



National Evaluation of the Early Intervention Programme Final Report

Helen Fraser, Audrey MacDougall, Anne Pirrie, Linda Croxford

June 2001

3 Implementation of the EIP

3.7 Summary of findings

- By June 2000 there were 67% of Scottish primary schools included in the EIP programme.
- The proportion of their schools that local authorities included in the EIP at the beginning of the initiative varied considerably from one authority to another and this difference was a greater distinguishing factor than the variety of approaches taken to the literacy and numeracy curriculum.
- Local authorities had a considerable degree of autonomy in the approaches they chose to take to early intervention.
- However there was a clear consensus amongst local authorities around the curriculum and organisational approaches of phonological awareness, onset and rime analogy, emergent writing, mental maths and whole class/interactive teaching.
- Approaches such as synthetic phonics, paired reading and the use of 'story sacks' as part of home-school link initiatives became more prominent as the EIP developed.
- Numeracy intervention took much longer to become established over the three-year period than literacy.
- Most head teachers in the sample reported that their schools were located in areas of multiple disadvantage, with significant numbers of pupils experiencing learning difficulties.
- Class sizes in the schools were already well under the statutory limits. However more than one-third of the head teachers were continuing to employ strategies to reduce class sizes.
- While most local authorities by 1999 had developed position statements on progression through literacy skills, a fairly high proportion of schools had not



done so. There were rather fewer authorities and schools reporting position statements on progression through numeracy skills.

- Head teachers and their teaching staff valued continuity in the deployment of staff within the infant stages. Staying with the same stage, following a class into the next stage and simply remaining within Primary 1 to 3 each had their adherents.
- Most head teachers used the budget flexibility that they had locally to 'top up' core early intervention funding from their own school budgets.
- Most local authority co-ordinators considered consultation and planning with head teachers to be very or extremely important.
- Most local authority co-ordinators considered staff development of all classroom staff to be very or extremely important. There was a consensus that the emphasis was on developing methodology rather than material resources.



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4 Impact on pupils

4.6 Summary of findings

- In the PIPS test there was a significant overall increase in reading attainment at Primary 3 between 1998 and 2000. There was no such overall change in mathematics attainment.
- The PIPS results did not show a pattern of significantly greater improvement in reading in 'EIP' as opposed to 'non-EIP' schools. However the difference in favour of EIP schools was significant in local authorities where the EIP funding had been focused on a smaller proportion of schools.
- There was a significantly greater increase in reading attainment on the PIPS test between 1998 and 2000 in schools that had introduced Reading Recovery-type approaches.
- There was also some weak evidence that the amount of increase in reading attainment was greater in those schools where home-link support had been introduced.
- A small number of local authorities attributed their success to the introduction of synthetic phonics. Others cited a mix of approaches.
- Attainment in mathematics on PIPS was, on average, lower in 2000 than in 1998 in schools where 'more phonics', or 'synthetic' or 'Jolly Phonics' had been introduced to improve reading attainment.
- On the other hand, mathematics attainment on PIPS was significantly higher in 2000, compared with 1998, in those schools where home-link support had been introduced.
- Local authorities' own evaluations reported considerable improvement in both literacy and numeracy results. Their data, in varying degrees, included results from standardised tests and National 5-14 Tests.



- More than half of the local authorities used terms like ‘significant’, ‘marked’, ‘considerable’ or ‘steady’ to describe the progress made. Our survey data confirm these findings.
- Respondents in schools were confident that the EIP had been effective in increasing attainment in reading, writing and numeracy. The perceptions of effectiveness were particularly marked in reading and writing.
- Class teachers in Primary 1 and 2, although generally very positive about the extent of attainment gains, have perhaps been rather more measured in their responses than other stakeholders.
- Pupils who were entitled to a free school meal tended to have lower attainment in reading and mathematics on the PIPS test. This relationship to attainment was no less in 2000 than it had been in 1998, despite the significant overall rise in reading attainment.
- Local authorities’ own findings, and the survey data, were broadly in line with the PIPS results, showing progress, but still a ‘gap’.
- The survey data show that, in literacy, the effectiveness of the programme was seen to be much greater for the highest and middle achievers than it was for the most disadvantaged and the slowest learners.
- Girls tended to have higher levels of reading attainment than boys on the PIPS tests, but there was no significant difference between girls and boys in average mathematics scores. There was no change in the extent of gender differences between 1998 and 2000.
- Older pupils in Primary 3 tended to have higher attainment in both reading and mathematics than younger children. However, the effects of age on attainment were smaller in 2000 than they had been in 1998.
- There was a general perception that pupils’ motivation was improving.
- Although on the whole, in the PIPS responses, pupils had quite positive attitudes to school, and also to reading and mathematics, the pupils in 2000 had more negative attitudes to school than their counterparts in 1998. There was no evidence, however, that attitudes to reading or mathematics had changed.
- Girls were more positive in their attitudes to school, reading and mathematics than boys.
- Positive attitudes to school in Primary 3 pupils were associated with the presence of nursery nurses or classroom assistants when they were in Primary 1.



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8 Recommendations

8.1 Interpreting success

1. Further early intervention should resolve and clarify policy and resource issues in respect of raising attainment and addressing educational inequalities associated with disadvantage.
2. There is sufficient evidence in the quantitative data to justify further research into the roles and effectiveness of home-link staff.
3. Other inequalities, such as those attributable to age and gender, should continue to be a concern. Policy at national and local levels should explore strategies for greater flexibility of age at entry regulations.

8.2 School management of staff, classroom practice and curriculum

4. Teachers' involvement, enthusiasm and professional satisfaction appear to have been part of the success of early intervention. Maintaining this should be a school management priority.
5. There should be a focus on taking forward a style whereby schools and teachers continue to be actively involved in the development, management and evaluation of interventions/projects/teaching and learning strategies.
6. Local authorities should continue to share developments and evaluation findings.
7. The perceived success of the introduction of nursery nurses, classroom assistants, learning support or additional teachers is universal in schools. Our evidence is that retaining this resource is justified both in terms of attainment gains and sustaining teachers' commitment.
8. As a resource, the cost of the additional staffing is significant, and it will be important to ensure that its value is fully exploited. The classroom team should be seen as one that capitalises on the full potential of all its members, and also functions as a team. Staff development, and on-going exploration of good practice and enhanced roles and contributions should be priorities.



8.3 Short-term and long-term gains

9. The history of early interventions should not be ignored. Longer-term success is not assured from promising beginnings. Pupils at risk will need focused support well beyond the early primary stages.
10. There is a need for a longitudinal study in order to determine whether early successes have been maintained.
11. There is a need to debate curriculum balance in the early stages of the primary school, and consider whether play and self-directed learning opportunities are under-represented.
12. Future large-scale initiatives should consider building in evaluation at the conceptual stage.