

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001

EXCELLENCE FUND FOR SCHOOLS : ANNUAL REPORT

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To inform Members of the contents of the annual report on the Excellence Fund for Schools Core programmes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** As part of the conditions for the grant for the Excellence Fund for Schools Core Programmes, the Authority was required to submit a report to the Scottish Executive by 31 July.
- 2.2** A report has been compiled and sent to the Scottish Executive. A copy of this document is available at the Members' information point.

3. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

- 3.1** Members will recall that there are ten sub-programmes within the Excellence Fund Core Programme. These are:

1. Alternatives to Exclusion
2. Study Support
3. Early Intervention
4. Supporting Parents
5. Classroom Assistants
6. Class Size Reduction
7. Support for Teachers
8. Higher Still
9. National Grid for Learning
10. Inclusion

- 3.2** The original Improvement Plans for each of the Core Programmes of the Excellence Fund, submitted by the Director in January 1999, provided a context for the priorities for development that the authority wished to address over the first and subsequent years of the programme.

Existing provision was highlighted within the Plans, and where pilot programmes were already in operation, the extent of progress was documented. This baseline data was invaluable in tracking continuous improvement over the following year.

Authority objectives were designed to reflect the needs and circumstances prevailing within East Ayrshire and, at the same time, to allow the authority to overtake the national objectives for each of the Core Programmes.

Key Officers within the authority have responsibility for delivering these objectives and strict budget and quality monitoring has operated throughout the programme.

In the first year of funding, much time was spent developing ownership by schools of the objectives set out in the original Improvement Plans.

In this, the second year of the programme, the impact of the Excellence Fund within the authority has been significant. Challenging targets have been overtaken in all of the Core Programmes. Improvement Plans, where necessary, were recast for year two in the light of the first year's experience and ever more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation systems have been put in place to reflect the continuous improvement agenda in the classrooms and schools in East Ayrshire.

3.3 Progress in Sub Programmes.

3.3.1 Alternatives to Exclusion

The key objectives of this programme are (1) to provide resources to maintain pupils at risk of exclusion in education, (2) to reduce exclusions from school and (3) to provide alternative education to pupils on long term exclusion.

Since the beginning of the programme we have developed a number of important structures and strategies to achieve our objectives. There now exists within East Ayrshire a policy and planning group chaired by the Director which oversees our inclusive agenda, a well established system of multi agency community assessment teams in every school cluster, a network of support bases for pupils experiencing most difficulty, ongoing contracts with two vocational training agencies which develop alternative programmes for young people, a well established framework for outdoor educational opportunities and a pilot programme "Framework for Intervention" introduced from Birmingham to assist classroom teachers with behavioural management.

3.3.2 Study Support

Easter schools in the secondary sector have concentrated mainly on examination revision, but learning and leisure activities in Primary and Special schools have also been a feature of Easter and Summer provision. Summer schools provide tutoring in dance, instrumental tuition, Gaelic, Philosophy, singing, art and design, video and a wide variety of outdoor activities and visits. Specialist schemes such as the Summer Academy at Strathclyde caters for 80 S3 students to increase aspirations to and experience in Higher Education.

East Ayrshire's participation in the GOALS initiative (Greater Opportunity of Access and Learning with Schools) has resulted in two clusters, Auchinleck Academy and Doon Academy joining the programme. Activities include Summer Academy at Strathclyde, Artists and Designers in Education, campus visits, junior university, parents sessions, revision sessions, Saturday University, schools liaison, Summer Schools, top-up programme and University Experience. These programmes benefit pupils from Primary 6 to Secondary 7.

Other projects include after school clubs, breakfast clubs, sporting cultural and leisure activities at appropriate times of the year. Residential and holiday activities have greatly expanded and enhanced educational provision throughout the service.

3.3.2 Early Intervention

All schools and nurseries within East Ayrshire have been active in the implementation of Early Intervention strategies. The Early Intervention Initiative has been successful in providing significant improvement in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics across the authority. This is due largely to the transfer of assessment data from nursery to primary school, the training programme for staff working with children in nurseries and early stages of primary, and the Early Intervention team supporting specific classroom organisation and methodology from primaries 1 to 3. The rolling programme of staff development will continue to progress Early Intervention strategies into Primary 3 and beyond, and resources will support the extension of Early Intervention in literacy and numeracy within these stages.

Children who are considered to be educationally 'at risk' are identified by the nursery establishments and appropriate action to support them is taken by primary schools.

The involvement of parents continues to increase, with over 2000 parents taking part in their children's education within schools in a variety of projects, workshops and meetings. Further projects for next session are designed to extend further family involvement in children's learning.

3.3.3 Supporting Parents

In session 2000/2001 the main objectives of the Supporting Parents programme have been met. The number of Home Link workers has been increased to four, three in Kilmarnock area and one in Cumnock. The range of activities and support to parents has been extended and this has resulted in an increase in numbers attending activities and workshops organised during school term, and holiday breaks. The number of home visits carried out by the Home Link and Support Workers has increased considerably this session. A number of forums and focus groups have been established for parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs. The initial forum attracted approximately 100 parents and the subsequent four area forums were attended on average by 20 parents.

3.3.4 Classroom Assistants

The number of classroom assistants employed within the authority will have risen to 120 FTE by August 2001. Phase 1 classroom assistants (20) have successfully completed the Professional Development Award for Classroom Assistants. In the coming session all classroom assistants will be trained to use the internet and e-mail in order to support pupils and to network with each other. The Wyse Group will be undertaking training of potential classroom assistants for East Ayrshire.

Examination of the 2000-2001 national test results, added to the 1999-2000 results, will be used to ascertain how levels of attainment have risen since classroom assistants have been appointed.

3.3.5 Class Size Reduction

Ten class size reduction teachers have been employed to enable the authority to achieve the key objective that all primary one, two and three classes have no more than 30 pupils. Where there have been accommodation difficulties the primary one intake has been capped at 30. As some of the class size reduction teachers are probationers, mentors have been identified. Work has also been required to ensure class size reduction teachers are regarded as equal partners with the same roles and responsibilities as all other teachers in the school.

Examination of 1999-2000 national test results showed that in schools where there was a class size reduction teacher there was a significant improvement in attainment.

3.3.6 Support for Teachers

- Probationer and Returning Teachers

Support for probationers and returning teachers, including teachers on supply, has concentrated on finalising the research project on probationer support, developing a tailor-made in-service programme based on a needs analysis conducted at previous in-service meetings, and developing a website jointly with South Ayrshire Council. A programme of eight half-day courses was arranged for the week before the new school session began. The pre-service programme was supplemented by a series of twilight courses. Topics dealt with included employment rights, classroom management, Early Intervention, special needs, preparation for interview, parents' evenings, reporting to parents, and union membership. A Website designed by advisory personnel from East and South Ayrshire and by probationers and returning teachers will be ready to launch in August at the planned in-service meetings. The website will provide useful information and links for new and returning teachers and will include local authority policies and a support forum for teachers.

- Advanced Skills

The philosophy adopted within the authority was to provide a programme of ever more sophisticated and challenging opportunities related to all aspects of learning and teaching for targeted groups of experienced teachers. The programme was designed to extend and develop the skills and expertise of staff. During session 2000/2001, significant progress was made in the provision of Advanced Skills Training, most importantly in the areas of: Thinking Skills, Reaching and Teaching Boys, From Homework to Home Learning.

In addition, the authority took part, as a pilot in the Critical Skills Programme. Jointly with schools, the authority supported four members of staff in the Level 1 CSP Training Institute. One member of staff has progressed to Level 2 Training and will act as a trainer for colleagues within her school and elsewhere within the authority. Training of staff in these areas has been provided by nationally and internationally respected professionals through the in-service provision and by direct consultation to staff in schools and in cluster groups.

- Industry and Enterprise Awareness for Teachers and Schools (IEATS)

This element of the Core Programme was extremely slow to develop. Publicity materials produced by the National Centre for Education for Work and Enterprise, marketing the IEATS programme to schools was endorsed by the authority. Opportunities to share experiences by those who had taken part in the programme were a feature of the marketing exercise. During Session 2000/2001, a total of 17 members of staff have taken part in the programme, ranging from full 5-day placements in major industries/institutions to shorter one, two and three-day experiences in local companies linked to training opportunities.

- Scottish Qualification for Headship

The Scottish Qualification for Headship is now a well-established element of Continuous Professional Development for senior managers in all sectors within the Education Department. The combination of off-site taught days and in-school project development and reporting provides an effective balance between the academic and practitioner dimension of teaching and learning.

Session 2000-2001 is the second year of this particular programme. To date, ten senior managers have embarked on the course with two successfully completing the programme through an accelerated route for those most experienced staff. The remaining candidates are at various stages throughout the 4 unit programme.

In session 2001-2002 a further 6 candidates representing special, primary and secondary sectors were successful in gaining entry to this prestigious staff development programme.

- 5-14

In session 2000-2001 the main objectives of the Support for Teachers programme have been met. Teachers have been provided with guidance on a range of teaching approaches in Mathematics and Writing and further guidance on planning in these curricular areas have brought about increased pace and progression in learning. The introduction of the revised national guidelines in Environmental Studies necessitated an extensive review of this curricular area and, to this end, working groups have been established to produce guidance to all East Ayrshire schools on the delivery of Science and Technology 5-14. Exemplar programmes of study have been produced and will be distributed to schools at the start of the new session.

3.3.7 Higher Still

Higher Still has now completed its second year of implementation in all secondary schools, with a high uptake of courses and units at Higher, Intermediate 1 and 2, and appropriate uptake of Access courses and units in Special Schools. Material from Higher Still Development Unit and National Assessment Bank have supported schools' efforts to provide a wide range of courses. Many schools have started Advanced Higher in those subjects where sufficient course material is available, and many are beginning to investigate Intermediate 1 courses in S3 and S4 where these courses might offer better provision for pupils.

3.3.8 National Grid for Learning

Authority schools have overtaken or are rapidly approaching the national targets in relation to computer: pupil ratios (1:5 in Secondary, 1:8 in Primary); access to Internet (all Secondary, Primary and Special); and e-mail (available to all pupils in Special, Primary and Secondary). Access in Primary and Special schools to Internet and e-mail is by an ISDN connection; in Secondary, schools have already moved to broadband connection.

Hardware provision in Special and Pre-five is similar to levels in Primary. Work begun in June 2001 and still ongoing should allow pre-five establishments access to Internet and e-mail by mid September 2001.

There are now 5 technical staff directly dedicated to supporting ICT in schools, as well as significant general support provided by the corporate IT department.

3.3.9 Inclusion

In terms of meeting the objectives of the Inclusion programme there has been an increase in the number of SEN auxiliaries available to support pupils with Special Educational Needs in all sectors, special, primary, secondary and pre-five. Disabled access has been improved and some minor adaptations have

been made in a number of mainstream schools to allow pupils with physical disabilities to move around more easily and safely. Additional specialist equipment e.g. mobile hoists have been purchased to meet the requirements of moving and handling regulations and to ensure the safety of pupils. A number of laptop computers and software have been purchased and distributed to pupils with special needs to improve access to the curriculum.

4. POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Nil

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational & Social Services

24 July 2001
GRS/SB

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The Excellence Fund for Schools
Core Programme
Education Action Plans
Specialist Provision in Schools | Education Committee - 28 January 1999 |
| 2. The Excellence Fund for Schools : Year 2 | Education Committee - 16 March 2000 |
| 3. The Excellence Fund for Schools : Year 3 | Education Committee - 3 April 2001 |

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools, Tel: (01563) 576089.

AGENDA