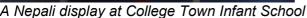Bracknell
Forest
Council

Celebrating EAL

Review of the Implications of English as an Additional Language in Bracknell Forest Schools by a Working Group of the Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel

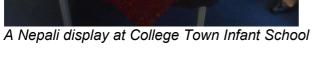*A Nepali display at College Town Infant School*

October 2008

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Acknowledgements

1.   Foreword by the Lead Member

1.1   Bracknell Forest has a mantra of ***"all schools will be good schools"*** and the education of our children to the highest possible level is something that members, officers and our teaching staff are passionate about.

1.2   For several years the demography of the Borough has been stable in the ethnicity of its population. However, there has been a noticeable and rapid increase in our ethnic community resulting in a diversity of teaching requirements arising from English not necessarily being a pupil's first language.

1.3   The Working Group was set up to identify the key issues arising from our increasing number of pupils from overseas and how best to tackle these issues.

1.4   The Working Group very quickly realised that English as an Additional Language ("EAL") was going to be a far greater subject matter than was first thought not only regarding the impact on our schools and pupils but also to celebrate the arrival of our EAL pupils into the community at large.

1.5   Our EAL pupils bring with them a great diversity of culture, language, custom and religion which should be shared with us as well as our culture being shared with them.

1.6   Here in Bracknell Forest we, rightly, pride ourselves in the multiplicity of international companies that have made the Borough their home earning us the reputation of being Britain's "Silicon Valley".

1.7   We are also home to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst and many of our EAL students have parents working for these major companies or stationed at the RMA.

1.8   It is not unreasonable to assume that our EAL pupils will emulate their parents and lead valuable and prosperous lives within our community.

1.9   Their first and second language will mean that we will have bi-lingual speakers raised and educated here in Bracknell Forest; the impact on businesses and schools will be immense.

1.10   Over the next few years we will be watching the redevelopment of Bracknell Town Centre, of which we will be rightly proud, but running in parallel we will also be addressing the issues that our continuing rise in EAL pupils will bring for which we should also be proud.

1.11   Let us be the authority that addresses the issues of EAL and leads the way in good practice and procedures now and into the future.

1.12   My thanks to the Working Group, particularly Denise Whitbread who interacted with the pupils and students as only a good teacher can and to Ian Sharland for preparing the questions and some of the outcomes.

1.13   My thanks must also go to Andrea Carr who accompanied us to all of our school visits and has prepared a truly excellent report.

1.14 Last but by no means least, a special thanks to the Headteachers, their staff and pupils at all of the schools we visited for making us so welcome.

1.15 The Working Group comprised:

Councillor Mrs Jennie McCracken (Lead Member)
Councillor Scott Burrows
Councillor Ms Denise Whitbread
Mr Ian Sharland (Parent Governor Representative)

2.   Background

2.1   Bracknell Forest Council's (the Council's) former Lifelong Learning and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered a list of potential themes to be reviewed in detail by working groups of the Panel during 2007/08 to complement its ongoing work such as performance monitoring. Having considered the relative merits of eight suggested review topics, the Panel, which has subsequently been re-structured to form a large part of the new Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel, decided that its 2007/08 work programme would consist of reviews of the following topics by working groups:-

- One area for review selected from the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 Supplement; and

- Extended Services and Children's Centres (jointly with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel).

2.2   This report records the outcome of the Working Group established to undertake a review selected from the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 supplement.

2.3   A review topic selected from the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 Supplement was felt to be of merit as the Supplement related to areas in Children and Young People's services which had been identified for improvement. Having considered the Supplement, the Working Group selected the implications of English as an additional language (EAL) in the Borough's schools as its review topic as this was a sudden and rapidly growing issue presenting challenges for schools.

2.4   The work programme was subsequently agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, the parent body of the Panel, following consultation with the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council.

2.5   The main purpose of the Working Group has been to identify the key issues for schools arising from the increasing number of pupils who do not have English as their first language and to recommend actions to tackle them.

2.6   Key objectives of the review have been to identify the impact levels of the increase of EAL in terms of which schools / areas are most affected with reference to EAL data, to recognise the key issues in the schools / areas of greatest EAL concentration, to prioritise issues to address and to recommend actions to tackle these issues.

2.7   The scope of the review has been the selection of a range of junior, primary and secondary schools to visit as examples of the schools / areas where the greatest impact of EAL may be experienced; the interview of headteachers, staff and pupils from these schools to establish issues and support needs; the identification of best practice to deal with challenges associated with growing numbers of EAL pupils; and the consideration of the wider diversity issues of EAL such as cultural differences between pupils from different countries.

3. Investigation, Information Gathering and Analysis

Scoping Meeting with the former Director of Social Care and Learning

3.1 The Working Group commenced its review at a meeting with the former Director of Social Care and Learning to obtain background information relating to the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 Supplement to inform its selection of a review topic theme and to scope the resulting review.

3.2 The Borough's first three year Children and Young People's Plan had been published in May 2006 and described how the Council:-

- identified the needs of children and young people;
- prioritised the needs; and
- would address the needs.

3.3 The Plan focused on five outcomes for children and young people and featured a vision based on these outcomes and designed to meet the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. There was a statutory requirement to undertake an annual review of the Plan and the 2007 Supplement had resulted from the first annual review. The Supplement described the positive progress made over the last year in achieving the priorities in the Plan. It looked at some of the issues that had arisen and considered new areas for development and how the Council intended to move forward in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people living in Bracknell Forest.

3.4 Having considered the 2007 Supplement, the Working Group identified English as an additional language (EAL) as its review topic. The need to support pupils with EAL was identified as a priority of the Plan associated with the 'Enjoy and Achieve' outcome. The Working Group was mindful of the increasing numbers of EAL pupils, both nationally and locally, and acknowledged that in excess of 70 languages were spoken in the Borough's schools. EAL was perceived to be a pressure on resources and a challenge to attainment and to schools meeting or exceeding their improvement targets. One of the Working Group's main aims was to ensure that overall standards of education throughout the Borough were not being compromised as a result of the increased numbers of EAL students in Bracknell Forest schools. The Working Group acknowledged the benefits of being mindful of the wider cultural issues associated with EAL in schools.

3.5 The Working Group prepared questions to ask headteachers, school staff and pupils during its visits to schools. The list of the questions is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

Meeting with the EAL and Diversity Team

3.6 The General Adviser, EAL & Diversity Team Leader and local education authority (LEA) EAL teacher met the Working Group to give an overview of their roles and advise on EAL issues.

3.7 The Working Group was provided with the ethnicity results of the January 2008 school census and advised that the census figures indicated that the number of languages spoken in the Borough had grown from 65 to 70 since the previous

census was undertaken, increasing the diversity in Bracknell Forest. These languages included Nepali, Indian, Russian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and African languages. The census figures showed that there were lower numbers of EAL pupils in Years 1 and 2 than in the foundation and secondary school stages with a particular increase at the GCSE level. The census results showed that:-

- The number of ethnic minority pupils in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools was 15,230 comprising 14% of pupils (12.1% secondary, 15.4% primary and 15.3% special school).

- The total amount of EAL pupils in the Borough's primary and secondary schools was 1,034 constituting 6.8% of school population (5.7% secondary, 7.6% primary and 4.3% special school).

3.8 An EAL co-ordinator was developing an assessment strategy relating to Key Stage (KS) 4 which involved assessing EAL students on their arrival and supporting them through that KS, 6th Form and beyond. This was a new area as existing EAL pupils had not yet progressed to KS4.

3.9 It was agreed that secondary schools to be visited by the Working Group would be The Brakenhale School and Garth Hill College. When considering which primary schools in the Borough to visit in order to identify the key issues for schools arising from the increasing number of pupils with EAL, the Working Group noted than Sandy Lane Primary School had improved considerably in this area and was thought to have the most effective EAL practice in the Borough, being recognised on the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) website. There was a significant Nepali presence at College Town Junior School whilst St Joseph's Primary School was considered to be the most inclusive of the Borough's primary schools. Great Hollands Primary School had experienced a recent significant increase in diversity and was seeking assistance to address the associated issues. The Working Group agreed that it would visit College Town Infant and Junior, Great Hollands Primary and Sandy Lane Primary Schools. A former language support teacher at Bracknell Forest was a governor at Sandy Lane Primary School and assisted with EAL issues there.

3.10 Although the Council had previously bought into Reading Borough Council's EAL provision, five years ago it had decided more could be achieved through an in-house provision and had then established the EAL & Diversity Team. The Team's interest in inclusion extended beyond schools and it formed part of the general inclusion agenda. The Team offered support to, and were welcomed by, all schools requiring assistance with addressing issues associated with EAL and diversity. There had been no central resources available when the Team had been created and subsequently effective networks with other boroughs had been built and in-house resources, including translation materials, were being developed to assist schools. An ethnicity document and plain English guide were being reviewed at the time of the meeting. The Working Group received copies of the EAL Handbook for Secondary Schools. Resources included access and engagement books produced by the Government and a primary activities folder which had been successfully launched the previous year and contained materials and resources which could be copied and utilised to assist with lesson teaching. Secondary activities folders that had been circulated to schools six to seven years previously were now in use. The Working Group's

attention was drawn to the Bracknell Forest Inclusion website which offered guidance, support and resources immediately accessible to all teachers.

3.11 Additional funding received in September 2007 had enabled the Team to expand. Two additional EAL teaching assistants had been employed for primary and secondary work, respectively. They had significantly strengthened the Team and helped with English language acquisition and the induction of new EAL pupils in an inclusive classroom environment. The new teaching assistants had visited many schools of all types to provide support. They had advised on the approach to younger EAL pupils in junior schools and had co-ordinated the SENCO to facilitate EAL pupils' induction in Great Hollands Junior School. Both assistants worked part-time and the hours of one had been increased to meet demand. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader, who was based in a secondary school and currently worked at a part-time level, would become full-time from 1 April 2008. Although the Team was currently able to meet the challenges of supporting EAL, there would be resource implications in the event that need increased. As the number of EAL pupils was expected to increase in the future placing further demand on the Team, it was necessary for it to have robust and effective working practices in place from the beginning. Prior to September 2007 the ratio of staff to EAL pupils was 1:513 and since September 2007 it was 1:398.

3.12 With regard to EAL lunch clubs, the Working Group was advised that, although these had been initially slow to develop, they were now progressing. A national association of language development was preparing a paper in respect of EAL lunch clubs to advise teachers on the best approach to running the clubs which involved using an English speaking pupil to act as the EAL pupil's playmate. Garth Hill College was presently undertaking the scheme and The Brakenhale School was intending to pursue it. Edgbarrow School had insufficient numbers of EAL pupils to warrant operating lunch clubs. Relevant information was made available in school staff rooms.

3.13 Reference was made to the four-day EAL course that was available to teachers and facilitated by the local authority. The Team aimed to work towards achieving a holistically inclusive environment in schools and acknowledged that teachers could become frustrated in the absence of tools that could be put into immediate action to solve issues associated with new EAL pupils. The General Advisor's role included attending discussion groups at the Westminster Commission for Human Rights to explain local EAL issues and experiences. The Working Group received copies of material from UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) stemming from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which sought to build an inclusion charter throughout schools to respect the diversity of all. This included a framework for the structure of faith schools. The work of the Team included visiting schools with a view to educating the future population by gaining their views on faith and religion and by challenging misconceptions whilst highlighting general morally acceptable views.

3.14 In response to a question concerning the Team's future vision to support diversity in the Borough's schools and minimise related issues, the Working Group was advised of a survey directed towards schools, parents and pupils and of a wish to develop schools' capacity to enable them to engage all pupils equally. Although there had previously been examples of schools claiming to be at full capacity to avoid admission of EAL children or seeking to avoid ongoing support from the Team once EAL pupils had been inducted, this was

no longer the case and provision was more inclusive owing to an increase in schools' understanding, confidence and skills. Whilst the Team had limited resources, it sought to empower schools and build their capacity to cope with increasing numbers of EAL pupils in the future. The Team focused on diversity and recognised the need to improve the capacity of teachers to deal with teaching EAL pupils and using associated strategies to advantage. The need for teaching staff to be aware of the background of EAL pupils and have targets to aim for was highlighted. In this connection, reference was made to a draft report which detailed ward by ward ethnicity and the need for close data links. Some courses were available to offer staff development and target common problems. It was noted that some advanced EAL learners were now progressing through secondary schools and there was a need to support teachers to enable such pupils to realise their potential. The parents of these pupils were thought to be successful with a common focus on enterprise and economic awareness leading to a need to establish pupils' aspirations. The Working Group acknowledged that, although parental resentment could potentially result from EAL pupils receiving more support in class than local needy children such as those with special educational needs (SEN), this was not noticeably the case in Bracknell Forest to date and it was suggested that schools should develop a self-resourced structure to avoid such a situation arising.

3.15 In the majority of Bracknell Forest schools, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) acted as the EAL co-ordinator for their school and could train teaching assistants in EAL and encourage pupils to work together in a collective and collaborative way to enhance inclusivity. Although the school census provided valuable ethnicity information, it was felt that additional immigration data such as housing patterns, community trends and movements of asylum seekers was required to complete the picture. Maintaining the absence of closed ethnic communities in Bracknell Forest was welcomed and the employment and investment opportunities offered by high achieving, diverse and multi-lingual communities were recognised. The Team was mindful of teachers' workloads and sought to provide a resource to facilitate teaching EAL pupils that would avoid over burdening teachers or eroding their lesson planning and preparation time.

3.16 In addition to supporting schools directly, the Team also worked closely with school governors, new teachers, teaching assistants and those returning to teaching. It was felt to be unfortunate that representatives of the ethnic minority communities were reluctant to become school governors as they tended to work long hours and felt that the role would be too demanding.

3.17 The Working Group received details of the EAL and diversity budget, which was carefully monitored, as follows:-

	Budget 2007-08	Budget 2008-09
Bracknell Forest Multicultural Budget	£16k	£50k
Corporate	£50k	-
Standards Fund	£45k	£61k
Total	£111k	£111k

3.18 The General Advisor also managed funding to support EAL traveller pupils. The combined budget for other support services i.e. Teaching Support Services and the Language and Literacy Centre was approximately £300k per annum indicating that EAL was tightly funded. The Team responded to local need and was not driven by national government. It would be considering its budget in the light of future need, such as increased costs when EAL pupils transferred from primary to secondary schools, and sought to fund 'on the ground' workers such as teaching assistants and not administrators. Training staff to train teachers and cascade methods of dealing with EAL issues had been identified as a cost effective method of operating. A cohesive approach across the Council was sought to ease the work of the Team.

Visits to Schools in Bracknell Forest

3.19 Information gained during visits to the six selected schools in the Borough is set out below and pupils' responses to questions are attached to this report at Appendices 2 to 6.

Visit to The Brakenhale School

3.20 The Working Group visited the above School where it interviewed a group of three KS3 pupils, a group of four KS4 pupils, the headteacher and a SENCO with reference to the questions prepared for such (Appendix 1).

3.21 The noticeable difference between the KS3 and 4 pupils in terms of confidence and articulation was recognised. In addition, the KS3 pupils were more reluctant to commit to answers or possibly offend than their older colleagues. The progress made by the EAL pupils was considered to be very positive. The SENCO advised that EAL pupils could acquire language skills very rapidly and, although the Nepalese and Ghanaian pupils had received no additional support, they had both learned very quickly. Those EAL pupils who were not learning as rapidly were given specialist support to overcome problems and enable them to benefit from lessons. Whether pupils spoke English or their mother tongue outside school was a factor contributing to the speed at which they acquired English.

3.22 The Headteacher advised that the number of ethnic minority and EAL pupils was increasing and presenting a challenge for the school. Although the issue was acknowledged by the LEA, the diseconomies of scale owing to its small size had an impact on resources which were not being committed to address it. Only strands of support were said to be provided by the Council. This included Diana Grey, a specialist EAL teacher, who presently assessed and supported two Brakenhale pupils, giving each two hours' attention per week. She also worked at other schools in the Borough. There were 20 separate nationalities represented in the School including Nepali, Ghanaian, Indian, Pakistani and Polish.

3.23 It was felt that an EAL peer group contact network would be beneficial. A Borough register of foreign language speakers who could assist the School with translations and correspondence etc. and loan books was suggested as a useful resource although Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and confidentiality could be associated issues. The School was endeavouring to obtain core English texts translated into Polish which cost £15 each and could be read in tandem with the English texts. The benefits of a centralised and co-ordinated set of foreign texts was highlighted. The Working Group noted that

the diversity of foreign languages spoken in the Borough's schools presented a greater challenge than where a larger number of pupils spoke the same language. As EAL figures were based on school application forms, on which parents were known to exaggerate their child's command of English, it was possible that the Council's EAL data was inaccurate. It was suggested that the form be expanded to enquire whether other languages were spoken and copies be made available in community languages in addition to English.

3.24 Although the increase from 10 to 60-70 EAL pupils was significant, the proportion of ethnic minority pupils in the School remained low. Whilst one or two such pupils had been challenging due to traumatic backgrounds and some experienced settling-in problems, EAL pupils tended to integrate, make friends, relax and become confident. Their parents wanted them to learn and succeed. The increase in the number of EAL pupils had an impact on the manner in which lessons were delivered and related training courses for teachers were available if resources allowed. Being mindful that one of the pupils in the KS3 group had a statement of special educational need, it was acknowledged that the increase in EAL could lead to a possible reduction in the support available to English speaking SEN pupils, which could potentially anger their parents.

3.25 When invited to put forward a 'wish list' to address the impact of the increasing number of EAL pupils, the Headteacher expressed a wish for the following:-

- Additional funding;

- A central loan resource; and

- An EAL teaching assistant in lessons to support literacy, provide informal mentoring and undertake monitoring and evaluation work. Timely support decreased conflict and speeded up settling-in and accessing the curriculum.

3.26 Although EAL language acquisition was rapid, approximately eighteen months, it was seven years before pupils were able to write English to a high standard. Age, intelligence and support received were significant factors. Where EAL pupils joined the School at GCSE level this posed a problem as examination papers were not provided in foreign languages. Those who had been living in the country for less than two years were eligible, at the examining boards' discretion, for 25% additional time and use of a dictionary when sitting examinations. Although it was assumed that older EAL pupils would have a better grasp of English than their younger colleagues, this was not always the case as they may have come to England at a later stage and their prior education may have been severely disrupted. Where pupils had not been attending school for a length of time they could be reluctant to return to it and those arriving in the country at Year 11 struggled to cope.

3.27 With regard to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, the Headteacher felt that the cultural variance offered by ethnic minority pupils was positive for the community.

Visit to Garth Hill College

3.28 The Working Group interviewed the Headteacher and a SENCO of Garth Hill College together with two groups of pupils.

3.29 The Headteacher advised that EAL presented many challenges to the College, the greatest of which was maintaining economic wellbeing. Pupils needed to be able to speak English in order to access the curriculum and achieve with others. EAL presented a difficult obstacle for the classroom teacher and other staff. Many Nepalese children had joined the College in September 2007 and where their command of English was weak it was difficult to make them aware of the College's policy plan and translations of it into other languages, particularly Polish, were sought. The structure of the College day was often different to that which foreign pupils were accustomed and the language barrier created difficulties in communicating it to them. Irrespective of the amount of support given to an EAL pupil before joining a class, the teaching staff were presented with many difficulties. An LEA teacher specialising in EAL worked with the College for two hours per week to undertake initial assessments of EAL pupils, support them with their initial learning of English and help teaching assistants by providing advice and resources.

3.30 The Working Group was given examples of where the College had received admission applications from parents who claimed that their children were able to speak English only to find on their arrival that this was not the case. Often the whole family would attend pre-entry meetings with the College and communicate through a translator. Education terminology could be beyond the grasp of those with minimal English.

3.31 The College was in receipt of less support than the previous year although the level of EAL pupils was rising. The support given was very occasional and short term and had included a period of assistance when Polish pupils had joined the College. Specialist training for staff in the form of an EAL familiarisation event had been provided by the local authority last year. Further training was planned involving two members of staff who would attend a four day course and cascade information and training to others. Unfortunately, a teacher who had taught a Polish pupil 4-5 years previously had now left the College and the knowledge and experience gained as a result was no longer available to it. Bracknell Forest was devolving an increased amount of funding to schools to assist with EAL and the College had succeeded in obtaining some funding from the Council to provide lunchtime sessions for EAL pupils involving games using the English language. However, it was felt that centralised resources for use by all schools would be more economical. Co-ordinated sharing of best practice amongst secondary schools in the Borough was sought. The LEA was seeking to have a meeting with secondary headteachers to discuss EAL issues in the near future. The College library was well used and additional resources in it such as a translator were welcomed. As use of IT and other resources was international, it did not present EAL pupils with any problems and was very popular with Year 12 Nepalese students.

3.32 Although the presence of many EAL pupils in schools in the south of the Borough was stated to have created some issues for English parents, this was not yet the case at Garth Hill where it had not disrupted College life. There were, however, some cliques forming amongst pupils. A group of KS4 EAL pupils who had joined the College in KS3 stayed together as they felt happier in the company of pupils with similarly limited English and built their confidence in using the language together. EAL pupils were accepted by the others and it was felt that their mother language and cultures should be valued.

3.33 The College had accessed some translation software which assisted and could be used when sending letters to EAL parents as the language barrier with parents was often greater than that with pupils.

3.34 The changing ethnic mix of the College had not presented any significant problems and an international Overseas Student Exchange Scheme was operated whereby foreign students joined the sixth form for one year. On one occasion such a student sat an AS level examination.

3.35 Resources in the library to assist EAL pupils included visual aids such as posters; books, DVD's and videos in mother tongues; and both local and Polish journals and newspapers. Funding limitations prevented materials in other languages being obtained and although central ordering might overcome this and increase use of the library, access could be an issue. It was felt that administration forms should seek more information in respect of pupils and follow them through the school system as not all EAL pupils were being recorded as such. As their English improved it was not always evident that they were EAL. The introduction of an e-mail system enabling EAL pupils to communicate with peers of common languages in other schools and establishing on-line discussion groups and forums were possible. Security was an issue with the latter and it would need to be delivered via a secure and monitored learning platform. The College had funded support in the form of English classes in the 6th Form. It was thought that the number of EAL pupils would increase in the future and the College's Development Plan needed to take this into account to prevent disharmony and an adverse impact on learning by all. The local authority's manner of addressing the rising numbers of EAL pupils in the Borough would have implications. It was felt that the benefits and not the threats of immigration into the United Kingdom needed to be promoted.

Visit to Sandy Lane Primary School

3.36 The Working Group visited Sandy Lane Primary School to discuss with the Headteacher, Mrs Elizabeth Norris, how EAL impacted on the School and to interview some of its pupils.

3.37 The Headteacher advised that the number of EAL pupils had increased from 5% to 18% of the total number of pupils on roll at the School during the past five years and that 85% of the casual intake were EAL pupils. The majority of EAL pupils were in the lower school and 19% of nursery and foundation stage pupils were EAL. Although the School had a three class intake enabling it to accommodate 90 pupils in each year group, there were currently year groups of approximately 72 pupils. This spare capacity was utilised to absorb the North Bracknell overflow resulting from over subscription of other schools in that area and to receive EAL pupils. As school funding was based on pupil numbers, the small class sizes caused funding implications for the School. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School was also in receipt of significant numbers of EAL pupils from the Italian and Portuguese communities.

3.38 A recent school governors' day with an EAL theme had been held in recognition of the need to have an EAL voice on the Governing Body and an EAL governor had just been appointed. An extract from the School's database showing fluctuating numbers of EAL pupils was circulated at the meeting. The Working Group was advised that the data was not representative as some parents re-classified their child's first language as English after they had been attending the School for a year. This reflected the wish of parents for their children to

succeed at school and rapidly acquire English but was not helpful in terms of funding. The School had a specialist EAL teacher who assessed pupils on arrival to establish their needs and facilitated their education and acquisition of English. They were generally intelligent and able children. The EAL teacher received support from the local authority and an additional EAL teacher had assisted when a sudden increase in the numbers of EAL pupils joining the School was experienced. There was also an EAL teaching assistant at the School. Staff had attended some courses in dealing with EAL pupils and the EAL governor had trained all staff in this area. The School had a 'buddy' scheme where new EAL arrivals were introduced to other pupils who spoke the same language to ease their induction in to the School and build their confidence. Sandy Lane was one of ten schools featured on the DfES website as having a good EAL model.

3.39 To assist the Working Group, the Headteacher circulated copies of a Spring Term 2008 First Language Profile for the School, a list of factors affecting improved support for EAL learners, details of the School's holistic approach to meeting the needs of EAL learners, an overview of the EAL co-ordinator's role and the key elements for global citizenship. The First Language Profile indicated that, in addition to English, 20 other languages were spoken amongst 46 EAL pupils.

3.40 Mrs Norris provided the following information in answer to the questions for headteachers set by the Working Group:

1. *What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children set out in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?*

   The Headteacher was aware of the five outcomes in the above Plan and advised that EAL presented challenges for the School.

2. *What support do you receive from the local authority in meeting these new challenges?*

   Mrs Norris described support from the local authority as being 'a phone call away' and advised that there was not a significant number of pupils in the School speaking a particular language but there was a wide range of languages each spoken by one or two pupils. A translation website was utilised for letters to parents and a Speak Easy Club at the School assisted with language acquisition. This was the third year that tutors trained parents to speak English where necessary. Russian parents from another school were involved and appreciated meeting other parents speaking the same mother tongue. There was a termly meeting between the School and EAL co-ordinators and, as supporting EAL at Sandy Lane was too large a role to be absorbed by the SENCO as was the case at some other schools, the School had a specialist EAL member of staff.

3. *What additional support do you need with EAL pupils now or in the future?*

   The School required continued support from the local authority to assess the ability of new EAL pupils as its resources for this were limited. Action by the EAL & Diversity Team within ten days was the goal.

4. *What ideas have you introduced at your school to deal with the increased number of EAL pupils?*

As each class included three or four EAL pupils, all teachers had been trained in dealing with them which involved building their confidence and ensuring that their education progressed.

The School had a 'Language of the Month' initiative which had featured Hungarian, Portuguese and Twi, an African language. Use of the internet enabled access to many EAL resources and displays in foreign languages spoken by EAL pupils were prepared to enhance inclusivity and promote a multi-cultural world and school. The EAL co-ordinator and one senior teacher were trained to assess and support EAL pupils either within or outside the classroom as this proved to be the most economical method. Before leaving school each afternoon, EAL pupils were given a worksheet providing key vocabulary that would feature in the following day's lessons to give them an opportunity to become familiar with it in advance of classes. As the majority of EAL parents were not asylum seekers and had come to the United Kingdom in a business contract capacity, they often had fluent English and were able to assist their children to learn the language. Computer programmes enabled the School's welcome pack to be translated into any language and be individualised to a particular teacher. In addition to a fairly learning project, there was a Speak Easy club for children, where an EAL pupil could bring a friend, possibly English, to play language games.

Global citizen projects were pursued at the School and an African project would be undertaken next and seek to identify similarities and not highlight differences. This involved the School Council linking with an African school through the Kerith Centre, Bracknell. The School followed the UNICEF rights respecting ideals and sought to build an overarching ethos that taught all pupils their rights and responsibilities whilst encouraging them to respect all languages, faiths and cultures / backgrounds. This had successfully changed the atmosphere of the School. It was found that when pupils received respect, they could more easily learn to give it to others.

In addition to becoming involved in EAL networking meetings and training events, the School maintained a dialogue with governors and staff.

5. *What issues do staff and parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?*

The School did not experience any issues with parents regarding its changing ethnic mix. Although pupils of one language linked in particular, all pupils generally integrated well together. An example was given of one child of mixed race who perceived all comments as racist but this was not the case.

6. *Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?*

No challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix had arisen as the EAL co-ordinator offered support to EAL pupils on arrival at the School without having to divert resources from elsewhere. The School responded well to

EAL which it celebrated as culture enriching. By KS2, EAL pupils performed as well as or better than local pupils, some reaching Level 5, as they were intelligent and attentive and their parents, who tended to be professionals, were keen for them to achieve and encouraged them. Some Bracknell parents were less confident than their EAL counterparts and did not encourage their children as they had not succeeded at school themselves and therefore did not expect their children to do so. As many EAL parents were employed in the area on a fixed term contract before returning to their native country, there was much transition amongst EAL pupils. It was felt that refugees and asylum seekers, who came from a different background to the professional EAL parents known to the School, would challenge the system.

7. *How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?*

The School did not experience any challenges of this nature and therefore did not need to deal with them.

8. *Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?*

Libraries were thought to be very helpful. Although the School had originally sought books in foreign languages, it subsequently found that books written in English were more useful as they assisted with language acquisition for EAL pupils. The local authority provided books on topics such as foreign countries to inform school projects.

3.41 A member of the EAL & Diversity Team advised that as the majority of EAL pupils were European there was a danger of their culture being overlooked as it was similar to that of the United Kingdom. There was a need to recognise that there were differences between eastern and western European cultures. It was felt that a central cultural resource available to all schools would be more economic than each school purchasing its own books.

3.42 The website was also a useful resource for schools. IT at Sandy Lane had improved significantly over the past four years and there was now an IT suite with internet access and whiteboards in each classroom. Volunteers from local IT companies had assisted with setting up and supporting the IT equipment and as the School was obliged to fund it from its own budget, resources were sought to manage it in the future. It was noted that some schools worked in partnership with businesses and offered employee training in return for resources or IT support.

Visit to Great Hollands Primary School

3.43 The Working Group visited Great Hollands Primary School to interview the Headteacher, Mr M Purdey, and one member of staff involved in EAL to discuss how it impacted on the School and to meet some of its pupils.

3.44 The Headteacher advised that there were currently 54 EAL pupils in the School which equated to 16% of pupils and the majority were joining at the nursery and reception stages. The largest single language group was Nepali and although the School had traditionally had some Nepalese and African pupils, the number of EAL pupils and languages represented, presently 23, had increased considerably in line with the changing demography of the area. Other than

Nepali and African languages, which were spoken by 8 and 7 pupils, respectively, the remaining languages were each spoken by one or two pupils. Of the 24 children attending the nursery, 8 were EAL. These four year old EAL pupils had no English and a growing trend of behavioural problems was being manifested. Although some of these pupils had some understanding of what was expected of them, boys in particular were utilising the language barrier as an excuse to misbehave.

3.45 One pupil was able to translate in the School but one to one EAL support was work in progress and some parents had provided translation assistance. The EAL induction process included parents or other family members, some of whom were able to assist with translation. Personal and social aspects were first addressed and new EAL pupils were allocated a 'buddy' teacher and pupil to offer some one to one support and assistance. A member of staff with learning support skills had established EAL groups in the School and language was targeted owing to the growing number of EAL pupils. The School did not have sufficient resources to fund a learning support assistant and had experienced severe financial difficulties a few years previously leading to staff redundancies. The Working Group was aware that SENCOs were looked towards for EAL support and recognised the importance of a separate EAL budget and co-ordinator. Although it was hoped that a senior French teacher in the School, who was interested in languages and had undertaken a four day bi-lingual course, would become its EAL co-ordinator, the need for a learning support assistant remained. There was a requirement for training to assist EAL pupils and Diana Gray, EAL teacher, would conduct a staff training course the following week to inform staff of the basic EAL induction process. A booklet concerning key induction points had been produced to assist the School.

3.46 Movement of EAL pupils in and out of the Borough's schools was rapid as they generally remained at a School for a few years only, possibly one Key Stage, before moving on or returning to their native countries. The School aimed to concentrate on the personal aspect, such as providing peer support in the classroom and playground, to speed EAL pupils' induction and facilitate their education during their time at the School. The need to engage with EAL parents and encourage their involvement with the School and possible socialising with English parents was recognised. Although Ghurkha fathers tended to develop a core of English through their work, mothers often did not and remained in the home without mixing and were at risk of becoming isolated. Filipino mothers also tended to be shy and reticent and there were instances where English was the third and common language amongst such families. Use of an interpretation service would be beneficial at the nursery admission stage. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that similar issues occurred amongst eastern Europeans and therefore establishing communities and engaging with reticent members was a target. Children's Centres with extended services were seen as being central to communities and giving an opportunity to achieve such goals by bridging gaps between school, children and families. The benefits of achieving such engagement as early as possible, preferably in the foundation stage, were recognised. It was acknowledged that Bracknell Forest families were accepting the cultural change associated with increasing numbers of EAL pupils and it was at the School's discretion as to how it addressed this learning need which was not that of an SEN nature.

3.47 Reference was made to a Year 6 French pupil who was progressing well despite limited English which reflected that the School, pupils and parents were tolerant and accepted special educational and EAL needs. The school day was

tightly programmed and teachers targeted and met SEN and EAL needs. Many EAL pupils were very intelligent and performed particularly well at mathematics. Their parents were encouraging and wished them to learn and succeed at school.

3.48 The Headteacher and staff member provided the following information in answer to the questions for headteachers set by the Working Group:

1. *What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children set out in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?*

   It was felt that this question had been answered during the course of the preceding conversation.

2. *What support do you receive from the local authority in meeting these new challenges?*

   The School received support from the local authority in the form of assistance from Diana Gray, EAL teacher, another staff member and the library resource. The Bracknell Forest Inclusion website was very useful and translation discs were helpful. The Headteacher sought full translation of the School's prospectus and some translation of numeracy and literacy texts. Pictorial language aids were utilised and although there was a telephone line translation service, this was cumbersome involving a third party and only used when there was no alternative. Reference was made to some bad behaviour by EAL pupils as a result of the language barrier. In such circumstances, parents were invited to the School to assist or collect their children. A central translation service was welcomed and although Reading University had offered such a service in the past, it had been very costly. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that the Team sought to develop a translation service to build on the existing translation of standard letters. The School benefited from an ICT suite and personal computers and whiteboards in each classroom which assisted and enabled use of pictorial literacy and numeracy aids.

3. *What additional support do you need with EAL pupils now or in the future?*

   A dedicated learning support assistant EAL co-ordinator was sought.

4. *What ideas have you introduced at your school to deal with the increased number of EAL pupils?*

   It was felt that this question had been answered during the course of the preceding discussion.

5. *What issues do staff and parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?*

   Although no specific issues were raised, the Headteacher felt that all needed to recognise that Great Hollands Primary was a Christian school with the presence of other faiths which it needed to celebrate. Fourteen pupils had not taken part in a religious education visit the previous day and he felt that there was some fear, racism and ignorance amongst parents and that bridges needed to be built to overcome these and impart

the message that although Christian assemblies were held, the School would study and celebrate other faiths and visit related sites. He intended to write to parents who had withheld their child's attendance from the visit in an endeavour to address any issues. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that similar problems had been encountered at a secondary school in the Borough, which had a strong emphasis on inclusivity and where a workshop session concerning awareness of other faiths and cultures had been delivered. A Bracknell festival to celebrate diversity had been suggested.

6. *Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?*

Occasional racist comments were heard in the playground at Great Hollands Primary School which tended to relate to colour rather than racial differences. Attempts were made to quash such behaviour as early as possible and discussions were held with offending pupils and sometimes their parents also. These instances were often repetition of comments heard on television and racist behaviour between black pupils also occurred. Such instances were reported to Bracknell Forest's Children and Families Manager.

7. *How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?*

It was felt that this question had been answered during the course of the preceding conversation.

8. *Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?*

Although there had traditionally been a dual language section in the library featuring Indian and African books, now that the spread of languages was wider further books were sought but resources were limited. There was a shortage of EAL storybooks and as it was costly for schools to purchase such books, a central resource from where they could be borrowed was sought. Great Hollands Library was utilised more than the central Bracknell Library and, although library use was encouraged, internet use prevailed. Whilst 98% of library books were non-fiction, fiction books were read in class. A teachers' section in the proposed new Bracknell Library within the civic hub was welcomed. The inclusion of some library shelves in Children's Centres was suggested as many parents could not access libraries owing to transport issues. It was acknowledged that Children's Centres had a significant role to play in this area. Although the Oaks Children's Centre, which was located on the Great Hollands site, was growing, it was proving difficult to engage parents unless their children were involved. One governor had an interest in EAL.

3.49 The Headteacher reiterated that the School needed support staff, particularly a funded EAL co-ordinator. In response, the EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that his team collated statistics concerning the number of primary and secondary EAL pupils which indicated rising trends. These facilitated number forecasting for next year and would be utilised to assist future budget planning. By 2011 it was hoped to close the attainment gap between ethnic groups and the LEA average.

<u>Visit to College Town Infant School</u>

3.50 The Working Group visited College Town Infant School to discuss the impact of EAL on the School with the Headteacher, Mrs T Sammons, and to meet some of its pupils.

3.51 The Headteacher advised that the number of EAL pupils had more than doubled in the last five years and Bracknell Forest had a higher percentage than the national average. As the School was currently relying on the goodwill of the SENCO to assist with EAL, a more sustainable approach needed to be found. Dealing with EAL brought increased responsibilities and longer working hours and a lack of funding and recognition of this was perceived.

3.52 The Headteacher provided the following information in answer to the questions for headteachers set by the Working Group:

1. *What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children set out in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?*

    The outcome concerning being healthy and safe was a challenge for the School as the changing ethnic mix was resulting in polarisation of Nepalese pupils. There was little economic migration in the area and very few races other than English and Nepali were represented which led to the formation of two distinct opposing groups. There were issues associated with the diversion of support away from SEN to EAL pupils and the School experienced difficulties in maintaining its economical wellbeing.

2. *What support do you receive from the local authority in meeting these new challenges?*

    Extended Services were thought to represent the most significant form of support from the local authority. Although a Nepali Day had been held on 12 April, it had been poorly attended as that day was the Nepali New Year and the community had not been consulted on the date.

    The School sought more support from Bracknell Forest and although it had previously received help from an EAL teaching assistant, the Headteacher felt that it was unfair if EAL children received greater support than others and wished to include all pupils. She felt that supporting EAL was a corporate responsibility and not just one person's role. Although the Council was not thought to provide sufficient EAL support, the numerous cost free courses it provided were appreciated. The School's SENCO was currently undertaking an EAL course with a view to obtaining accreditation and becoming an Inclusion Manager in September 2008. The Inclusion Manager would feed information to other teachers. The School was not pursuing the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service path. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that the Team was currently in a state of transition and recognised that stronger links with schools and further resources and staff were required, particularly as the number of EAL pupils was growing. The EAL course was valued by the Team who would verify that it was being successfully disseminated to other teachers. The Headteacher felt that the Inclusion Manager could become an

inclusion expert and promote leadership in the community and across the Borough.

3. *What additional support do you need with EAL pupils now or in the future?*

It was felt that this question had been answered during the course of the preceding discussion.

4. *What ideas have you introduced at your school to deal with the increased number of EAL pupils?*

The Headteacher, who had joined the School in January 2008, was of the opinion that there had been an over reliance on the EAL support provided by a former member of the Council's EAL & Diversity Team and there were no systems or records in place at the School, which coped with EAL owing to staff goodwill. The School utilised an EAL model from Birmingham that was felt to be effective and had been adapted to suit local need. This consisted of several stages and involved the assessment of EAL pupils on arrival, the introduction of a 'Record of Achievement' for them and strategies for teachers to utilise in the event that pupils were not settling in to the School. As many teachers had not worked in inner-city schools, they had limited experience of teaching EAL pupils and the model assisted by bringing consistency and structure to the approach. The difference between social and academic language was highlighted and although EAL pupils attained near fluency in English by stage 4 of this model, they needed to acquire academic language and had a high cognitive demand. Learning of academic language was tracked each term and a strategy, including a reading group, was employed where progress was not being made. This consisted of tracking the progress of ten pupils who were not achieving high scores and comparing and noting the progress made by all. The progress of the entire school was tracked across all key stages. Infant / junior reading clubs in Owlsmoor had benefited from the assistance of Year 11 pupils from Sandhurst Secondary School in terms of improving both reading and social understanding. Standardised tests were being introduced and a folder recording progress and attainment followed each child as they advanced through the School. Cohort files involving traffic light progress assessments were utilised and pupils' records followed them to the Junior School. Non-essential activities such as cost free after school clubs had ceased in lieu of devoting staff time to higher priority issues such as supporting and assessing EAL pupils. Drama classes continued to be offered on a payment basis and summer holiday activities would be provided. No complaints from parents had been received in relation to these changes. Although the School sought a Family Support Worker, this was hampered by funding constraints.

5. *What issues do staff and parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?*

This question had been answered during the course of discussion arising from question 1.

6. *Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?*

It was felt that this question had been answered during the course of the preceding discussion.

7. *How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?*

An answer to this question had already been provided.

8. *Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?*

Whilst acknowledging that there was a teaching centre at Easthampstead Park Mansion, the Headteacher advised that staff members were unable to access this owing to its opening hours and a central EAL resource was sought. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that the teaching centre included religious and multi-cultural resources.

3.53 The EAL & Diversity Team Leader informed the Working Group that there was no robust system in place to assist Nepali integration in the wider community. He made reference to a racial incident at a secondary school a year ago where, although the situation had been diffused, tensions remained simmering beneath the surface. There was a need for action to be taken to bridge gaps in and between schools and the community and a Nepali community worker was sought for this reason. Kent was reported to be a leading area in this field and an example of a festival in Maidstone to celebrate diversity was given. Nepalese people had been integrated into the community there without denying locals and it also enjoyed good employment prospects. Racism was more of a problem in secondary than primary schools as it was more intense amongst older pupils as they were more aware of racial differences than their younger colleagues. A summer camp was suggested as a beneficial method of enhancing inclusion and improving language. It was acknowledged that a social curriculum recognising the rights and responsibilities of all was being promoted in some schools.

Interview with the College Town Junior School Assistant Headteacher

3.54 The Working Group met the Assistant Headteacher of College Town Junior School, Mrs J Auster, who advised that 20% of the School's population was Nepali and small numbers of Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils were also present. She provided the following information in answer to the questions for headteachers set by the Working Group:

1. *What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children set out in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?*

Numerous challenges were posed by the changing ethnic mix of the School.

2. *What support do you receive from the local authority in meeting these new challenges?*

The Assistant Headteacher responded to the effect that the School currently received no assistance with EAL from the local authority. Previously, the School had received the support of an EAL teaching assistant for one afternoon per week for one term. This assistant had

worked with three Year 3 classes on reading and vocalising. Although this support had been beneficial, the School required more EAL support. New EAL pupils had recently joined the School in Year 6 and although support had been sought, none was forthcoming to date.

3. *What additional support do you need with EAL pupils now or in the future?*

Each year group was in need of support and although some EAL pupils were intelligent and valued education, others displayed poor attitudes and lacked comprehension. In terms of reading, EAL pupils tended to understand the purpose of books but needed those that they could relate to. Many were unfamiliar with the internet and required grammar support as their home languages were constructed differently from English. The School was culturally aware and recognised that the sooner grammatical difficulties were overcome the sooner EAL pupils comprehended what they were required to learn. Letters to parents had been translated by Bracknell Forest staff.

4. *What ideas have you introduced at your school to deal with the increased number of EAL pupils?*

The grammar issue had been raised as a problem requiring immediate attention and more visual support in lessons was sought. In addition to a focus on grammar, guided reading in the lower school assisted. Signs in the Nepali language were displayed around the school building and as this was the first occasion when a number of pupils were able to write in Nepali, the beauty of that written language was appreciated. The School sought to encourage this whilst acknowledging and celebrating the Nepali culture. A past day devoted to the Nepali culture had been well attended.

5. *What issues do staff and parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?*

Although the Assistant Headteacher was unaware of any issues raised by parents, she was conscious of those highlighted by school staff. There was some doubt as to whether direct approaches had been made to the local authority for assistance with EAL as the majority of such pupils were performing well. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader suggested that his team were perhaps yet to work with the School owing to transitional and capacity issues.

6. *Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?*

Whilst Nepalese pupils had been motivated to learn and been amongst the most hard working in the past, this year had witnessed a Nepali bonding and polarisation leading to a behavioural change in the older boys who were thought to be less enthusiastic and adopting a less intensive work ethic. College Town Junior was a highly transitional school seeing a constant shift in population.

7. *How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?*

There were no serious concerns regarding the changing ethnic mix requiring attention.

8.   Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?

The Working Group was advised that there was no library provision for EAL in the School. The EAL & Diversity Team Leader advised that schools in the Sandhurst area had historically received comparatively low funding levels despite having high numbers of EAL pupils. Harmonisation and attainment were sought for the area.

Further Meeting with the EAL and Diversity Team

3.55 Following the visits to schools, the Working Group met the EAL & Diversity Team again to reflect on the information received to date and to discuss arising issues.

3.56 During the visits, all schools had indicated that EAL pupils were now the norm and that numbers were growing. The Team had identified some priorities and prepared support plans to assist schools with dealing with the growing number of EAL pupils and was proposing to work directly with secondary schools in September to achieve this. Challenges faced by the Team included intangible aspects such as attitudes towards EAL pupils in addition to overcoming language barriers and assisting them to access the curriculum. The Team's approach featured linking with other teams such as the Behaviour Support Team. A cross-council overarching strategy was sought by the Team to marry EAL data to all relevant systems.

3.57 Inclusivity work undertaken by the Team would include open evenings and school-based family events tailored to meet local needs. The Team wished to visit all schools in the Borough twice per annum, which was possible within current funding arrangements, in order to review EAL support.

3.58 The Working Group was advised that the school census of January 2008 had indicated a slight shift in the EAL pattern in Bracknell Forest schools. The majority of EAL pupils were now tending to move through the education system and stay longer in the Borough's schools. Until recently, the number of EAL pupils in post-16 education had been negligible but with the increase in numbers it had become crucial to review the current provisions in place to cater for EAL pupils and to make them more accessible and effective. The attainment of post-16 EAL pupils would be at risk if consideration was not given to their requirements. In addition to the Borough's schools, the pastoral and academic provision at Bracknell and Wokingham College needed to meet EAL needs. There had also been an increase in Foundation Stage/KS1 EAL pupils which reflected the national trend for the same category and suggested that Bracknell Forest would experience a change in the ethnicity of the Borough.

3.59 In considering the outcomes of the visits to schools, the Working Group concurred with the view that Sandy Lane Primary School had the most effective EAL practice in the Borough, being recognised on the DfES website. EAL numbers at the school had grown very rapidly and it had developed a determination and positive approach to address the associated issues. Although the school was currently managing EAL very well, growing numbers in the future would place a strain on it. An EAL model based on the Sandy Lane approach would be prepared by the team in September 2008 for circulation to other schools. The school maximised use of EAL resources such as the library

and ICT systems and succeeded in permeating a positive EAL culture throughout the school including the governing body.

3.60 Other schools visited by the Working Group exhibited some good practice and were developing their EAL procedures. The schools were generally thought to be achieving much with limited funding and relied on the goodwill of their staff. This good practice included:-

- assisting new EAL pupils to integrate
- keeping friends together
- assessment of progress and language acquisition
- support from SENCOs
- multi-lingual and multi-cultural displays

3.61 One school had experienced difficulties and tensions associated with a school visit to a mosque. Some parents had withheld their children from the visit and the headteacher had addressed this by writing to these parents to explain the educational purpose and merits of the visit. The Team Leader had taught two sessions in respect of Islam in a secondary school in the Borough and although had been asked some stereotypical and challenging racial questions, he had received positive feedback once the pupils had an opportunity to digest and consider the information and he had been invited to give a third session.

3.62 The Working Group had found that racial tension was present in three of the schools visited and acknowledged that pupils reflected the views of families and communities. It was a particular problem for College Town schools and the surrounding community, between English and Nepalese pupils, which needed to be addressed before it escalated. It was noted that some Nepalese families were facing hardship which hindered their integration and there had been some instances of anti-social behaviour. The Working Group was advised of a forum comprised of representatives of the Council, housing associations, schools and the police which met twice per annum and mapped racial integration and undertook risk assessments. There was a need to proactively plan where travellers and refugees were placed and there was a model in place for this.

3.63 The Team Leader suggested that summer camps would assist cultural integration and development for EAL pupils particularly for Years 6 and 7 as part of the induction process and to assess new pupils. It was felt that transition from primary to secondary schools was particularly difficult for EAL pupils. Cost was an issue and an economical method of operating summer camps was provision for a cluster of schools in an area. One headteacher had succeeded in funding a summer camp and it was felt that the Council may be able to provide some funding for this purpose.

3.64 As attitude towards EAL pupils was a crucial factor to their integration and attainment, the Team sought to work on improving attitudes in the Borough's schools and alleviate any teacher prejudice. To date, training to deal with EAL pupils had been piecemeal and the Team wished to adopt a more central approach identifying and promoting best practice such as the Sandy Lane model. Developing schools' capacity to deal with EAL and maintaining their momentum was seen as the way forward although cost was an issue. The former Director of Social Care and Learning had sought additional funding from the Ministry of Defence towards dealing with the sudden increase in Nepalese pupils in the Sandhurst area without success. The Working Group recognised the difficulties of challenging a Government funding regime which saw EAL

merely as an inclusion issue for the Borough. Although SENCOs often assumed the role of supporting EAL pupils, this was felt to be inappropriate as the SENCO role was significant in its own right and differed from EAL. The Working Group felt that schools needed EAL managers / co-ordinators to avoid SEN pupils being disadvantaged and EAL pupils being wrongly labelled.

4. Conclusions

From its investigations, the Working Group has drawn the following conclusions.

4.1 At the outset of this review, one of the Working Group's main aims was to ensure that overall standards of education throughout the Borough were not being compromised as a result of the increased numbers of EAL pupils in Bracknell Forest Schools. Whilst the Working Group has identified a number of areas which require attention, its overriding impressions are that the schools within the Borough are managing the impact of the growing numbers of EAL students very well and that the EAL students in Bracknell Forest schools make an excellent contribution. Many of the EAL students are from professional families who have moved to this area with their work. These families are keen to integrate with their local community and have high academic expectations of their children. Thus the children generally settle into local schools quickly and strive to become excellent achievers. Whilst the challenges the Borough faces in its education system of more than 70 different languages should not be underestimated, the long term benefits to Bracknell Forest should also be recognised. The Borough is developing a pool of multi-lingual children who will succeed in its schools and become an asset for international businesses based within Bracknell Forest. This talent pool should be recognised as an asset when encouraging businesses to locate in this area.

4.2 Whilst the Borough should be proud of the approach being taken by its schools in respect of integration, the Working Group did identify a number of situations which need minor intervention to prevent larger issues in the future. In particular, one primary school which was keen to take a number of specific actions to promote further integration of families found that its efforts were misinterpreted and racist remarks were heard in the community. The school dealt with this quickly and effectively and the lessons learnt through this experience are:

- Keep a close watch for potential problems, try to avoid accentuating the issues and when they do arise deal with them promptly;

- When a problem does arise, deal with it comprehensively with parents / carers and pupils all in attendance.

4.3 One significant point to arise from the review was the comparison of Bracknell Forest to other Boroughs. Whilst the numbers of EAL students in Bracknell Forest are relatively low, the number of first languages spoken in the Borough's schools is extremely high. This leaves the Council with a significant problem in terms of the funding of EAL activities. It needs to produce materials in over 70 languages and does not benefit from the funding system which provides resources based on the number of EAL students rather than the complexity created by the numbers of languages spoken. This is compounded by the fact that local EAL students do not have the benefit of support within the school from other pupils speaking their language.

4.4 It is apparent from the Working Group's visits to schools that more can be done to link pupils of a common language who are split between different schools.

4.5 Funding limitations prevent materials in more languages being obtained and although central ordering might overcome this and increase use of the library, access could be an issue.

4.6 The Working Group is extremely impressed by the quality, direction and focus of the small EAL & Diversity Team. This Team is well managed and measures itself on the time spent supporting the schools and the impact they achieve through their support. It is evident that where schools have called upon the support of this Team the results have been excellent. The focus brought upon EAL by the Working Group has helped the EAL & Diversity Team to gain access to the leadership team in more schools and has increased the profile of its work.

4.7 The majority of the EAL & Diversity Team's resources for schools are housed on the bfinclusion.org.uk website which is nationally acclaimed by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency and the National Strategies. Working Group's investigations indicate that other EAL resources are split between schools and that a central resource is sought by schools to provide teachers with more information and resources to apply when teaching EAL pupils. Such centralised resources for use by all schools would be more economical. A teachers' centre in Bracknell Forest with key books in various languages to enable retention of EAL pupils' own languages and cultures would be valuable. Bracknell Forest shares some resources with other councils and operates in a similar way to Hampshire by linking ICT with core curriculum for EAL pupils.

4.8 One secondary school seeks co-ordinated sharing of best EAL practice amongst secondary schools in the Borough.

4.9 Administration / registration forms should seek more information in respect of pupils and follow them through the school system as not all EAL pupils are being recorded as such and this distorts EAL and diversity data. As their English improves it was not always evident that they are EAL.

4.10 In addition to raising the profile of EAL in the Borough's schools and easing the work of the EAL & Diversity Team, the work undertaken by the Working Group during the course of this review has attracted favourable feedback from schools.

4.11 Sandy Lane Primary School is an example of best practice in addressing EAL issues and is featured on the DfES website.

4.12 Recently there has been a slight shift in the demographics of the Borough's EAL pupils and the majority of EAL pupils are now moving through the education system and are staying in Bracknell Forest schools for longer. The effect this has is two-fold:

a. Until recently, the number of EAL pupils in post-16 education was negligible. With the increase in numbers, it has become vitally important to review the current provisions in place to cater for EAL pupils and to make them more accessible / effective. Attainment can be a possible concern for post-16 EAL pupils if consideration is not given to their requirements;

b. There has also been an increase in Foundation Stage/KS1 EAL pupils which mirrors the national trend for the same category and suggests that Bracknell Forest is set to experience a significant shift in its ethnicity.

4.13 In the main, Bracknell Forest schools have identified the SENCO as the staff member to take on the additional responsibility of the EAL co-ordinator. This is posing a number of challenges for the schools to negotiate in terms of additional workload, budget constraints, assessing and inducting new arrivals etc. Some of these concerns are currently being addressed via termly EAL co-ordinators network meetings, primary and secondary support plans and a focused EAL & Diversity Team action plan (08-09).

4.14 A large majority of the primary and secondary schools have highlighted issues with the availability of funds to aid EAL development within the school.

4.15 There is a growing need to stage cross phase training on EAL & Diversity issues across Bracknell Forest schools. The main concerns are schools prioritising such events and making staff aware of training opportunities. Although this can be done in-house (i.e. by the EAL & Diversity Team), the onus is with the primary and secondary schools in general to avail this opportunity.

4.16 With the increase in the number of EAL pupils, it is also envisaged that the capacity of the EAL & Diversity Team will be challenged significantly. The operations of the team have been altered to be commensurate with current demands. Where in the past it was possible to only provide 1-1 support, team members are now providing group support. In order to maintain an effective level of service, team member numbers will have to be re-evaluated and opportunities determined.

5.   Recommendations

It is recommended to the Executive Member for Education and Libraries that:-

5.1   The positive aspects of the increase in overseas pupils in Bracknell Forest schools be emphasised both in promoting the Borough and in terms of local press coverage. This might include a festival to celebrate diversity;

5.2   Additional funding be sought from Central Government to address resource constraints arising from the extremely high number of first languages spoken in the Borough's schools which require it to produce materials in over 70 languages and not benefit from the funding system which provides resources based on the number of EAL students rather than the complexity created by the amount of languages spoken;

5.3   In the event that a fair funding deal which reflects the high number of first languages spoken in Bracknell Forest schools cannot be obtained from Central Government, the Council should recognise the challenge faced by its schools and provide additional financial support to enable the EAL & Diversity Team and schools to carry on their good and important work;

5.4   The Sandy Lane Primary School model of dealing with significantly high numbers of EAL pupils with numerous first languages be adopted as best practice and disseminated to the Borough's schools;

5.5   Consideration be given to adopting a more centralised approach to EAL training for teachers and Bracknell Forest schools be advised of the availability of EAL training opportunities and encouraged to prioritise such events;

5.6   The current provisions to cater for post-16 EAL students be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently accessible and effective to meet requirements and promote attainment;

5.7   Consideration be given to establishing a central co-ordinated EAL resource of foreign texts for all the Borough's schools to utilise as required;

5.8   The possibility of linking pupils of a common language between schools be investigated to enhance friendship and support opportunities and ease introduction into new schools and communities;

5.9   The school administration / registration process be strengthened, with application forms available in all community languages, to ensure that further ethnicity information, such as whether other languages are spoken, is sought in respect of pupils and that records follow them through the school system to enable accurate EAL and diversity data to be collected;

5.10   The use of the school census data for EAL planning be reviewed to see whether it could be usefully supplemented with other relevant data; and

5.11   The capacity of the EAL & Diversity Team be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that it remains commensurate with the anticipated future increase in the number of EAL pupils and equipped to meet the associated challenges.

It is recommended to the Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel that:-

5.12 The Working Group should continue to operate in a form to be agreed with the objective of enhancing access and acceptance for the EAL & Diversity Team on an ongoing basis. This will provide a support infrastructure that will enable the Team to operate even more effectively over the next few years when the percentage of EAL students is predicted to continue its rise.

6. Glossary

CMCD	Consistency Management and Co-operative Discipline
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as a Additional Language
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
RMA	Royal Military Academy
SCL	Social Care and Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
TA	Teaching Assistant
The Council	Bracknell Forest Council
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund

QUESTIONS FROM EAL WORKING GROUP

The objective of these questions is to enable us to identify and focus on the major issues created by the increasing percentage of children from minority ethnic groups and thus the presence of a greater number of children in the Borough's schools for whom English is not their first language.

Questions for Head Teachers

1. What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children set out in the Borough's Children and Young People's Plan in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?
2. What support do you receive from the Local Authority in meeting these new challenges?
3. What additional support do you need with EAL pupils now or in the future?
4. What ideas have you introduced at your school to deal with the increased number of EAL pupils?
5. What issues do staff and parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?
6. Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?
7. How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?
8. Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?

Questions for Teaching Staff / EAL Specialist

9. What challenges do you see for your school in achieving the five outcomes for children in the light of the changing ethnic mix in the Borough?
10. What support do you receive from the school and the Local Authority in meeting these new challenges?
11. What additional support do you need now or in the future?
12. What issues do children raise that may be related to the changing ethnic mix at your school?
13. What issues do parents raise about the changing ethnic mix at your school?
14. Have you already encountered any challenges relating to the changing ethnic mix?
15. How did you deal with them and how responsive/supportive was the LEA?
16. Has/does the library system provide any support that you could recommend to these members of ethnic minorities?

Questions for Pupils

17. Are you happy at your school?
18. Do children work and play well together in your school?
19. Do you find any of the lessons hard?
20. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?
21. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?
22. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping overcome difficulties?
23. Do you go to the library?
24. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

Interview with KS4 Pupils at The Brakenhale School

The group of KS4 pupils comprised one Nepali, one Ghanaian and two British pupils. The discussion focused on the questions for pupils prepared by the Working Group who learnt that the Nepali pupil had been residing in the United Kingdom for three years and had attended Brakenhale School for two-three months whilst the Ghanaian pupil had joined the School directly from Ghana seven months ago and was happy there. Both spoke good English. One British pupil had been in the area since Year 7 and had transferred from Fox Hill Primary School to Brakenhale School with friends and was happy at the school which he valued. The other British pupil felt that Brakenhale was a very good school and he had many friends there.

The following information was provided in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

The Ghanaian pupil had not initially been happy at the school as he had felt a little lost, had no friends and only a few words of English and found it very different from Ghana. However, he had now settled in and was happy attending the school and living in England. Schooling in Nepal was also very different with a stricter approach and more concentration on maths, English and science. One British pupil found the School a friendly place and the lessons not too hard whilst the remaining pupil was very happy at the school finding that CMCD worked well and the teachers were friendly.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

The Nepali pupil was happy with the structure of the day which consisted of two lessons, a break, two further lessons followed by a lunch break and a final lesson. IT was named as a favourite area and she had used computers in Nepal. One of the British pupils felt the school day flowed well and the perceived length of it tended to vary according to the subject matter of the last lesson. Splitting the more intensive academic lessons with activities such as PE helped to balance the day. He felt that there was plenty of pupil interaction and preferred to be active than sitting in class. The other British pupil felt that the impression of lesson length varied according to how much he enjoyed the subject being taught. Photography and business studies were his favourites whilst maths and English were less popular. The Ghanaian pupil advised that there had been age variation in Ghanaian classes and that he did not mind mixing with younger children and would like to be in the same class as his younger brother.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

The Ghanaian pupil found history the most challenging subject as he had no background knowledge. Although one of the British pupils had no particular problems, he found that business studies was not absorbing and that one teacher's teaching style was too rapid causing him to struggle to keep pace.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

The pupils did as much as they could and asked friends for help or studied in the library to improve their understanding. Teachers were generally happy to help when asked and some language assistance had been provided.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

Teachers pausing before the end of a lesson to reiterate, explain and answer questions was suggested as a helpful step. The Ghanaian pupil felt that there should be additional support for EAL pupils and that an interpreter would be beneficial.

Q6. Does your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

The school's resources included a library, learning resource centre, PCs and interactive white boards. Pupils were able to access the learning resource centre during breaks and lunch to assist their studies. The pupils had PCs at home but no access to books in their first language.

Other resources were the spaciousness of the site which facilitated PE, games and football during breaks. The school's facilities and outside space were said to be better than in Ghana.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

All the pupils used the library and one visited the public library in Bracknell.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

The pupils liked the library and felt that it was a good place to learn. It had a friendly atmosphere, offered many books and PCs and there was always a teacher available to assist if required.

Interview with KS3 Pupils at The Brakenhale School

The Working Group met a group of three KS3 pupils who provided the following information.

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Two of the three pupils in the group were not happy at the school. They had found it very difficult to settle in and to make friends.

One of the group had only one pupil of the same sex transfer to the school from her previous school and even after a full term the lack of friends was an issue.

A second member of the group commented that other pupils were not kind to her and she felt that things would not improve.

The third member of the group was non committal about how happy they were at the school.

All three children welcomed the arrival of new EAL children as an opportunity to meet new friends.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

As this particular group was short of friends their perception of children playing together was also less positive than the Working Group would have expected. The main comment was that children tended to mix within their established groups and thus making friends was difficult.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

Two of the group felt that they did not find lessons difficult whilst the third struggled with reading and writing.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

One of the children commented that their Teaching Assistant (TA) spent most of their time with a single pupil and had very little time for the rest of the class.

The other two said that the TAs supported their whole class and that the support given was very helpful.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

Two of the group used the library and found it to be a great place to learn in a relaxed and friendly environment. The other member of the group did not take advantage of the library.

Interviews with Pupils at Garth Hill College

First Group of Pupils

There were eight pupils in the first group interviewed comprising two pupils from each of Years 8, 9, 10 and 11. Languages in addition to English being spoken or learnt by the pupils were Spanish, French, Romanian, Russian, Polish, an African language and Nepali.

The following information was provided in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Two pupils indicated that they were happy at the College, another was happy sometimes and the remaining five felt neutral about it.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

Three of the group felt that pupils did work and play well together at the College, another three were of the opinion that this was the case most of the time and the remaining two felt the situation was 'OK'. Pupils sought accommodation to use during breaks in order to avoid standing outside during inclement weather. Year 11 had a terrapin for this purpose but it was thought to be very crowded. Other points made were that older / bigger pupils 'picked on' younger / smaller ones and that year groups were split into labelled friendship groups based on music and fashion taste between whom there was no interaction. These groups formed in Year 7 and remained intact as the pupils progressed through the College until the end of their education. In PE classes the groups were placed in competition against each other and this heightened divides between them.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

The pupils indicated that they sought help from friends before asking teachers for assistance when they met difficulties. All pupils identified subjects with which they sometimes struggled and these were mathematics, science, English (Macbeth), IT, technology, geography, drama and RE because it was foreign.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

Three pupils were of the opinion that teachers and classrooms assistants were generally quite helpful when they struggled with lessons. One pupil felt that they were helpful in so far as they provided the answer to a question without explaining how it was arrived at and another felt that her maths and physics teachers were not helpful. An EAL pupil stated that teachers appeared to take the view that lessons were too difficult for him to learn and therefore were not particularly helpful. The reason for pupils having difficulties in lessons was said to be that the teaching style was too rapid for them to keep pace. Bad behaviour in class was identified as an issue which led to teachers becoming stressed and incommunicative. Pupils were reprimanded for talking when they asked their classmates for assistance.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

Pupils felt that they were given answers without sufficient explanation of the process and suggested that a more practical teaching stance involving greater use of examples be adopted and that pupils be allowed 10 minutes at the end of each teaching session to check their work with classmates to ensure correct understanding. One pupil sought the opportunity to ask teachers for help, another felt that teachers should listen more closely to pupils' needs and a further pupil required greater explanation of questions so she knew what was expected of her. A pupil suggested that fellow pupils be allowed to offer explanations because, as a peer, they were often able to identify an alternative method of explanation that was easier for him to understand.

Q6. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

English speaking Poles assisted with translation needs when Polish children were interviewed. Pupils' command of English was assessed on their arrival at the College and they were referred to an EAL teacher if it was considered necessary. Welcome packs with leaflets translated into different languages were provided.

The pupils generally felt that the College's resources played a part in helping them to overcome difficulties and improve learning. Use of the library, exercise books and glossaries in text books were cited as useful resources which enabled pupils to progress at their own pace. Difficulties had been experienced with science programmes on school computers which utilised confusing language and therefore more 'user friendly' science software and science dictionaries in languages other than English were sought. At present, only science glossaries in other languages, such as Russian, German, Portuguese and Slovakian, were available. Reference was made to maths and English phrase books and phrase books split into different subjects were welcomed. It was possible to download translated educational materials from the www.BFinclusion.org.uk website.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

The library was used by three of the group of eight pupils, all of whom had EAL.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

The three library users felt that it did have friendlier resources and a fourth pupil was of the opinion that it did not have enough computers.

Second Group of Pupils

The second group of pupils interviewed consisted of two Nepalese 6th Form students both of whom had been living in England for five months. The pupils were studying four subjects including maths and English and took part in the EAL lunchtime club which involved playing games with English speakers. They had been taught English from the age of five in Nepal where they had English text reading books such as fairytales and fables. The pupils had been introduced to lessons immediately on their arrival at the College and one stated that he had found initially that English was spoken too quickly for him to follow.

The following information was provided in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Both students were happy at the College as they had made good friends and found people in the organisation to be friendly.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

The students felt that pupils did work and play well together in the College although one stated that this view was based on experience in the 6th Form only.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

One student found writing English difficult whilst the other had previously struggled with English Literature but this was no longer a problem as he was now studying under the International English Language Testing System which he found interesting.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

Teachers explained lessons to one of the students when he needed assistance and the other student had received help in the form of extra English lessons and was assisted by the running of many programmes at the College.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

One student sought assistance with completing GCSEs in one year without compromising his grades and the other had found that support and encouragement from friends and teachers had helped.

Q6. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

Both students felt that the College's resources did play a part in helping to overcome difficulties and gain knowledge.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

Both students used the College library and liked Bracknell Library as it offered more than Nepalese libraries which were generally stocked with books only.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

The students found that the College library did have a friendlier resource where they could find anything they needed to promote learning.

Interview with Pupils at Sandy Lane Primary School

The Working Group met fifteen EAL pupils aged between 7 and 11 years of age who provided the following information in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Of the fifteen pupils, fourteen indicated that they were happy at the School whilst the remaining one pupil felt neutral about it.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

Six of the group felt that pupils did work and play well together at the School and nine expressed no particular opinion on the matter.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

One pupil did not find any of the lessons hard, another found them hard sometimes and a third felt neutral about them. The remaining pupils indicated that they enjoyed one or more subjects, including mathematics, literacy, design and technology, science and art, at least some of the time.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

Ten pupils stated that the teachers and classroom assistants helped them by explaining lessons when necessary. Four other pupils felt neutral about assistance and a fifth indicated that the lessons were different to those she had received before.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

Other than one pupil who required no assistance at all, the remainder of the group required some assistance with science, literacy, listening, ICT and mathematics.

Q6. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

Eight of the pupils identified books and dictionaries as playing a part in helping them to overcome difficulties, three pupils advised that their friends assisted them, two felt that teachers helped, one found computers helpful, one stated that clubs and playing games was beneficial and another felt that all of the School's resources helped.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

Eight of the fifteen pupils visited Bracknell Library on occasions.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

Of the eight pupils who visited the Library, five felt that the computers were a friendlier resource and the others made use of DVDs, the good selection of books and one welcomed being able to sit down to read in a quiet environment.

Interview with Pupils at Great Hollands Primary School

The Working Group met sixteen EAL pupils aged between five and nine years of age who provided the following information in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Fourteen of the pupils indicated that they were happy at school whilst the remaining two felt neutral about it.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

Six of the group were of the opinion that children did work and play well together in the School, five felt that this was sometimes the case and the remaining five had no particular opinion.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

Eleven children expressed some difficulties with lessons, particularly mathematics.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

Twelve pupils indicated that the teachers and classroom assistants helped by explaining the work and demonstrating what needed to be done, one felt that this was the case some of the time and two sought more assistance.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

Eleven pupils felt that they need more help with reading, spelling, multiplication, division and computers. A further child sought help with batting the ball when playing rounders.

Q6. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

Teachers, friends, collaborative learning, computers, whiteboard and pens, newspapers, dictionaries and in particular books were cited as resources which played a part in overcoming learning difficulties.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

Ten pupils indicated that they used libraries, one of whom had an e-plus card and visited both Great Hollands and Bracknell Libraries.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

Libraries were felt to assist learning and pupils welcomed the wide selection of interesting books in a range of languages, friendly staff, computers and cards.

Interview with Pupils at College Town Infant School

The Working Group met ten EAL pupils aged six and seven years of age who provided the following information in answer to the Working Group's questions:-

Q1. Are you happy at your school?

Of the ten pupils, nine indicated that they were happy at school and the remaining one pupil felt neutral about it.

Q2. Do Children work and play well together in your school?

Eight pupils felt that children worked and played well together in the school and two felt that they did not.

Q3. Do you find any of the lessons hard?

The majority of pupils found some lessons hard, particularly ICT.

Q4. When you find something hard how do the teachers and classroom assistants help you?

Four of the group indicated that teachers and classroom assistants helped when they found lessons hard.

Q5. Are there times when you feel that you need more help and if so what help would you like?

The majority of pupils sought more assistance with spelling and writing.

Q6. Do your school's resources (books, IT etc.) play any part in helping to overcome difficulties?

Books and teachers were cited as helping to overcome pupils' difficulties.

Q7. Do you go to the library?

Seven of the pupils visited the library.

Q8. If yes, does it have friendlier resources?

Two of the seven pupils who utilised the library felt that it had a friendlier resource but did not indicate what this was.