



**Children and Families
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
5th March 2009

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

Wards Affected:
ALL

Support for Somali Parents

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 A new school funding formula was introduced for the 2008/09 academic year, which has included the provision of additional funding for schools based on the number of Somali boys in each school. Whilst there was no prescription on how schools could use this additional funding, there was an expectation that additional support to Somali parents would be a key aspect of schools' plans and use of funding.
- 1.2 This report provides an update of the additional support being made available to Somali parents including extended services provision.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is invited to:

- note initial positive progress in providing additional support to Somali parents
- recommend a continued and strengthened emphasis on extending and expanding this additional support within more schools and at a more intensive level where needed.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Context

There are 9 secondary and 22 primary schools in Brent with significant numbers (defined as 4 or more pupils in each year cohort) Somali pupils. Even before the change to the schools funding formula in 2008/09, schools in the borough were taking positive steps to engage Somali parents. For example, one secondary school (John Kelly Boys TC) was already holding regular community events on the college's premises on Saturdays to help engage and inform parents. Several schools already had in place teaching assistants with roles covering both supporting teaching and learning in the school and providing links with the parents of Somali pupils (for example, Kensal Rise).

All of this more targeted engagement needs to be seen within a broader context in which most schools are making positive progress in engaging all parents. Therefore Somali parents will benefit from these broader developments.

In addition, there is a growing awareness in schools of the need to encourage Somali parents in particular to engage with the schools. Whilst it is difficult to measure quantitatively, both local authority officers and Somali community members have noted positive progress in this area although there has been some feedback by the Somali community that much more needs to be done.

The progress of Somali pupils in the last 3 years continues to be a mixed picture. The recently published results for the 2008 academic year have shown good progress at Key Stage 1 (7 years), satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2 (11 years), disappointing progress at Key Stage 3 (14 years) and strong progress at Key Stage 4 (16 years). However, at all stages the results of Somali pupils are significantly below Brent averages. For example, in respect of (provisional) GCSE results, the percentage of Somali pupils achieving 5 or more A*-Cs has improved from 43% in 2007 to 51% in 2008 (Brent 2008 average is 69%). The percentage achieving 5 or more A*-Cs including English and maths has improved from 26% in 2007 to 31% in 2008 (Brent 2008 average is 49%).

It should be noted that the change to the school funding formula has only been in place for just over a term, so this report should be viewed only as an early indicator of developments.

3.2 Additional Support to Somali Parents in this Academic Year

The following list provides some examples of specific **new or enhanced** activities which have been put in place in 2008/09 to support Somali parents. Many of these are taking place through partnership work between the local authority and schools and, in some instances, with important support from community and voluntary organisations.

- Curriculum meetings for Somali parents have taken place or are planned to take place this term in 5 schools (Chalkhill, St Andrew and St Francis, Wembley Primary, Braintcroft, and Roe Green Infants). Typically, these evenings cover the specific areas of the curriculum (for example, Religious Education, sports/swimming), the English education system (for example, homework, attendance and punctuality), social events (for example, school trips), family learning (for example, bilingual storytelling/reading), helping children at home (for example, with their reading and writing), parent volunteering (for example, translations/interpretations for other parents) and other areas of advice
- Examples exist (for example, Kingsbury High working with The African Child) of tailored projects in schools where targeted work with specific pupils has been carried out with significant input from parents
- Production of leaflets for parents covering “The types of questions to ask your child’s teachers” are being translated and are starting to be introduced in some schools (for example, Kilburn Park and Stonebridge)
- There has been some progress in some schools in the development and embedding of Somali parent forums (for example, Kingsbury Green working with the Help Somalia Foundation)
- A specialist Somali local authority officer is available for weekly parent surgeries in 5 schools (Mora, Furness, Newfield, Chalkhill and Braintcroft) with a large Somali pupil population
- At least 4 schools (John Kelly Boys, Braintcroft, Furness and Chalkhill) have put in place new or additional Somali Teaching Assistants both supporting teaching and learning and providing links with the community
- 1 large secondary school (Copland) has a dedicated Somali Community Link Worker and at least 1 primary school (Brentfield) also has a dedicated Somali link worker
- Some locality-based projects are either focusing on Black heritage or have a significant proportion of Black heritage pupils (with significant Somali pupil numbers) covering, for example, the use of creative activities to support English, maths, science and IT (SHINE project) and a leading edge IT project in primary schools (MLE Project – Wembley Cluster). These projects are involving parents as an integral part of their delivery

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