

## **To diminish the difference in achievement in reading between the boys eligible for PPG in the identified schools and 'other pupils' nationally**

### **Overview**

The project aimed to support pupil premium boys who underachieved in reading in order to improve their long term outcomes all areas of the curriculum and in each key stage. This project aimed to ensure that teachers accurately assessed their pupils reading skills and abilities to ensure that gaps in pupils' progress were identified and addressed at the point of learning and to develop pupils' use of synthetic phonics to initially decode text and later develop fluency in their reading. Further aims were to extend pupils' vocabulary to improve their speaking, reading for meaning and writing skills, comprehension, inference, deduction, and analysis. The final aim was to foster an enjoyment of reading amongst PP boys through reading for purpose.

The long term aims were for the attainment gap between pupil premium boys in the project schools and pupils nationally in reading to be reduced at KS1, KS2 & KS4. By the end of foundation stage it was intended an increased percentage of pupil premium boys would reach a good level of development, achieve the ELG+ in communication for language and pass the phonics screening check and for KS4 exam results for pupil premium boys in current and future cohorts to be improved in the three secondary schools.

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

Planning for the delivery and implementation of SSIF was undertaken in a collaborative manner which was inclusive of the teaching schools, LA and major MATs with a footprint in the city. By engaging and involving all stakeholders it was possible to form a strategic vision for the implementation of successive rounds of SSIF funding should the applications be successful.

A long term view was taken to ensure that the most appropriate school improvement priorities were chosen and phased in the order to ensure maximum impact by ensuring that the barriers to learning would be addressed in the correct order i.e. reading, mathematics and communication.

The SSIF leadership group included colleagues from each teaching school and the local authority. Clear roles were identified for each member of the programme leadership team so as to ensure expert involvement and an ability to ensure impact. Planning at the outset was for regular monitoring not only of the impact in school, but also to ensure that the programme was delivered and schools supported in the most appropriate manner. Once the improvement priority had been established, the SSIF leadership group ensured that it contained sufficient specific expertise to ensure effective planning and implementation.

Derby has an established Primary Strategy Group which comprises a wide

range of stakeholders, including head teachers, trusts, teaching schools, the research school, LA and PVI providers. Leaders of the SSIF programme were members of this group, thereby ensuring coherence with city wide provision. This ensured that plans for PSG provision complimented those of SSIF, thereby ensuring schools were provided with a clear strategic vision for school improvement in the city. Subsequent PSG programmes e.g. KS2 reading, were, therefore, able to complement the SSIF offer whilst communicating to schools the overall focus on reading as the city priority for 2017/18.

A clear school improvement priority was identified which stakeholders agreed was a major barrier to pupil progress in Derby City. Analysis showed that two-thirds of the total gender gap in reading at KS2 can be attributed to the fact that boys begin school with lower levels of language and attention skills than girls. In addition to the poor language skills of boys, issues that have an impact on reading outcomes are the under identification of poor language skills which prevents appropriate support being delivered early. Disadvantaged boys in the identified schools have significantly lower attainment at the end of all phases when compared to 'other' boys. This under-achievement impacts on their ability to achieve their potential in all areas of the curriculum, including in writing currently and in later key stages.

A clear and specific programme objective was identified by analysis of a range of available information and data. The objective of the programme was: "To diminish the difference in achievement in reading between the boys eligible for PPG in the identified schools and 'other pupils' nationally." By establishing a clear programme objective it was possible to identify the specific elements which must be addressed in order to secure improvement.

A number of common lessons which may be helpful when planning future programmes:

1. Collaboration between teaching school alliances, local multi-academy trusts and the local authority. By working collaboratively in a strategic manner the connectively which can be achieved is far more likely to improve outcomes for our pupils than working independently. Through this programme, the benefits of joint working were made visible leading to a commitment from the Derby City teaching school alliances to work collectively was established.
2. Integration with established school improvement structures is required to ensure sustainability. The SSIF programme embedded this approach from a senior leadership level within the TSAs and has built strong partnerships with the city-wide primary strategy group and school improvement working group.
3. Identify the common issue which will make the biggest difference; the most appropriate priority must be chosen at the right time. This was undertaken with the support of the Local Authority to ensure all evidence was taken into account and that a long term strategy could be communicated across all schools and to a range of appropriate audiences.

4. Knowledge of schools and their context including staffing, their skill level and the barriers to improvement. Use a range of pupil-level data sources to identify the nature and magnitude of challenges and problems was the starting point, however, understanding of school level context is essential to ensure engagement and effective implementation.

5. Build leadership capacity to lead the development at all levels. Establish leadership commitment to addressing the common issue; all staff must buy in to the chosen approach. Time was taken prior to the launch of the programme to ensure that TSAs, Trusts, and the Local Authority shared a clear vision for the programme. The pace of implementation required that this vision could only be shared and developed with schools after they had committed to be involved, during and after the programme launch.

6. Build a learning community within schools and beyond to create momentum around the issue. The Reading Programme Leader and SLE group became a major strength of the programme. It created and maintained a clear focus on the vision for the programme and was increasingly responsive to the leadership needs of schools. It provided a vehicle to share best practice and provide peer challenge to inform next steps actions.

7. Develop a range of CPLD to meet the needs of all adults at the right level. From the outset, the reading programme assessed the needs of all adults working in the classroom, including leaders, teachers and teaching assistants and was able to adapt and be responsive to school needs. This was increasingly possible in the second year of the programme as school needs were more clearly understood and trust and understanding had been built between the schools and the improvement strategy team.

8. Consider the needs of all adults involved with children. The reading programme initially consisted of three evidenced based approaches which were chosen by schools as a result of completing a staff confidence survey and input at the programme launch. The role of support and challenge by a project leader is essential to ensure impact.

9. Evaluate & respond throughout the project to ensure impact. It is important to evaluate the impact of the activity throughout the programme and, where necessary, amend the approach and support to ensure it will deliver the maximum impact. As the reading leader group became more established the school specific barriers to reading were able to be addressed through bespoke support.

10. Plan for sustainability & succession planning from the start of the programme planning.

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

School leadership of reading developed, through coaching, through the life of the programme to build increased capacity to sustain focussed improvement.

Leaders of the SSIF programme promoted increased school ownership of the programme through 2018/19 through their responsive and evidence based approach. Schools were encouraged to identify their barriers to successful implementation and were supported, coached and developed to deliver improvements in reading. Schools report that the programme has brought increased engagement in reading for staff and all pupils, not just disadvantaged boys. School leaders also valued the knowledge of successful strategies from other schools brought through the subject leader meetings and by the SLEs. This encouraged peer to peer support to share and develop good practice in reading. By working in a strategic manner across the Derby teaching schools and Derby LA with engagement at the Primary Strategy and School Improvement groups a coherence was brought to school improvement across the city. This programme supported SSIF schools beyond the scope of SSIF into the summer term 2019.

Evaluation findings have been shared with all Derby schools through city structures including PSG, the primary school improvement group, head teacher strategic leadership meeting (HSLM) which is attended by all city heads and CEOs and Derby City LA. Derby City LA school improvement advisers are empowered to impact across LA schools through HSLM. An evaluation report was produced to share intent, implementation and impact of the programme in line with expectations of the 2019 Ofsted framework so as to inform school planning for 2019/20. These city wide strategy meetings provided a vehicle through which disadvantage, social mobility and the importance of reading could be shared across all Derby schools in addition to those involved in the SSIF programme. The SSIF schools have committed to continue the subject leader group and DEYTS and LFTSA have committed to continue capacity to these meetings. From the SSIF schools, leaders from AR and RR have grown such that they are able to contribute to the leadership capacity of this group. The progress made with phonics will be maintained through invitation of all city schools to engage with the 2019/20 PSG phonics in KS1 programme.