Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

Consultation with Parents’ Groups

Wednesday 20 April 2011 – 11am

Attendees

Phil O’Flaherty  DES, Chair
Harold Hislop   DES
Eamonn Murtagh  DES
Anne O’Mahony,  DES
Eve McKay      DES
Áine Lynch    National Parents’ Council - Primary
Tommy Walshe  National Parents’ Council - Post Primary

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

Key Points

- The plan should also include children from birth to 3 years of age.

- The primary message is that engagement with parents is relevant and integral to all chapters including teacher education, school leadership, assessment and targeting additional resources; isolating references to parents in a specific chapter of the draft plan tends to suggest a limited role for parents.

- Lack of parental engagement is considered to be the most significant form of educational disadvantage and this should be reflected in the plan.

- It can take time following transition from primary to post-primary school to bring all students up to the same level, particularly where many primary schools feed into one post primary school.

- Following clarification the proposal of literacy advisors was welcomed. It was agreed that if these were provided by upskilling an existing staff member in a school to act as a curriculum leader for literacy and numeracy, the benefits of the role would outweigh a relatively short removal of the teacher from the school without substitution for the periods of training.

- While assessment and comprehensive availability of test results by parents were welcomed, concerns remained that the proposals might lead to teaching-to-test and results being made available for comparisons of schools. The possibility of schools becoming stigmatised and causing conflict between parents and schools was raised.