

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

10 OCTOBER 2000

EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT: PROGRESS REPORT – PHASE 1 P3 PUPIL ATTAINMENT

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT**

This report describes the improvements in attainment made by P3 pupils in the first phase of the Authority's Early Intervention Project.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report
- (b) notes in the attached report the analysis of the improved performance in standardised Reading and Mathematics tests recorded by Phase 1 P3 pupils in May 2000
- (c) notes the continuing benefits for learning and teaching in the early stages of primary schools arising from the Early Intervention project

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Progress in relation to the Early Intervention project was the subject of detailed reports to the Education Committee on 26 January 1999 (Article 7 refers) and 23 November 1999 (Article 7 refers)
- 2.2 Members will be aware of the very positive evaluation of the first two years of the Angus project carried out by an external consultant. The report prepared by that consultant indicated that evidence was beginning to emerge of increased pupil achievement in Reading and Mathematics in the early stages of primary school.
- 2.3 The first significant evaluation of the achievement of pupils who were the first to be affected by the Angus Early Intervention Project has been completed by the Council's Early Intervention Team and is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 2.4 The evaluation exercise sought to compare the June 2000 Reading and Mathematics scores of P3 pupils in the eight Phase 1 focus schools with the scores achieved by P3 pupils in the same schools in June 1999 and June 1998 respectively. The June 2000 P3 cohort was the first group of pupils whose early years curriculum had been affected by the Early Intervention Project. The comparisons of P3 attainment over the last three sessions were made on the basis of pupil performance in standardised tests.
- 2.5 The evaluation exercise also sought to compare the Reading and Mathematics scores recorded by last session's P3 pupils in the Phase 1 focus schools with the scores which they achieved in **predictive** tests carried out when they were in P1.

**3 EARLY INTERVENTION PHASE 1 PUPIL ATTAINMENT EVALUATION REPORT – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- 3.1 A key measure to evaluate pupil attainment in the Early Intervention project has been the use of standardised tests administered in P3 in relation to both Reading and Mathematics.
- 3.2 Since the inception of the project in session 1997-98 measures have been taken of the performance of 3 successive cohorts [Reading] and 2 successive cohorts [Mathematics] in Phase 1 focus schools, identified on the basis of social disadvantage and/or pupil underachievement.

3.3 The attached analysis of last session's P3 test scores in the eight Phase 1 focus schools indicates that:

- the 2000 P3 scores show a marked increase in mean scores compared with the scores achieved by the 1999 and 1998 P3 cohorts
- the percentage of children reaching the average score for their chronological age has risen steadily over the first three years of the project (56%→72% in the case of Reading, 54%→67% in the case of Mathematics)
- there have been significant gains in pupil performance as measured by comparisons between their scores in the P3 standardised tests and their scores in predictive baseline tests conducted when they were in P1 - most pupils have made a 9 point gain in Mathematics and a 13 point gain in Reading
- there are indications that, despite overall progress, girls are outperforming boys – on average the reading scores for girls were 5 points higher than the scores for boys
- the type of assessments and the type of methodologies used within the project enable schools to identify and respond more effectively to those children at risk of significant underachievement in the early stages of primary school
- the overall gains in pupil achievement may be attributable in part to:
  - targeted staff development opportunities for staff teaching in the early years
  - the provision of Early Intervention assistants who provide support to teachers and pupils
  - the use of more effective teaching methodologies including:
    - (i) the use of entry assessments which identify more effectively the starting point of each pupil upon entry to P1
    - (ii) more interactive teaching styles
    - (iii) more focused approaches to the teaching of reading
  - advice and guidance from teachers in the Early Intervention support team who are all experienced and successful infant teachers

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The results of this first major evaluation of pupil attainment are most encouraging. There is increasing evidence that the significant investment of support in the early years is paying dividends. It will now be important to build on the initial successes of the Early Intervention Project by ensuring a sustained commitment to learning and teaching approaches which are shown to be effective. It will also be important to seek to address gender differences and any evidence of underachievement among boys.

It is gratifying to note that 5-14 levels [measured by National Tests] reported in June 2000 in relation to P3 performance in Reading and Mathematics in Angus primary schools show a marked improvement over the performance of P3 pupils in 1999 and 1998. The evidence provided in the attached evaluation report and summarised in 3.3 above suggests that the Early Intervention Programme has made a significant contribution to the improvements in attainment by P3 pupils.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **6 CONSULTATION**

In accordance with the standing orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance.

JIM ANDERSON  
Director of Education

**NOTE:** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Appendix