

Diminishing the difference in Reading attainment for disadvantage children at Key Stage 2 in client primary schools

Overview

This project aimed to diminish the gap in literacy attainment for disadvantaged pupils across 10 schools in Bradford. Attainment in literacy, especially Reading, of disadvantaged children in the client schools persistently lagged behind that of non-disadvantaged, perpetuating differences which impacts on social mobility.

This four-term project used baseline data on the gaps in literacy attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils to diagnose pupils' needs and to implement and evaluate interventions in a Key Stage 2 improvement strategy to address the complex issues that contribute to the gap. Low levels of parental engagement exacerbated the issue, as well as limited capacity in subject leadership and governance. The project wanted to drive improvement to literacy leadership and whole-school pedagogy, and parental engagement for children in year 3 to 6 in order to diminish the difference to enable disadvantage children to be assessed as secondary school-ready.

10 SLEs were deployed in 10 schools to coach 10 literacy leaders, 25 teachers, 20 Teaching Assistants and 10 SEND specialists.

The SLEs worked with 10 literacy leaders in implementation of whole-school diagnostics and analysis of children's learning needs based on evidence- and researched-based approaches, and supported teachers to plan and implement effective interventions to address individual pupils' specific learning needs. Their coaching included joint practice in maintaining a professional development log. They also engaged parents in literacy to enhance home-support for literacy. The SLEs developed the literacy leaders to deliver bespoke whole staff literacy training to achieve the projects challenging targets.

The project reported to the Teaching Schools' Improvement Board, consisting of NLEs, LLEs, CEOs of the Alliance and Bradford Council on progress of the project.

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

- Detailed financial planning is crucial – we've learned a huge amount about this, including the close tracking of all expenditure on a regular basis, readiness for audit, putting in place funding agreements with system leaders, and robust delivery plans (including financial information) and memorandum of understanding approved by headteachers and governors.
- Having an electronic Record of Visit tool completed by System Leaders

after each day of support provided project managers with 'live' data on how the project was progressing.

- Standardised testing also helped to ensure all schools were assessing the same elements of pupils' learning at the same time and on a regular basis. This data provided excellent comparative data in the end. The Power of Reading was a great addition to the project, although not originally in the plan. This will have the biggest legacy on the teaching of reading. Its resources and principles are excellent and schools valued the programme. Schools think this will have more impact beyond the project rather than during it.

What the project may do differently in the future

- The EEF Implementation Guide was not available when the project was planned. The guidance offers great advice and guidance. It was used extensively during the project and it now shapes all aspects of the Trust's and Teaching School's school improvement work.
- Having never led a project before, more would have been done to ensure the climate and culture of some schools was better before they engaged in the project. The project lead would consult more with the project school head teachers in preparing the original project idea and application, and the formation of a dedicated project board (not just utilising existing group meetings) would be a must.
- System leaders need clear remits and areas of focus when they are deployed for lengthy and regular periods of time (e.g. in a school on a weekly basis). A systematic approach to planning this would enhance the excellent support they provide.

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

- The independent evaluation report outcomes have been disseminated via meetings with DfE Bradford Opportunity Area team and local leaders, to Bradford Council and to the Teaching School Council / DfE Advisor.
- There has been a positive reaction and encouragement to pursue one of the recommended actions of approaching the EEF to explore the potential to scale-up the project. We've identified in our evaluation report the most successful interventions and quality first teaching programme and invited the providers to hold a celebration event in June 2019.
- Produced a Literacy Prospectus for 2019-20 and disseminated this to schools across Bradford and the region. This, hopefully, will enable

schools to jointly procure these programmes so that the training for each is available locally from September 2019. Schools have been encouraged to consider these as part of the Opportunity Area literacy grants as well as funding them from their own budget.

- One school has blogged about the impact of the Power of Reading programme and this has gained some national attention. Our implementation of the project has been shared through inputs at Bradford Research School, NPQEL, NPQSL and NPQML events in Bradford. These inputs have been accessed by about 120 leaders. We're undertaking a survey of 160 Bradford primary schools' parental engagement activity in the summer term 2019 in partnership with Bradford Council and the Bradford Opportunity Area team. This will help us to identify best practice in the district and areas for further development. This survey is based on the EEF guidance report recently published.