Teacher from Craigielea. She spoke of the experience in her own school by focussing on the impact on staff, skills enhancement for teachers, the development and training support, the importance of the additional teaching time and the role of the nursery nurses, the role played by the area family support team, the new and innovative teaching methods, the increased pace of learning in the upper primary sector, the importance of parental involvement and the increased use and availability of resources for use with children to increase their core skills. She concluded her evidence by speaking of the increased confidence of children, the improved skills in reading, writing and mathematics and the need to ensure that teaching in the upper primary classes continues to embrace the enthusiasm of the children they are responsible for.

5.5 E.I.S. Negotiating Secretary

5.5.1 The E.I.S. Negotiating Secretary indicated support for the early intervention programme as developed within Renfrewshire, the need for good quality research into the effectiveness of early intervention, the impact that good and well supported teachers make to positive outcomes in terms of children's learning, research showing the gap between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged children, indicated his belief that the most able pupils benefited more from early intervention and discussed two projects undertaken in relation to early intervention in the United States. He concluded his evidence by stating that the E.I.S believe that excessive workload demands on teacher and excessive burdens around teachers conducting pupil assessments mitigate against children succeeding whilst believing that class size reductions will make a considerable impact on the educational achievements for all children.

5.6 Staff Tutors Early Intervention Literacy and Numeracy, Special Educational Needs and Early Years

5.6.1 Each of the Staff Tutors commenced their evidence by explaining their role in supporting staff in schools and nurseries around the early intervention programme. The evidence provided by the staff tutors was consistent around how schools access support and resources, the importance of in-service

support programmes, the provision of teaching materials, the role of continued professional development, the support for individual programmes for children and the positive impact that early intervention is having for children across Renfrewshire. As with other witness the Staff Tutors highlighted the importance of good links with parents in maintaining the learning of their children.

5.7 Head of Centre, Johnstone Nursery

5.7.1 The Head of Centre at Johnstone Nursery commenced her evidence by outlining her role as head of centre, emphasising the role of the pre-5 sector in preparing children to learn, the importance of learning through play, the work with parents, the provision of workshops to support parents in assisting their children to learn, establishing fun methods of engaging children, assisting children to develop skills through fun activities and highlighted the difficulties some children bring to nursery around developmental delay. She concluded her evidence by advising the Board of the importance of the contribution made to the early intervention programme by the pre-5 sector, the links between pre-5 and primary schools, the strong links between centres and parents, the staff development programme and the extensive use of play materials to ensure children entering primary are well prepared to learn the essential skills in literacy and numeracy.

5.8 Other authorities

5.8.1 The initial plan to invite representatives from other authorities was not able to be arranged. Other authorities were contacted and provided information in relation to their approach to early intervention. Glasgow City, West Dunbartonshire and Clackmannanshire were all asked to provide information on the approach to early intervention adopted by their authority. The level of consistency around evidence from these authorities was high. All authorities spoke of the importance of early intervention in raising achievement for children, the role of staff development was seen as essential, as was the creation of a nurturing environment within schools and the links between the school and the parents was also highlighted as essential to an effective early intervention programme and strategy.

6. National Test Data

6.1 No substantial research programme has been carried out to look at the effectiveness of the early intervention programmes in use across Scotland. The national test data for children involved in the 5 -14 curriculum is able to demonstrate the effectiveness of learning outcomes for children across Scotland. The early intervention programme is considered to have had a positive impact on Renfrewshire' children's performance in relation to the national testing.

6.2 The information contained in table 1 is for information in relation to the national test performance in reading by children across Renfrewshire and compares this to the national average in 1998/99, 2001/02 and 2003/04. Table 2 shows the

comparative information for writing and table 3 shows the information for Mathematics.

Table 1 - Reading

		1998/99	2001/02	2003/04
% of P2 children at Level A or above	Renfrewshire	43.7	62.2	48.4
	National	36.6	50.8	45.9
% of P3 children at Level A or above	Renfrewshire	81.6	89.8	88.9
	National	80.6	87.4	85.5
% of P5 children at Level B or above	Renfrewshire	79.7	92.2	95.0
	National	86.3	91.7	91.9
% of P7 children at Level D or above	Renfrewshire	58.8	73.3	76.9
	National	63.9	72.0	74.4

Table 2 - Writing

		1998/99	2001/02	2003/04
% of P2 children at level A or above	Renfrewshire	13.5	41.9	39.8
	National	16.9	38.5	42.1
% of P3 children at level A or above	Renfrewshire	71.5	85.8	85.6
	National	70.3	84.6	85.4
% of P5 children at level B or above	Renfrewshire	72.3	88.3	89.4
	National	78.6	87.6	88.6
% of P7 children at level D or above	Renfrewshire	47.3	59.6	61.4
	National	47.4	59.2	60.6

Table 3 Mathematics

		1998/99	2001/02	2003/04
% of P2 children at level A or above	Renfrewshire	73.0	84.8	81.8
	National	66.4	75.1	78.9
% of P3 children at level A or above	Renfrewshire	89.4	97.8	97.0
	National	92.5	95.1	95.9
% of P5 children at level B or above	Renfrewshire	83.1	94.8	95.7
	National	88.2	91.7	92.7
% of P7 children at level D or above	Renfrewshire	56.1	66.2	71.6
	National	63.4	68.5	69.7

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6.3 The information contained within the above tables shows that Renfrewshire's children in 1998/99 were operating at around the national average in the three areas in which the early intervention programme focussed. In some areas and stages our performance was below the national average and in others it was above the national average. By 2003/04, the latest available figures, Renfrewshire's children were performing in all but one area and stage (percentage of children at level A in writing) at above the national average. Whilst this change is not all relate to the impact of the early intervention programme the staff working in schools believe it is a major contributory factor.

7. Best Practice

7.1 The evidence heard by the Scrutiny Board heard that the following areas are considered best practice:

Staff development and support programme

The use of phonological awareness including the "learning to listen" programme

Parent Matters and Parents as Educators

The accelerated mathematics programme

The development of story packs and maths games

The nurturing environment contributed to by the deployment of nursery nurses in primary 1 and primary 2

The framework for writing (picked up by other authorities)

The early screening initiative

The role of the staff tutors in providing support and developing teaching materials and techniques.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The Scrutiny Board found that the early intervention programme in place across Renfrewshire has a great deal of credibility and confidence amongst the staff working in primary schools. The approach to early intervention now ensures that children receive support in developing learning skills at nursery. As with the staff in the primary sector the staff in the pre-5 sector hold the early intervention programme in high regard.

8.2 The involvement of parents and carers is seen as essential in ensuring that the early intervention techniques used in schools and nurseries are maintained and supported in the child's home. Parents have received briefings in how the techniques should be used and have access to tools to allow them to continue to support their child's learning, e.g. story bags and maths games.

- 8.3 Staff across the primary sector and the pre-5 sector are working together in a concentrated effort to improve the core skills for children in reading, writing and mathematics. These efforts are supported by the staff tutors teams.
- 8.4 The role of the staff tutors is considered as essential in ensuring that staff in schools and nurseries are able to access training and development programmes, have access to the best materials to provide lessons for children and that staff and parents are supported to work together to improve the outcomes for Renfrewshire's children.
- 8.5 Children in Renfrewshire appear to be benefiting from the early intervention programme as demonstrated in the national test results contained in section 6 of this report. In 1998/99 the first year the figures were available Renfrewshire's children were close to the average performance level across Scotland. The test results for 2003/04 show that in all stages and skill areas with the exception of writing at primary 2 Renfrewshire's children are now performing above the national average.
- 8.6 Renfrewshire's approach which involves both a nurturing approach and the concentration of developing the core skills in literacy and numeracy is consistent with practice in other local authorities. This approach is considered by the Scrutiny Board to meet the needs of children of all levels and ability within Renfrewshire.
- 8.7 The early intervention programme used across Renfrewshire has resulted in improved attainment for all children. In the children who were part of the initial programme significant progress was made in closing the gap between them and children in schools which were not participating. When the other schools were provided with access to the programme of early intervention their pupils achieved improved attainment but did not widen the gap over the children from the initial programme.
- 8.8 The Scrutiny Board considers that the programme of early intervention has been of benefit for children across Renfrewshire and wish to acknowledge the contribution of all staff involved in the programme and also the support of parents in ensuring that children are supported to maintain their learning in the family home.

