

**REPORT TO: SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 19 FEBRUARY 2007  
SPECIAL POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 20 FEBRUARY 2007**

**REPORT ON: EXTENSION OF LINK NURSERY SCHEME**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**REPORT NO: 104-2007**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This Report seeks approval to extend the Link Nursery Scheme to nursery classes in primary schools with less than 30 Full time Equivalent (FTE) places.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Special Education Committee's recommendation is sought for reporting to the Special Policy & Resources Committee on the 20th February 2007, in respect of bringing nursery classes with less than 30 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) places, namely - Barnhill, Eastern, Macalpine, St Mary's and St Vincent's, into the Link Nursery scheme from August 2007.

2.2 The Special Policy & Resources Committee are asked to consider the recommendation from the Special Education Committee of 19th February 2007, in respect of this report, and determine if the proposed extension should be implemented, with any corresponding amendment being made to the Revenue Budget for 2007/08 and later years.

**3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The delivery of this proposal will generate savings of £95,300 in financial year 2007/2008 (part year) and £152,400 in a full financial year.

**4.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This proposal will support the sustainability of nursery services across the city.

**5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

**6.0 BACKGROUND**

6.1 The earlier Report to the Education and Personnel Committees (refer to Report No. 841-2004) sets out in some detail the context in which early years and childcare services are developing in Dundee. This Report sets out further proposals to address the issues identified in the earlier Report. In particular this Report centres on addressing issues relating to making best use of staffing resources and expertise within continuing overprovision of services.

6.2 A Link Nursery Project was established in six primary school nursery classes, namely Lochee, Mill of Mains, Mossgiel, Newfields, St Margaret's and St Ninian's, in August 2005. This has continued to operate into 2006 - 07 in five of these nursery classes. Mossgiel Nursery class closed in June 2006 as agreed by the Education Committee in an earlier Report.



- 6.3 Two Link nursery classes, Lochee and St Ninian's, have fewer children enrolled in 2006 - 07 due to reduced demand. Core staffing in the Link Nursery classes currently comprise of one or two nursery nurses, as required through regulation by the Care Commission.
- 6.4 Regulation of day care services by the Care Commission requires that a minimum of 50% of staff are qualified. In the Local Authority Link Nursery Scheme 100% of core staff are qualified. In addition, on two days per week a fully qualified and experienced nursery teacher works alongside the core team in each nursery class to lead and guide the pre-school education element of the programme.
- 6.5 This high level of qualified staff would be maintained in the proposed five additional Link Nursery classes with all 3 nursery nurse staff in each setting having a minimum of HNC or SVQ3 qualification. Again the core staff would be further supported on certain days by the addition of a nursery teacher to the staff complement.
- 6.6 An evaluation of the first year of operation of the Link Nursery Project was recently undertaken. A questionnaire was issued to all staff involved in this initial year. To date, 14 responses from 25 questionnaires have been received by the Department. In the responses to these questionnaires staff teams and school management have identified benefits arising from the Link Nursery Scheme. They have also identified issues and suggestions for future developments and improvements. Detailed information from the questionnaires is contained in Appendix A which also includes an indication of the way in which the Education Department will address the issues identified.
- 6.7 The information gathered from the Link Nursery Project evaluation will be considered by the Best Value Review Group when it meets to discuss and identify the most effective and efficient ways to deliver early years services across Dundee in the future.

## 7.0 **PROPOSAL**

### **The addition of more nursery classes to the Link Nursery Scheme**

- 7.1 An earlier Report to the Education and Personnel Committees sought approval to establish a Link Nursery Project where smaller nursery classes with less than 20 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) places would be supported by Link Nursery Teachers working across classes. This Report seeks approval to extend the initiative to classes with 30 FTE places; Barnhill, Eastern, Macalpine, St Mary's and St Vincent's.

These proposals will result in financial savings because of an overall reduction in the teacher staffing complement. This will be achieved by normal staffing turnover and will require the redeployment of four nursery teachers into vacant posts in primary classes, one teacher redeployed as a Link Nursery Teacher supporting the Link Nursery Scheme and the redeployment of four surplus nursery nurses.

## 8.0 **CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Assistant Chief Executive (Management), Director of Social Work, and Director of Leisure and Communities.

## 9.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

Anne Wilson

Director of Education

19 February 2007

## Appendix A

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
<p>1 From your experience and perspective describe what you found to be significantly different features of your work during the first year of this initiative?</p>	<p>More direct involvement with day to day issues</p> <p>More teamwork (positive)</p> <p>The day for preparation and teamwork invaluable</p> <p>Daily input to review planning.</p> <p>More input to profiling of children</p> <p>Much more contact with parents and with outside agencies</p> <p><i>As I moved from a nursery school to a link nursery class I went with an open mind aware of obvious differences, eg no of children, sound levels. I therefore have not been aware of obvious differences</i></p> <p>Further opportunity to use initiative, leadership skills, management of everyday situations, decision making skills.</p> <p>Housekeeping skills were extended</p> <p><i>I had previously worked in the private sector. The differences have been substantial; more</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some NNs not confident in taking a leading role</li>   <li>▪ Difficult to find a time slot when all members of staff were available.</li>   <li>▪ Children have less teacher input and although NNs are very capable, they do not have the same training/skills as a teacher</li>   <li>▪ More written work - profiles, plans, reports.</li>   <li>▪ Working with different teams in different settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development, skills training and confidence building will continue to be developed and supported along with the sharing of good practice across settings.</li>   <li>• Time-tabled meetings for all staff will take account of varying staff working patterns.</li>   <li>• In Dundee City Council nurseries all staff are fully qualified in Early Education and Childhood studies as required by the Care Commission.</li>   <li>• In consultation with appropriate trade unions and staff the Education Department will review the range, content and quantity of paperwork necessary to support children's learning and to allow staff to fulfil their roles and remits.</li>   <li>• Experience of working in different settings has proved to be an excellent form of professional development</li> </ul>

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
	<p><i>opportunities to work with and alongside other professionals, more resources available to use with the children</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forming relationships with parents - very difficult especially in new setting.</li>   <li>▪ Difficulty in writing reports on children you see less often</li>   <li>▪ Required to go snack shopping</li>   <li>▪ Time to complete various tasks i.e. wall displays or diary</li> </ul>	<p>which enhances practitioners' experience and builds personal and professional confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear timetable outlining the availability of the Early Years Link Teacher for parents and other professionals will be provided and displayed in each setting.</li>   <li>• A whole staff team approach to information gathering to inform records and reports will be developed across all settings. The Department will review reporting formats.</li>   <li>• A whole school approach which supports and reflects the Health Promoting Schools initiative and utilises Healthy Eating Assistants will support the purchasing of food and other resources required for snacks.</li>   <li>• Settings will be supported with reviewing time management procedures to support staff in undertaking all necessary elements of their role.</li> </ul>

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less direct contact with my nursery teacher. I had to undertake tasks previously done by the teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department will review and clarify roles, remits and responsibilities. The sharing of good practice across all settings will be supported and promoted.</li> </ul>
<p>2a What specific benefits/ challenges did you find with staffing?</p>	<p>Increased levels of confidence in NN staff</p> <p><i>We have excellent staff who work well together as a team. They have a very positive attitude which surmounted any problems we faced.</i></p> <p>Working with other EYLTs and a day dedicated to planning, development children's profiles, protocols etc</p> <p>Benefit of working/sharing ideas with other EYLTs</p> <p>Excellent team work at all levels</p> <p><i>Good to have another nursery nurse to work with</i></p> <p><i>We benefited (children, parents and staff) through offering a good quality curriculum which reflected the specific needs of children attending our setting</i></p> <p><i>As a brand new team of four</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NNs were unused to taking a leading role</li> <li>▪ Having jobshare NNs made liaison and information sharing very challenging</li> <li>▪ Being expected to do supply cover for NN. Expectation of HTs/DHTs regarding what we were still responsible for</li> <li>▪ Difficult to establish continuity when in on only two days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing professional development, skills training and confidence building will continue to be developed and supported along with the sharing of good practice across settings.</li> <li>• Time-tabling of meetings for all staff will take account of varying staff working patterns.</li> <li>• The Department will review and clarify roles, remits and responsibilities. The sharing of good practice across all settings will be supported and promoted.</li> <li>• The Early Years Link Teacher is additional to the core nursery team therefore it is expected that the core team will provide continuity. The teacher provides an enhanced experience for the children and staff on the days she is at the nursery.</li> </ul>

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	<p><i>people, we had to get to know each other and how we all worked within the nursery.</i></p> <p><i>The team work well, we all have the same idea that we do our best for the children</i></p> <p><i>Issues were resolved through good communication skills and the support offered by our Early Years Link Teacher</i></p> <p><i>The team is running really well and the children are happily settled</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not at planning meetings so only know from second hand knowledge or diary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and staff in each setting will review their communication strategies taking staff working patterns into account.</li> </ul> <p><i>In addition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department will ensure that high quality staff development continues to be available to all staff.</li> <li>• The Department will continue to provide regular and sustained support.</li> <li>• The Department will continue to monitor, review and evaluate the Link Scheme initiative to ensure improved outcomes for the children.</li> </ul>
<p>2b What specific benefits/ challenges did you find with time management?</p>	<p>Communication is difficult, but strategies are developing and everyone is working together to improve things</p> <p>Pre-arranged dates for team meetings with HT worked well</p> <p>Initially limited until routine established</p> <p><i>We have a set timetable which we follow every week, start and end of</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation time difficult</li> <li>▪ Report writing - more children and less familiar with them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time-tabling of meetings for all staff will take account of varying staff working patterns.</li> <li>▪ A whole staff team approach to information gathering to inform records and reports will be developed across all settings. The Department will review reporting formats.</li> </ul>



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	<p><i>sessions to complete profiles.</i></p> <p><i>We have a planning meeting once a week to which all staff attend. Each member of staff has the opportunity to express their ideas and listen to each others views. Preparation is done in the morning before the children arrive; profile time is fitted in weekly timetable.</i></p> <p>Set times for planning, preparation and consultation.</p> <p>Meetings, diary, phone calls are all in place and working accordingly</p> <p><i>We have a planning meeting once a week with all staff and our link teacher, this also gives us an opportunity to discuss any other problems/issues</i></p> <p><i>We use our nursery diary on a daily basis</i></p>		
<p>2c What specific benefits/ challenges did you find with remits and responsibilities?</p>	<p>Took guidance from Early Years Manager and QIO Negotiated issues with individual school SMTs</p> <p><i>I was supported well by EYM and QIO and negotiated issues within individual schools</i></p> <p><i>We do have a lot of responsibility</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No clear (designation) of remits and responsibilities. Workload and responsibilities have increased and remit has changed significantly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Department will review and clarify roles, remits and responsibilities. The sharing of good practice across all settings will be supported and promoted.</li> </ul>

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
	<p><i>but all feel supported by each other</i></p> <p>Responsibility is shared equally between members of staff and this seems to work well</p>		
<p>2d What specific benefits/ challenges did you find with communication?</p>	<p>Staff work very closely together to ensure information reaches the appropriate person</p> <p>Other professionals eg Ed Psych made aware of when I was available and appointments made accordingly. Team meetings, dates and times planned in advance. EYLT timetable on notice boards. A firm commitment to spend class time with the children</p> <p>More aware of current issues and initiatives through contact with Early Years team</p> <p>Communications very good with parents and other agencies</p> <p>Have engaged in working more closely with the parents</p> <p><i>Communication between staff is excellent; we can discuss anything with each other. Also</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This is more difficult than before. Felt it took much longer to get to know new children and parents.</li> <li>▪ Little opportunity to meet other staff in school. A feeling of being out of the loop and unaware of what is happening (elsewhere in school)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sharing good practice along with continuing professional development, skills training and confidence building will continue to be developed and supported to ensure all are involved and informed.</li> </ul>

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
	<p><i>very good with parents, over the last year we have built relationships and parents know and trust us. Communication with other professionals is also developing well</i></p> <p><i>Communication between nursery group is very good, also good with parents and other professionals. We feel it is important to get to know the family, this helps the relationship with the child</i></p> <p>Informal talks, newsletter, other agencies, support of EYL teacher</p>		
<p>2e What specific benefits/challenges did you find with support for you and/or colleagues?</p>	<p><i>Early Years team has been very supportive. NNs value their meetings with EYM and QIO and I value the SMT link meetings. EYM and QIO very approachable and helpful</i></p> <p>From EYM, QIO and EYCC team - very good. Regular meetings to discuss/review issues and sound advice offered. Good support from DHT in base school, eg with risk assessment.</p> <p>EIS rep very supportive</p> <p>Very good support from EYM and QIO with regular meetings to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive with double planning, reports etc. Prep for HMIE and Care Commission inspections in two settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Department will ensure that high quality staff development continues to be available to all staff.</li> <li>▪ The Department will continue to provide regular and sustained support.</li> <li>▪ The Department will continue to monitor, review and evaluate the Link Scheme initiative to ensure improved outcomes for the children</li> <li>▪ The Department are committed to raising the quality of Leadership across</li> </ul>

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	<p>discuss issues as they arose. Weekly meeting with other EYLTS very valuable.</p> <p>Meeting with SMT</p> <p>Link meetings at EDS</p> <p>Supported well by EYL teacher</p> <p><i>Throughout the past year I have felt supported by both our staff and DHT who oversees the running of our nursery</i></p> <p><i>We can support each other in the team. I also feel supported by our depute who I can trust and discuss any problems with</i></p>		<p>all sectors. Professional development opportunities will be arranged to support this.</p>
<p>2f What specific benefits/ challenges did you find with workload?</p>	<p>Additional time given to nursery class</p> <p>Helped by day at Sidlaw View on Thursdays for preparation, medium term planning and development work</p> <p>Slightly more in some areas although less in others. Along with a productive team this balanced itself out</p> <p><i>Personally I feel that our workload is spread evenly between all staff</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An overall increase in workload was indicated by respondents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time-tabling of meetings for all staff will take account of varying staff working patterns.</li> <li>▪ The Education Department will review the range, content and quantity of paperwork necessary to support children's learning and to allow staff to fulfil their roles and remits.</li> <li>▪ A whole staff team approach to information gathering to inform records and reports will</li> </ul>

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
	<p><i>members</i></p> <p>Shared equally between staff</p> <p>Sharing the workload among the whole team - NNs, EYLT and SMT and sometimes others in school, eg school secretary classroom assistants where appropriate</p>		<p>be developed across all settings. The Department will review reporting formats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A whole school approach which supports and reflects the Health Promoting Schools initiative and utilises Healthy Eating Assistants will support the purchasing of food and other resources required for snacks.</li> </ul>
<p>3 With regard to your own professional development what has been most useful?</p>	<p><i>SMT/EYL teacher meetings. Having a very knowledgeable EYLT - I learned a lot from her</i></p> <p>Challenge of developing relationships and team work in new setting. (With other EYLTs) joint development of materials, eg profiles, protocols, curriculum development, sharing ideas and good practice. Learning from others. Observing working within different settings - raising standards</p> <p>Challenge of forming new nursery teams and working with different SMTs. Opportunity to work with other EYLTs to develop protocols, profiles etc. Working in more than one setting widens one's perspective. Sharing ideas.</p>	<p>No issues were raised in this category</p>	

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	<p>Developing interpersonal skills and relationships with others</p> <p><i>I feel more confident and able to deal with parents and outside agencies</i></p> <p>Made me more confident as had to rely on myself or other NN mainly</p> <p>VIG - communicating with children</p> <p>Successfully undertaking new challenges. Meeting new professionals and being aware of their remits for future reference if needed</p> <p>Gaining confidence through total involvement in all aspects of the nursery, and in particular, parent contact</p> <p><i>The support of my university lecturer - my readings of up to date thinking, communications with others</i></p> <p><i>Attending courses through the year have been more useful to my development</i></p> <p>The chance to go on different courses throughout the year has been very useful and beneficial to</p>		

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	the nursery		
4 Please give suggestions as to how you feel that this new initiative can be developed and or/improved further.	<b>This question provided a consultation opportunity for all staff involved in the initiative. Suggestions they offered are reflected in the 'Proposed Action' column for the previous three questions.</b>		
Additional comments	<p><i>Our link class is working really well thanks to the superb staff we have. We would like to keep them to ensure we can continue to offer a high quality service</i></p> <p>Forming relationships with parents and team members should become easier as this initiative becomes more established</p> <p><i>I was happy working with the EYLT as our team started to gel by the end of the year</i></p> <p><i>I feel I have had a successful year in this setting. I have been made to feel very welcome and part of a great team (professionally and personally) and I have settled very well. Although I had reservations about this new initiative, I feel it has opened doors for me and pushed</i></p>		

Questions	Sample of positive responses	Issues identified	Proposed Action
	<p><i>me that extra mile</i></p> <p><i>Grateful for the opportunity to express our views</i></p> <p>May extend and reinforce how valuable and good quality early years link nurseries are to individual group learning. The EYL nurseries also help support individual families though offering small children's group</p> <p><i>I would just like to add that I am very pleased to be given the opportunity</i></p> <p><i>I am enjoying the links initiatives and am very happy to be given the opportunity to work with such a great team of people</i></p>		