

**A review of the impacts of recent basic skills development activity initiated/ strongly supported by organisations connected to Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership**

Initial investments made 1996-2003	Where did those investments get Birmingham by 2006?
<p><b><u>Book gifts to stimulate reading/ love of books</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Book gift/motivational material at 9-12 months (<b>Bookstart</b>) via trained library/health visitors (around 100,000 sets of books/materials distributed over past several years); now to be supplemented with further books/materials at around 18 months and at 3-4 years old; Secured national funding (government + private sector) releasing local resources for targeting specific groups such as travellers, asylum seekers/refugee families, families in refuges and hostels</li> <li>➤ Activity, over 5 years to 2003, focused on 7 year olds (to counter the dip in reading at that age), with selection of a free book from a range of titles. More than 50,000 books distributed, via this '<b>Let's Get Reading</b>' activity, linked to school/ library activity</li> <li>➤ Book tokens &amp; visit to bookshop is built in as a common activity in many family literacy programmes, via schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <u>Bookstart:</u> National funding is now available for Bookstart materials (3 book gifts per child plus Booktouch for visually impaired children and Bookcrawl) The national funding is available until 2008. Birmingham Libraries continues to lead the Bookstart activity across Health/Libraries/Early Years settings. The Bookstart and Early years Librarian (mainstream post) co-ordinates the scheme with the help of a part-time assistant (externally funded). Health visitors issue packs to parents and return delivery statistics to local libraries who collate and pass them on centrally. Treasure Chests are delivered directly from a Birmingham storage location to Early Years settings by local delivery company. All children are entitled to 3 gifts before they start school. Birmingham achieved 88% overall delivery (compared with national 79%). Children's Centres are targeted, as are special needs children. Local libraries are linking with their nearest Children's Centres and many have given out Treasure Chests at special book events. Every library runs Bookstart Bookcrawl in Birmingham between October and March every year. This is a scheme similar to the summer reading trail and under 5s collect stickers each time they visit the library, 5 stickers and they get a certificate and 5 certificates (each one a different design) they get a free book. Children have to be library members to participate.</li>   <li>In addition, all libraries run rhyme and rhythm times for under 5s and other under 5s events in the year. Extra funding has enabled local libraries to increase their under 5s and family friendly resources and/or put in special events to promote library membership.</li>   <li>One intention is for every child to be a member of the library when they start school and will encourage this by use of an incentive scheme.</li>   <li>Bookstart has now expanded from its original inception in Birmingham and now has schemes in Europe, Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Thailand and the Falkland Islands, as well as links with other schemes in New Zealand, USA and Canada.</li>   <li>❑ <u>Let's Get Reading</u> After initial reports of a rapid increase in reading skills, more reading for enjoyment etc for Birmingham children around the key 6-8 year old period, things settled again, but at this higher level. A further boost, to try to lift activity levels further, was put in place for 2006/7. The offer of 3 free books to every 7</li> </ul>

year old is being offered to around 20 schools in selected neighbourhoods (where activity needs a boost) and is being used as the activity through which schools can choose to pull in Bookflood; visits by professional writers; more access to family learning; opportunities to draw in more reading volunteers etc.

In the 2007 budget announcement there is a proposal to issue supplementary book gifts to children at ages 5 and 11 (on starting schools).

- ❑ Book gifts etc continue to be an integral part of family literacy activity across the city.

### **Support for developments in Under Fives settings**

- School-based Preschool Workers moved into community venues such as health centres to work with under 5s, and their parents, to create interest in books, development of language, parenting support, family reading etc - in areas of low achievement/poor health etc (**Sure Start/Flying Start**)
- Under 5s/ family story times in more libraries; access to interactive stories on CDROM in libraries - **Cradle Clubs** in libraries in areas of low library usage by under5s families.
- Pre-OFSTED inspection support for private and community nurseries re literacy/ Numeracy resources, staff training, involvement of parents
- Identification of areas where language/ literacy baselines on entry to school are lowest, and encouragement of local groups of Under Fives workers to address the issue (via Neighbourhood Renewal).
- Parent/ teacher/ child activities around literacy and Numeracy developed in all nursery schools, day nurseries and many nursery classes (Building on **Leading to Reading** campaign).
- Groups of workers from different under fives contexts encouraged to work more collaboratively, via the Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- In the absence of a national framework for the content of under-5s curriculum, work was done across Birmingham to establish a common framework that had language, literacy and numeracy as elements within a broader curriculum. This was paralleled with a whole-city assessment of children's skills on entry to school.

- ❑ Up to 1,000 children per week use the forty-seven regular Under 5s activity sessions, in thirty-two libraries. This is in addition to the 5,000 Under 5s attendances at Words on Wheels (see later) and 3,000 under 5s attendances at summer events, Young Readers etc.

- ❑ In the 2006 OFSTED Chief Inspectors report 27 under 5's providers, of different kinds, were listed as having been judged 'outstanding' on inspection. This reflects the improvement overall, including language, literacy etc. At the same time there is still (in 2007) a sizeable proportion of early years organisations whose language communication and number work can shift from 'satisfactory' to 'good'. Maps are available showing the wards and smaller neighbourhoods that still have below city average levels of communication/language skills of children entering school. There is still a need for a more concerted approach to raising early language levels although much is being done via various mechanisms.

- ❑ There has been national development of a 0-5 Foundation Stage Framework with literacy, language and number as key elements.

- ❑ Training is consistently available to Foundation Stage practitioner staff. This includes communication skills/language/writing etc. The training targets new providers and providers in areas of underachievement. In 07-08 there is the intention to target more than 50 organisations in order to raise communication and language skills by 50% in these settings.

- ❑ From an early position where there were Under 5s Workers Groups meeting in several areas of the city, there developed a series of Inclusion Networks with all Under 5s and Foundation Stage organisations represented. These operated alongside the emerging Children's Centre networks. OFSTED reports on pre-school provision in the city show that most Children's Centres are now rated as good or excellent. Any further infrastructure development will be via the Early Years activities of the Local Authority as part of the Children and Young People's Plan. The increased numbers of Children's Centres will also be able to draw on curriculum support and support for engaging parents.

- ❑ [Flying Start](#) operates a city-wide outreach service although in-depth work is targeted to those settings or families that are identified as having the greatest need. The focus is on families with 0-3 year old children, some take part in activities offered to the whole community, some are targeted with specific activities and some are referred for 1:1 support. Many of the families live in temporary accommodation; or are housebound.

Activities include specific parenting programmes, communication and progresses towards language and literacy and could be followed up with more in-depth workshops. The team have built on a book sharing service and every family visited at home is given a book and encouraged to sharing this as a family. There are currently book loan schemes operating in the hostels/refuges, health centres or stay and play sessions, with an increasing number of book loans including books for adults in addition to the children's books.

The team are working in close partnership with Children's Centres, Sure Start and libraries. Some of the team are working on specific communication/ language projects –Stop Look and Listen is one based south of the city and has been developed jointly by Flying Start workers, a Health Visitor and Sure Start Family Workers. It has been delivered to several families in the area and is currently being extended by Flying Start to other areas by training up other practitioners and health workers.

The team are currently undertaking work on the government's 2-year pilot to access eligible particular 2-year-old children into childcare. The target is families who live in temporary accommodation and the aim is to access childcare, which is of high quality and has a proven history of parental support. The time spent away from the child has allowed a number of parents to access other services including ESOL classes. The pilot began in July 2006 and is set to run until April 2008.

### **Young people engaging with writing (other than through school activity)**

- Young people review books; communicate with others via website; **Stories from the Web**. Club model with links to wider library service opportunities; (around 18 groups have become self-standing with some central support. Young people create own portfolio of creative writing, book reviews etc and contribute to an on-line gallery which currently holds 32,000 pieces of work. All staff working with early years groups will be able to access new Early Years sections of **Stories from the Web**. Links with librarian visits to schools, reading groups etc has spread to other local authority areas from its beginnings in Birmingham.
- Gallery 37 (Art summer school) – use of key skills college staff to build in

- ❑ [Stories from the Web](#) is now a national service (and is also gaining recognition internationally). By 2006 it was being used by 50 library authorities across the UK. The website is now supported by funding from a subscription model with each authority contributing a relatively small sum of money. Library staff promote the website to families who use it independently. A range of activity is undertaken with mainstream schools and newly arrived families. The balance of activities for young people include:  
(7-11 area) A range of creative writing including stories, poetry, book reviews and feedback about the site.  
(11-14 area) A range of creative writing as above, online book related discussions(moderated), use of the Writing Tips written by 'real' authors and poets.

<p>communication/ number work; Basic skills built into football coaching schemes etc.</p> <p>➤ In 2005 the Library Service initiated a Young Poet Laureate for the city, alongside the much more established system of annual Poet Laureates.</p>	<p>In addition the resources on the site underpin reader development activities held as one-off sessions throughout the year.</p> <p>❑ The Young Poet Laureate activity is still developing, into its third year. Groups of young people have the opportunity to work with the adult poet laureate; the young and adult laureates work together during their year.</p>
<p><b><u>Support for building literacy and numeracy activities into all aspects of learning</u></b></p> <p>➤ Assessment of potential for literacy/ numeracy ‘inserts’ into after school clubs, weekend or holiday activities, stays at residential/environmental study centres, or into the different ‘pathways’ through learning that the government has been trying to encourage in secondary schools.</p> <p>➤ Literacy/Numeracy built into <b>University of First Age</b>, Children’s University, Summer Schools, Supplementary Schools etc.</p>	<p>❑ <a href="#">Supplementary schools</a> continue to exist across many areas of the city, with some examples of excellent practice. There is some way to go before all are linked into adequate teaching that supports literacy, language or numeracy developments – and a debate about whether this is the best function some should be aiming to provide (as opposed to work on resilience, social and emotional development etc). The aim is that such community organisations form part of the wider network of support, across localities, to help children and young people improve their outcomes. There is now a national support and development centre for supplementary school activity, based in Birmingham.</p> <p>❑ The value of <a href="#">out of hours learning</a> has, after some years of a clear focus on classroom practice, reappeared on the local and national agenda. Much of this focuses on physical activity, creativity and positive engagement. Without wanting to see only the development of extra reading/writing sessions there is more to be done to develop out of hours curricula that are exciting, encouraging and provide wide scope for contextualised practicing of basic skills. One route for this will be via the extended activity clusters, with city-wide support from a central team.</p> <p>❑ There is continued use of residential centres. These offer specific literacy/numeracy activities, which link in with the National Curriculum. Other sessions have links with literacy/numeracy and session plans/schemes of work may highlight these links. The literacy/numeracy documents have been upgraded and the team attend updating sessions.</p> <p>❑ There are many more opportunities for young people to engage in own-time structured reading activities and book-related activities (mostly stimulated via the Library Service but with a growing involvement of professional writers via private sector development agencies). Most significant amongst these is the Libraries’ Summer Reading Challenge. This is successful, but needs to extend the range of young people involved.</p>
<p><b><u>Outreach with young people/on outer estates</u></b></p> <p>➤ mix of youth work/library skills work from central library, focused on groups of young people who are not traditional library users; access to training for Youth service staff re vocational mentoring/ support (with inbuilt literacy)</p>	<p>❑ A limited number of community development activities provided a link between local library services and ‘disconnected’ residents, particularly on housing estates. The most active of these was a link between Kings Norton Library and the Three Estates by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to organisations to promote the services available at the library; group</li> </ul>

	<p>visits to the library, in order to improve access to the comprehensive range of free information; story sessions in the locality and parent support through talks on sharing books with babies, helping children to choose books etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional sessions with the elderly, including readings, talks, and displays on health and other appropriate sessions, with any needs expressed during this work being reflected in service planning, including book stock selection</li> <li>• Promoting the resources available to basic skills learners and tutors and other local courses offered in the area, and stimulate the use of basic skills Library resources</li> <li>• A film night to get young people to begin film reviews and move on to book reviews, with the opportunity to promote library stock closely related to certain films and topics. The Youth Service has continued to use the library's equipment to offer the service to young people each week</li> <li>• Training through volunteers working one-to-one with 11 –16 year olds has created the opportunity for the library to work more closely with the alternative curriculum aimed at young people who are absent from school mainstream education.</li> <li>• The opportunity to establish a community loan for parents and children at community venues, with a parent helper scheme.</li> <li>• Working with the Community Wardens to establish a 'Walking Bus' providing a regular safe passage to children and young people from the Three Estates to the library.</li> <li>• This work has made sufficient impact for the constituency to be considering a community library provision on the Hawkesley estate at the community centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Homework support facilities in libraries</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ resources available at end of school day in almost every library, with staff support</li> <li>➤ linked to school curriculum; set books/texts (with some training of librarians by education advisers etc</li> <li>➤ linked into wider library services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 41 local libraries are still being supported with up-dating their Core Collections of books which support homework enquiries. Every library runs their clubs in more or less the same way. They still have a dedicated member of staff to support the children. Schools/centres also offer homework support but the children that visit library clubs come along as we offer something very different. Staff need to be constantly up-dated in changes to the school Curriculum.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Focus on specific groups of children/ young people</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Children in care/in hostels/at risk: stocks of books and computers etc put into hostels/care homes; work with foster carers; links to authors/ writer in residence - with a focus on books generally and ones relating to own situation; production of booklets of own writing; targeted inclusion of looked-after children in wider city programmes; use of reading volunteers to support reading skills.</li> <li>➤ Activities with new arrivals/ unaccompanied asylum seeking children working with authors/ readers to explore books that connect with their context</li> <li>➤ Small amounts of additional resources or extra staff hours to enable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Via 3 working groups focusing on underachieving groups various reports have been produced. Some of the originally supported work is continuing, alongside other developments. Insights from these reports were put alongside a review of national/international research re what makes a difference for underachieving groups [via Core Skills Development Partnership as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal approach]'. All of this thinking on how to counter underachievement is being fed through all relevant developments focusing on Key Stage 2 and 3. The combined work on supporting work with underachieving groups is being carried forward via school-based action research.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Looked After Children</a></li> </ul>

'boosting' work to be undertaken with school pupils who had clearly not grasped some specific curriculum skills – enabling these groups to 'catch up and keep up' before they started to fall ever further behind because of gaps in their skills.

- Training school staff to work on a Reading Recovery basis with individuals/ small groups needing to catch-up (focusing on Year 1 pupils)
- Action-research activity, at school level and via city-level working groups, to collectively work on how to improve achievement for underachieving groups, on how to produce consistency across schools etc. Focusing on boys; AfroCaribbean pupils)
- Extra literacy/ language work inserted into support activities of Portage Service and Pupil/ School Support service and Visiting Teacher Service.

From being a much overlooked group, Looked after Children are now a priority group for the Local Authority – in terms of their care, their health, their education, the transition to after-care, and their opportunities to influence what happens to them. The Local Authority takes its Corporate Parent responsibilities more seriously.

The Children's Services targets for educational attainment by aged 16 now include a separate sub-target for improving the levels of attainment of looked after young people.

Services to this group falls within the scope of the now established Looked After Children Education Services which attempts to minimise disruption to children's learning. This is done through in-school support; support at meetings e.g. appeals, exclusions, reviews; liaison with key agencies; interim teaching for Looked After Children without school places; multi-agency training on all issues relating to Looked After Children; telephone helpline for advice and support to designated teachers, social workers, foster carers and any agencies working with Looked After Children

Much more information, and more accurate information, is now available – and any gaps in service delivery is now more clearly visible. Schools are more aware of the needs of this group and what support might be necessary.

Examination results for this group, whilst still well below city average, are improving year on year.

### **Young Readers Festival**

- Idea first tested in 1998/99. Festival had series of more than 150 events, over 2 weeks, high numbers involved, primary and secondary school age; some focus on specific groups within a broad popular appeal; events linked to school curriculum... can be supported by pre-Festival activities in schools, with book loans of authors' works. Based on readings/ performance events, extended by 'meet the authors'; discussions/ questions; how books get written/ how writers make choices etc – including writers into Children's Homes, and into 15 PlayCentres.

- ❑ [Young Readers Birmingham Festival 2006](#) was the eighth annual children's book festival organised by Birmingham Libraries and took place from 20 May – 3 June 2006. In all there were 162 events, featuring a wide range of poets, authors and storytellers reaching an audience of approximately 12,400 throughout the city. The majority of events were free but for the first time a charge was made for some events.

One of Young Readers Birmingham's key aims is to reach and develop new audiences and this was done in a number of ways including:

- programming a new and revised range of authors, poets, storytellers and musicians reflecting, in particular, Black and Asian communities in Birmingham;
- targeting specific disadvantaged groups including Looked After Children, Newly arrived families and Special Schools – this year we ran sessions specifically targeted at children with learning difficulties and disabilities;
- programme available on request in a range of community languages and large print.

	<p>Young Readers 2006 was extremely successful and well attended. The majority of events had capacity audiences and future festivals need to address a growing demand. Young Readers 2007 is currently being planned. There is a need to see where this sits within other events, festivals etc.</p>
<p><b><u>Support for reading development in specific locations</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A converted 'single deck bus' type vehicle had been used by the library as an outreach books and storytelling resource for families with children 0-5. This popular facility was supported through a time of financial difficulty so that it would be able to be built into the strengthened early years partnership structures. This mobile library facility was reaching families in areas that do not normally use library services, by parking at community venues/Health centres etc. <b>Words on Wheels</b></li> <li>➤ In Small Heath area (designated as in need of reading development with young children) there have been poetry slams in secondary schools; storytelling and community groups etc. This brought together a range of earlier threads and was focused, with support from Birmingham Children's Fund, at children at risk/disadvantaged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ The <a href="#">Words on Wheels</a> vehicle remains very popular and is flexibly available to support a range of other events and library activities across the city. It has lift access for wheelchair users and the driver is a librarian. It is stocked with examples of the latest books available in libraries; has a parents' collection, toys and games. It still has an Under Fives focus but is less tied to that age group. There are links to Children's Centres and other parts of the early years network across the city. Work is additionally done to support groups such as Traveller families.</li> </ul> <p>This has been added to by a smaller 'Transit' type vehicle which, similarly, takes books/reading/storytelling to disadvantaged parts of the city – with an initial emphasis on Black/Caribbean families. (<a href="#">Words Out</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ Small Heath area was selected for a boost to reading-based activities (<a href="#">Words Aloud</a>), which have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A local poet acting as 'writer in residence' at Birmingham City Football Club has run workshops for young people (identified by their schools as under-performing).</li> <li>• More than a hundred 2 hour sessions, each year, working on a series of projects such as making films and newspapers or creating a performance poetry piece.</li> <li>• Materials (i.e. notepads/pens/book marks promoting the facilities and events offered by library services &amp; community organisations along with tips on reading, learning and general welfare/emotional issues) have been distributed to over 1500 children.</li> <li>• 50 literacy workshops (each one hour long) held at the local library, each session attended by a group of 30 pupils from a local primary school. These interactive sessions were led by children's writers to encourage creativity and reading within the setting of the library. Where necessary the opportunity was taken to stock up the library with relevant books. Children were encouraged to take out the books from the library at the end of the session. Follow up materials were also sent out to the schools.</li> <li>• More than 50 workshops held in primary schools; with community groups of parents; and as part of an intensive summer school for 9-15 year olds disconnecting from education (around 300 different participants across the range of workshops).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Extending the range of library support in school settings</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ One option in the Schools Library Service menu of support to schools is to supply boxes of around 100 high quality books (general, or selected to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <a href="#">Bookflood</a> is an established activity that schools (and others) can access as part of the normal Schools Library Service menu of support. The model remains that of delivering crates of up to 200 new, high quality books to a school for the</li> </ul>

match a theme or a target group, or to encourage use of a particular kind of text) which can be left with classes for an extended period of time for the pupils/ teachers to engage with how they choose (**Bookflood**). Currently running at about 5000 books per year.

- All libraries in secondary schools reviewed fairly recently, with support to bring them up to a reasonably good level.

school to use in any way appropriate to their own development planning. The range of books can include dual language; cultural stories; quirky picture books; non-fiction; books on arts/crafts/hobbies/pets; poetry; picture books; board books and tactile books/big books for group use/stories for beginner readers. The range, number and variety of books are selected by the Schools library Service advised by the school.

This crate of motivating books can be left with the school for up to a year. They are being used in a range of ways – added into school library catalogued stock; put in classroom book cases; used in exchange sessions (where e.g. parents come in to talk with the child about the book choices they are making); used to stimulate the creation of children's own books etc.

This activity has strengthened the School Library Service with more schools, enabling those schools to access the wider range of services on offer through the Schools library Service.

### **School staff development**

- Updating sessions for head teachers, heads of departments, language and maths coordinators, classroom teachers and learning assistants re focusing on the teaching and learning of specific skills in reading and writing, language, numerical transformations, number patterns etc.
- 5, 10 and 20 day courses for English coordinators and maths coordinators in schools – allowing the key staff to meet others in the same position and, at the same time, to really get to grips with bringing about improvements in literacy and numeracy at a whole school level within their own organisations.
- Sharpening whole school plans and policies that linked understanding which groups of pupils were under-performing (and what to do about it) with staff development programmes and targeting of resources.
- Additional support for newly appointed teachers and newly appointed school managers re literacy and numeracy development.
- Opportunities for primary school teachers to sit in on 'demonstration' lessons by colleagues in other schools and take the insights back to their own school.
- Extra visits to schools by literacy and numeracy 'lead teachers / consultant teachers' who could work with staff on the issues for their school, undertake demonstration teaching of particular curriculum skills, bring in examples of expertise from other schools, make links with wider staff development programmes etc.
- Professional development sessions on specific topics e.g. 'literacy through art' – for art teachers; often sitting alongside attempts by schools to build reading, writing, language and number skills into broader curriculum areas (ensuring that key words for e.g. a geography topic

- ❑ After a couple of years when Birmingham's coherent approach was subject to the need to adapt to/incorporate a variety of national initiatives, the picture is settling back into one of Birmingham having a unified approach to raising levels of English/Maths from foundation Stage to Key Stage 4. This includes generic support through advice and support to schools; more focused advice through specific work on curriculum areas/with schools; to very targeted interventions in schools below the national floor targets. At Key Stage 3 this includes looking at what can be learnt from effective practice elsewhere. Schools are expected to share knowledge across networks and to be far more responsible for their own ways forward.
- ❑ All schools in Birmingham are now familiar with, and skilled at, delivering within the national literacy and numeracy frameworks. Specific professional development sessions have been held to focus on aspects of writing or speaking & listening. Ongoing support to teachers and learning assistants is available in each school via a member of staff designated as having curriculum lead responsibility for literacy or for numeracy, with support for these curriculum coordinators coming from the Local Authority advisory/ improvement support to schools. The city-wide advisory consultants are available to give specific support to particular schools across their organisational/policy issues, or to individual teachers in certain schools around aspects of teaching and learning.
- ❑ Use is still made, by schools, of national quality marks/leading practice awards etc, but these now have a background role to the more robust processes of school annual development planning and self-assessment.
- ❑ The concept of shared modules delivered across primary/secondary schools at the transition at age 11 was taken up nationally. At the end of primary Year 6 and at the beginning of secondary Year 7, teachers are encouraged to use the national Transition Unit (on Authors and Texts) to offer continuity in teaching

were known and understood by pupils before tackling that topic in geography; repeating the skills gained in English – use of writing frames, skimming and scanning for meaning, using text for different purposes etc – in other subject lessons: and so on.

- Teacher cpd sessions on specific topics (e.g. KS1 writing)
- Use of national schools' Quality Mark (mapped to Birmingham's 7 processes of school improvement) as a further aid to development/ improvement planning.
- Primary/secondary teacher linkages around use of shared curriculum units across Year6/ Year7 (**Moving On Up**)
- Expanded trialling (as an 'associate' to national pilot) of national strategies e.g. KS3 Strategy. Where pilot LEAs each worked with around 50-100 pupils in a small number of schools, Birmingham trialled the approaches/materials across more than 1,300 pupils in more than 50 schools.
- Introduction of 'direct and deliberate' teaching of literacy/ maths skills
- Focus on how 'talk' can be made 'work' in the school classroom
- Training re thinking skills and maths/science –CAME and CASE.
- Establishing central literacy and numeracy resource bases for teachers.
- Access to an experienced headteacher, released to work with the Partnership, who could work with headteacher colleagues and could 'broker' learning between schools.
- Support materials produced centrally and available free to schools – videos on 'best practice'; curriculum materials to help children bridge the learning gap that might occur between primary and secondary school, etc.
- Training of 300 teachers in catch up/reading recovery techniques, working 1:1 with pupils at risk of falling behind. Extended the model to include small group work and more effective use of teaching assistants.

approach, learning objectives, lesson structure, and the opportunity for pupils to build on previous success and demonstrate what they already know. A reading journal supports the transition and, on transfer to secondary school, becomes a useful baseline document.

- ❑ The early focus of literacy and numeracy skills (much of which still underpins national approaches) was successful in doubling skills levels quite rapidly across all Key Stages- establishing Birmingham as the fastest improving city. At a point, though, it was clear that simply more of the same would not continue to produce similar gains. The emphasis on core skills was built into wider strategies incorporating attendance, behaviour, social and emotional development etc. Further significant gains need to be made over the next few years if Birmingham is to reach, or surpass, national average levels of pupil attainment in English and Maths.
- ❑ Once the gains from the introduction of more structured approaches to language development had been consolidated across most schools, it was clear that any next 'leap' in achievement was most likely to rest upon individual school research about the specific next steps in their particular contexts. A process was put in place that increasingly relied upon action-research at classroom level (alongside further support for key managers/ coordinators). The topics of research have followed the needs of the schools but have also clustered around specific developments in assessment approaches, use of visual texts, etc..
- ❑ At Key Stage 3 (11-14) the local strategy has included street posters encouraging pupils to see this stage of their learning as important in its own right, and a 'keep-your-book-in-the list' vote based on reading of a range of selected books.
- ❑ Excellent data exists on the relative performances, in English and Maths, of different communities across Birmingham. Schools are familiar with using pupil-level data to shape their teaching developments and decisions. At the whole-city level aggregated individual pupil data identifies 'hot spot' locations where interventions might be expected to produce most impact.
- ❑ Work has been done to identify the range of 'what works' re countering underachievement and to build on this via school-based action research, and via teacher development in e.g. personalisation of learning, assessment for learning etc. Whilst there has been significant closing of many of the achievement gaps between different groups in the city, there is more to be done to use this knowledge to bring about the larger scale improvements still needed.
- ❑ Many of the Reading Recovery trained teachers are still in Birmingham schools and able to use the elements of the approach as part of their everyday work with classes of pupils, and to advise other staff. Government reinvesting in focused catch up work via 'Every Child a Reader' and 'Every Child Counts' in designated schools.

#### **Reading volunteers**

- ❑ Volunteer Reading Help (primary focus) and Reading Matters (secondary focus)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Trained adults into schools to listen to children read; covers primary and secondary school; support for linking to business social responsibility agenda through established programme of using business volunteers from companies; four different volunteer schemes brought into contact with each other (joint proposals for development/ funding; shared training etc).</li> </ul>	<p>continue to operate in the city. The work has increasingly been directed towards local clusters of schools since schools purchasing a valued service is the logical position for this work.</p>
<p><b><u>Developing literacy and numeracy skills using ICT</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pupils using various types of small/ handheld computers to support reading/ writing (supported e.g. via National Literacy Association, Aston Pride, Birmingham City Council)</li> <li>➤ Adult education staff trained in use of consistent set of software packages (with capacity to author to suit own groups), using scale to lever in large volumes of software at advantageous prices; production of Spelling Disc, via CTAD. Sets of self-access adult literacy CDs into libraries.</li> <li>➤ Development of national trial model for CD-based diagnostic assessment for adult basic skills (<b>SkillsBuild</b>) – later developed as Target Skills</li> <li>➤ Putting literacy and Numeracy materials onto Grid for Learning, supporting e-college/ anywhere, anytime learning/ remote access to additional learning.</li> <li>➤ Establishment of Integrated Learning Systems (e.g. Successmaker) into many schools</li> <li>➤ Increasing the use of ICT to support literacy and numeracy – whether this was digital cameras to help nursery children make their own personal books; use of electronic whiteboards to support whole-group teaching; research into teaching and learning via ICT; laptops and desk top computers into children’s homes linked to good content that would enable easy access to learning materials; e-learning via laptops; email and good content for disaffected non-attenders etc – all sustained over a number of years in the knowledge that it takes at least a year for new methods/new technology to be built into everyday classroom activity in ways that enable it to impact substantially on learning outcomes.</li> <li>➤ Upgrading the software and paper-based resources used by schools to support literacy and numeracy developments in their pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The use of various ICT devices (for learning at home) is still being extended. The concept of pupils, parents and teachers having remote access to school work is relatively firmly established even if practice is still extremely variable across the city. Much of the development work has been carried forward in regeneration areas (such as Aston and Castle Vale). Birmingham is feeding into national developments on this work.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Adult reader development through libraries</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identification of socially excluded groups; focusing on their specific needs (in terms of stock held in libraries etc). Improve stock/train library service staff. Involvement of young people in stock selection/purchasing policy (stocking of magazines, graphic novels etc)</li> <li>➤ Collections of Skills for Life materials put into libraries; staff trained in adult basic skills awareness; stronger links made between libraries and adult literacy providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Building on the work to encourage uptake of library services by under-represented/socially excluded groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese community: 10% of the books now loaned from the Central Lending Library are to the Chinese community in the city</li> <li>• Young and Single Parents: this became the Fox Hollies Family Project and a huge success.</li> <li>• Lesbian and Gay collections: these collections still thrive in the 16 libraries and all libraries support LGBT resources.</li> <li>• People with Mental Health problems: the project group continues to meet to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

➤ Establishment of more teenage and adult reading groups (more than 30 across the city)

promote resources in community libraries and arrange occasional training events for library staff. Links have strengthened at community level in some libraries and groups have continued to meet. It is expected that the service will develop the Books on Prescription service that is about to be launched to include recommended books on mental health issues.

- Refugees and Asylum Seekers: the rapidly changing nature of the population in some areas has led to a continuing range of local initiatives and promotions (Small Heath Library for example now has very well established links with the Somali community and occasional open days, and 9 libraries have Somali Book Collections). Generally, helped by the free internet access, new communities do discover library services quite early and the library staff are now much more experienced at supporting people who are new to the city.

All libraries are signed up as Read and Write development centres and feature the range of recent publications designed to appeal to less confident readers. The Vital Link (adult basic skills and libraries) standards have been established at all libraries and the service is now signed up to the national library staff reader development learning programme – ‘Frontline’.

- The libraries website shows 15 adult and 11 teenage reading groups. Most are healthy and active.

### **Spoken word and language development**

- Whole city approach to speaking/listening developments; common messages out via range of services – being revisited in 2005/6 to see what more can be done
- Speech and Language Service staff train teachers to work on language development via normal classroom activities – reducing of caseload that needs specialist support
- Identification of common, recurring messages (re language development 0-5) and incorporating these into a series of stage-related leaflets which were worked on by joint group from various agencies. Leaflets (200,000 plus) distributed through wide range of access points
- Work with secondary schools to link young people’s experience of drama to their understanding of set GCSE English texts

- Another activity involving Flying Start is ‘Tune into Babies – Talk Together’, originally started by the Core Skills Development Partnership and subsequently developed in partnership with Speech and Language Therapists and Children’s Centre Managers. Over the last year there has been a city wide publicity campaign aimed at parents, managers and practitioners throughout the city. This work has featured in a national ‘Talk to Your Baby’ conference. The next phase is to develop a training programme, which will be rolled out to all the practitioners as an integral element of the city training programme.

- Speech and Language Therapy have worked collaboratively with mainstream schools and nurseries in order to meet the needs of children with speech and language difficulties. This work has included training school staff to encourage speech and language development as part of the classroom activity, supporting school staff in meeting specific needs of children in their setting and the development of materials and resources.

This work is helping to further broaden and develop the knowledge and skills of all practitioners involved, as well as identifying a range of ways of working within schools and nurseries to facilitate speech and language development.

Success has occurred in settings where staff training, resources and ideas have

been taken on board and where there is collaboration between the school/ nursery staff and speech and language therapy.

Challenges too, have been identified, such as how to manage high numbers of children with speech and language needs and how to develop and sustain this work over time. Work is continuing to manage these challenges together with the further development of evidenced based effective ways of working and guidelines for good practice across the city. This includes working in partnership with other services supporting mainstream schools and nurseries.

❑ 'ArtSites'

Pupils aged 11-16 were worked with, from within 5 secondary schools. Professional artists/directors worked with groups from each school on drama based on their English set texts (poetry/play/novel). These were pupils not expected to reach the grade of 'good'. 70% of the pupils showed substantial increases in their grades. In some cases grades went from a predicted 'D' to an 'A' or 'B'. 11-14 year olds did performances within school, based on their drama work. 16 year olds from the 5 schools did performances at an Arts Centre to an audience of 115 parents, relatives and supporters.

**Family learning/family literacy, language and numeracy**

- Expanded into largest programme in Europe and (of its kind) the largest city programme in the world; via schools/ early years settings; strongly linked to children's ongoing activities; furthers achievement of both parent and child; spin offs in terms of increased home reading/ writing activities
- Extending in planned ways (as part of the city's Family Learning Strategy); work via community groups, Youth Offending Service etc; programme is based on a 'known- to- work' set of models plus some looser development work.
- Increasing links with parents in ways that created shared understandings of what the school, teachers, children and parents could all do to improve the skills levels of the children in definite and focused ways (**Inspire**; Keeping Up with the Children).
- Distribution of Basic Skills Agency leaflets to parents in primary schools

- ❑ Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) is co-ordinated and managed by the Family Learning Service in the Directorate of Children, Young People and Families, bringing together children's services and adult learning. It aims to improve the literacy and numeracy of children and their parents or other adult family members. It also achieves other outcomes for adults and the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children. It is very successful in its size and its access to large numbers of learners from disadvantaged communities.

The Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy programmes form part of the action plan of the City Community Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan, as well as the Adult Learning Plan.

A schools-led approach is taken. Programmes are delivered in partnership with 10 secondary and 100 primary schools, 25 early years' settings and 4 community groups, with the adult outcomes being the responsibility of the Birmingham Adult Education Service and 4 FE Colleges.

The basic models are: 12 hour introductory courses (consisting mostly of Play and Language and Keeping Up With the Children), and intensive courses which are of 60-72hours over one term for both children and parents.

On the intensive courses teachers from the school teach the children, adult basic skills teachers from adult learning providers teach the adults and they both teach the joint sessions.

In 2005/6, 3,400 learners were involved (1000 parents/carers and 900 children were enrolled on 101 intensive courses of 60 or 72 hours and 1,500 parents or carers on 150 shorter courses of 12 hours). The programmes are good at reaching parents who are male (17%), who have a disability (19%), or who are from black/minority ethnic communities (71%).

On the intensive courses, accreditation for adults reached the national target of 25%; and 74% children significantly improved their literacy or numeracy, as assessed by their teacher. More is being done to describe the additional gains, from these programmes, in terms of progress against national curriculum levels. Where appropriate the substantial courses have been designed to incorporate common messages relating to health outcomes.

Partnerships are a strong feature of this work. Planning of the whole programme is done jointly with schools and adult learning providers. All of these programmes link with local libraries and bookshops, as well as other facilities e.g. Museums. In 2005-06 particularly strong partnerships that have led to innovative developments have been with the Health Authority and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Through these, all early years' courses have included health sessions and play/drama and theatre experiences, developing language and personal and social confidence.

At its most recent inspection the strategic leadership and management of this set of support activities was considered to be excellent and the service was graded 'good' as a whole.

- Information to parents is now widely available via national websites and via all schools/Children's centres. Additional activity is focused at times of transition (to school; from primary to secondary school) or for parents where children are disadvantaged/at risk.
- Inspire is now well established as a whole school approach in the majority of schools. At the latest estimate there would be in the order of 60,000 parents involved in any one year. The approach was highlighted as a case study in the key government sponsored research on parental engagement and children's learning. It has been taken up in a number of other areas outside Birmingham.

**Developing potential future writers and young people engaging with writers, via schools**

- Support work with 20 young people with potential as writers to move from 'doing writing' to 'being writers'
- Work in more than 200 schools; 100,000 young people engaging with writers (via 'Write On' programmes); including teachers as writers;

- The 'Write On' activity is established in Birmingham and has spread to other local authorities. It is used by more than 200 schools. The model remains that of a professional writer working with one class for 5 half days. The list of writers available includes poets, journalists, non-fiction writers, illustrators and writers of fiction etc. Teachers are able to access twilight creative writing sessions and parents are included wherever possible.

<p>gaining confidence to develop young people as writers; support/guidance for writers working with schools; managed/brokered services for linking writers with a range of organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Development of arts-based/creativity-based European (EQUAL) funded programmes opened up more options for young adults/older school pupils to engage with writing as a potential career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Pupil's English grades at KS4 (age 14-16) are often not as high as they could be because they find it difficult to produce original pieces of writing (as opposed to writing about a given piece of text). Some activity has been designed to give pupils an opportunity to work intensively with five professional writers over the course of a day. The pupils produce their own creative writing and find out about the work and career of writers who work in a range of genres. As a result of this pupils demonstrate a greater enthusiasm for all forms of imaginative writing as well as having an insight into careers that involve writing. Small groups of young 'aspiring writers' have continued this work over a longer period of time.</li> <li>❑ Work has developed re programmes, via Birmingham Repertory Theatre, offering opportunities to develop playwriting skills, extended by a set of outreach activities in schools in disadvantaged areas re dramatic writing.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Books and community development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>(Books for Change)</b> developing reading motivators within communities; linking texts with community development; people's lives and social justice; use of books to change communities ways of seeing their environments; book recycling into communities; voluntary sector motivated; public access to information on books/reading in voluntary/community sector 'shop front'.</li> <li>➤ Survey of reading in public places (in 2003/4) - including on a variety of bus routes - showed it to be a visible activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Books for Change had a number of exploratory strands. The one that has been most active has been the recycling of good quality once-read books into community groups and community venues. Mostly this has been through links in Birmingham's voluntary/community organisation network but has also included books going abroad e.g. to replace books in schools in war-affected areas of Africa. Less was developed around use of text to change communities perceptions of themselves although there was some follow through on this in terms of 'Why not read ... (selected books)?' pages in the Voluntary and Community Service Council's regular newsletter. The activity was the basis for a voluntary sector focused Writer in Residence in Birmingham. The future of the developments is being discussed: one option is to link some of the book recycling to the local 'prescription to read' activity within local health services.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>'Birmingham Reads'</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reading strategy for the city (mainly City Council) 1998-2004, built on Year of Reading (currently being reviewed, with a view to 2006-2009 statements being drafted)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The 'Birmingham Reads' approach is being refreshed, via the Core Skills Development Partnership, in the run up to the National Year of Reading in 2008.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Developing new training options for young people (post 14)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'New Start' activity with Year 10/11 pupils; alternatives to school</li> <li>➤ Core skills built into programmes for excluded pupils; young people subject to residential care orders etc</li> <li>➤ 'New Step' developments; curriculum materials for National Traineeship, PreVocational Training, Bridge Programme, Stepping Stones (Rathbone) provision.</li> <li>➤ Work done to strengthen basic skills content of Youth Offending Team activities – resource boxes provided.</li> <li>➤ Literacy/ numeracy activities built into Education-Business developments (including <b>'Words @ Work'</b>, <b>'Numbers@Work'</b>, and development of company-focused Big Books)</li> <li>➤ Key Skills developments within apprenticeship/ modern apprenticeship/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ These developments have been incorporated into the trialling and subsequent national delivery of programmes such as Entry to Employment and Apprenticeships.</li> <li>❑ Young people disconnected from the education/training system are now able to access alternative pathways with the expectation that they will be able to improve their functional skills.</li> <li>❑ More remains to be done to ensure Skills for Life support is available to learners 14-19, whichever pathway they are on. Some of this will be picked up by the functional skills developments that are in place nationally.</li> <li>❑ The Youth Offending Service caters for 112,000 10-17 year olds. Links exist</li> </ul>

<p>New Learning Gateway etc</p>	<p>with training providers and some specific work is done with Learning and Skills Council grant support. More remains to be done to embed basic skills into wider aspects of the support for young people, but substantial progress has been made overall during the past few years.</p>
<p><b><u>Development of work with employers and employees</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Curriculum development of Core Skills for employees with moderate learning difficulties</li> <li>➤ Work on basic skills awareness within Business Link, Trade Union Learning Reps etc</li> <li>➤ Stand-alone PCs put into employers premises as in-company learning points; development, with CTAD, of work-focused basic skills CDs for Care, Manufacturing etc.</li> <li>➤ Employee basic skills TNA developed</li> <li>➤ Employer briefings re importance of improving basic skills at work; identification of employer champions for this work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ This has now developed into national programmes. Skills for Life is an integral part of both the employer support through 'Train to Gain' and, for those seeking work, the new Employability Programme being trialled for full national implementation in September 2007. Birmingham and Solihull LSC staff have been key to both of these developments, alongside staff in Jobcentre Plus and the DfES.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Adult basic skills curriculum and staff development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ESOL initial assessment toolkit developed; other ESOL developments based on Birmingham ESOL Review</li> <li>➤ Development of paraprofessionals within voluntary/community organisations</li> <li>➤ Basic skills awareness sessions with frontline workers in libraries, probation offices, job centres etc.</li> <li>➤ HE core skills assessment and support materials</li> <li>➤ Work via Welfare to Work Gateway; linking prevocational training outreach workers with job centres</li> <li>➤ Basic skills into programmes for visually-impaired, homeless, offenders, Bangladeshi adults, mental health service users, asylum seekers/refugees etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The initial review of ESOL and the subsequent development work put Birmingham in a strong position to lead a regional set of pathfinder activities as part of the establishment of the national adult Skills for Life strategy. The approach to ESOL is planned to change in 2007 and this will require some supported work with local colleges and other providers. As part of the Ministerial testing of the new proposals a small number of focus meetings were held, with the Core Skills Development Partnership being asked to chair some of these on behalf of the DfES and national LSC.</li> <li>❑ The Partnership also led pathfinder activity on adult literacy implementations and has worked very closely with a range of organisations to get the Skills for Life strategy embedded across the region. This has required close working with the DfES. The Partnership Manager was seconded to take on the West Midlands Skills for Life manager role. This function has now been embedded within the planning functions of the Learning and Skills Council in the region.</li> <li>❑ The Partnership has led a number of strategic approaches that have fed into national thinking. We established a baseline of adult literacy/numeracy skills and 5 years later established the amounts of progress that had been made in closing these adult skills gaps. We established the notion of local area floor targets (e.g. for each ward and worked with local area planning groups (for adult learning) across the city to encourage a better targeting of resources.</li> <li>❑ There is now a coherent Skills for Life development framework across the region, developed with the support of the partnership. This is being used to direct rural developments, numeracy developments etc – and is the basis for a changed approach to ESOL.</li> </ul>

- The work in Birmingham has been very positively referred to, both nationally and internationally, during 2006. In an international review of learning cities, Birmingham was referred to as a case study and in the follow-up 'Learning Cities: Lessons Learned' document the work in the United Kingdom case-studied Birmingham which, 'for instance, has developed exemplary basic literacy initiatives to attain significant improvement in both educational achievement and social inclusion in an increasingly multi-cultural environment', with the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership being described as 'particularly active' within these developments.

In a Department for Education and Skills response on international benchmarking of strategic approaches to adult basic skills Birmingham was seen as unique in its determined approach to making a whole-city set of differences. An essential feature was 'engaging with both the micro and macro levels at the same time' and central to the success of the Birmingham approach (facilitated by the Core Skills Development Partnership) was a commitment 'to work through mainstream partners in order to influence the various planning and development processes across the city rather than merely relying on short-term initiatives and funding'.

The report drew out the main critical success factors behind Birmingham's approach and concluded that 'as regards the development of adult literacy, language and numeracy interventions in the context of a Learning City, Birmingham can be regarded as an exemplar', and that 'it is unlikely that any city strategy has set out to address the needs of children and adults in as holistic a manner as that pursued in Birmingham. A case can be made for Birmingham to become the benchmark against which other cities and city regions measure their own commitments and achievements'.