

# Stirling Evaluations

## Starting Points

As with the Early Intervention Project, Starting Points was conceived as having universal application i.e. as a profiling/planning support for use with all children. It was not specifically intended to have a screening or identification purpose. However, a recent project has looked at the relationship between transition information (nursery-P1) and any subsequent staged intervention response (in P1/P2) by the primary school in a sample of pupils from 21 schools in the authority.

<b>Table 1 Children with Starting Points Profiles</b>		
concerns highlighted at transition	number	percentage
yes	44	65.7%
yes, orally	5	7.5%
no	17	25.4%
not known	1	1.5%

<b>Table 2 Children without Starting Points Profiles</b>		
concerns highlighted at transition	number	percentage
yes	17	39.5%
yes, but by parents	3	7.0%
no	14	32.6%
not known	9	20.9%

This information is indicating that the use of Starting Points and the structured transition process that is part of it greatly increases the number of at risk learners identified at point of entry into P1, i.e. 65.7% compared to 39.5%.

It is felt that there is scope for developing this further both in increasing the percentage of this population identified pre-P1, and also for supporting early targeted intervention strategies.

## Staged Intervention

Data on overall numbers of pupils and at what stage they are placed on staged intervention could be used as a way of tracking the impact of earlier identification and response. For instance, it might be expected that there would be a trend towards children being placed on staged intervention at earlier primary stages rather than later as staff become aware of more information earlier and move more quickly to specific intervention. Further discussion on this data is planned with SLANT coordinators.

## Annual Evaluations

Annual evaluations conducted by our external evaluator consisted of detailed questionnaires which were given to every member of staff involved in the initiative.

Key findings include:

- **Effectiveness of Strategies**  
Strategies judged to be effective varied. However there was agreement as to why they were effective including:
  - Fun for children
  - Children eager and enthusiastic about purpose
  - Learning tailored to children's needs
  - Children supported to explore and develop ideas
  - Children's confidence and self-esteem were enhanced
  - Teachers enthusiastic and motivated by staff development
- **Literacy**
  - Children tackling unknown words with more confidence
  - Children more motivated and ready to write
  - Increased use of lending library by children and parents
  - Constant use of writing area
- **Numeracy**
  - Faster mental calculations
  - Better awareness of the language of number
  - More use made of number games and activities
  - Clearer progression targets
- **Parents**
  - Increased importance given to involving parents
  - Broad range of activities/events for families planned
- **Staff development**
  - Many staff found the staff development to be a useful time to meet and share ideas with colleagues
  - Courses reinforced the importance of play in supporting early literacy and numeracy development
  - Staff particularly appreciated the practical sessions
  - In recognising the importance of 'sustaining the gains' Staff are sharing successful outcomes of the Initiative with colleagues throughout the school.
- **Home school links**
  - During session 2001/02 the focus of one of the external evaluations undertaken by our external consultant, was Home School Links.
  - A structured interview was held with seven of the pilot headteachers and two case studies completed.
  - Findings and conclusions drawn will help to inform Stirling's Home Link Strategy.

## Key Recommendations

- Continued support should be given to schools to help staff to find tune their skills of identifying and collecting evidence to demonstrate that activities undertaken have contributed to raising achievement.

- Further consideration needs to be given to the respective roles of school managers and authority staff in ensuring that P3–P7 staff are fully informed about Early Intervention outcomes generally and, in particular, how they should be involved in building on P1–P2 achievements.
- Schools should begin planning how they will continue the activities of network groups beyond the end of the EI initiative in 2002; those schools which are not yet involved in a network group should be assisted in establishing a group.
- Wherever possible schools should consider the appointment of nursery nurses in the early primary stages to support early learning.
- Work with families should continue to develop in new and innovative ways.
- The impact of Early Intervention should continue to be monitored, particularly on the middle and upper primary classes.