

**REPORT TO:** Children Young People and Families Policy Performance Board

**DATE:** 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Children and Economy

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Early Years Review

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the school performance data for early years in Halton, identifies the challenges the borough faces and describes the actions to be taken to address to raise standards. It also provides details on the progress the borough is making in terms of the national child measurement programme and similarly the challenges faced in the early years.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

2.1 Members support the proposed approach to improving standards in early years.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 There were 1446 children in the reception cohort in 2014 and 33% of this cohort was identified as being eligible for free school meals.

3.2 A Good Level of Development (GLD) is the indicator of achievement at the end of the reception year and is based upon the achievement of expected levels in Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, Communication and Language, Literacy and Maths.

3.3 In Halton 46% of children achieved a Good Level of Development. Although this was a 9% increase on 2013 outcomes, the national outcome was 60%. Halton was therefore ranked joint 150 out of 152 for this indicator. The percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the 30% most deprived national areas is 53% and in Halton 40%. Further analysis shows:

- GLD Girls in Halton is 52% National is 69%
- GLD Boys in Halton is 39% National is 52%

Of the 17 Early Learning Goals Halton's strongest aspects were children achieved at least expected were health and self-care 86%, moving and handling 85% and technology 82%. The weakest aspects were writing 48%, reading 40%, numbers 38% and shape, space and measure 33%.

- 3.4 Although GLD is a term that refers to “readiness for school”, this assessment is carried out as formative observation throughout the reception year in school and final summative judgements are made at the end of the summer term in reception class. Whilst tracking throughout Early Years settings is an important part of the picture, it is the reception teachers who make the EYFS statutory assessment judgements.
- 3.5 Reception teachers are supported throughout the year with moderation training and networking events. Since the last set of results, briefings have been held with headteachers to share the Halton EYFS data and reinforce the need for using pupil tracking to inform planning and opportunities throughout the year, so that any gaps are continually reviewed to meet children’s needs.
- 3.6 An analysis of Halton’s results has identified that results in individual areas of learning have increased, however, it is primarily the areas of numeracy and literacy where children are falling below expectation.
- 3.7 In 2014 66% of Halton’s Year 1 children were assessed as “Working at” against a national figure of 74%. The Halton result was a 3% increase and a 12% increase on 2012 outcomes. The national increase over the 3 year period was 16%. Despite this increase Halton again has the second lowest proportion of children meeting the expected standard in phonic decoding nationally. As a result the authority has been required to submit to the DfE and Ofsted our plans for raising standards in phonics and reading.
- 3.8 Although progress has been made in reducing levels of excess weight (overweight and obese) in year 6 children from 36.5% in 2012/13 to 33.7% in 2013/14 it is lower than the North West average and only slightly higher than the England value. The Halton percentage was also the lowest in Merseyside. Levels of excess weight have increased in reception aged children from 25.1% in 2012/13 to 29.5% in 2013/14.

#### **4.0 FOCUS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 4.1 In the report to PPB “Summary of Educational Attainment and Progress 2014” (October 2014) members were given a details of the planned action that would be undertaken as part of Halton’s Early Years Strategy in order to raise standards in early years. Detailed below are some of the key areas of work which have been undertaken since the last report:
- EYFS data analysis was shared with reception teachers. A briefing session was delivered to headteachers in the Autumn term, regarding good level of development and using data throughout the year to inform gaps or areas of learning to focus upon.
  - Reception teacher cluster networks have been established. Achieving a Good level of development, writing, reading and number forms the basis of these meetings and this will be reviewed throughout the year.
  - New to reception briefings are going to be established at the start of the new academic year to train and provide support for new to reception teachers in

EYFS curriculum, assessment, moderation and good level of development judgements and curriculum planning.

- In September a cluster network is being established for nursery schools and nursery classes, so that they can plan for how they are preparing children to be able to reach GLD by the end of reception.
- A Good Level of Development (GLD) working group has recently been established working with 16 primary/ infant schools. This group will analyse tracking data throughout the year and use to inform interventions in the aim to increase the GLD in schools and across Halton LA. The results in July will be shared with all schools and will inform future training/working groups and potentially GLD tracking programme for all schools in September.
- Teaching schools have worked with Warrington LA and have been successful in gaining funding for £60,000 to be spent across Halton and St. Helen's to improve EY quality provision, particularly focusing upon outcomes for vulnerable children in literacy and numeracy. Warrington has appointed a specialist teacher who will work with Halton settings on this project work, following targeted work provided by Halton EY specialists. Maths and Literacy training for this project is beginning in May 2015 targeting all practitioners and teachers who work with 3 and 4 year olds.
- Two Early Years Conferences took place in Spring term (one for reception teachers and the other for PVI settings), focusing on provocative learning environments and developing literacy skills with a particular focus upon writing. These were well attended and very positive feedback was received from the delegates. Some settings are using their additional 2 year funding allocation to work with the key note speaker on developing literacy within their settings.
- Two trips to Early Excellence were organised in spring term (1 for reception teachers and another for PVI). Bespoke training was delivered focusing upon the teaching of phonics and time was also spent exploring Early Years environments to support learning opportunities across the EYFS.
- During summer term 2015, a phonics review group will be established to explore the current practice, skills and identification of effective strategies to raise the quality of phonics teaching and improve phonic outcomes in EY and KS1. This will also inform future training/support networks.
- Some two year old funding has been allocated to support two year old training, so that two year old children are supported with their development and any risk of delay identified and acted upon at an early stage.
- Education and health are working closely together to develop an integrated two year old progress check. A two year old support panel is being established in May 2015, so that multi agency professionals can coordinate support for any children not reaching their developmental milestones.

- Many children have been identified with speech and language delay which in turn has an impact on later development in reading and writing. Following a joint strategic needs analysis, Halton have devised a new Speech and Language specification introducing a focus on an Early Years agreement; an Early identification contract and a SEN contract. These contracts will come into effect from July 2015 and will have a significant level of increased support for children, families/carers and practitioners working with Early Years children.

4.2 A piece of action research will be undertaken over the summer term and early autumn. The aim of the research is to:

- support us to understand why Halton's performance in GLD is so low compared to other LAs
- identify and consider examples of good practice and, as a result of the research recommendation, develop a range of actions which will have an immediate impact on early years performance and also actions to secure longer term impact.

4.3 Finally the speech and language service specification has been significantly revised and strengthened. There are now three separate contracts with one of the contracts specifically targeted to address early years. The new contract arrangements are scheduled to commence in July 2015.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Educational attainment is key to the future life chances of children and young people in Halton.

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Educational attainment of children and young people will have a significant impact on future employment, learning and skills of Halton's population.

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

Child Development is one of the five key priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board in Halton.

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

N/A

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 It is essential that progress is made to improve early years performance and has been recognised as a key priority by the Children's Trust, Health and

Wellbeing Board and LSCB. Both OFSTED and the DFE have also contacted the authority to raise their concerns. It is therefore essential that we understand why are performance is lower than others and what we can do to accelerate the rate of progress as despite the progress made over the last few years in the borough outcomes for children are well below those in other similar authorities.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 Improving the outcomes in early years will contribute towards closing the gap for our most vulnerable children.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Summary of Educational Attainment and Progress 2014	Halton Borough Council Website	Gill Bennett -Divisional Manager - Education