

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES 2014-17**  
**Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 4 February 2014**  
**Author: ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report brings to members' attention Education Services' draft Local Improvement Priorities for the 3 year period 2014-17. The Local Improvement Priorities will, in due course, form the basis of the Service's overall Service Plan and school improvement plans for the same period.
- 1.2 The draft Local Improvement Priorities are included as Appendix 1 to this report.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In keeping with usual practice, Education Services consulted fully with all headteachers and service managers from the start of the planning process both to ensure their complete involvement in the process and to enhance their commitment to it. The list of consultees is outlined below:
- The Early Years and Primary Improvement Partnership
  - The Secondary Schools Improvement Partnership
  - Education Services Headteachers
  - Education Services Senior Staff Group
- 2.2 Also, in keeping with the widely expressed view of headteachers and service managers, the Local Improvement Priorities continue to focus on a much reduced core range of critical themes which contribute to the achievement of the council's corporate goals, as expressed in the Corporate Plan, the Strategic Community Plan, and the Single Outcome Agreement.

**3. NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1 Following agreement of the Local Improvement Priorities by the Education Executive, each of the individual priorities will be allocated a dedicated Improvement Plan outlining in greater detail how the service proposes that it will be developed during the course of session 2014/15 in particular.
- 3.2 An example of one such Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix 2. This sets out the Education Services Strategy for improving literacy across the Falkirk area.

3.3 The Local Improvement Priorities and their Support Plans will be issued to schools and other educational establishments prior to the Easter break. This timescale will enable our schools and other establishments to begin their own planning for academic session 2014/15.

3.4 While our schools will be using the Local Improvement Priorities as a basis for their own future plans, the priorities will also be incorporated into the overall Service Improvement Plan for 2014-17 and, as such, will be presented to the council's Performance Panel at the appropriate time.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 Members are invited to endorse the draft Local Improvement Priorities for Education for inclusion in the Education Services Performance Plan for 2014-17.

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**Acting Director of Education**

**Date:**

Contact Officer: Nigel Fletcher, ext 6686.

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL

**Local Improvement Priorities 2014-2017**  
**Overall Summary**

1	2	3	4
Further developing a thriving, sustainable and vibrant economy	Continuing to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens and communities	Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination	Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live, work and visit
<p><b>Curriculum for Excellence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the priorities set out in the <b>Authority Expectations 2013-16</b> (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> <li>• Implement the <b>Literacy Strategy</b> (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> <li>• Implement the <b>Numeracy Strategy</b> (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> <li>• Address the identified <b>Workforce and Organisational Development</b> issues (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Getting it Right for Every Child</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement the procedures for the <b>Named Person, Team Around the Child and Child's Plan</b> (C/EY/P/S/CLD)</li> <li>• Develop and implement the <b>Nurturing Programme and Nurturing Schools</b> (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Early Intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track, Monitor &amp; Intervene to support <b>Vulnerable Groups</b>, especially <b>Looked After Children</b> (EY/P/S/C)</li> <li>• Build <b>Family Capacity</b> (EY/P/S/CLD/C)</li> <li>• Implement improvements identified through the <b>Early Years Collaborative</b> (C/EY/P/S/CLD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resources and Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Assets, Infrastructure and School Capacity meet <b>current and future demographic needs</b> (C)</li> <li>• Deliver the expansion in <b>Early Years Provision</b> in line with the Children and Young People's Bill from August 2014 (C)</li> <li>• Plan for and build <b>Community Capacity</b> in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and partners (CLD/C /EY/P/S)</li> <li>• Manage <b>Budget</b> development, consultation and implementation (C)</li> <li>• Improve business <b>processes and systems</b> to support more efficient workstreams (C)</li> <li>• Ensure <b>workforce planning and recruitment</b> meets current and future needs (C)</li> </ul>

Key to Notation: EY= Early Years; P = Primary Schools; S = Secondary Schools; CLD = Community Learning Development C = Central Teams (including Partners)

**Falkirk Council : Education Services**

**Literacy Strategy 2014-17**

**Zero tolerance of illiteracy**

Falkirk Council's literacy strategy is informed by the Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan and shares its vision to raise literacy standards for all and to improve outcomes and life chances for the people of Falkirk.

***Rationale***

"Improvements cannot be confined to a particular sector or point in a learner's journey. Literacy development starts from birth. Early years settings and schools develop children and young people's basic and advanced literacy skills and in adulthood the on-going development of literacy skills helps to advance personal achievements, employment prospects and participation in society." (Literacy Action Plan, 2010, Scottish Government)

Falkirk's vision is for our children, young people and adults to be able to read, write, listen and talk, allowing them to reach their full potential, to engage fully in 21st Century society, to access lifelong learning and actively engage in meaningful employment.

The purpose of our literacy strategy is to guide us as we raise standards of literacy from early years to adulthood. This strategy recognises that language development begins pre-birth, when the foundations are laid on which language continues to develop throughout our lives.

The strategy demands innovative approaches to partnership working. It invites services, agencies and families to raise the bar in terms of what all our children, young people and adults can achieve. This reflects recommendations from the Literacy Commission (December 2009):

- adopting zero tolerance of illiteracy;
- sharing best practice to meet the literacy needs of children;
- prioritising early years to tackle the socio-economic effect on learning;
- moving beyond the basic literacy to higher order literacy skills.

The development of high levels of literacy in Falkirk will support the achievement of the ambitions set out in 'One Council, One Plan' Falkirk Council Corporate Plan 2012-2017, specifically the aspirations to:

- further develop a thriving, sustainable and vibrant economy;
- continue to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens and communities;
- increase our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination.

This strategy runs from 2014-2017 and will evolve in response to national, local and individual contributions and challenges.

### ***Delivering the strategy***

9 work streams make up the 2014-17 strategy:

1. Embed Active Literacy in every school
2. Maximise Early Years contribution
3. Further develop Literacy Across Learning in the Broad General Education and the Senior Phase
4. Involve families
5. Work with partners
6. Analyse data and act on findings
7. Deliver intelligence based professional learning experiences at school, cluster and authority levels
8. Populate and review the strategy support tool
9. Design a robust evaluation process

Teams, involving a range of officers, school based staff, partners, parents, children and young people as required, will be set up to deliver each of the workstreams.

#### ***1. Embed Active Literacy in every school***

Active Literacy will be the main approach to the teaching of literacy. It will be supported by a diverse range of methodologies including 21st century technology. Recent HMIE school inspections have recognised the strength and impact of Active Literacy on children's progress.

Barriers to learning are addressed through an inclusive approach, where individual additional support needs are identified and supported in line with best practice.

The foci for session 2013-14 for learners aged 3-18:

- the development of reading skills
- confidence and the ability to transfer these skills across a range of learning experiences
- a significant improvement in literacy achievement

An additional focus for Early Level in session 2013-14 is talking and listening, which is fundamental to the development of reading and writing.

## **2. *Maximise Early Years contribution***

We recognise the importance of literacy skills from birth: the on-line literacy strategy support tool enables practitioners to effectively support and enhance the development of literacy skills for all early years children. Practitioners will work together across Early Level, using active methodologies and strategies to support the achievement of developmental milestones. In session 2013-2014 the focus is on talking and listening skills to ensure that strong foundations are established to enable learners to be effective communicators from an early age.

## **3. *Further develop Literacy Across Learning in the Broad General Education and the Senior Phase***

- Roll out Active Literacy in all secondary schools
- Make use of local and national guidance
- Support exploration of new strategies and techniques
- Team teaching to demonstrate innovative practice in action

## **4. *Involve families***

Families play a crucial role in the development of children and young people's learning from the early years of playing, talking and sharing books through to providing support for exams and wider learning. It is important to respond to parents/carers as individuals and work from a growing understanding of their needs.

Education staff and partners will have the required skills and knowledge to support learners and their families in the promotion of literacy.

## **5. *Work with partners***

Positive contributions that are made by a wide range of services and agencies to promote literacy and support literacy development. In the current financial climate, it is crucial that there is effective partnership working to share resources to challenge poor literacy across society.

Each individual's journey will be different according to need and will involve their family and a range of universal and specialist services and partner agencies. To maximise impact in relation to literacy development:

- Falkirk Council services will define specific team roles and responsibilities
- Partner agencies will share their literacy plans on the strategy support tool

## **6. *Analyse data and act on findings***

Analysis of available and relevant data will support and challenge all to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. It will identify trends, inform direction of travel and professional learning needs. We will communicate the findings, actions taken and impact from changes made to all stakeholders.

This focus will include close analysis of:

- school improvement plans
- validation visits
- ongoing professional dialogue
- current and prior assessment data
- feedback from professional learning events, the literacy networks etc.

### ***7. Further develop professional learning experiences at school, cluster and authority level***

The professional learning programme aims to support **all** staff who have a role in eliminating illiteracy. This goes beyond 'courses' and could include:

- Support networks which ensure regular engagement in professional dialogue and keeping up to date with new developments
- Partnership working with Education Scotland relating to literacy e.g. delivering and receiving training, contributing to and learning from national advice
- Co-creation of support for schools who are addressing literacy skills in their school improvement plans
- Access to training materials online via Falkirk Council's You Tube channel to enable 24/7 access

The professional learning programme is informed by:

- consultation with Head teachers, managers, staff , partners and professional associations
- research
- evaluations of courses

### ***8. Populate and review the strategy support tool***

The literacy strategy statement is supported by an on-line literacy strategy support tool, <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/LiteracyStrategy/>. The tool aims to raise awareness of the provision that exists within and out with the formal education sector, providing an overview of roles and responsibilities, action plans, identifying gaps in literacy provision and offering links between services and agencies to offer a better understanding of how they impact on literacy and encourage meaningful cross sector working to benefit the learner.

### ***9. Design a robust evaluation process***

From the outset, we will undertake ongoing evaluation of the Literacy Strategy. All staff will engage in professional dialogue and reflection based on a shared understanding of literacy development and a shared vision of their aims for children, young people and families. This continuous process of self-evaluation will support identifying the agenda for improvement.

**December 2013**