

Learning Matters

News and information for staff in educational settings

Autumn term – November 30 2007

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Message from Terry Parkin

International Links

Southwark schools have some quite outstanding practice. However, to continue to improve at the rates we have seen we need to learn not only from the best in the borough, but from the best in the world.

With that in mind, a party of ten heads and deputies spent a week in Canada looking at some of the best North America has to offer. What was seen was a tight focus on improving a small number of areas, and embedding improvements in those areas in all they do. Literacy was a focus in all aspects of schoolwork, with 100 minutes a day in the core. This is not the recommendation from the study tour party, however!

Ontario is driven by the need to improve literacy, and has learnt from being a couple of years behind England in its implementation of a literacy strategy. In spite of strong central direction, the best learning was seen in classrooms and schools where teachers took risks, engaging pupils fully in their learning.

A strong collective responsibility also characterised the best schools. So what have we to learn? First, do fewer things, but do them better or perhaps deeper, and do them with a strong sense of collective improvement. Second, the opportunity to see how a different country works leads to more reflective practice at home. We clearly need to work with schools to help them develop an international dimension. Third, the chance to study overseas is enriching just in itself and we as a local authority need to look at encouraging the take-up of such opportunities.

Finally, we heard a presentation from the Free University of South Africa. You might have heard of this through its high profile sponsors such as Richard Branson and Oprah. You may hear more about it from those on the trip. If you are looking for an overseas link, or an international organisation to support, this might be an interesting place to start.

Regards

Terry Parkin

Deputy director of children's services – education

Good report card for Southwark's children's services

Services for children and young people in Southwark have continued to improve and are making a positive difference to lives, according to the latest assessment by Ofsted.

In results announced this week as part of the annual performance assessment, independent inspectors have given Southwark's children's services an overall rating of three out of a possible four points.

Key strengths identified include the council's action to make children feel safer in the borough and its work tackling health issues such as obesity, smoking, and breast-feeding.

Romi Bowen, strategic director for children's services, said: "We're encouraged by the assessment results, which recognise the quality of the services we are providing for Southwark's children and young people, and the improvements we've made since the last inspection.

"The report not only highlights the many good services we provide but also helps us to identify areas for improvement. A key priority remains continuing to improve educational attainment across the borough and developing our services to make sure that Southwark's children have the best possible chances in life."

Ofsted inspectors gave Southwark's services a rating of three out of a possible four points for six of the seven areas of judgement:

- the overall effectiveness of children's services
- being healthy
- staying safe
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic wellbeing
- the capacity to improve including the management of children's services.

Inspectors scored Southwark a two for the final area, enjoying and achieving.

For the full report go the [Ofsted website](#).

News and information

Private fostering

Southwark Council and children's charity NCH is calling on all schools to let them know about any private fostering arrangements they are aware of, to ensure these children and families are safe and supported.

Private fostering is when a child under 16, under 18 if disabled, is looked after for 28 days or more by an adult who is not a close relative. The law defines a close relative as someone who is the child's brother or sister, grand-parent, step-parent, uncle or aunt.

The law requires carers and professionals who work in any field to notify the local authority of any child who may be privately fostered so it can approve these arrangements and ensure proper support is in place for this potentially vulnerable group of children.

Many children in private fostering arrangements are sent here from overseas – often from the Caribbean, West Africa or South America – to stay with another family to improve their education. Children born in the UK can also be privately fostered, perhaps due to family breakdowns.

While arrangements normally work well, it's vital that the council knows about them. Southwark Council has asked Family Plus, which is run by NCH to manage our private fostering arrangements.

Michael Sweetland, private fostering coordinator, Southwark family plus, said: "Over the past year we have been very successful in raising awareness of this important issue and have generated a significant number of notifications of possible private fostering arrangements. Of these 34 have been assessed, checked and agreed as private fostering arrangements – one of the best results in London.

"However, we know that there are many private fostering arrangements in Southwark that we do not know about and we are asking schools to help us out. January is an important date as there will be a new intake of children into our schools so it is important that we take the time to consider whether any child in their school could be in a private fostering arrangement and to let us know."

If you come across any possible private fostering arrangements in your practice contact Southwark Council's children's services referral and assessment team on 020 7525 1921 or email rad@southwark.gov.uk

Contact Michael Sweetland, private fostering coordinator, Southwark family plus on 020 7703 4934 Email michael.sweetland@nch.org.uk

Does your school have a website?

If it does, you need to get it listed on Directgov website's school finder:

<http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>. This is the official source of school data, and makes it easy for the public and other professionals to find information about your school. Even if you haven't got a website, you should keep your school's information up to date with the DCSF.

How to update your school's information

Directgov's school finder information comes from the DCSF Edubase – and every school should have an Edubase login. Login at

<http://schools.edubase.gov.uk/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fDefault.aspx> and add your school's profile and web address then we you can make sure that the public information about your school is all present and correct.

Contact Stephen Caffarey, Southwark children's services e-communications officer on 020 7525 2246
Email stephen.caffarey@southwark.gov.uk

Regional briefings for religious education: dates and venues

Teachers can register on the CfBT website – www.cfbt.com – from November 19. The list below gives you the town where the event is to take place – the precise venue will be posted on the website. Places are limited, so early registration is recommended.

January 16 – South West region - Plymouth

January 22 – Yorks & Humber region – Leeds Brighouse

January 30 – East Midlands region - Leicester

February 4 – North West region - Bolton

February 12 – North East region - Newcastle

February 26 – South East region – To be decided

March 3 – East of England region – To be decided

March 10 – West Midlands region - Birmingham

March 13 – London region - To be decided

Contact Rosemary Rivett, director of professional services, RE Today, on tel/fax 0121 430 2959
Email rosemary@retoday.org.uk
Web www.retoday.org.uk or www.natre.org.uk

Candy drug in schools: warning

A type of the drug Crystal Meth, that has the taste and appeal of a popular children's candy, is doing the rounds in schools.

Known as Strawberry Meth or Strawberry Quick, the drug smells of strawberries and is like pop rocks, the candy that sizzles and pops in your mouth.

If children consume this drug thinking it's sweets, they can become seriously ill. It also comes in chocolate, peanut butter, cola, cherry, grape and orange flavours.

Please tell children **not** to accept sweets from strangers and not to accept sweets that look like this from their friends. If they come across it, they should report it to their teacher.

Raising Standards for All: EMA guidance launch event

Would you like to attend an event celebrating the diversity represented in Southwark schools? Why not come along to the launch event of Raising Standards for All, on Tuesday December 4 2007, 4pm to 6pm at the Salmon Youth Centre. [View invitation.](#)

The new guidance supports schools to promote the wellbeing, progress and attainment of children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups.

Unlike guidance you will be familiar with, Raising Standards for All is designed to be accessible to a nonspecialist audience, providing an interesting read, including lots of quotes, examples of good practice and top tips. It's presented in five magazine style booklets:

- Guidance for Senior Leadership Teams
- Teaching and Learning
- Partnership with Parents, Carers and the Community
- Using Data to Promote Achievement
- Pupil Voice: Building a Culture of Pupil Participation

For more information on the guidance pack please contact Christine McInnes on 020 7525 2919 or email christine.mcinnnes@southwark.gov.uk.

To book a place at the event email paulette.houslin@southwark.gov.uk with your name, parking requirements and any special needs.

Child protection e-learning course

Learn about safeguarding children on the web

It's a difficult subject, but the reality is there are children living in Southwark suffering from child abuse. The abuse might be physical, sexual, mental or more commonly, neglect.

It's the personal duty of everyone who works with children, paid or unpaid, to safeguard children.

So take the first step and learn about safeguarding children on the web. It's free to anyone who comes into contact with, or works directly with children, or with adults who may also be parents or carers. You could be working in a school, for the council, NHS, police, in the private sector, a faith group or a voluntary and community group.

This e-learning resource gives essential training about what harms children, how to recognise harm or risk, and how to take action to help safeguard children. It runs through the different types of abuse and gives clues and tips on how to recognise abuse when it occurs.

The course, **Awareness of Child Abuse or Neglect**, is in two levels.

Foundation - a short course for anyone who needs to recognise children who may be at risk and know what to do.

Core - more detailed, this longer course is for workers in direct services to children and their families.

You can try a demonstration by visiting www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

You don't need advanced computer skills, just access to a computer and Internet at work, home, local library, or internet café, or similar. The full course lasts about two hours but you can do half an hour when you have time and go back to complete the rest.

To sign up email marcelle.dopwell@southwark.gov.uk saying you want to do our e-learning course.

Copy deadline

Learning Matters is distributed fortnightly on a Friday.
Please ensure copy is received by the deadline to ensure inclusion.

Copy deadline	Distribution
December 7	December 4
Christmas break	
January 11	January 8

We would like to hear from you. If you have changes to any details, want to share good practice, have news and information or want to celebrate achievement, please use let us know.

Email us at childrens.services@southwark.gov.uk

Your feedback, suggestions and any comments are always welcome.