

**ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) WORKING GROUP
8 MARCH 2011
(4:30 pm to 5:30 pm)**

Present: Councillors Mrs McCracken (Lead Member)

In attendance: Rosanna Border, Senior Adviser Inclusion and Diversity, Learning & Achievement
Kashif Nawaz, EAL & Diversity Team Leader
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Scrutiny), Chief Executive's Office

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Notes

The notes of the last meeting of the Working Group, held on 30 November 2009, were received.

3. English as an Additional Language (EAL) Update

The report of the Working Group's past review of EAL had included a recommendation to the effect that it would continue to have an involvement with the EAL & Diversity Team (the Team) to monitor its progress and provide support and assistance where necessary. As some time had elapsed since the Working Group's last update meeting with the Senior Adviser and the Team Leader, held on 30 November 2009, this meeting took place to enable Members to receive a final update in respect of EAL in the Borough's schools and the activities of the Team before concluding its work in this area for the foreseeable future.

The Senior Adviser stated that the profile of EAL had been raised significantly over the past decade and that the service had grown and developed over that time. This included embracing the traveller service. The Team liaised closely with the police and with housing, enforcement and health services to assist in this area through the provision of support, health services, temporary school places, water and refuse sacks. A leaving date and clear up arrangements were agreed with roadside families. At the time of the meeting there were two traveller families residing on roadsides in the Borough receiving support from the Council. The Team liaised and shared data with head teachers in relation to traveller pupils and offered advice to schools on how best to support these vulnerable pupils. College Town Primary and Ascot Heath Junior Schools had recently accepted traveller pupils although their attendance at the schools had been brief.

The Team included one full time and two part time teachers. One to one teaching of EAL pupils was provided where the schools required teaching support in addition to the provision of advice and strategies. Regular meetings were held with schools to monitor EAL pupils' progress and ascertain whether there were any barriers to overcome. The attainment of EAL pupils was utilised to measure the effectiveness of EAL intervention.

Although much of the Migration Impact Grant (MIG) had been withdrawn by the Government in 2010/11, the Team remained in receipt of a grant of £7.5k from the MIG to support its activities. An Induction & Support Programme had been produced on a CD-Rom with Mathematics and English sections included to provide EAL teaching advice and ideas to schools. The needs of advanced EAL pupils were ascertained to identify what was required to facilitate their progress. New EAL pupils were supported initially to learn social English before progressing to academic English, which took on average seven years to achieve fully.

All schools had received EAL training which formed part of teachers' continuing professional development. Further training was to be provided in the summer term 2011 for secondary and primary school teachers, which followed on from the March 2011 training for primary schools and included any schools which had been unable to receive that training. All schools had responded favourably to the offer of this training with the exceptions of Crowthorne CE Primary, St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary, Birch Hill Primary, Ascot Heath CE Junior and Crown Wood Primary Schools owing to other priorities and efforts would be made to work with the head teachers concerned to ensure that a representative from each school could attend. In terms of secondary schools, Ranelagh School had not responded to the training offer, however, the Senior Adviser had spent a day at the school and could confirm that it was making good progress and integrating EAL with religious education. The new training was more focused on EAL induction offering a programme to meet schools' needs. It consisted of a fifteen minute introduction by the Team Leader before delegates took the lead. Members of the Behaviour Support Team and the Speech and Language Therapy Team also attended. The Team now benefited from software which enabled it to construct training material in a form that could be updated by schools, which had received training for this purpose. There had been a move away from EAL responsibilities resting with one person and these had been spread across the Team and across school staff with whom the Team worked to build their knowledge and confidence resulting in a good support programme being in place in schools. The Team Leader also supported the development of Mathematics and English teaching integrating it with EAL work.

A significant number of immigrants from Eastern Europe had settled in Bracknell Forest leading to some smaller and isolated communities developing and the Team had worked with one family in particular to assist its integration in the absence of community support. The benefit of linking people from the same cultural background to form groups where they were able to offer each other mutual support before being introduced to the wider society was acknowledged. The Team endeavoured to ensure that all were treated equally and fairly. Education in respect of different cultures was provided at schools to forge understanding.

Although much had been achieved to date, EAL was work in progress and issues remained. However, the Team was increasingly confident to tackle issues and promoted the positive aspects of EAL during its meetings with schools which were considered to be successful and constructive. Wider acceptance of, and respect for, EAL was apparent.

The Lead Member expressed her gratitude for the officers' input into the Working Group and acknowledged that much progress had been achieved in supporting EAL in the Borough's schools although there was scope to accomplish more. It was felt that the Team provided excellent value for money from its modest funding of £130k. Additional funding would enable the training of teaching assistants to support EAL or the employment of another EAL teacher and enable further integration of services.

The officers identified linked provision as the main area to strengthen in order to achieve fuller integration and maximise efforts in the absence of future funding for EAL work. The Lead Member supported a linked approach and offered to assist the Team with forming links wherever possible through her other roles in related areas such as corporate parenting and safeguarding. Attention was drawn to a database of volunteers in the Borough who could be approached to assist. Training EAL staff remained to be undertaken to maximise support on the ground and efforts would be made to support the pastoral aspect of EAL as progress in the academic area had been achieved. A person-centred approach without any unnecessary bureaucracy to identify solutions to any issues associated with EAL was favoured.

4. Future Meetings and Activities

It was acknowledged that this last meeting of the Working Group would conclude the review work of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel in respect of EAL for the foreseeable future owing to a reduction in staffing resources to support Overview and Scrutiny and the need to review other service areas of the Council and its partners.