

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

Case study school 2

School context

This is an average sized community primary school serving an urban area. A resource base for children with autism is based at the school, and these pupils join with those from the main school for much of the day. The percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals is well above the national average. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below expectations overall and children's language skills are often particularly weak. The school came out of special measures in 2001, but standards from 2001–07 remained low. Attainment was below the 55% level 4+ floor target in English and mathematics for four years to 2007. The Ofsted inspection of September 2007 judged overall effectiveness to be good with rising standards across the school.

Barriers to improvement

When the headteacher joined the school, the following barriers to improvement were identified:

- Poor pupil behaviour
- Low expectations and aspirations from the school community
- Low staff morale caused by special measures and a proposal to close the school
- Poor language skills of pupils
- Inconsistent quality of teaching across the school
- A curriculum that did not meet the wide range of needs of pupils.

The school-based issues – what needed to change?

- Behaviour needed to improve. Pupils didn't see the link between behaviour and learning, and didn't feel responsible for their own learning.
- Standards needed to rise – particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' attendance needed to improve.
- There was a need to consolidate the school's strategies for assessment of pupils' learning and further improve its analysis of pupil performance data.

Priorities for school improvement

- Raise standards across the school.
- Improve behaviour and attendance.
- Further develop and embed assessment for learning strategies across the school.
- Strengthen systems for tracking progress and monitoring and evaluation.

What was done?

- The pupil performance tracking system was broadened to ensure ownership by all members of staff. The local authority tracking system was adopted and this helped with setting targets across the school and comprehensive provision mapping. Clear entry and exit criteria were identified for each intervention and pupil progress data is entered three times a year by class teachers.
- Quality First Teaching was improved across the school. Staff worked together on joint planning and Advanced Skills Teachers worked with teachers to improve pedagogical approaches to writing.
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning was introduced across the school and this was incredibly successful, particularly for children in the autism resource base.
- The school has prioritised writing for the past three years and has used a range of strategies such as *Talk for Writing* and *Talking Partners*.
- *Letters and Sounds* was introduced across the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes.
- A topic-based approach to curriculum planning has been developed which includes a children's charter identifying entitlement to curriculum enrichment through, for example, visitors and visits.
- Aspirations of the community have been raised through a range of strategies including taking Year 4 pupils to a university followed by a graduation ceremony at the school.
- Assessing Pupils' Progress has been introduced across the school for reading, writing and mathematics and moderation has been established. This has led to greater agreed understanding by staff of levels and appropriate identification of next steps in learning.
- Pupil conferencing has taken place with pupils identified as having special educational needs or those on the able, gifted and talented register.

What has been the overall impact?

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved significantly. In 2009, 63% of pupils attained level 4+ in English and mathematics (23% in 2003): 66% attained level 4+ in English and 69% in mathematics. There was a significant improvement in the performance of boys in 2009.
- Performance at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved significantly, particularly in writing.
- The introduction of *Letters and Sounds* has led to accelerated progress in Communication, Language and Literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Behaviour in and out of the school is now good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are engaged in learning.
- The curriculum is planned to ensure that skills in the core subjects are applied in themed topics.

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'.