

Schools with results below the floor target of 55% level 4 English and mathematics or in Ofsted categories

Case study school 1

School context

In April 2007, a new headteacher took up the post at this smaller than average community primary school with higher than average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. A few weeks later, the school was subject to an Ofsted inspection and placed in special measures. The report noted that achievement was inadequate because pupils were not taught well enough and the progress they made was unsatisfactory. The children were uninspired, thought they were incapable of success and displayed extremely negative behaviour both in class and the playground.

Barriers to improvement

- Gaps in children's prior learning.
- Quality of teaching and learning at inspection was 50% inadequate.
- Difficulties in embedding the change process with a constantly changing staff.

The school-based issues – what needed to change?

- Teaching and learning had to be improved.
- Children needed to feel they could succeed and know what to do to improve.
- A rigorous schedule of monitoring and evaluation needed to be established.

Priorities for school improvement

- Raise standards considerably by the end of Years 2 and 6 in English and mathematics through improving significantly the quality of teaching, enabling all pupils to make the progress of which they were capable.
- Strengthen senior and middle management and governance by delegating roles and responsibilities and developing skills necessary for effective leadership. Adopt a robust approach to ensuring accurate self-evaluation.
- Ensure assessment is accurate and always used to inform planning.
- Involve pupils in assessing their own work so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the curriculum to ensure that pupils encounter stimulating activities to sustain their interest and make sure that their developing needs are met through well planned progression of knowledge and skills in all subjects.

What was done?

- A school single plan and Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) were developed to focus activities.
- Staff worked with the governing body to develop a shared understanding of learning and raise expectations across the school community.
- Interim staff were appointed who were at least satisfactory, and a leading teacher (LT) was recruited from a nearby school. The LT modelled excellent practice and also worked alongside members of staff to significantly improve pedagogy. He also delivered INSET especially around *Talk for Writing* – exemplifying the use of the Primary Framework for planning and modelling good teacher assessment.
- As part of the Communication, Language and Literacy Development programme the school used *Letters and Sounds* to develop phonics. They also pursued opportunities to encourage boys' writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 through speaking and listening, and visual literacy.
- Teacher assessment was improved, focusing on Assessment for Learning.
- Accurate data was used to challenge expectations and to target effective pedagogical approaches and appropriate intervention to meet the needs of all pupils: National Strategies materials such as *Overcoming Barriers*, *Moving from Level 3 to 4*, and *Support for Writing* were used to aid planning using the Primary Framework.
- Better assessment led to better Quality First Teaching. The number of children in special educational needs (SEN) categories fell by almost 20%. Those SEN children who needed more specific support were given a much more appropriate curriculum.
- Classroom environments were improved through the development of learning classrooms rather than specific learning walls.
- The curriculum was rewritten to focus on teaching the basic skills that the children needed to have to enable them to be more independent learners, and to then apply learning within other subjects and themes.
- Perhaps the most powerful lever for change was pupil progress meetings. These meetings enabled staff and the senior leadership team to work together to celebrate improvement and to look for solutions to teaching and learning issues.

What has been the overall impact?

The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. The Ofsted inspection in March 2009 reported that the school had improved dramatically, and judged the overall effectiveness of the school, including the quality of teaching, to be good. It was noted that assessment information was used well to plan lessons which had a good emphasis on practical tasks and discussion: the curriculum engaged all pupils through well planned application of basic skills and an emphasis on speaking and listening, and there was a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation in place.

Standards and progression across the core subjects have improved very significantly. In 2009 86% of pupils attained level 4+ in mathematics (45% in 2007), 86% attained level 4+ in English (64% in 2007) and 95% attained level 4+ in science (54% in 2007). Overall contextual value added was 101.2.

Results at Key Stage 1 are just below national average with average point scores in writing above national expectations.

The full case study is available on the What Works Well website at www.whatworkswell.standards.dcsf.gov.uk. Please follow this link and then search for 'Leading on Improvement'.