Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

Consultation with NGOs

Monday 18 April 2011 – 2pm

Attendees

Harold Hislop               Chair
Eamonn Murtagh             Inspector
Phil O’Flaherty             DES
Anne O’Mahony              DES
Eve McKay                  DES
Niamh Gallagher            Children’s Rights Alliance
June Tinsley               Barnardos

Key points made to the Department in addition to those in the written submission:

➢ General welcome for the plan but the plan should be child centred and ensure that actions are in the best interest of the child.

➢ Need for clarity on how gaps at national level and local level are to be bridged: national and local targets need to be aligned and there is a need for clarity regarding accountability.

➢ Provision should be more linked-in with other service providers e.g. public health nurses, speech and language therapists and after school services. Disadvantaged areas have good models of transfer of knowledge and cooperation between multiple stakeholders.

➢ Literacy needs to be understood more broadly than it appears to be in the document: for example, in addition to the reference to digital literacy in the initial definition, it should be incorporated throughout the plan.

➢ More detail is required on the early childhood phase: Aistear needs to be a key component of teacher education courses; more detail given on ECCE workforce development targets

➢ Schools should be able to exchange examples of good practice, especially with regard to transfer.

➢ Difficulties in transition from early childhood care and education to primary school and from primary school to post primary school could be eased with a more formal protocol on exchanges of information between education providers, perhaps through student portfolios.

➢ Need for curriculum reform at post-primary level is urgent, including idea of literacy across the curriculum.
Concerns were expressed in relation to lower targets set for disadvantaged students sending an implicit message that it is acceptable if they do not meet the national average.

Boards of Management potentially have a leadership role through championing literacy and numeracy in schools.

Parental engagement is particularly necessary for literacy and numeracy: this engagement can happen in a range of ways and needs to be supported.

More specific reference needs to be made to children with special educational needs; children in detention schools; and children with speech and language difficulties.

Appreciation for the meeting and appreciation that this was the first occasion (as part of an official consultation exercise) on which the organisations had been examined on the contents of their comment and proposals.