

Project READ (Reading Everywhere Across Derbyshire) - A programme to improve pupils' outcomes in spoken language and reading comprehension from EYFS to Year 6, targeted upon 43 identified schools.

Overview

The aim of this project was to reduce underachievement in communication in early years and promote reading across all phases, with a particular focus on pupil premium and other disadvantaged pupils and to improve progress across the key stages, especially boys. Pupils fall behind in all areas because of poor reading and inability to access the curriculum. The programme targeted 42 priority schools in Derbyshire where 2016 data showed outcomes were below national in phonics and KS1 reading, and where 50% pupils at KS2 did not achieve expected outcomes in reading, writing and maths combined because of lower outcomes in reading. Project READ aimed to create sustainable change, not a 'one off' intervention. Instead it implemented a local capacity building approach whereby schools could access a strategy with a layered mix of direct support alongside the development of a reading culture that engages all schools and partners in the improvement of reading. The key outcomes were an improvement in reading ages and to overcome the dip in reading ages in the transition from primary to secondary school.

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

Project design

Project design was informed by:

- Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) 'Literacy Guidance Reports' for EYFS, KS1 and KS2, 'Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning' and 'Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation'.
- 'Developing Great Teaching' (Teacher Development Trust)
- Read On, Get On, tripartite model of reading.

These influenced project design in the following ways.

- An evidence-informed approach to improving reading outcomes was communicated through Scarborough's Reading Rope (from EEF Literacy Guidance Reports) and a cardboard desk tidy summarising the Read On, Get On, tripartite model of reading. These were referenced at training events and by SLEs during in-school visits, providing a consistent thread throughout all project activities.
- Each EEF Literacy Guidance Report places the development of spoken language skills as 'Recommendation 1'. In line with this, CPD strands have focused on spoken language skills as well as on literacy skills.

Each CPD strand had two aims: to improve quality-first teaching and to equip schools with high-quality, structured interventions to accelerate progress for pupils struggling with spoken language and literacy.

Leadership roles were clearly articulated so each school was clear about who was responsible for leading each strand.

CPD was spaced over several months, in line with the TDT recommendations, to enable time for practice, experimentation and refinement.

Effective teaching of systematic synthetic phonics

Professor Teresa Cremin was the keynote speaker at our 'Reading for Pleasure' conference. This conference was very well-received by delegates, particularly as delegates were signposted to the OU/UKLA website <https://www.researchrichpedagogies.org/research/reading-for-pleasure>, a rich resource of evidence-informed practical ways to develop reading communities in school.

Monitoring outcomes on teacher confidence and skill

- To monitor quality of CPD delivery, evaluations were collected (evaluation of the extent to which intended outcomes were achieved and usefulness of the activity).
- To monitor the impact of CPD activities on teacher/ teaching assistant confidence and skill, bespoke pre and post self-evaluation forms were collected. Delegates evaluated impact using 'I am confident ...' statements which referred to CPD-specific subject knowledge, leadership skills and pedagogy.
- At the end of each term, this data was used to shape the next delivery phase.

Monitoring impact on outcomes for children

- Participating schools have maintained their in-school tracking of pupil progress for all pupils during the project.
- Project data collection has included children's progress on the three time-limited intervention programmes using pre- and post-intervention data.
- The impact of ELKLAN training has been monitored as part of the Derbyshire ECaT: Every Child a Talker programme, using our bespoke tracker.
- The impact of the Inference Training intervention has been evaluated using the Hodder Group Reading Test.
- The impact of the Talk Boost intervention has been evaluated by a report generated from ICAN's online tracker.
- In addition, pre- and post-data sets were collected as part of the transition strand, using the Hodder Group Reading Test.

Lessons learned - What the project may do differently in the future

- It is beneficial to work with schools in localities as far as possible to minimise travel time and to maximise opportunities to build school-to-school support.
- It would be beneficial to run a project with a two year timeline to monitor outcomes over time, to enable learning to be embedded and to build capacity over time.
- To improve phonics outcomes, project design which enables schools to work closely with feeder pre-schools and nurseries would support the early acquisition of foundation skills e.g.: through equipping nursery and pre-school practitioners with skills to boost children's phonological awareness and to build family engagement in.

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

Actions taken to build in-school sustainability

- The engagement of head teachers was secured throughout the project timeline: they were invited to the launch event and received regular update emails, with phone consultation and additional support visits as required.
- Each school nominated a Project READ Champion who was given a clearly defined role, supported by the head teacher. This role was: to coordinate project activity; to oversee the work of SLEs assigned to the school; to include project activity in the English action plan; to monitor and evaluate impact; to ensure that as many staff as possible (teachers and teaching assistants) would participate in CPD events to maximise impact during the year; to plan for sustainability.
- All CPD events were designed as linked events, spaced over time to equip teachers and teaching assistants with practical strategies to improve subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy. 'Gap tasks' enabled practice, reflection and refinement.
- CPD included input to build in-school leadership capacity for teachers to equip them to drive improvements in their area of focus over time e.g.: SLE support, accurate self-evaluation, action planning.

Actions taken to build school-to-school support throughout Derbyshire

- SLE engagement was secured by inviting SLEs to launch events to become familiar with project aims and to meet head teachers and colleagues from the schools they would be supporting.
- SLE deployment to schools was planned to maximise the possibility of school-to-school support post-project eg: deployment to schools in the SLE's locality as far as possible.
- SLEs were invited to contribute to training events and to contribute 'what works well' case studies to the project website.

- In the final term, project schools were enabled to share learning from the project with English Leads from other schools in their local cluster. Support available: slide presentation, delegate packs, Project READ Lead visit to cluster meetings.

Actions taken to share lessons learned

- At each CPD event and at the three major project conferences, delegates were given opportunity to work collaboratively to share learning with each other.
- SLEs, project schools and other Derbyshire schools have contributed 'What works well' case studies to www.projectread.org.uk, available until July 2020 with free access for all schools.
- During terms 3 and 4 of the project, the Project READ Lead disseminated learning from the project in local forums: Derbyshire primary Headteacher LA meetings and primary English lead clusters.

Actions taken to transfer activity to other organisations

SLEs and Derbyshire LA consultants will now develop the Project READ model through delivery of small-scale cluster projects to schools not involved in the original project. The first pilot cluster projects started during the final term of the funded project to maximise opportunities to incorporate lessons from Project READ.