

taught and promoted. This is a challenge, but one that the library service and schools are energetically trying to meet in order to engage and equip children in Hampshire for life in the twenty-first century.

3. Achievement in Reading in Hampshire schools

- 3.1. Standards in reading achieved by pupils in Hampshire remain consistently high and above national averages. Nine out of ten pupils achieve or exceed the national expectation in reading at Level 2 by the end of Key Stage One and have done so for the last five years. The same is true at the end of Key Stage Two where almost 90% of pupils achieve the national expectation of Level 4 or more. Almost a third of pupils achieve above the national expectation (Level 3) at the end of Key Stage One, and this grows to over half of all pupils by the end of Key Stage Two (Level 5). Again, this is a consistent picture over the last five years.
- 3.2. At GCSE, standards in English have risen steadily over recent years. Students achieve above national averages and the rate of improvement in Hampshire has been greater than that nationally. Results and improvement in GCSE English Literature – perhaps an even better indicator of achievement in reading – are even more impressive, with over three-quarters of students who take it achieving a higher-grade pass.
- 3.3. The standard of reading in England as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report in 2006¹ demonstrates that the standard of 'Reading literacy' which is defined as, "a young person's ability to understand, use and reflect on a range of written texts in situations they may encounter both inside and outside of school and in preparation for adult life and the world of work," is higher than it has ever been and better than in other parts of the UK, with the exception of Scotland. Of the 55 countries assessed by PISA only seven recorded statistically significant higher reading literacy levels than in England and, whilst girls outperformed boys in every Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country, the gap in England was one of the smallest which is attributed by the report to the work done on improving boys' literacy in English schools.
- 3.4. Nevertheless, despite the very high performance in reading of children in Hampshire schools, there remains significant variation between the different parts of the county and for some vulnerable groups of children. There are also both primary and secondary schools where the percentage of children who achieve the expected levels in both English and mathematics is below national benchmarks, so there is no room for complacency.

¹ OECD Pisa Report 2006 available at : www.pisa.oecd.org

4. Teaching and promoting reading in schools

- 4.1. The nature of reading and the range of texts available to children as well as how they access reading is changing in a way and at a rate that is unprecedented. The ongoing centrality of reading to success in school and in life means that schools have had to adapt the way in which reading is taught to keep pace with the evolution in the nature of reading and the reading skills which young people need.
- 4.2. Synthetic phonics has been introduced and implemented in schools across Hampshire, meaning that pupils in this county get an effective and engaging start to learning to read and comprehend texts. This approach is now also an integral part of work in the Early Years. The development of comprehension and understanding is a key area for focus at the end of Key Stage One and throughout Key Stage Two, when pupils also learn about the cultural and historical contexts of texts.
- 4.3. During secondary school, reading becomes an essential tool through which children access the curriculum and the world, whether the text is on paper or electronic. Children and young people have access to a staggering amount of information and are increasingly creators of text themselves, available in an instant through the world-wide web. Developing discerning readers who are able to distinguish between the value, reliability and quality of text is a vital part of the reading curriculum in secondary schools.
- 4.4. Students are encouraged to make links between texts and to understand connections so that reading for meaning as well as enjoyment develops through the secondary years. As well as GCSE, new qualifications in functional skills being introduced in secondary schools mean that students will also be able to demonstrate competency in and mastery of reading skills at a high level in practical and applied contexts.
- 4.5. At every stage of reading development there are interventions designed to help those children who are falling behind to make up ground. Every Child a Reader, which will be developed over the next two years, is a national programme of intervention. This is supported by the roll out of one-to-one tuition at various key points during the school journey to ensure that those who are not making adequate progress are individually supported.

5. Library use by Hampshire Children and Young People

- 5.1. Libraries nationally have seen a substantial drop in the numbers of customers, including children using libraries over the past few years. The most noticeable reduction in children's libraries has been in the numbers of children borrowing information books for homework or for their own interest.
- 5.2. Although there is insufficient research to confirm the fact that a large percentage of UK households now have internet access which allows information and interest material to be found and downloaded at any time it is clearly a significant factor in the decline of borrowing of this sort. Whilst not regulated or quality controlled, electronic information is continuously updated

and immediate. As Google state in their corporate priorities: "The world is increasingly mobile and unwilling to be constrained to a fixed location. Whether it's through their PDAs (i.e. Portable Digital Assistant), their wireless phones or even their cars, people want information to come to them." Without doubt, children and young people are sophisticated users of these media. The sheer volume of information means that now, more than ever, children must be taught the skills required to analyse and interpret information so that it is appropriate for the use which they intend to make of it. These are high level skills.

- 5.3. The borrowing of fiction from libraries by children has not seen the same decline so that fiction now accounts for nearly 80% of issues to children and young people in Hampshire. Nationally the decline in book borrowing from Hampshire libraries by children has been far less dramatic than that by adults and in Hampshire in 2008-2009 it increased by 5% and continues to rise this year. Book issues to children now account for 32.5% of all issues in Hampshire libraries.²
- 5.4. The School Library Service (SLS) is subscribed to by 97.6% of Hampshire schools and offers resources, advice and training to schools as well as the 400,000 books currently on loan to schools. Primary and special schools are entitled to three books per child as a base stock and secondary schools two books per child with the opportunity to exchange up to 400 books each year. Schools still request information and interest books as a substantial part of their loan and both primary and secondary children make good use of this resource.
- 5.5. In addition, those schools subscribing to the SLS have access to the SLS bookshop through which over 60% of schools buy their books. In 2007/2008 schools bought £297,000 worth of books from SLS and this rose to £320,000 worth in 2008/2009.

6. Promoting Reading in the Community

- 6.1. It is through reading in its many forms that we can better understand, participate and increasingly shape the world and the vital nature of functional literacy cannot be overstated. However, reading has a more fundamental and less quantifiable centrality in terms of its role in helping children and, eventually the adults they become, to be emotionally and socially literate, make sense of themselves, other people and their own impact upon and responsibilities to society. This is the unique contribution of fiction and what lies behind the significant work of schools and the SLS in promoting fiction reading, discussion and exploration among children and their parents.
- 6.2. The best schools promote and develop the wider reading of pupils and this is usually mirrored in practice by teachers reading and discussing good quality whole texts. At its best, this involves the development of 'reading communities' in schools and beyond, and involves teachers, librarians, pupils

² Based on a recent stock survey of 20 Hampshire libraries

and parents. If this practice became commonplace throughout Hampshire primary, special and secondary schools, reading for pleasure and personal development would become a tangible and important element of the culture of the school, the wider community and, more importantly, a rich and valuable dimension to the lives of young people.

- 6.3. There have been a range of research projects and initiatives during recent years that have aimed to help develop such 'reading communities'. One of the most successful and most recent is the 'Teachers as Readers' initiative that has been designed and developed following research by the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA). The president of UKLA spoke at the annual Hampshire Primary English Conference in November organised by the HIAS English team, giving the ideal opportunity to build the foundations of some further work in this important area.
- 6.4. The Summer Reading Challenge which takes place annually in libraries across Hampshire, as well as in rural communities using the mobile library, encourages children aged 4-11 to read (or listen to) six books over the summer holiday. This engaged 1 in 4 Hampshire 4-11 year olds in summer 2009 and it was, in the words of Kesia, aged 6, "absolutely triple brilliant!" Bookstart Bags are given out to children and libraries across Hampshire offer Story-times, Toddler-times and Baby Rhyme-Times (frequently attracting over 80 parents and children).
- 6.5. The SLS, like the public library service, is very pro-active in promoting reading with children, and annually organises the Hampshire Book Award for Year 8s, the Hampshire Illustrated Book Award for Year 5s with hundreds of children taking part and the Wessex Children's Book Festival which attracts almost 10,000 children and their families to meet authors and illustrators during a week long celebration of reading throughout the county.
- 6.6. Considerable work is done by the public library service to make reading attractive and accessible to vulnerable children and a particular project, with the Children in Care Team, to encourage children in care to join libraries and borrow books and foster carers to engage in reading with their children has been a notable success. Schools and the library service work together to encourage parents to share stories with their children with a specific focus on some of the more disadvantaged areas of the county where book borrowing has seen an above average increase.
- 6.7. Another project, using external funding, is being developed by the library, museum and archives services, working in partnership with 'Aiming High' and 'Parent voice' to encourage disabled children and their families to share and create stories together and to encourage them to use libraries and other CCRA venues more regularly.
- 6.8. The library service, the English advisory team and schools have an increasingly joined-up approach to encouraging reading in schools and in the community. Support for teachers, parents and carers and a range of information and advice leaflets about children's reading are all available and, in some instances, have a very specific and agreed focus, for example, Boys and Reading, Books for Reluctant Readers and book lists with particular

cultural or social significance. It is, however, noticeable from the available data that children in the later years of secondary school are particularly hard to engage in the reading of fiction and this has seen little change, possibly because of the increasing demands of examinations in recent years as well as the proliferation of other forms of personal leisure activities. This age group, as well as adults, remains a key focus.

7. Proposals

- 7.1. The English advisory team propose the establishment of a specific, “Community of Readers” project to evaluate the impact of this sort of school and community project on increasing reading for pleasure as well as improving literacy. Although the UKLA work focuses on primary age children, this piece of work would be aimed at all the children and young people within a specified local children’s partnership, across the phases and schools in conjunction with the SLS and other partners.
- 7.2. This would be viewed as a pilot project running alongside the further development of the range of initiatives already operating in schools, libraries and communities across Hampshire with the intention of assessing whether the investment of time and funding adds significant extra value in the partnership on which it is focussed.
- 7.3. If this work is approved, the specific children’s partnership would need to be identified, the timescale agreed and suitable baseline data established against which to judge additional value.

8. Finance

- 8.1. There would be some cost attached to this proposal in terms of advisory time and suitable resources. A proportion of this would come from standards funding focussed on improving literacy as well as seeking a contribution from the schools which participate in the project. No additional funding would be sought from central budgets.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1. That the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services notes the attainment and engagement of Hampshire children in reading as outlined in this report.
- 9.2. That the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services approves the proposal to establish a pilot “Community of Readers” within a Hampshire local children’s partnership.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. Reading standards and book issues are both impacted negatively upon by deprivation and much of the work in schools and by the SLS has a particular focus on improving attainment and encouraging reading by children and families in the less affluent parts of Hampshire.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. The proposals in this report have no direct impact upon crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

- a) Improved reading and access to current information support awareness of climate change and how human activity relates to it. Borrowing of books through the SLS is a contributor to reduced paper production and disposal.