

Small Tweaks for Big Leaps in Reading Attainment

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'Learning to read' quickly and efficiently allows children to access the curriculum by being able to 'read to learn'. Children who come from literacy rich home backgrounds are more likely to learn to read quickly. Not all children start school with this advantage. There is a very strong evidence base for teaching children to read using systematic synthetic phonics within a literacy-rich background to help redress this imbalance. <https://nrf.org.uk/> A recent decline in reading attainment meant that School A was keen to be involved in an improvement project to resolve this.

Aim : By the end of June 2019 28 out of 45 pupils in P2 in school A will be at or beyond expected levels of progress in learning to read.

Method

The Head Teacher, Literacy Lead and I developed the aim from research and school data. Being aware that **statistics are actually children and reaching targets means improved outcome for them**, the reading team used a fishbone analysis and *The Improvement Guide* to develop initial change ideas.

Process Change

A driver diagram was developed to articulate our change theory and locate this project within the overall improvement of attainment in reading.

By inverting the idea of Barriers to Learning we created a rubric around **Factors for Success**. Detailed operational definitions eliminated subjectivity. This allowed us identify change ideas and measure their impact.

Pupil	Overall Literacy Attainment Results	Ref. Sep 18	Attention	Engagement	Environment	Attendance	Language	Group Dynamics	Staff Training	Parental Engagement	Targeted Intervention	Total out of 45
66	blue	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	42
57	pink	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	4	5	39
84	Group A	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	28

Pupil	Overall Literacy Attainment Results	Ref. Sep 18	Attention	Engagement	Environment	Attendance	Language	Group Dynamics	Staff Training	Parental Engagement	Targeted Intervention	Total out of 45
66	completed	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	41
57	blue	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	4	5	39
84	pink	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	35

Rate of progress: + stayed on the same trajectory, ++ accelerated progress.

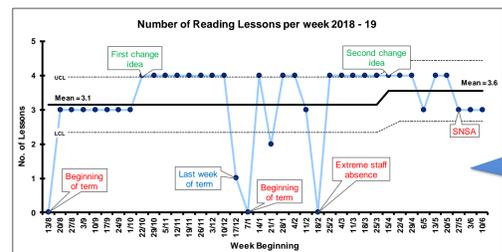
At or beyond expected progress measured against benchmarks	Not yet at expected levels of progress measured against National benchmarks	Significantly behind expected levels of progress measured against National benchmarks
66	57	84

This is key to identifying what needs to change and why. The rubric covers all areas that we need to be aware of in order to ensure there is high quality learning and teaching across the programme. *Literacy Lead*

Three pupils were sampled, one each who was above, at and below expected levels of progress. The rubric helped achieve equity for all pupils.

A number of PDSAs were completed around the change ideas; new tracking and target setting, increase number of lessons, 1-1 tuition and optimising the learning environment for the slowest progress pupils.

We tracked our data on the number of reading lessons delivered over time. This helped identify unnecessary loss of teaching days. Consequently, in April, lessons began on Day 1 at the beginning of term.

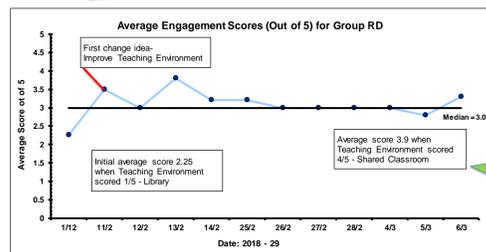


Very revealing... clearly shows gap between perceived and actual learning time. This has had a significant impact on the success of our learners this session. *Class Teacher*

Results

Leaving the small group of slower attaining pupils in their classroom and moving the larger group of more able children, **challenging the usual construct**, had a tremendous impact. In seven months pupils in the slowest progress group made more than a year's progress in reading. Gains in confidence and self image as readers are equally impressive.

The children need this to ensure best chance of progress. *Teacher*



It is better in the classroom. It's quiet. It helps you learn. It's hard to learn if it is too noisy. No one listens. When it is quieter it is better. *Pupil A*

2.25 = Needs instructions repeated. Can focus attention for short periods.
3.9 = Can listen to most instructions, can apply what they have been asked to do.



I practise at home now and I like reading. I can read my tablet now. I like looking at books and words all around me. *Pupil B*

It used to be kind of hard to read. But it's not now. We read, Fred talk, listen to Miss Mackay. I feel proud I can read. *Pupil C*

From few sounds to reading books in 7 months.

Conclusion

From a starting point in October of 18 pupils, **by June 2019, 25 children in P2 were at or beyond expected levels of progress**, almost reaching the set target. This is lower than a peak of 31 children in March. Analysis of assessment data has pinpointed next steps for improvement in teaching to address this.

Not rocket science - the increase in the number of lessons taught has reversed the downward trend in reading attainment across the school. Focus on one year group had no negative impact with attainment improving for all over the session. P1 attainment is very high.

Measurement was a key factor in the success of the project.

Key Learning Points

- Kotter's 8-step process for leading change is useful to help frame and critique improvement projects.
- The Hawthorne Effect can be a powerful component in an improvement project.
- Using technical tools helps explore new routes to improvement.
- Data combined with pupil/teacher voice tells the most powerful story.

Next steps

- Spread project to another area of the school.
- Scale to another school.
- Develop improvement bundle.
- Share early findings with Reading Leaders across the city.

Achievements

- Increased confidence and skill at interpreting data.
- A new perspective for designing improvement projects, in particular looking at bundles of small gains which can lead to wider improvement.
- Staff involved report high levels of confidence in their ability to help design future improvement projects.

Key reference materials

- Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Stahl, S. A., & Willows, D. M. (2001). Systematic phonics instruction help students learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 71, 393-447.
- Learning Hierarchy (Haring, Lovitt, Eaton, & Hansen, 1978)
- www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/ImprovementStories/WhatIsaBundle.aspx

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