Functional Literacy and Numeracy

A report from Overview & Scrutiny

Foreword

Cllr Jon Hunt

Chairman Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Can our young people read, write and do a reasonable amount of maths when they leave school? This is a question that has concerned the children and education overview and scrutiny committee for some years.

This report takes up the challenge laid down by the co-ordinating committee when it published its report on the city's Growth Agenda. This was to find a way of ensuring that the vast majority of our young people leave school with the basic skills they need for the modern work-place.

It proved timely for as we embarked on the work, there were a number of statements from business leaders bemoaning the allegedly poor results of our education system. In addition the problem was recognised at national level and the concept of functional skills introduced, with a view to embedding them in the education system.

Once satisfied that functional skills tests were indeed a useful and much improved way of assessing whether someone has adequate literacy and numeracy, we could concentrate on examining how they can be included in the current system, including the GCSE curricula.

During the review we visited Nechells and Brandwood for two rewarding and eye-opening sessions with young people who had emerged from school with little in the way of qualifications and were using NEET programmes to gain a second chance for themselves.

Finally I would like to thank all those who have made this piece of work possible – members of the committee including the young people's representatives, who played an active part, Jill Short and Iram Choudry from the Scrutiny Office and officers from the Directorate of Children, Young People and Families, who provided helpful and informative support.

Contents

Further information regarding this report can be obtained from:
Lead Review Officer: Jill Short
                         tel: 0121 303 3099
                         e-mail:jill.short @birmingham.gov.uk
Reports that have been submitted to Council can be downloaded from
www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.

1   Introduction

Reasons for the Review

1.1   There has been over recent years a barrage of criticism from business leaders nationally that "millions of school and college leavers are not fit for work" and that too many do not have even the basic grasp of the three R's. In addition wide ranging concern has been voiced about the number of young people who leave compulsory education without a single C grade at GCSE.

1.2   In recognition of this, the Coordinating O&S Committee as part of the Growth Agenda Review identified the need to develop targets for functional skills qualifications, that could be used to drive up levels of literacy and numeracy for Birmingham school leavers, who do not attain a Level 2 qualification (GCSE grade A*-C or equivalent) in English and Maths.

Aims of the Review

1.3   The aim of this piece of work was to clarify how Birmingham will ensure that the introduction of Functional Skills qualifications will help all young people leave school with at least basic levels of literacy and numeracy.

1.4   In particular, it sought to establish what Birmingham is currently doing and what more can be done, to ensure that all young people have the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.

Membership of the Overview Group

1.5   The Overview was conducted by the full committee which was (at the time) made up of Cllr Jon Hunt, Cllr Zoe Hopkins, Cllr Chaudhry Rashid, Cllr Hendrinna Quinnen, Cllr David Barrie, Cllr Matt Bennett, Cllr Bill Evans, Cllr Margaret Sutton, Cllr Peter Howard, Cllr Gwyn Neilly, Cllr Shaukat Ali Khan, Mr Shahid Mir (parent governor representative), Mrs Sonia Campbell (parent governor representative), Father Cownley(Church Representative), Mary Edwards (Church Representative) Sarandip Bhatt (young peoples representative), Mohammed Bilal (young peoples representative)

Our Key Questions:

1.6   The Committee started off with a series of questions which formed the basis of the exercise:

- How do we ensure that young people have a basic level of numeracy and literacy when they leave school?

- How will it be measured?

- What will the content of the Functional Skills qualifications be?

- Will the Functional Skills qualifications provide useful opportunities to raise standards?

- How might they be used to raise levels of attainment?

- What target might Birmingham set?

1.7 To explore these issues, Members met with the Cabinet Member for Young People and Families, City Council officers, colleges, schools, local businesses and young people attending courses at the Maypole Centre and Gordon Franks Training. Appendix 1 sets out in detail the programme followed.

What is the problem?

1.8 Over the last few years both the media and various studies have highlighted a perceived discrepancy between the needs and requirements of the job market and the skills level of school leavers. A number of business leaders are on record claiming that many of the young people they are employing lack basic skills in numeracy and literacy and are leaving school ill prepared for the world of work. Some recent surveys and national reports appear to back this perception. For example the report "Towards Ambition 2020 Skills, Jobs, Growth – Expert advice from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills October 2009" concludes that:

> "The UK's future prospects – our route out of recession, our chances of a successful recovery and sustainable economic progress thereafter– depend on the industries and jobs we are able to create, and on having the skilled workforce we need to do those jobs well. Yet too many people in the UK fail to gain the basic employability and lower level skills needed to progress in work. As a result fewer adults possess the skills to progress in tomorrow's labour market or the motivation, confidence and opportunity to gain them".

1.9 In addition the CBI report "Emerging Stronger: The Value of Education in turbulent times – Education and Skills Survey 2009" provides additional information on employers views (sample of 581) of education and skills issues.

1.10 This survey shows that employers remain concerned about the basic skills of their least qualified employees and about the availability of the higher level skills that will be needed for the specialist jobs that will lead to recovery. It states that a deficit of basic skills is a serious problem for individuals and employers – and a heavy drag on business performance across the economy. According to the survey, 40% of employers surveyed reported problems with the basic numeracy and literacy of their workforce with nearly 57% concerned with poor IT skills among their staff. Concern about basic numeracy and literacy was especially acute in retail and manufacturing – where 69% of firms surveyed in retail and 50% in manufacturing reported problems with literacy.

1.11 Over half the employers surveyed were concerned about a shortage of basic IT skills among their current workforce – but felt that young people's skills in the area are exemplary.

1.12 Poor numeracy and literacy skills can be a serious impediment to the ability to secure, hold onto and progress in employment. Almost one and half million workers in the UK believe a lack of basic

competency in reading, writing and dealing with figures has cost them promotion or even lost them a job. (learndirect research 2007)

1.13   The high personal cost of a shortage of functional abilities in the core areas of literacy, numeracy and IT skills – higher risk of unemployment, lower earnings, limited career opportunities and social exclusion is matched by a significant cost to companies, whose business performance suffers from a lack of key skills. A recent study by KPMG estimates the cost to the economy of those who leave school without basic numeracy skills at up to £2.4bn a year. (The long term costs of numeracy difficulties produced by KPMG for Every Child a Chance Trust Jan 2009)

1.14   There was broad agreement about the sort of "basic skills" employers were seeking. These included being able to draw out information from basic texts and compose written communications and the ability to work through basic arithmetic and percentage problems such as calculating change or working out the reduced price of an item on sale.

1.15   The report states that although an A*-C pass at GCSE is the benchmark for which schools and students should aspire, it is not necessarily an accurate proxy for basic numeracy and literacy. But the large number of children falling well below this measure is leading to a basic skills deficit in the UK workforce.

2   What are Functional Skills?

2.1   Functional skills are described as being those fundamental skills in English, Mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that help people to gain the most out of life, learning and work. They are about using English, Maths and ICT in everyday situations. They are essential for:

- getting the most from education and training.

- personal development of all young people and adults.

- developing employability skills.

2.2   It is intended that a functional skills qualification will form a platform upon which to develop other important abilities like communication, team working, presentation, and problem solving. These in turn provide a base upon which to build employability skills. The term "functional" should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and knowledge that they need to take an active and responsive role in their communities, in their workplace and in education.

2.3   Functional Skills will replace Key Skills and Basic Skills in September 2010. The differences between the two approaches are set out below at paragraph 2.6.

Who will benefit from a Functional Skills qualification and how?

2.4   The former Government considered that Functional Skills qualifications would be useful to:

- learners: young people and adults who will develop important problem solving skills which will make sure that they are well prepared for employment, further learning and life in general.

- employers: the initiative will help to ensure that employees can apply vital functional skills in work situations which will improve effectiveness and productivity.

- higher education: competency in the key subjects of English, Mathematics and ICT will help students progress to further achievement, and will allow them to study independently.

2.5   The previous Government was of the view that to be effective, Functional Skills needed to be fully integrated into the curriculum and allow learners to engage with real situations. The main requirement driving the Functional Skills qualification development was the need to ensure that learners can 'do the basics'. This is fundamental to the initiative and needs to continue to drive delivery and assessment. It is not yet clear if the new Government proposes any major changes in the existing approach for this policy area.

How do Functional Skills differ from Key Skills?

2.6   Functional Skills are about being able to apply the appropriate literacy, numeracy or ICT skills required when solving problems or carrying out tasks in every day life or work. They require a more rounded approach than Key Skills, teaching both the knowledge and skills of the subject and

then going a step further to teach learners how to apply this to everyday scenarios. For example, a learner needs to know more than how to calculate a percentage, such as how to reduce sale items, if they work in the retail sector.

Introduction of the Functional Skills Qualifications

2.7 It is proposed that the Functional Skills accreditation will replace the existing Key Skills and Basic Skills qualifications, including the 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy' qualification. These examinations will no longer be available after 2010.

2.8 The Functional Skills qualifications will develop skills that employers and education providers look for when selecting candidates. Skills that help people to communicate or to present information and ideas effectively, to use technology to meet their needs, and to apply mathematical and problem-solving skills in order to operate confidently in professional, commercial and social environments.

> They are about applying knowledge to find effective solutions to real problems. Better functional skills will help to raise standards in schools and colleges and give employers confidence in the skills of the people that they recruit. To be a success, the functional skills qualifications have to reflect the skills that people need for further study and for employment."
> **(Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2009)**

2.9 Functional skills qualifications in English, Maths and ICT have been developed from Entry level to Level 2, they will be available nationally from 2010 for young people and adults. Functional skills Level 2 is deemed to be equivalent to GCSE grade C and above and Functional skills Level 1 is deemed equivalent to GCSE Grades D-G, or Key Skills Level 1.

2.10 To ensure functional skills are readily accessible to the full range of learners they will be available as stand-alone qualifications. In addition, they are also a component of Diplomas.

Functional skills and GCSEs

2.11 The assessment of functional skills has been incorporated into the revised GCSE specifications for English, Mathematics and ICT and the standards are embedded in the Key Stage 3 and 4 programmes of study. While learners are not required to pass level 2 in Functional Skills before they can achieve grades A*-C in these subjects, it was the intention that schools should be encouraged to give young people opportunities to enter and achieve freestanding functional skills qualifications, as they remain central to the reform of education for 14 to 19 year olds, and the measures which government is taking to equip the UK with the skills it needs for the 21st century.

2.12 The content changes to the GCSE criteria mean that the new GCSEs will extensively test functionality, whilst functional skills are already being delivered as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Assessment

2.13   Functional skills assessment will be based primarily on task-based scenario questions with a limited duration, delivered in a controlled environment. The assessments will use and reinforce skills-based, problem-solving learning techniques. Awarding bodies will offer either assessment opportunities throughout the year or on-demand assessment opportunities where possible.

2.14   The new stand-alone Functional Skills qualifications are being introduced from September 2010, following a three-year pilot. As stated above there will be tests in English, Mathematics and ICT, at Entry Level and Levels 1 and 2.

In broad terms the qualifications aim to focus on the following broad areas:

- The English qualification is divided into three sections that pupils will be assessed against, these cover speaking and listening, reading, and writing.

- Maths: This focuses on testing the ability to use and process mathematical information as well as the ability to interpret and analyse it.

- ICT: This focuses on the use of ICT systems, and tests the ability to find and select information, and develop and present information.

2.15   The qualifications are available for learners of any age, including adults and mean for example:

- Someone with Functional English at Level 2 should be able to write effectively, structure sentences and punctuate appropriately – for example to write a logical and persuasive letter or presentation to help them to get their point across when it matters most, or writing a successful job application.

- Someone with Functional mathematics at Level 2 should be able to use a range of data types and techniques to solve practical problems as well as check the accuracy of their solutions – for example, to work out the total cost of materials for an art project at college or how much foreign currency they will get when they change their holiday money.

- Someone with Functional ICT at Level 2 will be able to manage and retrieve information, use a variety of applications and apply safety and security practices – for example to understand how to use a computer to produce a flyer for an event and create a mailing list for it using a spreadsheet.

(Further details of the Functional Skills standards are set out in Appendix 2)

3   Progress in implementing these changes

National Developments

3.1   Members were advised on the range of national and local developments.

3.2   There have been more than 3,000 centres nationally involved in piloting the three Functional Skills qualifications in readiness for national roll-out and a national programme of training and development has been in place since Summer Term 2007.

3.3   However there have been a range of issues and difficulties since this implementation. For example a number of different bodies were initially awarded training and development responsibilities: National Strategies (schools, 14-16 sector), LSIS (FE, post 16), SSAT (Diploma development), Awarding Bodies (examinations & assessment) and the messages from these have not always been consistent.

3.4   National Strategies have a Strand Director for Functional Skills and, in September 2008, appointed a team of Regional Advisers with a specific remit for the development of Functional Skills.

3.5   The Qualifications Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) (which the new Government has recently announced is to be abolished) has produced Functional Skills Standards for Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE Level C+) in English, Maths and ICT. A consultation process was under way (at the time of completing this review) which should lead to a revision of these. Members were told that at the time the assessments offered by the Awarding Bodies did not match the QCDA assessment criteria and final accredited versions would not be available before Summer 2010.

3.6   Pupils studying for Diplomas from September 2008 will have to obtain the relevant Level 1 or Level 2 qualification in all three Functional Skills subjects (English, Maths & ICT) in order to obtain their Diploma in 2010.

3.7   Current Year 9 pupils will be the first cohort to sit the new GCSEs in which Functional Skills are embedded. (Weighting for functional elements: English 45-55%, Maths 45-55% ICT 45-55 %.) These courses start September 2010 (Awarding Body specifications had not been ratified at the time we were receiving evidence), with first accreditation in summer 2012. Functional Skills will be a separate stand-alone qualification at this point.

Local Developments:

3.8   Staff from the School Effectiveness Division have attended relevant national briefings and have produced customised training materials to support the development of Functional Skills within the local context. In addition training sessions have been delivered to schools and FE institutions involved in Diploma Gateways 1 & 2. These were required to pilot Functional Skills prior to commencement of Diploma courses. Some schools have subsequently requested/received in-school training for all staff to acquaint them with Functional Skills or support with a Functional Skills teaching and learning audit.

3.9 The Division has delivered a range of local briefings to schools on the importance of Functional Skills, its place within the revised National Curriculum and the need to develop skills-focused teaching. In addition, a session was delivered to senior managers with responsibility for curriculum development. This provided guidance for developing a curriculum vision and approach at KS3 that implements the revised Curriculum and Functional Skills in a coherent manner, as well as embedding Functional Skills teaching into everyday classroom practice. Subject Leader Development meetings for English, Maths and ICT have also included a specific focus on the development of Functional Skills as an integral part of the KS3 curriculum, highlighting changes needed to achieve this. Such sessions are open to all secondary schools, including special schools. The English and Maths teams within School Effectiveness Division have all developed subject specific resources to support the teaching of Functional Skills.

3.10 Support has also been provided to Diploma Gateway schools in developing policy, practice and models for the delivery of Functional Skills.

3.11 Finally the development of Functional Skills was one of the key features for in-school consultancy support and centre-based CPD (Continuous Professional Development) events during 2009-10.

3.12 Members were advised that, although nationally the focus for training and accountability remains largely on KS4, locally it is perceived that focus is needed at both KS3 and KS4. At KS4 for youngsters studying for a Diploma, and at KS3 for all pupils, as it is these young people who will be expected / 'encouraged' to obtain Functional Skills accreditation and therefore need to follow a curriculum which provides the learning opportunities designed to develop these skills. To achieve this there will be need for continued Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on skills-focused teaching and liaison with local employers to develop the opportunities needed for pupils to demonstrate mastery of these skills in 'real, relevant and purposeful contexts'.

3.13 It was felt that there is much still to be done to develop and strengthen the collaborative work with partner schools, to support the implementation and embedding of functional skills within the principal learning of the 14-19 diploma programmes.

3.14 Following the recent change of Government it is currently unclear if any of the existing national policies in relation to Functional Skills will be subject to change.

Current literacy and numeracy standards achieved by Birmingham's school leavers

3.15 The percentage of Birmingham pupils achieving English and maths skills at Level 2 (equivalent to a GCSE A*-C grade) and Level 1 (equivalent to a D-G grade) are performance measures that were used by the DCSF (now Department for Education) in the KS4 performance tables.

3.16 To be counted in the Level 2 indicator, pupils must have:

- GCSE English and GCSE maths at A*-C or

- Level 2 Functional Skills in English and maths or

- Level 2 Key Skills in Communication and maths or

- Level 2 Basic Skills in Literacy and numeracy or

- AS level English and maths.

3.17   To be counted in the Level 1 indicator, pupils must have achieved the above at Level 1 (D-G grade at GCSE or equivalent).

3.18   Table 1 shows Birmingham's performance at the end of Key stage 4 compared with the national average and Statistical Neighbours/Core City Local Authorities (2009 results). Table 2 gives a breakdown of Birmingham's figures, for 2009 showing the percentage of students achieving the English and Maths levels by qualification type. Table 3 shows the percentage of pupils achieving each grade in GCSE English and Maths in 2008 and 2009.

Table 1 The percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving English and maths skills at Level 2 (equivalent to an A*-C grade) and Level 1 (equivalent to a D-G grade) in 2009. Birmingham compared with statistical neighbour and core city LAs

Statistical Neighbours and Core City LAs	% of students achieving English & Maths Skills Level 2	% of students achieving English & Maths Skills Level 1
Coventry	56.2%	93.8%
Luton	54.8%	96.2%
Enfield	54.5%	95.4%
Leeds	53.7%	93.0%
Liverpool	52.7%	90.6%
Birmingham	**51.8%**	**93.5%**
Walsall	50.9%	92.7%
Derby	50.3%	94.7%
Wolverhampton	49.1%	93.1%
Nottingham	48.7%	88.3%
Newcastle	48.5%	88.7%
Bristol	48.2%	88.2%
Bradford	48.0%	91.4%
Barking and Dagenham	47.5%	94.6%
Manchester	44.5%	88.9%
Sandwell	43.5%	91.7%
Stat. Neighb./Core City average	**50.2%**	**92.2%**
England	**54.2%**	**90.8%**

Table 2 The percentage of Birmingham Y11 pupils achieving the English and maths skill levels by qualification type (2008/2009)

Percentage of pupils achieving at least Level 1 (D-G) in GCSE English and maths		Percentage of pupils achieving Basic skills/Key skills/Functional skills at Level 1		Percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 (A*-C) in GCSE English and maths		Percentage of pupils achieving Basic skills/Key skills/Functional skills at Level 2	
2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009
91.6%	92.7%	0.8%	0.8%	45.8%	47.8%	4.6%	3.8%

Table 3 The percentage of Birmingham Y11 pupils achieving each grade in GCSE English and maths (2008 and 2009)

GCSE Grade	English		Maths	
	2008	2009	2008	2009
A*	3.6%	3.4%	4.3%	4.2%
A	9.2%	9.6%	9.1%	10.4%
B	17.1%	17.2%	15.8%	15.4%
C	26.1%	28.8%	23.8%	25.2%
D	18.2%	17.7%	15.1%	15.1%
E	11.5%	10.5%	11.1%	10.5%
F	5.7%	5.2%	9.0%	8.3%
G	2.3%	2.0%	4.9%	4.9%
U	0.9%	0.8%	2.4%	1.7%
Absent/Not entered	5.5%	4.7%	4.4%	4.2%

3.19   As the above tables show, most (93.5%) Birmingham school leavers achieve a Level 1 qualification, while half (51.8%) achieve a Level 2 qualification. Currently, most students obtain the qualification from GCSE, with a much smaller proportion obtaining the qualification from the Key Skills/Basic Skills/Functional Skills.

3.20   There are variations in attainment by ethnic group and gender (Fig. 1). In 2009, 95% of girls achieved a Level 1 qualification (compared with 92% of boys) and 55% of girls achieved a Level 2 qualification (compared with 49% of Boys).

3.21   Less than 40% of Somali, Arab/Yemeni and Black Caribbean, boys achieved level 2.

3.22   Pupils eligible for free school meals were also less likely to achieve a level 2 qualification (35% compared with 57% of children not eligible for free school meals.
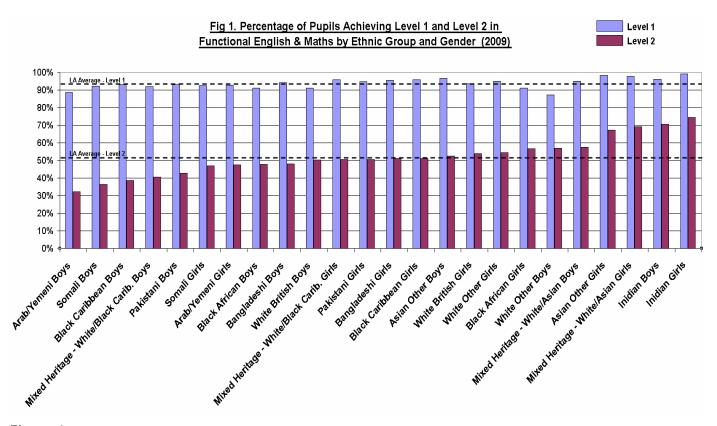
Fig 1. Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 1 and Level 2 in Functional English & Maths by Ethnic Group and Gender (2009)

Figure 1

NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in Birmingham

3.23   NI 117 is a key performance indicator for the local authority and the Children Families and Young People Directorate It is a national indicator that measures the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) as an average of the months November, December and January. The targets for NI 117 for the years 8/9 and 9/10 were set three years ago by the government at 7.6% and 7.3% respectively. Clearly these targets were set prior to the recent economic recession and the subsequent increase in young people's unemployment.

3.24   Performance against these targets showed a figure for Birmingham of 8.1% for the year 2008/9. Whilst the government have yet to ratify the 2009/10 figure initial data indicates that this will show a further reduction to 7.74% (2670). No comparative data for other authorities was available at the time of undertaking this review. However, it is anticipated that Birmingham will compare favourably against both statistical and geographical neighbours.

3.25   Members were advised that there are several reasons why Birmingham has been able to successfully continue to reduce the numbers of 16-18 NEET young people against a challenging economic background. These include:

• the development of a cross agency NEET strategy and delivery plan led by the Integrated Youth Support Service and bringing together Connexions, schools, colleges, work based

learning providers, Job Centre plus, the Learning and Skills Council and other education based agencies.

- exceeding the September Guarantee targets – ensuring that a very high proportion of 16 and 17 year olds had definite offers of places in Further Education or Training.

- considerable investment of Connexions funding and Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) in programmes and training targeted specifically at NEET young people.

- the successful Entry to Learning government pilot. Birmingham was one of only four local authorities chosen to pilot this project. 450 17 year olds identified as "not yet ready for learning" undertook this 15 week programme with 86% of course completers moving into sustained education.

- reducing the number of "not knowns" to 2.68% from the 2008/9 figure of 2.92%.

3.26   The Connexions Service tracks the progress of all young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years. However with post 16 year old young people frequently moving home, leaving home, moving away from or into the authority or seeking education, employment or training outside of the authority they become increasingly difficult to track. Connexions works intensively with other agencies to ensure that contact is maintained and young people achieve positive destinations.

3.27   Members were advised it should also be noted that this improved performance was achieved despite the 2009/10 Connexions Area Based Grant (ABG) being reduced from the 2008/9 amount of £11.5M to £11M. Further significant reductions implemented recently by the new Government for the 2010/11 Area Based Grant will clearly have significant impact on the ability to sustain this improved performance.

4   Findings

4.1   A complete list of who attended each of the meetings or provided written evidence can be viewed in the Session Plan at Appendix 1 along with the questions that were asked of each of the witnesses.

Views of Employers and Businesses

4.2   Members met with local business representatives and the Chamber of Commerce and the following points were raised:

- Employers require evidence of basic skills, simple maths, reading and comprehension, IT skills, keyboards and a positive attitude in order to consider employing school leavers.

- The Chamber of Commerce had undertaken a survey which had showed 92% of businesses felt that these basic skills were crucial to success.

- Some employers are concerned about the current standard of qualifications gained by young people feeling that those gained 20 years ago were of a much higher standard and that standards are being dumbed down to hit targets. It was also stated that the focus on league tables can be a mistake, although they do have a role to play.

- It was suggested that there was a need to go back to basics in learning, in some cases technology was taking over and reliance on such things as spell check on computers and calculators, meant that pupils did not need to able to spell and count.

- There was a feeling that young people were not being adequately supported in terms of how to prepare CVs and letters of application for jobs. For example one employer cited her experience of receiving a well presented CV from a school leaver which was accompanied by a covering letter on a torn page which did not give a very good first impression. It was felt that on the whole handwritten letters make a better impression on employers.

- A representative from Aston Pride Business Think Tank (set up to provide direct links to businesses, with 900 businesses within the Aston area.) confirmed that it was generally felt by local small businesses that many school leavers did not have the relevant qualifications to do the job and there were also problems with language barriers which can result in Health and Safety issues arising in certain sectors such as manufacturing.

- Members heard of some innovative links that have been developed between schools and businesses at Small Heath School. The school worked with a large number of business partners to make sure the students were well prepared to enter the workforce and students were also assisted with preparing CVs. It was felt however, that the current curriculum was often inflexible.

- There was a perception that in general school leavers had little understanding of the skills required by the local economy and the types of jobs available for example in engineering. It

was felt that more could be done to ensure young people had access to career advice that was better linked up to the local jobs market.

- There was some cynicism expressed about the quality of some of the more vocational courses currently on offer, with one business stating that they had experience of interviewing one candidate who had undertaken a one year legal secretarial course and had not been taught typing skills.

- In response to a question from Members regarding training given to employees by local businesses, it was reported that some larger organisations had funding and support available to offer specific packages to young people entering the workforce, with smaller companies not being able to offer the same level of support. It was also stated that the West Midlands had the highest take-up in the country for "Train to Gain".

Small Business Skills Survey and CBI Employability Skills Framework

4.3   The views of the local Birmingham businesses seem to echo the findings of the national Small Business Skills Survey carried out by the Forum of Private Businesses in 2008. This survey of 1500 forum members found the following:

- Small businesses are important recruiters of school and college leavers as well as graduates, with more than a million potential employers in this sector. They are important employers locally and over three quarters recruit from local schools and colleges.

- Employment attributes including interpersonal skills and willingness to learn are amongst the most important skills that employees can offer Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) alongside basic skills. (Employability attributes also include willingness to learn, team working skills, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, driving skills and work ethic).

- Basic skills improved marginally as part of the government's emphasis on this issue but according to this survey, many businesses still do not feel that basic skills are good enough. Traditionally, in skills surveys of this type, basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and communication are the most important ones that employers are seeking but this survey saw the introduction of employment attributes such as work ethic and willingness to learn gaining in significance over and above basic skills.

- One in five SME employers felt that the skills base was poor or very poor, in some way and around half of these indicated that this had a direct impact on their financial bottom lines. Only 7% said that there was no real impact on their businesses.

- 87% of respondents stated that they had to recruit someone with a lower level of skills than they would have wanted.

- SME's on the whole were more interested in competency, rather than qualifications, the exception being businesses closely aligned to the public sector.

4.4 Following consultation the CBI has set out the following employability skills framework which gives some insight into the skills that are they are most keen to see exhibited by potential employees:

- Self management – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self starting, time management and readiness to improve own performance based on feedback.

- Team working – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions.

- Business and customer awareness – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty.

- Problem solving – analysing facts and solutions and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions.

- Communication and literacy- application of literacy, ability to produce clear structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning.

- Application of numeracy- manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts.

- Application of information technology – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.

Views of Colleges

4.5 Members met with representatives of three colleges in the city and the following key points emerged from the discussions.

Levels of literacy and numeracy of young people enrolling on courses

4.6 When asked if the young people enrolling at the colleges had appropriate levels of numeracy and literacy and ICT skills, Members were told that all learners that attend the colleges have an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy prior to joining their courses. This ensures that they are placed onto the appropriate level of course and that they have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to support the achievement of their vocational course.

4.7 However the initial assessment result often identifies a mismatch between qualifications gained at school and the level of literacy and numeracy demonstrated. This information influences the level of course that a learner is placed on.

4.8 One college explained that many young people expect their literacy and numeracy skills to be higher than they are as shown to be at assessment. There is often a mismatch between GCSE results and literacy and numeracy skills and in all cases of discrepancy, the skills will be usually lower by one level. This may be understood in the light of schools having targets for GCSE results and working towards those. Access to Key Stage results would be a great help to colleges as they should relate more closely to literacy and numeracy skills.

4.9 Many vocational courses have entry criteria which require students to have Grade A-C GCSE in English and Maths. Where students have these grades they generally have the appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy. However, courses accepting learners with Grades D-G find that young people often do not have appropriate levels of numeracy and literacy and this had to be addressed through Additional Learning Support (ALS).

4.10 The majority of support for the 16-19 group is for literacy and numeracy. ICT support is rarely if ever needed, as the skills obtained at school are adequate for the student's needs at college. Literacy is the more common of the two skills supported and a knock on effect of poor literacy is a lack of understanding of the literacy needed for numeracy, although numeracy is stated as the least favourite subject of many applicants to A Level programmes.

4.11 Support most often required is associated with English as a second language needs, spelling, punctuation and grammar which may relate to the ethnic background of many young people. Students who had difficulties with literacy often suffered with dyslexia.

4.12 There are a number of students who have profiles in literacy that may require extra support in reading, writing or speaking and listening or other literacy skills. There are also many students who have vocational qualifications which meet entry criteria for a course but whose literacy and numeracy levels may fall below the course level.

4.13 All the colleges stated that there was a shortage of literacy and numeracy teachers, and it was proving difficult to find suitable teachers.

Numbers of students requiring additional support

4.14 The number of 16 to 18 year olds who received additional support varied from 4% at one college to 15% for another. All three colleges estimated that the actual number supported was probably greater as students are often supported within their class groups.

4.15 For one college it was estimated that approximately 65-70% of the support required related to literacy needs, including ESOL. However it was pointed out by one of the colleges that the success rate for those receiving Additional Learning Support was 88% compared to 78% for those not receiving ALS.

Types of extra support provided

4.16 Young people may be referred to specialist literacy and numeracy support workshops or they may work with a Teaching Assistant in class. Specialist Dyslexia support is also available and Dyslexia assessments are also undertaken. It was pointed out that a number of learners are identified as needing Dyslexia support for the first time when they get to college i.e. it was not identified previously in school.

4.17 In addition, one of the colleges identified that each of its campuses has a well resourced Learning Support Centre for students to attend on a drop-in basis, in groups or for individual sessions.

Implications for Colleges arising from the introduction of the new qualification

4.18   All of the colleges agreed that the new Functional Skills qualifications provide the opportunity for a coherent suite of qualifications in ICT, English and Maths common to both schools and colleges. However, if schools do not take up the FS qualifications alongside GCSE then the issue of a lack of correlation between levels of lower grade GCSEs and Functional Skills levels may continue. It was felt that GCSE tests a different set of skills to Functional Skills – which are more problem-solving based. The colleges felt that if schools opt out of FS it will be a missed opportunity to establish a continuum between schools and colleges.

4.19   The colleges felt that this is the biggest change to Literacy, Numeracy and ICT since Curriculum 2000. They felt that they had a good track record in delivering Key Skills and the Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications and had experience of delivering the pilots for Functional Skills. In addition they have trialled the assessments with a range of learners – young people and adult students, as well as young people on ESOL programmes.

4.20   However there has been the need to recruit more qualified English and Maths teachers, and there are currently insufficient well qualified teachers available, particularly in Maths, and who have experience of embedding or contextualizing the delivery of English and Maths. It was felt that all staff will need to be trained in the delivery and assessment of Functional Skills.

4.21   One college pointed out that if it is to be required to teach all three Functional Skills to all its 16-18 year old learners, there are further resourcing issues particularly for the delivery of ICT.

4.22   Another college stated that the present initial assessment tool that all applicants take assesses them against the Core Curriculum. There needs to be a review therefore of which aspects are relevant to Functional Skills. If it is identified that this needs to be replaced this will be at a considerable cost to the college.

4.23   For colleges seeking to grow Apprenticeship numbers functional skills need to be developed in conjunction with employers, making collaboration essential. The requirements and levels of Functional Skills for apprenticeships vary between Awarding Bodies

4.24   Functional Skills need to be delivered alongside Diplomas so colleges will need to work with their partners to ensure that this is embedded across all learning and opportunities for the transferability of skills are available.

4.25   The Colleges all agreed that there needs to be a marketing approach in the transition to Functional Skills. It needs to be "sold" to learners by all involved. (This must include organisations i.e. Connexions).

Impact on existing provision

4.26   As stated previously Key Skills will cease from autumn 2010 and will be replaced by Functional Skills. All of the Colleges recognised that there is considerable training to be done with all staff to raise awareness and to inform them about these changes.

4.27   One college pointed out that the pilot has demonstrated that students find Functional Skills harder than Key Skills because of the problem solving/thinking skills required. Successful implementation of these qualifications will require therefore, that development of and opportunities to apply the skills are created, in all areas of the curriculum. Although there will still be a need for some discrete specialist classes, functionality must be a part of delivery. Not all staff possess the necessary skills to deliver this at present, so there is a large staff development need. Enrolment onto Diplomas will mean careful initial screening and support needs to be built into timetables, right from the start of the academic year, for those who need it. A strategy on how to meet the needs of apprentices needs also to be considered.

Implications for wider relationships with schools

4.28   All of the colleges felt that there needs to be closer planning between colleges and schools, to ensure that the literacy and numeracy needs of the young learner are addressed throughout their learning experience. This will enable staff to share in good practice and resources and have a joint staff development programme around the issue of literacy and numeracy provision.

4.29   It was also felt that information on further education colleges should be available to students in year 9.

Views of the Connexions Service

4.30   Members met with officers from the Connexions Service to explore their views of the Functional Skills qualifications. The Connexions Service is a universal service available to all young people between the ages of 13 and 19 (up to the age of 24 for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities). Its principal function is to support young people through the difficult transition from secondary education to a positive destination in terms of Employment, Education or Training.

How the Service operates

4.31   It is one of a suite of services that form the Integrated Youth Support Service (including the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Service, the Education Welfare Service and Targeted Services). These services work together to provide a wide range of support services to young people as the move from child to adult.

4.32   The Service is delivered through approximately 200 trained Personal Advisors (PAs) who provide Information Advice and Guidance, Careers Education and Guidance to two distinct cohorts:

- Those currently in education; - supporting young people (and where appropriate parents) within schools, colleges and learning providers. This includes specific transition support for

young people with learning difficulties and / or disabilities as set out in the Apprenticeship Skills, Children & Learning Act 2009, Section 139A (7) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

- These young people between the ages of 16 and 19 who are designated Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

4.33 At least one Personal Advisor (PA) is assigned to every secondary school, special school, college and learning provider in the city and every single young person between 13 and 19 (up to 25 years if a young person has a learning difficulty and/ or disability), is assigned to a PAs caseload. The PAs role is to:

- Track every young person in accordance with DCSF (now Department for Education) guidelines

- Support the young person through the provision with relevant information, advice and guidance (IAG) and careers education and guidance(CEG)

- Support the School, College and Learning provider in their statutory duty to provide impartial CEG

4.34 The Service is universal with each young person having an assigned PA. For many young people their path through education into employment is a straight forward one and the support from family and school means that the Connexions PA's involvement is light touch focusing mainly on monitoring progress. However for others the PA's involvement is more intensive and for those more vulnerable young people Connexions employs specialist PAs to work with:

- Teen Parents and those at risk of becoming pregnant.

- Looked after young people and those leaving care.

- Young people involved in the criminal justice system.

- Young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

4.35 In addition to the above services the Connexions Service provides;-

- Seven Connexions shops staffed by PAs offering both drop in and pre-booked appointments

- A curriculum support service to schools and colleges offering bespoke training and support to staff, a range of information advice and guidance including publications and support materials and an approved quality award assessment process matched to national standards.

- A vacancies and opportunities service listing up-to-date job vacancies, apprenticeship opportunities, volunteering opportunities and other career opportunities

- A comprehensive and partly interactive website designed for use by young people, parents, Connexions PAs, teachers and other professionals.

Connexions work with 16-19 year old NEET young people

4.36   Connexions PAs have a number of options available to them when working with young people who are aged between 16 and 19 and NEET. Amongst these are referrals to learning providers who can address the issues that are preventing the young person accessing employment. Often such courses are designed to address the "soft" skill deficit but will also include literacy, numeracy and ICT.

4.37   Another option available to Connexions PAs is to refer to learning providers who provide direct basic employment training such as forklift truck driving or warehouse work. Lack of functional skills can often prevent a young person accessing such courses.

4.38   Whilst some work is undertaken by learning providers to support young people in the contexts described above there are limited opportunities to focus on the development of these skills for this target age group and therefore Connexions PAs may refer young people to adult courses.

4.39   The Connexions Service would therefore see the introduction of opportunities to develop these skills post school as a really positive step in helping young people move to independency both in employment and the broader aspects of their life.

4.40   It should be recognised however that most of the young people with whom Connexions PAs work intensively, come with a variety of needs and skill deficits. So whilst functional skills may be a key need, it may be more beneficial to provide these within a holistic development programme.

4.41   In the context of a universal service, Connexions PAs inevitably work more intensively with the most vulnerable and the most at risk. A recurring feature with this cohort is poor literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. It should be noted, however that along side this the lack of other skills around personal organisation, timekeeping etc. are also common features.

4.42   Employers working with Connexions frequently identify basic numeracy and literacy skills as minimum requirements for even jobs requiring no formal qualification.

4.43   A basic qualification that registers a functional level for numeracy, literacy and ICT is welcomed by both Connexions and employers, as a way of demonstrating that a young person has the skills to cope within the working environment. Inevitably a qualification of this type for young people will increase employability and help them in finding employment.

Other relevant Connexions work

4.44   In 2008 the former Government identified that for many 16 and 17 year old NEET young people their previous experience of education and their current life style would either prevent them from re-entering the learning environment or, if they did would lead to them "dropping out" within a short space of time.

4.45   To address this, pilot Entry to Learning projects (E2L) were launched in four local authorities including Birmingham. (£1.5M). For Birmingham, the requirement is to provide 15 week

programmes for 500 young people. The programmes are designed to prepare young people to re-enter the learning environment and contain the following key features;-

- A personal support worker "Trusted Adult" for each young person.

- A £30 weekly payment for each young person who is able to meet time keeping and attendance requirements.

- A bespoke training programme for each young person provided by a recognised learning provider.

4.46   Whilst the pilot has yet to be evaluated, it has been recognised that some young people are lacking functional skills and these have, therefore, been included within their training programmes.

4.47   This programme is funded directly by central government (through the former DCSF - now the Department for Education). It was funded for two years (2008/9 and 2009/10) and extended for one more year (2010/11). The new Government has reviewed this further and the programme will be discontinued at the end of December 2010.

Views of Young People

Recent surveys

4.48   According to a national annual survey carried out among 6000 13-25 year olds by the independent education foundation Edge published in early 2010, only half of young people feel that their education has prepared them well for the job market.

4.49   Two thirds of young people believe that the economic downturn will cast a shadow over their job prospects for years to come. Their confidence about being well prepared for the world of work seems to plummet, as they approach the jobs market. While 85% of under 17s polled were confident that their education had prepared them well for employment, this fell to only 53% among the over 17s.

4.50   These findings will add to fears that the young are bearing the brunt of the UK's economic difficulties, with recent figures showing that 40% of those out of work by the end of the year are expected to be under the age of 25. While a million 18-24 year olds nationally are not in education, employment or training.

4.51   Three fifths of those surveyed said that radical changes were needed to the education and employment system to improve their employment prospects, with dissatisfaction focused on a perceived lack of work experience opportunities and unhappiness with career advice. Nearly half (48%) said that they had not been given sufficient chances to sample the world of work while 41% agreed with the statement in the survey that "careers advice for young people is not working". Just under a quarter said that schools should put more emphasis on "employment skills".

4.52   Barry Sheerman M.P. (the then) Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee said that there needs to be a three way conversation – "we need to know what employers are looking

for, what young people want and how education can implement these changes and only by doing that will we be sure that young people leave the education system with the best possible chance of gaining employment."

Member visits

4.53   The review group was keen to hear first hand, from young people, who had been identified as being at risk of becoming NEET about their experiences of school and education. Visits were organised for members to Gordon Franks Training and the Maypole centre to hear about how young people there were progressing on the Entry to Learning programme.

Gordon Franks Training

4.54   Gordon Franks Training provides training for young people who may not have had the best experience at school. It provides a number of different training courses for young people including:

- Apprenticeships for 16-25 year olds in the Retail, Customer Services, Wholesale and Business Administration. Currently 130 young people on apprenticeships.

- Apprenticeships at KS4 level in Business Admin and Retail targeting 74 young people.

- E2L (Entry to Learning), 90 young people have been through this programme and are ready for the next phase of their development.

- E2E (Entry to Employment) pathways programme: The agency also supports a foundation level of work with some youngsters to ensure that are up to the standard to go onto one of the training programmes. In addition it undertakes preventative work and is currently working with three schools with youngsters who may be potentially NEET.

4.55   Staff at the Centre told Members that a key focus of its approach is based upon developing emotional intelligence and to support this all learners have a life coach, who is more than a mentor. Their role is to build up the young peoples' confidence so that they are able to make their own choices and to take responsibility for their own actions. Good information, advice and guidance is key is to the progression of the youngsters. In terms of qualifications, currently all the young people study a Key Skills qualification as part of the programme, but from September 2010 this will be replaced by the new Functional Skills qualification.

4.56   A key issue for the centre with the new Functional Skills qualification will be finding the capacity to deliver it, as it takes longer to assess Functional Skills compared with the old Basic Skills qualification which could be done online.

4.57   Members met a group of 11 young people, who were enrolled on the E2L (Entry to Learning) training programme. Entry to Learning is designed for 16-18 year olds who need support in making a career decision, and will benefit from raising levels of confidence, motivation and self-esteem. Whilst being dynamic, exciting and fun, the course is specifically tailored to meet individual learning styles and preferences and every learner is provided with their own life coach.

Qualifications are offered in maths, English, ICT and health and safety. The aim of the programme is that young people will develop and broaden their opportunities and become more attractive to potential employers. A £30 educational maintenance allowance is available to all, with travel expenses paid. The young people are identified via Connexions.

4.58   When asked about their experience of school, the young people told members that it was quite negative, and that they felt that the teachers were not interested in teaching them. One young person summed it up by saying "I didn't get enough help".

4.59   Another young person felt that "teachers hadn't supported him either and also some of his school friends were a distraction".

4.60   Many of the young people felt that there was some stigma attached to coming along to a training centre like Gordon Franks, but they knew that this was the only way that they would get the chance of opening up the "good" options of either college or work for themselves. They did however, know that some of their friends wouldn't even consider coming to a training agency.

4.61   All of the young people spoke very positively about their experience of the E2L programme.

> "It's a different way of learning and teaching here, it's a different atmosphere. Maths is taught via CD's and online learning."
>
> "If you can't do it the first time, they help you until you can"
>
> "You're taught in a more realistic way– It's more practical, less revision"
>
> "I really enjoy it here, I was disheartened at school"
>
> "Here, they teach in a way that suits you and the life coach is brilliant"

Maypole Centre

4.62   Members also met seven young people who were taking part in Entry to Learning programme at the Maypole project. When asked what they would like to see done differently at school the young people stated that they would like more support in the classroom, smaller groups and more one to one support.

4.63   When asked about their experiences of school the young people clearly indicated that they responded best to lessons that they felt were interesting and relevant to them, which were taught to them in a way that made them feel more engaged:

> "I loved English so I made an effort, I hated maths, and I hated the teacher so I skipped the lessons. I didn't see the point of it"
>
> "I hated English, I didn't like poems and Shakespeare, I like horror stories"
>
> "The teachers were more bothered about controlling the class than teaching"
>
> "If the schools treated us like adults we'd behave like adults."
>
> "The last couple of years at school were for me a complete failure"

Another of the young people pointed out barriers to learning that can arise as a result of staff turnover.

> "We had four different maths teachers in one year, I never learned a thing".

4.64   When asked about their views of the Entry to Learning scheme Members were told that many of the young people were now making good progress with English and Maths and that they found the style and content of what they were learning now much more interesting and engaging compared with school.

> "We're learning how to do CV's as well as preparation for interviews, we're doing lots of interesting stuff, and I'm even learning how to do a budget for my flat"
>
> "They treat us like adults here."
>
> "I've had driving lessons here."
>
> "I know someone who's got seven GCSEs but they don't know how to do a CV"

Views of Schools

4.65   Members received evidence from three secondary schools about their experiences. The following points were raised.

Proportion of pupils needing extra support with literacy and numeracy

4.66   All three schools confirmed that they had identified pupils who need extra support. One school stated that between 10-20% of each year group enter the school below Level 4 and 3-4% of pupils in each group enter at below Level 2. Another school stated that up to 50% of their intake needed extra support with functional skills on a regular basis. It stated that investment was

needed to provide extra staff which then enabled the teaching of smaller groups of students whose second language was English.

Types of support provided to these pupils

Some examples of the additional support provided included:

- Regular assessments to identify areas of weaknesses and area of improvement
- Smaller group teaching
- Boost groups for reading and writing and spelling
- Specialist English and Maths teachers
- Withdrawing some pupils from lessons to work on literacy
- Targeted teaching on the basic skills
- Teaching Assistant support in all classes and subjects to support literacy and numeracy
- Parental interviews and progress reviews
- Exam support (access arrangements)

Views on the Functional Skills Qualifications

4.67   All three schools agreed that it was essential that pupils should leave education equipped with the numeracy and literacy skills that will make them useful in the workplace and so, they broadly agreed with the reasons behind the new Functional Skills qualifications

4.68   One school stated that they were currently a pilot school for the introduction of Functional Skills and they have passed through the gateway for a diploma and Year 12 pupils have sat Functional Skills exams this session. It was pointed out that pupils have enjoyed the lessons and the new delivery but have found the content and exams very difficult. It was asserted that that accessibility to the content relies on literacy in all FS exams and the quality of written communication is important in FS maths as well as literacy. In general, pupils find it very difficult to explain their methods, reasoning and logic and the pass rates have been reportedly low nationally.

4.69   On the whole, the schools felt that functional skills should be taught as early on as Year 7 as this would provide the young people with an introduction to functional skills early in secondary schools, these skills could then be built upon over the years to ensure that young people have the necessary level of "functional skills" when they leave school. The school representatives felt that in the long term, the introduction of FS would improve GCSE results as it enhanced other skills as well. It was noted that 2012 is the first year results will be based on the "new" GCSE.

Implications for school and staff in delivering the required curriculum

4.70   The schools had identified a number of implications associated with introducing the new qualification;

- There were considerable time constraints to have everything in place

- Both the delivery and assessment criteria for FS are different and this puts additional pressure on staff as they also have other changes to implement at the same time, including the new KS3 and KS4 as well as GSCE 2010, new framework, Diplomas and new post 16 courses. Eventually it was hoped that pupils FS will be embedded into the curriculum

- One school complimented the support they had received from the BASS ((Birmingham Advisory and Support Service) maths and English team stating that BASS have worked extremely hard for the schools in helping them simplify and implement the changes.

Ways in which work experience/links with local businesses can be developed to support the application of functional literacy and numeracy skills.

4.71   Schools agreed building these links is important because it raises the profile of Functional Skills and provides pupils with real life contexts. For individual pupils, it can increase their motivation and communication skills and gives them the chance to meet and understand the needs of local employers, ultimately making them better prepared for the world of work.

4.72   However it was difficult to achieve in practice, because businesses often do not have time to invest in schools and in general schools found it hard to know how to develop these links.

4.73   One school representative advised that in her school there was an extra member of staff who was employed by the collegiate specifically to focus on work experience. She also advises pupils on interview techniques and obtains feedback from businesses. She also confirmed that in addition a Year 9 skills day had recently been held, which had proved successful.

4.74   One school suggested that financial or other incentives for businesses should be provided to encourage increased business involvement. It was agreed that education networks could work to find more effective ways to find links with businesses in their wider area. It was also thought that schools might consider the need to train their administrative staff to work better with businesses so that they could set up links that are attractive to businesses.

Linkages with local colleges

4.75   Schools were asked how well links had developed with local colleges and Members were told that in theory such linkages did exist in terms of formal structures, such as through existing networks and partnerships but in reality there no real links as far as sharing resources, business links etc. however, ideas are exchanged informally at meetings.

Learning from the Core Skills Agency

4.76   Members were keen to explore lessons learned from the experiences of the Core Skills Agency regarding Adult Literacy and Numeracy and this is set out below.

4.77   In 2001 the government launched its National Skills for Life Strategy, focusing on adult literacy, language and numeracy skills. In 2003 a national skills survey was undertaken. This recorded that, nationally, 84% of adults possessed functional literacy skills and 79% adults possessed functional numeracy skills at that time. The comparable figures for Birmingham were 82% functionally literate and 76% functionally numerate.

4.78   Birmingham, via the local Learning and Skills Council, was a pathfinder for most aspects of the Skills for Life Strategy and has been regarded, by the government, as a leading area for adult basic skills improvements.

4.79   'Adult' in this context covers the 16-60 age group (delivery has included work with 16-19 year olds via college and training providers – including work with offender learning; work with young employees; work via apprenticeships/Entry to Employment etc).

4.80   The refresh of the national strategy has indicated that a follow-up national survey will be undertaken in 2010-11. This will give an indication of the extent to which 'on the street' skills of 16-60 year olds have changed over a seven year period (as opposed to proxy Public Service Agreement measures such as numbers gaining national Skills for Life qualifications).

4.81   The National Skills Strategy has set a challenging aspiration that 95% of the adult population will be functionally literate and numerate by 2020.

Activities that support this aspiration include:

- Improving the success rates (and greatly expanding participation numbers) on post 16 Skills for Life courses – in addition to embedding functional literacy and numeracy in vocational courses (and expecting that learners will gain dual certification of vocational skills and of functional skills).

- Improving the post 16 curriculum of skills; improving the qualification of post 16 learning and skills teachers.

- The requirement to teach functional skills across the secondary curriculum; and the entitlement for all young people to study functional skills (up to Level 2) up to age 19.

4.82   The expectation is that the national 2020 level will be reached (although the numeracy outcome is still identified as a serious challenge). This implies that by 2020 95% of 16-19 year olds in Birmingham could be both functionally literate and functionally numerate at levels expected by employers and necessary to underpin continued learning/training.

Local Information

4.83   In addition to the 2003 national Skills for Life survey, Birmingham (via the LSC) commissioned Birmingham-specific surveys of literacy and numeracy in 2001, 2005 and 2009. This has given local data which indicated that:

- in 2001 83% were functionally literate and 79% functionally numerate

- in 2005 90% were functionally literate and 88% functionally numerate

- in 2009 90% were functionally literate and 88% functionally numerate

   The data can be disaggregated in various ways:
- there were no significant differences in levels of functional literacy across age groups and relatively small differences between functional numeracy levels of 16-19 year olds and (the slightly better) 40-55 year olds.

- The largest gaps were associated with socioeconomic groups (e.g. a 9 percentage point difference between most affluent groups and least affluent groups).

- Across the 2001-2005-2009 period functional skills gaps closed steadily across different ethnic groups.

4.84   The data was analysed by ward and across each four year stage an internal aspirational floor target was set (in terms by 2005/2009 there will be no ward below a particular% level). This aspiration was shared with local adult Skills for Life providers who refocused some of their delivery appropriately. (This floor target approach was regarded as highly innovative in 2005). Whilst this is locality-based rather than individual-based it has indicated:

- the 'lag' in numeracy compared with literacy functionality.

- the aggregation of low skills levels in Shard End, Kingstanding, Fox Hollies, Bartley Green and Weoley wards. (There are issues of adult English for Speakers of Other Languages but in numerical terms these are dominated by the higher volumes of need in white, disadvantaged communities).

4.85   It was suggested that there has been confusion about the terms being used by different sectors when debating "functional literacy and numeracy" and there is a need be clear about what aspect is being addressed, for example:

- having passed a functional skills test

- having been taught sets of functional skills

- being able to apply specific skills in various settings

- being able/willing to quickly pick up job-specific requirements

- being able/willing to 'present oneself' appropriately

4.86   Local authorities will have a stronger role re 14-19 transition going forward and can expect these skills to be rehearsed and recorded and 'passported' between providers.

5   Conclusions

Reasons for the Review

5.1   Members undertook this review because they were concerned about the perception that some young people were leaving school, without the necessary skills in English and Maths to engage successfully as citizens, progress in further learning, or secure good jobs within the city. A key question here then, was to establish what is meant by the "necessary skills". It was evident that if what this really means is measured by the achievement of a Level 2 qualification in both English and Mathematics (GCSE A*-C grade or equivalent basic/key skills qualification) then even with considerable improvements in results over recent years, Birmingham still has a long way to go. In 2009 some 51.8 % of pupils achieved this level. Attainment rises to 93.5% if those achieving the Level 1 qualification (GCSE D to G in English and maths or equivalent basic/key skills qualification) are taken into account. However Members questioned the benefits of using D-G grades in this way.

5.2   In reality, the picture is a little more complicated than it first appears. It is clear from the findings of national survey undertaken as part of the Government's Skills for Life Strategy in 2003 that in Birmingham 82% of adults possessed functional literacy skills and 76% were functionally numerate. This increased (according to a Learning and Skills Council survey) in 2009 to 90% functionally literate and 88% functionally numerate. That being so, and delving a little deeper into what local businesses were telling us, the problem seems to be, not that the vast of majority young people cannot read or add up but that they are unable to apply the concepts they have learned in a practical context such as the world of work (for example show the ability to write a letter or report, or to manipulate numbers) and they had not developed sufficient employment skills, such as team working, problem solving and flexibility.

5.3   In recognition of the types of issues raised above and following a three year pilot, the former government drove forward a new approach to Functional Skills. It also introduced stand alone Functional Skills qualifications which will replace the former Key Skills programmes in 2010. Under this there will be tests in English, Maths, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at Entry Level and Levels 1 and 2. Functional skills will be a component of diplomas and in addition assessment of functional skills is being embedded into the new GCSE specifications for English Maths and ICT.

5.4   In undertaking this review Members were keen to explore:

- The perspectives of local businesses about the types of skills they were looking for in school leavers.

- How many young people currently need additional support with literacy and numeracy and how this is provided in schools and colleges.

- How Birmingham is progressing with the implementation of the functional skills programme.

- Whether or not setting a target regarding the achievement of Functional Skills would support improved attainment.

Views and Experiences of Local Colleges

5.5 The colleges we spoke to told the Members that currently learners enrolling at the colleges were given an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy prior to joining their courses to ensure both that they are placed on an appropriate level of course and that they have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to succeed.

5.6 This assessment identifies if additional support is needed and this can then be provided in a variety of ways. Members heard that mismatches with qualifications gained at school and the level of literacy and numeracy demonstrated were in some cases found, and in all cases of discrepancy the skills were lower than expected. This was more often the case where learners enrolling had GCSE grades at D-G.

5.7 Members were told that the support most often required by students at these particular colleges, was largely associated with English as a Second Language, spelling punctuation and grammar. Cases were mentioned by one college where learners had been identified as needing dyslexia support, which had not been picked up previously by their schools. The colleges felt that closer working with schools and greater access to Key Stage results would help them to understand more about the individual's skills. It was suggested that it would be helpful if information on further education colleges and options could be made available to students in year 9 so that they could have plenty of time to consider and explore their options.

5.8 Colleges also felt that a common assessment framework should be adopted so that young people did not face repeated testing as they moved from school to college.

5.9 In terms of implementing the new Functional Skills programme, colleges welcomed the new qualifications as offering a coherent suite of qualifications in ICT, English and Maths which will be common to both schools and colleges. However they were concerned that if schools did not take up the functional skills qualifications, alongside GCSE, then the issue of the lack of correlation of levels between lower grade GCSE and functional skills would continue. Colleges also identified the need for more literacy and numeracy teachers. It was stated that there was a national shortage and it was proving difficult to find suitable teachers. In addition there was a need for more teacher training to assist existing staff to be able to deliver and assess functional skills.

Views and Experiences of Local Employers:

5.10 The local businesses who met with Members called for more flexibility, within the school curriculum and more of a focus on developing the practical skills that young people need to apply when moving into the work place. Some businesses, felt that the qualifications young people were coming out of school with were not always relevant to the career they wanted to pursue. This was seen as highlighting the need for more of the "right kind" of careers advice being made available to young people before they left school. What was meant here was the need for accurate advice

about the type of jobs available within the local economy and the skills and qualifications needed to apply for them.

5.11   A degree of cynicism was expressed by local businesses about the standards tested by current examinations such as GCSE and it was felt that over the years these had been dumbed down so that targets could be achieved. The employers stressed the need to go back to basics in learning to ensure that pupils could add up without the use of a calculator and communicate clearly by for example writing a well set out letter without resorting to a computer spell check.

Views and Experiences of Schools

5.12   As with transition to colleges there are issues relating to transition from primary to secondary school. Teachers at secondary schools are not always aware of what children have already covered. As a result some pupils may know more than others on some topics and this may pose a real danger of some pupils "switching off" as aspects of lessons are repeated. It was felt that Secondary school teachers need to understand the different learning styles of pupils starting KS3. At this stage, schools spend time seeking to identify pupils that require help with literacy and numeracy using baseline testing and regular assessments. Additional support provided includes for example, small group and targeted teaching.

5.13   Those schools that had experience of piloting the Functional Skills qualification found that pupils had enjoyed the lessons and new delivery but they had found the content and examinations very difficult. They found it a challenge to explain their methods, reasoning and logic as required. It was noted that pass rates had been low nationally so far. Schools also identified the need for additional staff to support these qualifications and more training for all staff to enable functional elements to be built into teaching. Some concern was expressed about whether those schools that had not been part of the pilot programme would be ready in time to implement the changes required or whether they would have the capacity, given other existing demands. It was also noted that there was a degree of confusion caused by the national arrangements for implementation with a range of different bodies having training and development responsibilities and conflicting guidance regarding standards and assessments.

5.14   Schools welcomed the introduction of the qualifications but were concerned that they may create additional tensions for schools by adding to the numerous other criteria/ measures against which school success was currently judged.

5.15   There was a general view that there should be an emphasis on introducing Functional Skills at an earlier level, ideally it was felt that it would be better to start some of this work at KS1 and 2 Members heard about some excellent examples of good practice within schools in terms of how they are linking with businesses to provide work experience and provide real life scenarios to support the application of functional skills. One school stated that an extra member of staff had been employed by the collegiate to work on developing work based experiences and opportunities and this had been very successful. Other schools however felt that there were difficulties in trying to provide a large enough number of these opportunities for their pupils as it can be difficult for

schools to develop these links and many businesses simply do not have the time to become involved. It is clear, more needs to be done to build links between schools and businesses to ensure that there are the opportunities for young people to gain work based experiences. It was also suggested that the City Council may itself be able to directly offer more opportunities for work experience and there may be potential to explore opportunities with partner organisations as well as the community and voluntary sector.

Good Practice in Supporting Literacy and Numeracy

5.16   The group heard about a range of good practice within schools and colleges to provide additional support to learners to improve their levels of literacy.

5.17   Members were also keen to explore the experiences of young people who had become disengaged with school and find out what sort of programmes were in place through the Connexions Service to support NEETS. Members therefore visited two centres running the Entry to Learning (E2L) programme delivered in partnership with the Youth Service. It is a fifteen week scheme aimed at young people who are in danger of becoming NEET. It provides a trusted adult to support the young people and a personalised programme. Members were very impressed with the enthusiasm of the young people they met attending the programme and felt that this is the excellent sort of provision that should be made available more widely.

The need for a Target for Functional Skills

5.18   Members began this exercise with the view that they should explore the potential for setting a challenging city wide target to raise the attainment of young people in functional skills, which would drive up levels of literacy and numeracy and increase the confidence of employers in standards. Discussion on this topic resulted in mixed opinions from various quarters; on the one hand the value of setting even more targets to measure aspects of attainment at 16 was questioned. It was felt that a more personalised approach with early intervention at Key Stage 1 to identify children, who needed support with literacy and numeracy via teacher assessment with the creation of benchmarks, would be more likely to deliver the improvements sought.

5.19   On the other hand, whilst Members supported this approach, they still believed that the existence of a target would focus efforts on this area. Members heard about the survey work that had been undertaken as part of the National Skills for Life Strategy, to establish the level of adult functional literacy and numeracy skills nationally and the specific surveys that had been carried out subsequently in Birmingham over the following years. They were told that that the refresh of the National Strategy has indicated that a follow up national survey will be undertaken in 2010/11. The Strategy has set a challenging national aspiration that 95% of the adult population will be functionally literate and numerate by 2020. The implication of this for Birmingham is that by 2020 95% of 16-19 year olds could be both functionally literate and numerate at levels expected by employers and necessary to underpin continued and learning. It was concluded by the group that

this 95% adult literacy and numeracy target could be adopted by the City Council within the Council Plan.

5.20   In addition, Members were keen to be able to monitor progress on functional skills and agreed this should be reported to the Children and Education O&S Committee and Cabinet in future, as part of the Annual Achievement Reports.

As there has been a change in Government, it is possible there may be changes in national policies which will impact on this area which this review has been unable to anticipate.

Suggested Actions

1.   That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families explores the potential to set in place a standardised assessment process as part of the entry process to the Further Education sector to examine functional skills and prevent over assessment.

2.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families ensures that schools are supported to develop their capacity to deliver the Functional Skills programme through the monitoring and advice function of school improvement partners and access to the curriculum support services offered by the School Effectiveness team in BCC.

3.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families explores the potential to provide greater support for the Entry to Learning (E2L) type programmes as part of the NEET reduction strategy.

4.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families works with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities to support the adoption of the 95% adult literacy and numeracy target by the City Council within the Council Plan.

5.   That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families includes specific reference to levels of functional literacy and numeracy achieved, within the Annual Achievement reports received by the Children and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet from December 2011.

6.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families encourages schools to explore new ways to develop and strengthen their links with businesses, voluntary and community organisations and the City Council and its partner organisations to improve communication skills via work based opportunities.

7.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families works with schools to identify where current year 10 pupils have held their work experience in 2010 to form a baseline and register of businesses for future placements, monitoring and improvement.

8.   That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families works with the Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Equalities to seek to:

- Identify how many work experience placements have been held to date in 2010 within BCC and in what service areas they have taken place. Based on that information, a baseline could be formed which would allow the council to:

- Consider either maintaining or increasing the number of work based opportunities for young people within the City Council. As part of this process consideration would need to be given to the capacity of service areas to facilitate placement, in terms of supervisory time and the availability of tasks to undertake.

9.   That the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Families brings forward a report to the Children and Education O&S Committee on how the Connexions Service identifies job opportunities for young people.

10.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, young people and families ensures that there is additional support for pupils and students with English as an additional language across the 14-19 transition.

11.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families brings forward a report on early testing of dyslexia at both Primary and Secondary level

12.   That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families reports progress towards the achievement of these actions to the Children and Young People O&S Committee in March 2011. The Committee will schedule subsequent progress reports thereafter.

APPENDICES

Report of the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny
Committee, **September 7th, 2010.**

Appendix One Functional Literacy and Numeracy Session Plan

Date	Meeting themes/Attendees	Questions/topics to cover
Session one Wednesday 30th September	**Work Outline** **Scene Setting**	Terms of Reference Report
Session two Wednesday 28th October	**Further Education Colleges** Birmingham Metropolitan College South Birmingham College City College.	Do you feel that the young people attending the college have an appropriate level of numeracy, literacy and ICT when they first enrol? Could you provide us with any details of the numbers of students who need additional support in these areas when they start at the college? What extra support do you provide for these particular young people? What are the implications for your college arising from the introduction of the new functional skills qualifications? Do you have mechanisms in place to be able to provide these? And are these arrangements adequate in your view? How will the introduction of functional skills impact on existing provision within the college? What are the implications for your wider relationships with schools?
Session three Wednesday 25th November	**Employers and business organisations** Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Canty & Co Solicitors Federation of Small Businesses Aston Business Think Tank Small Heath School	What is your understanding of functional literacy and numeracy skills? What are the types of skills employers within the West Midlands are looking for when they recruit young people into their workforce? What evidence can you share with the committee to indicate that some young people lack the necessary skills needed by businesses within the region? How can work experience be used to help with the development of the types of skills that businesses want? How can links between the business community and schools be improved in order to support further the acquisition of these functional skills? For example should work experience be used to develop some of the types of skills that businesses want?

Date	Meeting themes/Attendees	Questions/topics to cover
Session four Wednesday 16th December	**Connexions**	Do you feel that the new Functional Literacy and Numeracy qualifications will support young people in finding employment? What is your experience of seeing young people without functional skills? What can be done to improve their chances of being able to find work? Can you please supply destination information of those young people who you identified as in need of extra support in literacy and numeracy?
	Cabinet Member	How are you working with schools and businesses on the issues around functional skills? What are the implications for the City in introducing these new qualifications? How can we use targets to ensure young people are coming out of education with the right levels of skills? What targets could be set?
Session 5 January 27	**Schools** Golden Hillock School Archbishop Ilsley Catholic Technology College Frankley School	What proportion of pupils need extra support with literacy and numeracy within your school? What support do you provide these pupils? What are your views on the new functional skills qualifications to be introduced in 2010? What are the Implications for your school and staff for delivering the required curriculum? How can work experience/links with local businesses be developed to support the application of functional literacy and numeracy skills? What linkages have you got with local colleges relevant to these qualification?
Session six February 24th	**Core Skills Agency** **Functional Skills** **Support Programme**	Lesson Learned

Listed below are examples of the skills learners will develop through the functional skills qualifications

English Standards

Entry level
The context is familiar and accessible to the learner. The English skills demanded by the situation or problem are clear and straightforward. The learner demonstrates some awareness of audience and purpose, recognising formal and informal contexts and applying their knowledge and skills accordingly. The skills or techniques required may not be specific to the situation or problem. Guidance and direction are provided.

Level 1
The context may be less familiar than at Entry level but is accessible to the learner. The English skills demanded are more precise, requiring a greater level of accuracy and judgement when applied to a specific situation or problem. Each situation requires an organised approach and incorporates various options for selection. Learners evaluate the usefulness of a range of texts and/or information sources as well as making choices about the suitability of their responses and solutions, in terms of style, vocabulary, presentation and format. Guidance is provided but autonomous decisions are required to find solutions.

Level 2
At level 2, learners analyse multi-faceted tasks where the context may be unfamiliar and the situation or problem needs to be identified. The usefulness or validity of the tools available may not be immediately apparent in all situations and there may be more than one solution. An initial review and analysis of the task should provide some insight into the key objectives, audience and purpose that a learner will need to consider before determining an appropriate response or solution. Guidance may be provided, but choices are independently made and evaluated.

English
Speaking and Listening

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
Speaking and listening At this level, learners can: Participate in and understand the main points of a simple discussion/exchange that is familiar with another person.	Speaking and listening At this level, learners can: Participate in and understand the main points of simple discussions/exchanges that are familiar, making active contributions, with more than one person.	Speaking and listening At this level, learners can: Participate in and understand the main points of formal discussions/exchanges that are familiar, and unfamiliar informal discussion/exchanges, contributions that contain relevant points at appropriate times and in an appropriate manner. Respond appropriately to others and respect others' turn-taking rights.	Speaking and listening At this level, learners can: Take full part in formal and informal discussions/exchanges that may be unfamiliar. Prepare for formal discussion of opinions and ideas. Be flexible in discussion, making different kinds of contributions. Present information/points of view clearly and in appropriate language.	Speaking and listening At this level, learners can: Make a range of contributions to discussions in a wide range of contexts, including unfamiliar audiences. Listen to complex information, giving relevant, cogent responses. Make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts. Present information persuasively. Adapt contributions. Take a range of roles when moving discussion forward.

English
Reading

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
At this level, learners can: Read and understand short, simple texts on familiar topics that explain, describe and narrate on paper and on screen.	At this level, learners can: Read and understand straightforward texts including chronological and instructional texts. Use alphabetical order to locate information.	At this level, learners can: Read and understand straightforward texts, independently and for a purpose in different formats. Understand main points made in texts, including diagrams and graphical representations. Written texts are more than one paragraph long. Use strategies to read including detailed reading and scanning texts.	At this level, learners can: Read and understand the main points and ideas within a range of texts and text types, including reports, instructional, explanatory and persuasive texts. Take appropriate action.	At this level, learners can: Compare, select, read and understand information, ideas, opinions, implicit meaning and/or bias within a wide range of texts and text types. Use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions for different purposes. Read and summarise succinctly information/ideas from different sources. Read and actively respond to different texts.

English
Writing

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
At this level, learners can: Write short, simple sentences. Use written words and phrases to present information.	At this level, learners can: Write short documents with some awareness of intended audience.	At this level, learners can: Write documents with some adaptation to the intended audience. Plan draft and organise writing. Sequence writing logically and clearly. Use basic grammar, including appropriate verb/tense and subject/verb agreement.	At this level, learners can: Write documents clearly and coherently to communicate information, ideas and opinions using language, formats and styles suitable for their purpose and audience. Use correct grammar including subject/verb agreement and correct and consistent use of tense. .	At this level, learners can: Write documents on complex subjects, concisely and clearly, logically and persuasively, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions effectively and persuasively.
Punctuate using capital letters and full stops.	Construct compound sentences using common conjunctions. Punctuate using question marks			Use a range of different styles and sentence structures, including complex sentences for different purposes. Punctuate accurately using commas, apostrophes and inverted commas.
Spell correctly some personal or very familiar words	Spell correctly a range of common words	Spell correctly and check work for accuracy.	Spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately so that meaning is clear	Spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately so that meaning is clear.

Mathematics

Entry level

The context is very familiar and accessible to the learner. The mathematics demanded by the situation or problem are simple, clear and routine. The techniques and procedures required are specific to the situation or problem. Guidance and direction are provided.

Level 1

The context may be less familiar than at Entry level but is accessible to the learner. The mathematics demanded are clear but with some non-routine aspects to the situation or problem. Methods and procedures may require selection and an organised approach. Models need to be selected and adapted.

The learner will receive some guidance, possibly on how to approach the situation, but will need to decide which mathematical techniques to apply, which models to select, or how to adapt these approaches. Checking procedures will be accurately and appropriately used. The solution will be accurate for the problem and will be effectively communicated.

Level 2

In some respects the context is unfamiliar to the learner and the situation or problem needs to be identified. The mathematics demanded may not be obvious in all situations and there will be non-routine aspects to the situation or problem. Methods may involve several steps and require identification of underlying mathematical structures and ways of

describing them.

The learner will make independent choices as to what mathematical techniques and models to use and evaluate these, although may receive some guidance, for example with regard to possible options or models. The response to the problem may involve several connected steps. The learner will try out different values or methods and evaluate the effect on their results. Appropriate checking strategies will be accurately and effectively used at each stage. The learner can justify the choices made and the accuracy and appropriateness of the solution given the context of the initial problem and the intended audience.

Functional Mathematics

Process	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level2
Representing and analysing and Interpreting	Learners can: understand simple mathematical information in familiar and accessible contexts and situations use given methods and standard models to obtain answers to simple given practical problems that are clear and routine	Learner can understand simple practical problems in familiar and accessible contexts and situations use basic mathematics to obtain answers to simple given practical problems that are clear and routine	Learners can understand practical problems in familiar and accessible contexts and situations begin to develop own strategies for solving simple problems	Learners can understand practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations, some of which are non-routine identify, obtain and utilise necessary information to tackle problems	Learners can understand routine and non routine practical problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it
	Learners can Generate results that make sense to a specific task	Learners can Generate results to a given level of accuracy Use given checking procedures	Learners can Select and apply mathematics to obtain answers to simple given practical problems that are clear and routine Use simpler checking procedures	Learners can Select and apply mathematics in an organised way to find solutions to practical problems for different purposes. Use appropriate checking procedures at each stage	Learners can Select and apply a range of mathematics to find solutions Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage.
	Learners can communicate solutions to simple given practical problems in familiar contexts and situations	Learners can communicate and explain solutions to simple given practical problems in familiar contexts and situations	Learners can interpret results and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar contexts and situations	Learners can interpret results, consider the appropriateness of conclusions, and communicate solutions to practical problems, providing explanations	Learners can interpret results, consider the accuracy and appropriateness of results and solutions, and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine and non-routine contexts and situations draw conclusions in light of situations and provide mathematical justifications

Information and Communication Technology

Entry level

Entry level learners are expected to apply their basic knowledge and understanding to produce an appropriate solution to a simple problem (complexity). Learners apply their understanding within a routine and familiar context (familiarity) and apply a limited range of techniques to simple activities (technical demand). Learners are expected to solve problems that are essentially instructor/tutor led (independence).

Level 1

At level 1, learners are expected to identify the ICT requirements to solve a straightforward task and to apply their knowledge and understanding to produce an appropriate solution (complexity). Learners apply their knowledge and skills within a non-routine but familiar context (familiarity) and apply a range of techniques in a number of applications to produce an appropriate outcome (technical demand). Learners are expected to solve problems that are essentially instructor/tutor guided, demonstrating the confidence to make informed choices and knowing when to seek guidance (independence).

Level 2

At level 2, learners are expected to analyse multi-step tasks and to separate the components, identifying the relevant ICT requirements in order to apply their knowledge and understanding to produce an appropriate solution (complexity). Learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding within non-routine and non-familiar contexts (familiarity) and demonstrate the use of a wide range of techniques across several applications to produce an appropriate outcome (technical demand). Learners solve problems independently, completing activities effectively in order to overcome challenges and produce successful outcomes (independence).

It is important to remember that each level of the functional skills is built upon the previous level(s). Therefore a learner at level 2 would be expected to have the skills, knowledge and understanding that a learner at Entry 1 to 3 and level 1 would have.

Use ICT Systems: Skills Standards

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
1 Interact with ICT for a given purpose	1 Interact with ICT for a purpose	1a Interact with and use an ICT system to meet needs	1a Interact with and use ICT systems independently to meet needs	1a Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs
		1b Store information	1b Use ICT to plan work and evaluate their use of ICT systems.	1b Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system used.
			1c Manage information storage	1c Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval
2 Follow recommended safe practices.	2 Follow and understand recommended safe practices.	2 Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	2 Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	2a Independently follow and understand the need for safety and security practices

Use ICT systems: Coverage

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
1.1 Use ICT for a given purpose	1.1 Use computer hardware	1.1 Use correct procedures to start and shutdown an ICT system	1.1 Use correct procedures to start and shutdown an ICT system	1.1 Use correct procedures to start and shut down an ICT system
1.2 Recognise and use interface features	1.2 Use software applications for a purpose	1.2 Use input and output devices	1.2 Use a communication service to access the internet	1.2 Select and use a communication service to access the internet
	1.3 Recognise and use interface features	1.3 Select and use software applications to meet needs and solve problems	1.3 Select and use software applications to meet needs and solve given problems	1.3 Select and use software applications to meet needs and solve problems
		1.4 Recognise and use interface features	1.4 Recognise and use interface features effectively to meet needs	1.4 Select and use interface features and system facilities effectively to meet needs
		1.5 Understand that settings can be adjusted according to individual needs	1.5 Adjust system settings as appropriate to individual needs	Select and adjust system settings as appropriate to individual needs
		1.6 work with files to enable storage and retrieval of information	1.6 Utilise ICT to plan and organise work	1.6 Use ICT to effectively plan work and review the effectiveness of ICT tools to meet needs in order to inform future judgments
		1.7 insert and remove media	1.7 Work with files and folders to organise, store and retrieve information	1.7 Manage files and folder structures to enable efficient and secure information retrieval

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
			1.8 Insert remove label and store media safely	1.8 Insert remover label and store media safely.
2.1 minimise physical stress	2.1 minimise physical stress	2.1 minimise physical stress	2.1 minimise physical stress	2.1 minimise physical stress
2.2 Keep access information secure	2.2 Keep access information secure	2.2 Keep information secure	2.2 Keep information secure	2.2 Keep information secure
	2.3 understand the need to stay safe	2.3 Understand the danger of computer viruses, and how to minimise risk	2.3 Understand the danger of computer viruses, and how to minimise risk	2.3 Understand the danger of computer viruses, and how to minimise risk
			2.4 Understand the need to stay safe and to respect others when using ICT based communication	2.4 Understand the need to stay safe and to respect others when using ICT-based communication
				2.5 Independently identify ICT problems and take appropriate action

Use ICT systems: Examples/applications

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
1.1 ICT: computer, touch screen, cash point machine, mobile phone, multi-media devices, on-screen information Purpose: find local community information, use learning software	1.1 Keyboard, screen, printer, point and click device,headphones, microphone	1.1 Log in, log out, use shut-down menu	1.1 Log in, log out, use shut-down menu	1.1 Log in, log out, use shut-down menu
1.2 Icon, option button, hotspot	1.2 Text processing, graphics, web browser, e-mail	1.2 Keyboard, mouse, touch screen, microphone, printer, headphones	1.2 Broadband, dial-up, network, mobile device	1.2 Broadband, dial-up, network, mobile device
	1.3 Icon, option button, hotspot, window, menu	1.3 Word processing, graphics, internet browser, e-mail, audio or video player	1.3 Word processing, spreadsheet, graphics, internet browser, e-mail, audio and video software	1.3 Word processing, spreadsheet, graphics, browser, e-mail, audio and video software
		1.4 Icon, option button, hotspot, window, dialogue box, menu, drag and drop	1.4 Desktop, windows, dialogue box, menu, submenu, toolbar, scrollbar, drag and drop, zoom, minimise, maximise	1.4 Desktop, windows, dialogue box, menu, submenu, toolbar, scrollbar, drag and drop, zoom, template, wizard
		1.5 Window size, mouse settings, icon size, screen resolution, desktop contrast, volume	1.5 Window size, mouse settings, icon size, screen resolution, desktop contrast, volume	1.5 Window size, mouse settings, icon size, screen resolution, desktop contrast, volume, date and time
		1.6 Create, open, save, print and close files, name files appropriately	1.6 time convenience and cost	1 .6 time convenience and cost, quality, range of facilities, versatility

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
		1.7 CD, DVD, memory stick, hard drives	1.7 Create, open, save, save as, print and close files, create folders and subfolders, name files and folders appropriately	1.7 Create, open, save, save as, print, close, delete, view, rename, move and copy files, create folders and subfolders, name files and folders appropriately
			1.8 CD, DVD, memory stick, hard drives	1.8 CD, DVD, memory stick, hard drives
2.1 Adjust seating and lighting, avoid hazards	2.1 Adjust seating and lighting, avoid hazards, take breaks	2.1 Adjust seating and lighting, avoid hazards, take breaks, arrangement of hardware and cables, wrist rests and other devices	2.1 Adjust seating and lighting, avoid hazards, take breaks, arrangement of hardware and cables, wrist rests	2.1 Arrangement of hardware and cables, wrist rests and other devices
2.2 Password Pin	2.2 Password Pin	2.2 Keep copies safe, keep password or PIN secret	2.2 Keep copies safe, take backups, keep password or PIN secret	2.2 Keep copies safe, take backups, keep password or PIN secret
	2.3 Avoid inappropriate disclosure of personal information	2.3 Avoid inappropriate disclosure of personal information, use appropriate language	2.3 Use virus-checking software, treat files from unknown sources with caution	2.3 Use virus-checking software, treat files from unknown sources with caution
			2.4 Avoid inappropriate disclosure of personal information, avoid misuse of images, use appropriate language, respect confidentiality, use copy lists with discrimination	2.4 Avoid inappropriate disclosure of personal information, avoid misuse of images, use appropriate language, respect confidentiality, use copy lists with discrimination

54

Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Level 1	Level 2
				2.5 Software freeze, respond appropriately to error dialogue, virus threat, storage full, paper jam, uninstall software, know when and whom to ask for help to fix the problem