

Bradford Primary School Improvement in Partnership, diminishing the difference through evidence informed targeted interventions

Overview

The project supported 21 high-priority primary schools in Bradford, an Opportunity Area. It identified a need for more effective strategies to improve KS2 attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils, frequently boys. This pupil cohort was considered a West Yorkshire regional priority and a key focus of the Bradford Opportunity Area's delivery plan.

The project aimed to improve leadership of learning, linked to a specific area of the core primary curriculum for each school – maths, reading or writing. While the needs and strengths of each schools are unique, there was clear evidence of need to improve leadership.

21 Good and Outstanding schools – 19 primary, 1 secondary, 1 nursery – lead the support via specific improvement strands. Coordinated by the Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance (with input from the National Literacy Trust). St Edmund's worked in partnership with Eden and Shanidar Teaching School Alliance and four Multi-Academy Trusts.

Strong existing local collaboration made conditions ripe for the future development of visible learning community-based Joint Practice Development (JPD). Bradford Birth to 19's Teaching School expertise in system leadership aimed to promote sustained improvement in leadership of learning.

Within the JPD framework, the project deployed – in any one school – one of two 20-week interventions drawn from the EEF toolkit.

1. The IPEELL programme to improve writing through self-regulation and metacognition
2. Dialogic teaching to improve maths or reading outcomes.

The project also deployed feedback strategies from the EEF toolkit.

The case for IPEELL and dialogic teaching is clear, but St Edmund's audit of leadership within supported schools revealed need for sustained and significant peer support at Headteacher level to support effective implementation of improvement strategies.

Good practice to share with others interested in running school improvement projects to ensure projects deliver the intended outcome.

- This was a highly successful project. Of particular value were:
 1. The choice of high-quality interventions in the first instance, backed up by excellent, school-referenced training led by SLEs.

2. The care taken to establish JPD school pairings. The most effective involved drive from the top with positive, honest Headteacher to Headteacher engagement.
3. The focus that was given to mentoring and coaching at all levels, with the attention given to practitioner non-hierarchical partnerships – this was a ‘both on a learning journey, together’ ethos.
4. Flexibility – the willingness of school leadership teams to extend support and project work, when this met the needs of a school.
5. Clarity of outcomes given out at the beginning of the project helped to take away anxiety surrounding any undercurrent there might have been around receiving DfE support.

What the project may do differently in the future

- We would elect to use a local Headteacher or other experienced system leader to provide and develop coaching and mentoring. While not wanting to undervalue the importance of CUREE’s mentor standards, our Headteachers felt that a more local offer, with proven local impact would have been better.
- From a DfE requirements perspective, the changes brought to their reporting mechanism were helpful, but could have been there from the start.
- The four-term project was not long enough to measure maximum impact of strategies – this did not follow a clear recommendation from the EEF implementation recommendations. We had to rush the PLAN and PREPARE stages. Equally, SUSTAIN would be enhanced by having more flexibility in funding so that we could spend over another year rather than leave additional collaboration unfunded.

Sustainability measures taken by projects to ensure improvement are sustained beyond the funding period.

- As part of our work with the Bradford Opportunity Area, we have significantly developed our understanding and experience of using the EEF’s Implementation Guide. As the project has advanced we have invested hugely in the development of leadership of literacy and also of CPD, to enable greater sustainability of literacy improvements and whole school improvement. Within the project schools, there has been a shift of focus to consolidating the new practices and enhancing their skilful use among all relevant staff. We have disseminated the findings of the project widely at:
 1. Bradford Leading on Oracy Conference on 18 June 2019, with 100 people attending.
 2. We have also run additional training course for additional staff at the supported and supporting schools.

3. We have also taken the opportunity to run course for others schools from across Bradford as the success of the SSIF project has become more evident. We have run training courses for 140 teachers in dialogic teaching, for example.

We would continue to monitor the implementation to capture how the interventions are being adopted and adapted over time. Supported by the Bradford Opportunity Area, additional outreach with a number of additional schools will allow further cascading and testing of the programmes impact. In order to sustain the impact, we will work with school leaders to support them to continually acknowledge support and reward the outcomes of the project in the future.