

Improving pupils' reading at KS1 and KS2 through training of teachers in synthetic phonics, reading comprehension, reciprocal reading, language development, and encouraging enjoyment for reading

Overview

The aim of the project was to improve the teaching of reading at KS1 and KS2 across 42 target schools, with a particular focus on pupil premium children. Raising reading standards at KS1 and KS2 is a priority for Leicestershire schools and the schools supported by this project were behind the national standard.

The main focus of the project was on the teaching of synthetic phonics, comprehension skills and oral language skills at KS1 (in-line with recommendations 14 of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance for improving literacy in KS1). At KS2 the focus is on developing language capability to support reading, teaching reading comprehension including reciprocal reading, and supporting pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities. The KS2 activity will directly follow the EEF recommendations for KS2 literacy 13, with an additional focus on volume of reading.

The planned outcomes of this project were that in the short term schools would be engaged across their entire teaching staff, implementing evidence based practice and approaches. Pupils' confidence and ability in reading would improve and encourage them to read more, starting a virtuous circle of improvement. Teachers would become reflective practitioners through engaging with other schools in their cluster.

In the longer term, an improvement in pupil outcomes is the expected result of the activity. Although an LA wide impact may not be apparent, from focussed work with 42 schools, a significant impact is expected on the reading outcomes in those schools with a narrowing of the gap between LA wide and national figures.

This work will be sustained into the future by the creation of an Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland English Research Partnership, which will be accessible to all schools and maintain a focus on literacy.

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

From the very beginning, we outlined to all leaders and headteachers the outcomes we expected to achieve from the project. This clarity and focus for the group really helped to ensure schools understood what we wanted them to achieve and what we needed them to work towards.

We developed internal data tracking, which schools have taken part in, to reinforced the messages on pupil assessment data and this has been collected twice during the project. We internally surveyed schools and appointed an external evaluation partner too which has helped to keep regular

project feedback being returned.

Overall, our advice would be:

1. Ensure that you are clear up front about the project outcomes
2. Make sure you do not overburden schools with data returns, this ultimately leads to a lesser quality of response
3. Time your requests well to avoid adding stress/pressure to schools involved
4. Make sure you communicate that the outcomes are not all pupil data driven and that there are important measures that are qualitative as well as quantitative.

What the project may do differently in the future

The key lessons learned are:

- Invest in project leadership to ensure there are people working hard across multiple TSAs to drive the agenda.
- Try and break down schools into manageable size groups. Groups that are too large eg 9+ will not work.
- Invest in admin and project management when delivering at scale. It is so vital to have a good plan and someone that is committed to looking at the project all of time.
- Get communications right, schools can take umbrage to insensitive, untimely messages.

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

During the last term of the project, we made a concerted effort to begin to pull local partner TSAs and LAs together to tackle the issue of project legacy and sustainability. We have developed a consistent and motivated working party who are driving on the work of an English Research Partnership for the 3 counties locally and for all schools in those areas to be involved with.

We are working hard to develop a structure and support function to support local schools and complement local developments in the area. We meet every 3 weeks as a group of 8 TSAs and partners from LAs. We have funded some support from local project managers to help us develop the rationale and vision for the groups and colleagues from local TSAs are also being released to support the development of the project.

We are positive that we can gain local stakeholder buy in to formally launch the partnership for January 2020 but we are being cautious with time to ensure we do not launch before we are ready.

In terms of sharing the resources and outcomes from this project, we have created an online resource which is now available for all partners to access.

UDN: 2016

This is a free and open resource which can be accessed by all should help reduce teacher and leader workload in schools. Our open resource can be viewed at: <https://www.leicestershiretsa.co.uk/programmes/improving-pupils-reading-at-key-stage-1-and-key-stage-2>