

Schools needing to maximise progress

Case study school 6

School context

This is a smaller than average primary school situated in a city centre. The school takes pupils from a varied and diverse area. Children start the school with levels of knowledge and skills that are above those expected nationally. The percentage of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was going through a transition period with new staff and a recently appointed headteacher. There were weaknesses within the senior and middle leadership and management of the school with a lack of training for role, and insecure self-evaluation and school improvement processes.

The new headteacher needed to reorganise the senior leadership team (SLT) to ensure colleagues with the correct responsibility were aligned and enthusiastic about moving the school forward. The assessment coordinator and the inclusion coordinator were invited to join the SLT.

Although standards were high at the end of all key stages progress across the school was not consistent.

The school had been reluctant to implement the Primary Framework as standards were historically high in English and mathematics.

- The school recognised that it required stronger leadership in English and mathematics if the whole school was to move forward.
- In addition there were inconsistent tracking systems between phases and key stages and a lack of understanding of continuity and progression between staff. Teacher assessment was insecure and there was little or no moderation. This was further compounded by uncertainty about how to implement monitoring and evaluation of English and mathematics.

Priorities for school improvement

The school identified the following priorities for development

- Establish a new SLT with clearly identified roles.
- Implement a more rigorous tracking system by using the local authority (LA) tracking pupil progress policy and an aligned management information system.
- Quality INSET for all staff on Assessment for Learning (AfL) and assessment of learning using Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP). Ensuring that the use of APP was an objective for all staff in performance management and evidence was gained from tracking pupil progress.
- Use of drop-in sessions to observe lessons.

What was done?

- The inclusion coordinator and deputy headteacher attended APP for writing sessions.
- The headteacher attended Leading for Improvement days. As a result the school was now in a position to implement the revised Primary Framework led by the SLT.

- Only the headteacher attended Leading for Improvement days, however, the LA offered many courses and it was important to select the appropriate training for the SLT and they in turn identified training suitable for each key stage. (The SLT are the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 managers – training was discussed with individuals as well as in key stage meetings.)

Colleagues brought back aspects of their training to the staff and there was discussion about SMART expectations. There was to be a consistent approach throughout the school. This would provide peer support.

- INSET was delivered by the headteacher and the SLT and the local AfL consultant. The school planned with the neighbouring school for a whole year of INSET and set targets and objectives for each meeting/INSET day. This meant that our SLT attended training offered by the LA to lead these meetings. There was an expectation that all subject leaders attended their network meetings.
- The school also established a partnership with a neighbouring school and all meetings involved both schools. (The final meeting of the year also involved the local secondary school.)
- As a result the school was invited to become a lead APP school. The school received support from the LA AfL consultant.
- A calendar of events were scheduled throughout the year to focus on: APP, Pupil Progress meetings, focused observation, use of peer observations as an approach to the professional development of teachers, scrutiny of children's work and discussion with children. These self-evaluation procedures indicated a growing confidence in the use of AfL by most teachers.
- Performance management evidence demonstrated the use of APP in teachers' planning. There was evidence to indicate that teachers were making more secure judgements as a result of pupil progress meetings which ensured teachers and pupils were more aware of their targets.

What has been the overall impact?

- This school is a good school and is now in a position to share practice with others as identified by the LA.
- There is a whole-school ownership of APP; for example, this is evident this year as we use APP for reading – the SLT has been responsible for purchasing resources, reorganising Guided Reading, and modelling classroom practice. Two teachers led moderation sessions and are seen as the lead teachers for APP.
- Progress is consistent across the school and AfL practice is strong and continues to develop, in particular the school assessment judgements are now secure. However the school recognises that induction into AfL practice for new staff will be a priority as staff are promoted and leave the school. This mobility will challenge the school's capacity to support others.
- The systems and tools are in place and all teachers are confident and aware of the expectations of progress. Levels of progress are being scrutinised by the SLT and staff are benchmarking the impact of support. Children identified as not making progress receive intervention, and the Inclusion Coordinator redeploys support accordingly.
- Parents are being shown the Attainment Mapping Grids. This has provoked a lot of discussion with teachers and parents sharing expectations of progress.

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'.