



**Children and Families
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
11th December 2007

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families**

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Languages in Schools

1.0 Summary

Our children speak over 130 languages. Over three quarters of Brent's school children are from minority ethnic groups. Many bilingual pupils achieve very well academically, but there are patterns of underachievement for groups of pupils. Accelerating the rate of improvement of underachieving groups is a key objective for strategic priority three of the Children and Young Peoples' Plan. During the academic year 2007-8 a new approach to the collection of language data will provide a clearer picture of the relationship between first language, ethnicity and achievement for schools. An equalities audit developed by the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service is being piloted this year and will support schools in effectively targeting underachieving groups of pupils for improvement. The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, part of the School Improvement Services, provides a wide range of advice, training and materials for schools.

2.0 Detail

- 2.1 Brent is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse areas in the country with a long history of immigration. Children in our schools speak over 130 languages and although the numbers of first languages spoken has remained fairly constant over recent years, there is a gradual shift in the size of groups speaking any one home language.

Naureen Kausar
November 12 2007

- 2.2 Language data collected by schools annually is a useful indicator of the changing pattern of pupil population in our schools. During the academic year 2007-8, schools are moving from manual collection to electronic collection of language data through their termly PLASC returns. The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service has provided support and training for this development. This data will add value to the detailed analysis undertaken at borough and individual school level looking at the correlation between ethnicity and achievement, and will allow even closer targeting of resources to areas of need.
- 2.3 In primary schools, the first languages other than English are, starting with the highest: Gujarati, Somali, Arabic, Urdu, Tamil, Portuguese, Panjabi and Albanian. At secondary age, these are, starting with the highest: Gujarati, Urdu, Somali, Arabic, Tamil, and Punjabi. Gujarati speakers are decreasing, although this still remains the largest language group by far at primary and secondary schools. Although not all primary pupils continue to Brent secondary schools, it is reasonable to deduce, looking at a three year trend, that there are growing numbers of Somali and Albanian speakers coming through our schools.
- 2.4 As well as collecting the numbers of pupils speaking different languages in schools, the numbers of pupils at different stages of English language development are also collected. The figures for the last four years indicate that the numbers of pupils in primary schools who are at the earlier stages of acquiring English are decreasing. Figures from secondary schools are more static.
- 2.5 Each year, the The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service audit the data collection from a proportion of schools and in each school a sample of the assessments of stages of English language development is moderated. The audit, which is completed by School Improvement Services staff working in partnership with school staff, not only moderates the accuracy of assessments being made, but also provides a valuable opportunity for discussing and spreading good practice in assessment, teaching and learning for bilingual learners.
- 2.6 Many of our bilingual learners are very high academic achievers and progress rapidly through the stages of development; however this is not the case for all. This academic year 2007-8, a new form of audit is being piloted, that will look at the accuracy of EAL assessment alongside other aspects of a school's approaches to supporting ethnic minority achievement. It is hoped that this new form of audit will support schools in developing the best possible approaches for accelerating progress for underachieving groups.

- 2.7 Teachers in Brent schools are well used to supporting pupils at different stages of learning English. To extend and develop the wealth of knowledge and understanding held by Brent teachers and to support teachers new to the borough, The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service provides a range of training, advice and support, both centrally and in individual schools. Courses include termly meetings for EMCOs (Ethnic Minority Co-coordinators in schools), accredited courses for teachers of EAL pupils in the early years, developing EAL learners writing skills, and training for the assessment of EAL pupils. A recent focus for training has been ensuring the development of academic proficiency for advanced bilingual learners.
- 2.8 Many bilingual pupils achieve very well academically, for example Asian Indian pupils are one of the highest achieving groups in the borough. However, by the end of Key Stage 4, only 30% pupils of Somali heritage achieve 5A*-C at GCSE. A number of training courses currently focus on improving the achievement of Somali pupils. The Head of the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service has a key role in supporting schools in implementing the recommendations of the Improving Outcomes for Black Pupils steering group, where Somali pupils are highlighted as a group to be targeted for improvement.
- 2.9 An action research project developed in seven primary schools last year focused on supporting the development of home languages alongside the development of English. Much research internationally points to the success of this approach. The project resulted in a DVD of good practice being produced to circulate to other schools.
- 2.10 Much support and training for secondary schools is tailored for individual schools. Sessions this year include supporting schools in analysing data on language and ethnicity and a focus on targeting specific support to gifted and talented students from minority ethnic backgrounds particularly advanced bilingual learners.
- 2.11 The Standards Fund Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is ringfenced. The grant is intended to narrow achievement gaps for those minority ethnic groups who are underachieving and to meet particular needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. It is distributed annually to schools using a formula which uses numbers of pupils whose first language is other than English and numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups who are underachieving at national level (pupils of Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and the following mixed heritage groups; White and Black Caribbean and White and Black African) weighted by free school meals. In 2006-7 the grant was £4,416,301 and in 2007-8 £4,702,371. 11% of the grant is retained centrally to fund a small central EMTAS team who monitor use of the grant and provide training, advice and support to schools.