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Caroline Perry

Literacy and numeracy coordinators in other jurisdictions

Summary

This paper provides an overview of the role of literacy and numeracy coordinators in Northern Ireland, and discusses the qualifications required here and for comparable roles in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

In Northern Ireland literacy and numeracy coordinators are not required to have specific qualifications beyond the required teaching qualifications. In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) must have achieved a Grade C or higher in GCSE English and mathematics (or equivalent).

These requirements are broadly in line with those in the other jurisdictions considered in this Briefing Note. In England and Wales no specific literacy and numeracy qualifications are required for coordinators beyond those needed for entry into ITE.

The Scottish curriculum states that improving literacy and numeracy is a role for all teachers, and in Ireland, guidance places much emphasis on the role of school leaders

in improving standards in these areas. As such, there is no clear role for literacy and numeracy coordinators in these jurisdictions, although there is evidence of coordinators working in some schools. Table 1 provides an overview of literacy and numeracy qualification requirements in each of the jurisdictions.

Table 1: Overview of literacy and numeracy qualification requirements

Jurisdiction	Initial Teacher Education admission requirements	Literacy/ Numeracy coordinator qualifications requirements
Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further qualifications required
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further qualifications required
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade C or above in English at Higher Level or equivalent (primary and post-primary) and Credit, Grade 1 or 2 in maths (primary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific role: literacy and numeracy are deemed to be the responsibility of all teachers
Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade C or higher in GCSE English and maths or equivalent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further qualifications required
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum specified grades in English and maths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific role: emphasis is on school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy

1 Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the role of literacy and numeracy coordinators here, and discusses the qualifications required for similar roles in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

2 Northern Ireland context

The Department of Education's (the Department) *Count, Read: Succeed* strategy includes literacy and numeracy coordinators under the category of 'school leaders'. There is no standardised job description for the role, which may vary according to the size of the school, existing job descriptions and taking into account the role of the Head of English or Maths. However, the responsibilities the role is likely to include are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Likely areas of responsibility for literacy and numeracy coordinators

Area	Responsibilities
Planning and supporting the effective use of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading planning, target-setting and monitoring of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy • Embedding a culture where monitoring and analysing pupil progress data is an integral part of accountability processes • Having a key input to the school development planning process to include setting priorities and targets for raising standards in literacy and numeracy
Supporting teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support to teachers in meeting the needs of pupils who are underachieving (with the support of the SENCO and others in the school) • Providing support to teachers in the development of classroom practice and decisions on pedagogy
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing approaches and solutions in relation to teaching and learning in order to improve practice • Identifying effective practice; monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback in a way that leads to improvement • Identifying the training needs of staff and ensuring these needs are met
Encouraging reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring effective use is made of the school library and, where appropriate, the public library service

Source: Adapted from information provided by the Department of Education, March 2012

Qualification requirements

In Northern Ireland, literacy or numeracy coordinators in primary or post-primary schools are not required to have specific qualifications beyond the required teaching qualifications. The Minister for Education, John O'Dowd MLA, has stated that he has no plans to change this approach.¹

The appointment of coordinators is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, who may choose to appoint a candidate with particular attributes and skills. The Minister has stated that this might include proven leadership or communication skills, effective

¹ Minister for Education response to an Assembly Question by Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA, 21st February 2012

motivational skills or a specific interest or competence in literacy and numeracy.² The recent report by the Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce 2010/11 stated:³

“It is essential that literacy and numeracy co-ordinators in primary schools demonstrate a strong background in maths and English respectively and ideally are specialists in the respective areas.”

Initial Teacher Education admission requirements

In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) are required to have achieved a standard equivalent to a Grade C or higher in GCSE English and mathematics.⁴

Training

Training is provided to newly appointed literacy and numeracy coordinators by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs). Training courses, cluster group meetings and school-based support from CASS officers are also available to coordinators, and professional development and support materials are available on ELB websites.⁵

The remainder of this briefing note examines the qualification requirements for equivalent posts in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

3 England

ITE Admission requirements

In regard to literacy and numeracy, all entrants to ITE must have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics.⁶

Literacy and numeracy coordinators

In England there are no specific qualifications required for literacy coordinators, although desirable attributes include a ‘love of language’, outstanding literacy skills and the ability to work with a range of colleagues.⁷ Job advertisements for literacy and numeracy coordinator posts tend not to state any specific qualification requirements

² As above

³ Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce (2011) Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce 2010/11

⁴ Eurypedia: *Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education* [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-Northern-Ireland:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education#Admission_Requirements_50_C2.A0

⁵ Correspondence from the Department of Education, 14th February 2012

⁶ Eurypedia: *Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education* [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

⁷ Times Education Supplement: *Next step - How do I become ... A literacy coordinator?* [online] Available at: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6010910>

other than Qualified Teaching Status, although some advertisements state that mathematics or English specialisms would be an asset.⁸

A recent report by Ofsted found that many English coordinators in primary schools are not subject specialists. The report suggests that few English coordinators in primary schools have studied English at degree level and that most will not have studied the subject beyond advanced level.⁹

4 Scotland

ITE Admission requirements

At primary level, entrants to ITE must have passes in English at Higher level (Grade C or above) and in mathematics at Standard Grade (Credit, Grade 1 or 2) or Intermediate 2, or equivalent qualifications. At post-primary, a pass in English at Scottish Qualifications Certificate Higher level (Grade C or above) or equivalent is necessary.¹⁰

Literacy and numeracy coordinators

The Scottish Curriculum emphasises that literacy and numeracy are the responsibility of all teachers in schools, and does not outline a role for coordinators.¹¹ As such, no additional qualifications are required for teachers supporting these areas.

However, there is evidence that some local authorities support the use of literacy and numeracy coordinators. For example, the Highland Council has set out a strategy to up-skill literacy coordinators by providing additional training and modelling best practice by existing coordinators.¹²

A recent Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) review highlighted a need to improve many primary teachers' basic numeracy and called for the implementation of a national numeracy action plan.¹³

5 Wales

ITE Admission requirements

Among the minimum requirements for entry to ITE in Wales is that all entrants must have achieved a standard equivalent to a grade C in the GCSE examination in English and in mathematics.¹⁴

⁸ For example: *Numeracy Coordinator Advertisement* <http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=42125>; and *Literacy Coordinator Advertisement* <http://www.academicsltd.co.uk/academics-JobDetails.asp?academics-job=41976>

⁹ Ofsted (2012) *Moving English Forward* Manchester: Ofsted

¹⁰ Eurypedia: *Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education* [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-Scotland:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

¹¹ The Scottish Government (2006) *A curriculum for excellence: Building the Curriculum 1* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

¹² Highland Council *Highland Literacy Project Literacy Strategy 2008 – 2011*

¹³ The Scottish Government (2012) *Supporting Scotland's STEM Education and Culture - Science and Engineering Education Advisory Group - Second Report* Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

Literacy coordinators

The Welsh Government views the role of the literacy coordinator as ‘crucially important’ in supporting all teachers in improving literacy skills. The guidance does not set out particular qualifications required by coordinators, rather, requiring that the person appointed has ‘sufficient status, experience and resources’ to discharge their duties.¹⁵

In regard to professional development, the newly launched National Literacy Programme (NLP) includes support for teachers’ professional development and the sharing and consistent use of best practice. Teachers may avail of opportunities to undertake additional study in the teaching of literacy; learn from teachers demonstrating best practice and take part in Professional Learning Communities.¹⁶

6 Ireland

ITE Admission requirements

Entrants to colleges for ITE must have achieved the specified minimum grades in Irish, English and Mathematics. Eurypedia reports that the academic status of candidates remains high and that there is much competition for places.¹⁷

Literacy and numeracy coordinators

The Department of Education and Skills’ literacy and numeracy strategy places an emphasis on school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy. The strategy states that government will seek to build the capacity of school leaders to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy, and also sets out plans to improve the professional skills of teachers in literacy and numeracy.¹⁸

In particular, the strategy states that professional development in regard to teaching literacy and numeracy could be improved, and highlights the ‘low mathematical ability among a number of students’ in initial teacher education. There have been calls for the appointment of literacy and numeracy coordinators in schools in Ireland.¹⁹

¹⁴ Eurypedia: *Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education* [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-Wales:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

¹⁵ Welsh Government (2010) Developing higher-order literacy skills across the curriculum

¹⁶ Welsh Government May 2012: *Programme of actions to raise literacy standards launched by Minister* [online] Available at <http://wales.gov.uk/press/fourth/educationskills/2012/120517nlp/120517nlp.jsessionid=Y6yqP1FTLszpnmVhndJnRw5vQnr2XvTt4NWx1IliNvdh5I0yLx6V!-856040559?lang=en>

¹⁷ Eurypedia: *Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education* [online] Available at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ireland:Initial_Education_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education

¹⁸ Department of Education and Skills (2011) *Literacy and numeracy for learning and life* Dublin: Department of Education and Skills

¹⁹ For example: Association of Teacher Centres of Ireland (2011) *A response from the Association of Teacher Centres of Ireland to the Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools*

Nonetheless, there is evidence that some schools do have literacy and numeracy coordinators. For example, a pilot programme has been carried out involving fortnightly teacher training from a literacy lecturer and funding for hundreds of new books.²⁰

²⁰ The Irish Examiner (2011) *Call for literacy co-ordinator in schools* [online] Available at: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/call-for-literacy-co-ordinator-in-schools-151143.html>