

## **Reducing barriers to accessing learning for disadvantaged pupils**

### **Overview**

This project focused on improving access to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Literacy, identified from a range data, was a key barrier impacting on progress at KS2 and KS4. Data also identified wider issues e.g. attendance, exclusions, well-being as barriers. Delivering of the project was led by a Teaching School across three strands:

S1 – literacy in primary (phonics, reading comprehension)

S2 – effective pupil premium strategies (use of support staff, mental health)

S3 – transition KS2/3 (literacy across the curriculum)

The project was delivered on the following working principles:

- Supported peer review to challenge & impact upon practice
- CPD commissioned against evidence based needs
- Research & collaboration on what works well
- Integral use of system leaders to drive, coach, model & hold to account

The initial application to the Strategic School Improvement Fund was endorsed by the sub-regional Learning Partnership. The project met two key criteria

1. It showed evidence of collaborative working & an agreement to share good practice across the Partnership.
2. It met the agreed sub-regional priorities relating to improving performance of disadvantaged groups.

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

- Targeted school-to-school support which is planned in partnership with the receiving school so that system leaders and the receiving school are clear what is / what is not the aim.
- Power of Reading (CLPE) has been well received, and indications are that it is becoming embedded in classroom practice for the schools who took part. Quotations from school evaluations:  
*“In terms of statistical evidence Reading is now on average, across the school, the highest performing subject compared to Writing and Mathematics, whilst traditionally Mathematics has outperformed Reading and Writing.”*  
*“There is evidence through book scrutiny that the children’s engagement with English learning is improved when there is a high-quality text linked to their learning.”*
- Children seem to write more lengthy pieces of writing as a response to a high-quality text – this has been seen by project lead as Head and our Trust Lead through joint book monitoring. The impact on reading

has been seen in the children's level of interest in books, especially boys; they now want to find other books by that author or of the same genre to read independently. Most children are now able to infer to a higher level. With writing, the children have had lots more opportunities to write in role, as well as a range of writing genres across the school.

- Peer collaboration under the guidance of a trained lead, as in the pupil premium reviews. Agreement on the content and format of the pupil premium review reports, to guide schools with a consistent approach.
- Mental health first aid (2 day and half day courses) and related training supporting mental health have been particularly effective and well-received. They have benefitted both primary and secondary contexts.
- Targeted CPD which closely meets the needs of schools and is effectively facilitated.
- Ensuring key staff members are involved in the training and are able to disseminate in their own school. This has been particularly marked in the suite of mental health training opportunities provided Strand 2, and the Wayne Tennent and Power of Reading training in Strand 1.
- Use implementation data to actively tailor and improve the approach: The quality assurance of the coaching support allowed us to identify best practice and areas for development. These were then planned into subsequent training sessions for coaches. The process remained unchanged but the detail in the coaching support evolved over the period of the project.

### **What the project may do differently in the future**

- In strand 3, the project initially tried to develop a project across all involved schools which was dependent on co-ordinated activity at a micro level. This meant that the project moved at the pace of the slowest school. Whilst still important to ensure every school is signed up to the objectives of the project, it has been necessary to allow enough autonomy to benefit according to their own needs.
- Seek to establish an increased number of contacts, especially in secondary schools, to help disseminate knowledge and training and engage more staff. In some cases, everything from the SSIF project was directed through one staff member responsible for pupil premium.

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

Plan for sustaining and scaling and innovation from the outset:

- Impact of Strand 1 activities can be measured in terms of the phonics

and reading data for both 2018 and 2019. Classroom practice has definitely improved in schools which have engaged with CLPE Power of Reading. Wayne Tennent guided comprehension, and with one-to-one lead practitioner support.

- Our message in teaching phonics has been to stick rigidly to the approach (either Letters and Sounds or Read Write Inc.) and in the case of Letters and Sounds, to teach the relevant phase to the age group in daily 30 minute sessions (e.g. phase 5 for Y1) and then provide catch-up interventions for those children who have not mastered earlier phases. This can be provided by TAs as long as they are appropriately trained. Ongoing training planned for phonics to support schools where personnel change. In addition, we are providing training for teachers teaching children who have not mastered phonics by the end of KS1. This training will take place late in summer 2019 to address the transition of these pupils into Y3 in September.
- Power of Reading books purchased for all schools involved, and access to website materials continues - schools can also opt to continue subscribing. Power of Reading planning units remain available for schools who took part. Indications from Power of Reading feedback are that it is supporting wider reading opportunities, as children love the books and want to read more by the same author. School libraries and classroom reading areas have been improved as a result of the training from Power of Reading.
- A legacy group will continue, based on the Wayne Tennent project, to support those teachers who were involved in the project as they embed practice in their own classes, and with their schools as a whole. Feedback from schools indicates two thirds have already shared with the whole school, and others have plans in place to do so.
- Mental health and well-being training as part of Strand 2 has provided most schools in the project with a trained mental health first aider, and in many cases more than one. This work will be developed in the future with the lead TSA offering training for leaders on Leading a Mentally Healthy School. There is also ongoing work in embedding therapeutic approaches introduced, such as Massage in Schools and Mindfulness.
- Trained pupil premium reviewers can go on to use this experience in future reviews under the umbrella of the TSA. Quality of our pupil premium reviews acknowledged in recent Ofsted report of one of the supported schools: *Significantly develop the quality of leadership and management at all levels so that teaching and pupils' outcomes rapidly improve by ensuring that: leaders use the findings of the recent review of the pupil premium to improve rapidly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.*
- Established learning themes for pupil premium reviews. There is scope for this work to develop with SEN reviews also.

- Peer review model being established in the town of the lead TSA as a result of shared learning between SSIF project and Schools Partnership Programme (Education Development Trust). This has shown that schools are in a stronger position to challenge each other, and to drill down into each other's practice.
- MITA project has involved schools from Strands 1, 2 and 3 and represents a major investment. 47 local schools involved, and headteachers, SENDCOs and other senior leaders trained, being challenged to audit and review practice, and build on the MITA approach. We are using SSIF funding to train key facilitators in delivering the MPTA which draws out the practicalities of MITA, in face to face training with TAs and teachers.
- The local Transition Charter formalises the best practice established through collaborative work and training events within Strand 3, and invites all schools to commit to building on this in future collaboration. Impact of this strand mentioned in a recent Ofsted report, which highlighted that the school is quickly improving English teachers' understanding of how English is taught in primary schools. This has enabled English teachers of Year 7 pupils to plan their curriculum so that it builds on what pupils have learned previously; and commitment established for all schools participating, that Y7 pupils will have samples of writing from Y6 in their books to ensure KS3 teachers raise expectations.
- Other aspects of collaboration across the local area include: new to headship programme; NPQ programmes - NPQH, NPQEL, NPQSL, NPQML; School Direct; NQT programme