

RACE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS IN MEDWAY SCHOOLS

1. AIMS

1.1 Legislative Context

- 1.1.1 Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 (inserted by Section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) gives local education authorities (LEAs) a duty to promote high standards of education in primary and secondary schools.
- 1.1.2 Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations Amendment 2000, gives public authorities such as LEAs a statutory duty to promote racial equality.
- 1.1.3 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on local authorities to secure continuous improvement in its services, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This is the duty to secure best value in spending public money.
- 1.1.4 Medway Council propose to reorganise our support for pupils from minority ethnic groups. The reorganisation aims to raise standards and contribute to promoting race equality by improving the way support is offered to help our minority ethnic pupils reach their full potential. The proposals take account of the statutory duties set out above. Specifically, in order to ensure that our proposals are consistent with our duty to promote racial equality, we have carried out a race impact assessment according to our own procedures which are based on the Commission For Racial Equality's (CRE's) guidance (www.cre.gov.uk/duty/reia/index.html).

1.2 Current arrangements for promoting the achievement of minority ethnic pupils

- 1.2.1 The total population of Medway is quarter of a million. A comparatively small proportion (5.4%) of people living in Medway come from minority ethnic groups. Of these, the largest group are people that class themselves as Indian (2%). None of the other groups have a percentage greater than 0.5%. Currently, minority ethnic children represent about 9% of the primary schools population and 8% of the roll in secondary schools. See Medway Council's Race Equality Scheme May 2005 (www.medway.gov.uk/res_booklet_new_ifc-4.pdf).
- 1.2.2 Because numbers in the population are low, the numbers of minority ethnic children in each school year group are small, too. For this reason, it is difficult to generalise about the achievement of Medway's minority ethnic pupils because the performance of even a single child can have a large effect on the group as a whole. Having said this, typically children of Asian (Indian), Asian (Pakistani) and Chinese heritage outperform the Medway average. The performance of Asian (Bangladeshi) heritage children is fairly consistently below average, and that of other groups varies. This reflects the

national picture, except that at national level children of Pakistani heritage do less well than the average – so the Medway group buck the national trend.

1.2.3 Support for minority ethnic pupils in Medway is provided by the Medway Language Achievement Service (MLAS). The service is offered to schools on a 'buy-back' basis. This means that the Council passports resources to schools which can then be returned to us in exchange for the services of MLAS. The Service's work is focused on the support of individual and small groups of pupils which is mediated by language support teachers and bilingual classroom assistants. The Council is able to retain a proportion of its resources for promoting minority ethnic achievement. In practice, we use these resources to meet the management and administrative costs of the Service, thereby subsidising the price charged to schools.

1.2.4 The staffing of the Service numbers 19.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts, consisting of:

- Head of Service
- Two part-time team leaders (1.2 or FTE)
- 12 Teachers (including the team leaders) with a full-time equivalent of 8.2 FTE
- 10 Bilingual support assistants with a full-time equivalent of 6.5 FTE
- Two instructors, paid at unqualified teacher rate (0.4 FTE)
- Three out stationed assistants (0.8 FTE), working in community settings such as places of worship
- Two administrative staff (1.7 FTE), one of whom is on a temporary contract.

1.2.5 The specific resources available for promoting the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups in 2005/6 are:

- £234,159 from the DfES Standards Fund for Ethnic Minority Achievement, of which £150,000 is retained centrally and the remainder devolved to schools;
- £62,500 from the DfES Standards Fund for Vulnerable Children;
- £391,887 delegated directly to schools through the funding formula.

1.2.6 Currently:

- 47% of schools buy back in to a service level agreement with MLAS;
- The service works with just under 20% of the minority ethnic pupils in Medway schools;
- Because demand for the service has fallen faster than its costs, there will be an estimated overspend of £60,000 in the current year;
- According to the 2004 Audit Commission Survey of Medway Schools (which compares our performance with that of other participating LEAs), the level of satisfaction with Medway's MLAS is in the lowest quarter of local education authorities surveyed.

1.3 Rationale for a new kind of service

1.3.1 Currently, Medway Council is not providing effective strategic advice, support and challenge to schools in the area of minority ethnic pupils' achievement. There is no effective analysis of performance data at school level undertaken by the LEA, good

practice is not consistently identified and poor performance is not challenged. Our knowledge of school practice is based on the schools in which the service operates, which is now less than half of all schools in Medway. And in any case, this intelligence is not used in any consistent way to direct support, challenge or intervention. These weaknesses in the current arrangements make it very difficult to support schools and their minority ethnic pupils effectively or efficiently within the resources available.

1.3.2 The OfSTED inspection of Medway in 2001 (published January 2002) identified strategic weaknesses in this area of work. The report recommended that the Council should *develop clear priorities, strategic objectives and action plans for supporting ethnic minority pupils and raising their achievement*. The review of the MLAS will provide valuable information in developing the Council's final response to this recommendation.

1.3.3 In order to discharge its duty to promote high achievement, and to address related issues identified in paragraph 1.2.4, the Council recognises that it needs a service that will actively and effectively:

- Promote whole school strategies to raise the achievement of minority ethnic groups;
- Collect, analyse and use data to identify underachievement and target intervention;
- Advise on the allocation of resources between schools and monitor their use;
- Promote a school ethos which is supportive of pupils from minority ethnic groups, promoting their achievement and valuing the cultural diversity they bring to the school;
- Ensure that racist incidents are dealt with appropriately and recorded, and that good practice in this area is disseminated and poor practice challenged.

1.3.4 At the same time, there is evidence that, where pupils have English as an additional language, developing their competence in their heritage language (mother tongue) is effective in promoting their use of English*. For this reason, and in response to requests for support from local groups in teaching community languages, the Council should work with the voluntary sector locally in providing community language teaching.

2. EXISTING FEEDBACK

2.1 The key drivers for change are set out in the previous section. To summarise, these are:

- To establish a strategic service which will effectively support and challenge schools to improve the achievement of their minority ethnic pupils;
- To rationalise a service which is declining in popularity with schools and, as a result, is becoming increasingly unviable financially.

2.2 During the calendar year 2004, a number of consultation exercises about the future of MLAS were carried out involving schools, the staff of MLAS and local community organisations. The details of these exercises are set out in a report to Cabinet on 7 September 2004

(http://ww2.medway.gov.uk/FTP/Cabinet_Decisions/is754/reports/report_754_898.doc).

2.3 Essentially, the consultation process considered two options:

Option 1

Retain the current service and develop a strategic function within it. This would involve reallocating to the strategic function the Standards Fund resources which currently reduce the cost of the service to schools. The outcome would be to raise the price of the service to schools.

Option 2

Move to a core strategic service only. This would involve ending the current service, and assisting schools to develop their own provision. The aim would be to ensure that all MLAS staff who wanted to remain in employment would be found jobs in schools or elsewhere in the Council.

2.4 The first round of consultation involved a questionnaire survey to schools and meetings with MLAS staff and local groups, including the Ethnic Minority Forum and the local Council for Racial Equality. It secured 26 written responses, of which four were from members of MLAS staff. Seventeen of the 26 favoured Option 2. Five responses supported Option 1, three of which were from MLAS staff. The remainder did not express a clear preference. Particular issues raised in the responses and in meetings were:

- It is important to retain an element of the existing service provided by MLAS, although a number of schools indicated a preference for employing their own specialist staff;
- The importance of retaining the skills of key MLAS staff in Medway;
- A need to rationalise the collection of data on ethnic minority achievement;
- The importance of monitoring schools' use of resources from the DfES Standards Fund;
- A need for monitoring schools' reporting of racist incidents more effectively;
- The importance of in-service education, development and networking for staff;
- The need for support for new arrivals who are speakers of languages other than English.

2.5 The options, together with the outcome of the consultation, were presented to the Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 May 2004. The Committee commissioned officers to carry out further consultation.

2.6 The second round of consultation was based on a more detailed iteration of Option 2. This proposed four new posts:

- Adviser, ethnic minority achievement;
- Two advisory teachers (known locally in Medway as consultants), one dealing specifically with English as an additional language issues and the other with more generic concerns about achievement of minority ethnic pupils;
- Peripatetic support teacher for education of asylum seekers, assessing their language needs and assisting schools in making the right provision for them.

2.7 Key issues identified in the second consultation are listed below. *The Council's response is shown alongside in italics:*

- A need for any reorganised service to respond quickly and flexibly to schools' needs. *This would indeed be important, which is why it is proposed to include a dedicated post for work with children newly arrived in Medway, including asylum seekers and refugees;*
- Lack of administrative support in the new structure. *Some administrative support would certainly be needed, and detailed proposals were subsequently advanced at the point of formal consultation with staff and trade unions;*
- The key role of the adviser post. *This would certainly be an important appointment and it would be essential to ensure that the post holder has relevant experience as well as an ability to maintain credibility through work as a link adviser with a small number of schools. It would also be important to ensure that the post holder had the full support of the rest of the advisory team so that all schools receive excellent support and challenge on any issues relating to minority ethnic achievement, with specialist advice available whenever required;*
- Opportunities for schools to buy back specialist support when they need it. *A buy back service was not included in the new structure, although officers discussed with the Chairs of Primary Consortia the possibility of staff being employed by one school on behalf of all consortium members, and financial responsibility being shared between them;*
- The importance of a training programme. *This was rightly identified as a key issue, and the new adviser post will be asked to produce a training strategy as an aspect of developing, identifying and disseminating best practice;*
- The need for a link between the ethnic minority achievement service and the Traveller education service. *This is indeed important, and will be achieved through both services reporting to the same senior adviser and by the Traveller teacher being based at MLAS;*
- Home-school liaison was identified as an issue. *This is not properly the task of a central service but rather one that should be addressed by the school – with advice (such as can be provided by the proposed team) where required;*
- A concern that classes in community settings supported by MLAS should continue. *There is no proposal to reduce support to these classes, and indeed one of the duties of the proposed adviser post was to encourage the growth of heritage language classes.*

2.8 Following the consultation process, the proposals were finalised and job descriptions drafted for the new posts. A complaint was then made to the Commission for Racial Equality that a formal equality impact assessment had not been carried out. The Council's view was that the consultation had been sufficiently detailed, and had informed the proposals to a sufficient degree, to discharge our responsibilities under the Race Relations Act. Nevertheless, in order to ensure compliance with best practice and the guidance issued by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Council agreed to supplement the consultation that it had already taken.

The objectives of the impact assessment can be summarised as follows:

- Consult directly with affected service users from the black and ethnic minorities;

- Identify any potential adverse impact on minority ethnic or racial groups;
- Consider the impact of alternative proposals to assess to what extent they might either positively help or hinder the promotion of race equality;
- Consider how any relevant issues of community concern or adverse impact could be most effectively dealt with in any revised structure for MLAS.

3. LIKELY IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS

3.1 As set out in the first section, the aim of the changes is to secure an improved service in schools for pupils from minority ethnic groups. The first round of consultation indicated that schools would not be prepared to pay an increased cost for the existing MLAS service. The duty of the Council to secure best value in its expenditure requires that action is taken and the situation is not allowed to drift.

3.2 One possible impact of the reorganisation could be a reduction in the amount of bilingual support available to schools and children. The Council's response to this was that:

- Officers would work with schools to encourage them to employ former MLAS staff directly to work with bilingual children. In this way, the bilingual skills of staff would not be lost to the education service;
- We would encourage schools to recruit bilingual staff from the local minority ethnic communities. The bilingual skills of MLAS staff are well represented in these communities which are predominantly of Asian ethnic origin. MLAS has not been able to recruit staff who are bilingual in, for example, the Eastern European languages which are more difficult to find locally and since this is a growing need we need to re-direct our energy on this from a strategic perspective;
- Ethnic minority children have a need for other kinds of support to language support that is not currently available. Only some children from ethnic minorities need language support. The service needs to be changed to respond to this changing picture.

3.3 A second risk was a reduction in the availability of specialist teaching and support skills. If specialist posts are lost from MLAS, there is a risk that specialist skills will be lost to Medway. However, as outlined in the previous paragraph, officers would work with schools to secure the continued employment of specialist staff. In some cases, this could involve several schools agreeing to co-operate in employing a staff member, with all members of the group or consortium contributing to the salary. Arrangements of this kind already work effectively in the Excellence Cluster.

3.4 A third issue is a possible loss of flexibility for schools in making provision for minority ethnic pupils. However:

- Currently, black and ethnic minority children represent about 9% of the primary school population and 8% of the roll in secondary schools. This is a significant proportion and indicates that the overall numbers of minority ethnic children in the system are likely to rise slightly as the younger children move in to secondary schools. Medway's minority ethnic population is here to stay, and schools need to make strategic and long term arrangements to meet their needs, rather than relying

on a service which provides staff for a year at a time;

- The skills of support for bilingual and minority ethnic children in class – whatever their needs – are generic rather than specific to particular ethnic groups.

3.5 It is thus in schools' long term interests to recruit and train a group of staff who can then be full and permanent members of the teaching and non-teaching staff team, participating fully in the professional life of the school.

3.6 Finally, the reorganisation risks a loss of minority ethnic staff from the Council's workforce, where minority ethnic groups are already under-represented. We would certainly want to avoid such an outcome, and would use our best endeavours to secure alternative employment for all displaced staff, in accordance with relevant human resource policies and procedures for dealing with staff affected by reorganisations.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.1 Essentially, there have been two alternatives considered – Option 1 and Option 2, set out in paragraph 2.3 above. Clearly, either of these options, if adopted, would require further development, with precise staffing structures and job descriptions. Some of this work was done in 2004 for the second round of consultation. The race equality impact assessment consultation, however, was undertaken on the fundamental options rather than on the detail of the implementation.

4.2 Because the response of schools in the first round of consultation was that they would not be prepared to subsidise a more expensive service, the second round focused on the second option which was developed in more detail for the additional consultation purposes.

4.3 In responding to the issues raised by the Commission for Racial Equality, we decided to consult again on the two original options.

5. CONSULTATION ON IMPACT

5.1 Methodology

5.1.1 One potential weakness of the two rounds of consultation undertaken in 2004 was that they did not involve parents and young people from minority ethnic groups. Accordingly, the main focus of consultation for the race equality impact assessment was on children from minority ethnic groups and their parents. An outline of the methodology to be followed was discussed and agreed with the local Race Equality Council (REC).

5.1.2 The principal means of consultation with these groups was by questionnaire. Two kinds of questionnaire were devised by the Council's research and review team: one for parents of children from minority ethnic groups and the other for minority ethnic students of secondary school age. Copies of the questionnaire are available on request*. The questionnaires covered a wide range of issues in order to help officers in the Council to design a service which meets the needs of children and their families. Questionnaires were sent out, via schools, to almost 4000 families who were identified

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as being of minority ethnic origin from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and the MLAS database of students.

- 5.1.3 Five hundred and thirty eight responses were received from parents and 153 from students. The questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter which included a telephone helpline for support in completing them. Where families were known to have bilingual needs, these letters were translated into the appropriate community language.
- 5.1.4 The questionnaires included an invitation to participate in a focus group to discuss the issues in more detail: fifty-two parents and seven students responded to this invitation. Three focus groups took place: one of these, scheduled for 21 July, had to be rescheduled at a late stage following the attempted terrorist attacks in London that day. In the end, sixteen parents took part in focus groups, and no students were able to participate. The focus groups were conducted by a consultancy independent of the Council.
- 5.1.5 A further request for views was sent to schools, and members of the MLAS service were also given another opportunity to comment.

5.2 Outcomes Of The Consultation – Parents and Pupils

- 5.2.1 Clearly, the results of the parent and pupil questionnaires are a particularly important source of data, given the large number of responses received.
- 5.2.2 The questionnaires opened with a general series of questions about satisfaction with various aspects of school life and practice that could affect pupil achievement. Respondents were asked to reply accordingly to a five-point scale (very good – good – ok – poor – very poor). Only 3% of parents and 7% of students considered that the quality of general support was less than OK: over 70% of parents and 55% of students rated it as good or better.
- 5.2.3 Parents rated schools more highly on academic issues than on pastoral care. For example, nearly 80% thought the school was a good or better at encouraging their child to do well at school. However, just over 50% thought the school was good or better at dealing with bullying and exactly 50% thought the same about dealing with racist behaviour. And in answer to a later question, 17% thought their child worries about bullying. Students' responses were more even, but followed a similar general pattern.
- 5.2.4 In other questions, parents were invited to agree or disagree with a number of statements about school ethos and the availability of support (again, a five point scale: agree strongly – agree – no opinion – disagree – strongly disagree). Parents showed significant levels of concern about schools' understanding of their religion and culture, and about how this understanding was (or was not) reflected in uniform and school meals. Students' concerns were even more significant.

Parent Questionnaire

Absolute Analysis % Respondents	Base	Missing					
		No reply	Agree Strongly	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Base	2152	72 3.3%	383 17.8%	856 39.8%	630 29.3%	179 8.3%	32 1.5%
The school shows understanding of our religion and culture	538	13 2.4%	97 18.0%	253 47.0%	135 25.1%	32 5.9%	8 1.5%
The uniform/clothes worn at school take into account your religion and culture	538	22 4.1%	84 15.6%	166 30.9%	209 38.8%	45 8.4%	12 2.2%
The school meals take into account our cultural/religious needs	538	24 4.5%	71 13.2%	139 25.8%	222 41.3%	75 13.9%	7 1.3%
Every effort has been made to ensure your child feels comfortable at school	538	13 2.4%	131 24.3%	298 55.4%	64 11.9%	27 5.0%	5 0.9%

Student Questionnaire

Absolute Analysis % Respondents	Base	Missing					
		No reply	Agree Strongly	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Base	765	30 3.9%	118 15.4%	222 29.0%	279 36.5%	94 12.3%	23 3.0%
a. I look forward to going into school	153	4 2.6%	30 19.6%	61 39.9%	41 26.8%	15 9.8%	3 2.0%
b. The uniform/clothes worn at school take into account my religion and culture	153	7 4.6%	22 14.4%	38 24.8%	64 41.8%	12 7.8%	10 6.5%
c. The school shows an understanding of my religion and culture	153	5 3.3%	24 15.7%	53 34.6%	46 30.1%	25 16.3%	- -
d. The school meals take into account my cultural/religious needs	153	6 3.9%	21 13.7%	30 19.6%	66 43.1%	23 15.0%	7 4.6%
e. The lessons cater to my religion and culture where appropriate	153	8 5.2%	21 13.7%	40 26.1%	62 40.5%	19 12.4%	3 2.0%

5.2.5 On a similar scale, there is again a contrast between parents' perceptions of academic and more general support. For example, only 3% disagreed with the statement 'my child is supported through exams' whereas 19% disagreed with 'I do not worry if my child has a problem at school because I know they will be helped.'

Absolute Analysis % Respondents	Base	Missing					
		No reply	Agree Strongly	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Base	2690	146 5.4%	528 19.6%	1327 49.3%	483 18.0%	185 6.9%	23 0.9%
My child is supported through exams	538	37 6.9%	96 17.8%	246 45.7%	137 25.5%	20 3.7%	2 0.4%
My child is encouraged to progress to further education	538	46 8.6%	97 18.0%	220 40.9%	159 29.6%	15 2.8%	1 0.2%
My child is encouraged to achieve	538	24 4.5%	147 27.3%	310 57.6%	40 7.4%	13 2.4%	4 0.7%
I do not worry if my child has a problem at school because I know they will be helped	538	20 3.7%	92 17.1%	241 44.8%	85 15.8%	92 17.1%	10 1.9%
Most of the time, I feel their is sufficient support given to my child at school	538	19 3.5%	96 17.8%	310 57.6%	62 11.5%	45 8.4%	6 1.1%

5.2.6 Students were not asked these questions in the same form. However, only 7% disagreed with the statement 'most of the time, I feel supported at school', and only 4% with 'I feel confident when I am at school'. Encouragingly, over 90% of students agreed with the statement 'I try hard in my exams to achieve good results' – a demonstration of their commitment to achievement.

5.2.7 Some of the findings on MLAS are quite difficult to interpret without undertaking additional, more detailed consultation. However some of these issues may be more appropriate to be investigated further through any revised MLAS service:

- Only 9% of parents and 12% of students said they had heard of MLAS before reading the questionnaire;
- 29% of parents said their children had needed help with English language, although only 12% of students said this (this may be because parents were mainly of primary age children, whereas students were all of secondary age);
- Of these, only 6% of parents said that MLAS staff had provided this help – although a further 10% specified learning support assistants and another 4% mentioned

language support teachers. Students were not asked this question.

It is therefore apparent that few of the respondents had much knowledge or experience of the work of MLAS. This emphasises the need in any new arrangement for supporting pupils from minority ethnic groups to communicate better with parents about the services provided to their children.

5.2.8 The options for the future of MLAS were briefly described. Over 75% of parents expressed a preference for one option or the other. Of these, 82% favoured option 2 (the strategic service only). For students, the figures were similar although less polarised: 59% expressed a preference and, of these, 76% favoured option 2.

5.2.9 Sixteen parents attended focus groups. Between them, they had 18 children at primary and seven at secondary school. Whilst the numbers were small, the focus groups offered an opportunity to explore issues in detail. The key findings are set out below.

- Most parents felt that the schools were generally positive and supportive environments and gave examples about extra help in terms of reading problems (this was not necessarily specific to English as a second language);
- Schools were generally inclusive of the basic concepts of religion and about teaching of differences. Parents gave examples of good practice within the schools such as flexi time around visits to the mosque and acknowledging of religious festivals. There were a few examples where secondary schools did not deal with differences so well. For example a parent talked about her daughter being teased after a class discussion on culture. When she spoke to the teacher about it the teacher suggested excluding her daughter from the lesson as a solution. A number of parents did not want to make a big issue of culture and ethnicity as they often face lack of understanding by teachers.
- Parent's perceptions of how well schools dealt with bullying and harassment, was divided by primary and secondary. Generally speaking parents with children in primary schools felt the schools dealt with it in a satisfactory way. There was one example where a parent had to move her daughters out of secondary schools in Gillingham because of racial bullying and the ineffective way the school handled it. Most parents were aware of anti-bullying policies but not of any specific anti-racism policies.

5.2.10 Parents in the focus groups liked a mixture of option 1 and 2 as they were concerned about what would happen to the language support needs of individual children if there was not central service providing the teachers or assistants. They raised several issues and the Council's response is shown in italics:

- Who will monitor the schools to see if they are addressing individual language needs of children? *This would be a key task for the new strategic service. The new service will include an improved data analysis function which will enable the strategic service to identify children who may have language needs. The close liaison between the new service and the link advisers will enable the advisory service to support and challenge schools in ensuring that children's language needs are met as well as ensuring that ambitious and achievable learning targets are set for them.*

- Could MLAS run courses for teachers and support staff about cultural awareness? *This will also be a key task for the strategic service.*
- Will MLAS have up to date information on how all Black and Minority Ethnic children are doing in schools? Will they have facts, information and trends? *The new service will have this information.*

5.3 Outcome Of The Consultation – Schools and MLAS Staff

- 5.3.1 The most recent (third) round of consultation with headteachers yielded nine responses – a response rate of 8%. Of the nine, four thought that the service as under option 2 (the strategic service only) was about the right size. Three thought that this option would produce a service that was too small (though one of these had supported this option in the two previous rounds of consultation). Two responses were equivocal – saying that the service required depended on the level of need. Schools appear to value the assessment and teaching skills of the current team more than the bilingual skills, and on commented that the languages spoken by the existing bilingual support assistants do not meet the needs of their children.
- 5.3.2 The MLAS staff held a meeting and submitted a response to the consultation. The response raised a number of issues about the quality of the consultation process. In particular, concern was expressed about the complexity of the questionnaires sent to pupils and parents, and whether the number of responses received constituted a valid basis for decision-making.
- 5.3.3 Concern was also expressed that the proposals to close MLAS (which have now been under consideration for over a year) had undermined confidence in the service and this had contributed to the reduced uptake by schools. An example was given of another local authority that had been successful in persuading schools to make more use of their equivalent service, and it was suggested that the retention of this kind of service was required to meet the language needs of children entering the country from abroad.

6. Decision On Future Action

- 6.1 This consultation, taken together with the previous exercises, ensures that the Council is now in a position to take a clear decision on the reorganisation issues. In terms of the two options which were the subject of consultation, the outcome is clear - that a majority of consultees supported Option 2, which would discontinue existing support arrangements and replace them with a core strategic service. This is in line with the Council's previous decision, and it is recommended that the Director of Education and Leisure should now proceed to implement this.
- 6.2 However, what has emerged from the consultation is a relatively high level of concern about issues to do with the ethos in Medway schools – dealing with bullying and racist behaviour, and general levels of support provided to students. There is no evidence, of course, that the situation would be any better or worse in another local authority, and bullying is a concern for many parents, irrespective of their ethnic origin. Nevertheless, the key finding is that any service intended to support pupils from minority ethnic groups must address this wider agenda.

6.3 Currently, responsibility for some areas of practice in relation to minority ethnic students rests outside MLAS, mostly with the Policy Unit in the Education and Leisure Directorate. At present, the directorate is in the process of reorganising into a Children's Services and a Community Services Directorate (dealing with services to children and adults respectively). It will be important, in this process, to ensure that the proposed adviser for minority ethnic achievement, who will head the new strategic service, has overall responsibility for monitoring a full range of performance indicators in schools covering:

- Achievement (analysed by ethnic origin);
- Racial incidents (which are monitored in accordance with the recommendations of the MacPherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence);
- Parental and student satisfaction (as schools are increasingly surveying their parent and student bodies as part of the normal self-assessment process);
- Schools compliance with their specific duties under the Race Relations Act (see www.cre.gov.uk/duty/pa_specific_education_schools_ew.html) which are:
 - To prepare and maintain a written policy statement for promoting race equality;
 - To assess the impact of their policies on students and parents of different racial groups, including, specifically, on the attainment of pupils;
 - To monitor this impact over time; and
 - To publish the results of this monitoring annually.

Such a change will not require specific additional resources for the core service, as the tasks of collecting, analysing and presenting the data should continue to be carried out elsewhere in the Council. The key point is that the adviser for minority ethnic achievement should have:

- An overview of the findings;
- The task of presenting these to the Director of Children's Services, elected members and back to schools;
- A brief to ensure that parents of children from minority ethnic groups are well informed about their progress, the achievement of Medway's different ethnic groups, and how the Council and schools support them;
- The power to make recommendations to the Director and her senior managers, as well as elected members and schools, to address issues arising from the findings. There also needs to be a clear link with the School Improvement team to ensure a consistency of adviser support and challenge.

7. Monitoring

7.1 The previous section has set out a requirement to identify and report on a range of performance indicators in relation to the achievement of minority ethnic students, and the effectiveness of schools in responding to the needs and aspirations of minority ethnic families.

7.2 It is proposed that the adviser should be required to report annually to the Council on these issues, through the Overview and Scrutiny function.



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