



Thursday March 6th 2008 - immediate

BANKS URGED TO HELP TEACH CHILDREN TO COUNT

Ed Balls today called on Britain's banks and other financial institutions to give a head start to those children who struggle with maths after visiting a maths intervention project in a London primary school.

He called on more firms and organizations to follow the lead of KPMG, Deutsche Bank, Lehman Bros, Charles Dunstone Trust, Man Group and other organisations in supporting the Every Child Counts programme which will by 2010-11 provide specialist teacher tuition to help 30,000 children aged 7 who are having the greatest difficulties in maths.

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, said:

"We want every child to master the basic skills they need. Businesses tell me that they need all young people to have good skills and training so they are ready for work. Schools are doing a fantastic job in improving standards in maths – but intervening early with the small group of children who really struggle is the key to setting them on the road to success.

"I'd like to see more businesses come forward to and get involved in the Every Child Counts programme – in the long run it will not only help prevent children from falling behind but help them have the workforce they need."

Jean Gross, Director of the Every Child a Chance Trust that sponsors the programme, said: "We are very pleased that the Government is backing an unusual combination of business and charities who realise just how debilitating numeracy difficulties can be. Early evidence shows that one to one specialist teaching in Maths at the age of seven can help children to achieve and surpass the national level of numeracy for their age. There is also evidence that, if they don't, the long term costs to society are high."

The Government will invest £144 million over the next three years into rolling out nationally the Every Child A Reader (ECAR) and Every Child Counts (ECC) programmes.

By 2011, 30,000 seven-year-olds who need help with maths will get intensive teaching support each year and it is expected there will be 1,600 teachers trained to offer the high level of expert intervention support involved in Every Child Counts.

Ed Balls was visiting Joseph Lancaster Primary School in the London borough of Southwark where business is funding a £600,000 programme at 10 schools in the borough using five specialist trained teachers to give one to one tuition for half an hour a day to those having the greatest difficulty with mathematics.

He was shown by headteacher Richard Slade different ways of making mental arithmetic attractive to seven-year-olds. These included one using an example of counting chickens and eggs in an incubator.

He was told about encouraging early results from the scheme now being trialled at Joseph Lancaster. In the London borough of Hackney 412 children aged seven received the intervention and within a year 83 per cent had either caught up with or overtaken expected numeracy levels for their age as a result of their extra lessons.

On the visit he was joined by some of the main sponsors of the ECC campaign. These included: Paul Lawrence, Director KPMG, Paul Marshall, Trustee ARK, Jim O'Neill, Chairman, SHINE, and Peter Sherratt, Vice Chairman Lehman Bros.

Notes for Editors

1) Every Child Counts was announced last year to develop a numeracy intervention scheme for children aged seven who have the greatest difficulties in mathematics, using highly trained teachers to teach children on a one to one or small group basis for around 12 weeks. We are currently in a research and development phase and aim to reach 30,000 a year 2010-11 when ECC begins to roll out nationally.

2) It is backed by an unusual combination of charitable trusts, the business sector and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). Business and charitable sponsors include KPMG Foundation, Eureka Foundation, Lehman Brothers Europe Foundation, SHINE, Man Group Charitable Trust, Deutsche Bank and the Charles Dunstone Trust.

**Further information from Tim Devlin, Press Officer, Every Child Counts
07939 544 487.**