

Securing School Improvement Grant Funding Project Evaluation

Severn Teaching School Alliance (STSA) worked with other teaching schools regionally and two local authorities to implement a series of actions, funded through the DfE funded Securing School Improvement Grant (SSIG), to **address the gap between disadvantaged pupils and 'all pupils' in relation to their progress at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and/ or mathematics**. The 8 local primary schools that were selected to participate from within the STSA had a progress gap for 'all pupils' and disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing or maths which exceeded the 2017 coasting measure nationally.

The support that was offered by STSA advisers and Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) was intended to support schools in increasing the awareness of close the gap strategies from evidenced based research; increase engagement and the sharing of best practice across local schools and support networks, and enable early identification of 'gaps' in learning for vulnerable groups across the chosen schools.

As an outcome, in the schools that the STSA worked with, there were improved progress measures for disadvantaged pupils in 2018/19 that evidenced that the gap had diminished or was diminishing between these pupils and other pupils nationally.

The following strategies were implemented in order to achieve the project aims:

- The use of a quality assured group of Advisers and SLEs, who worked within the Severn Teaching School Alliance and had a proven track record of raising attainment and securing good progress across STSA schools. Advisers provided peer to peer support and evaluation, advice on priority family learning and pedagogy. SLEs provided identified teachers with support through lesson study, co-coaching and support for planning, interventions and assessment in relation to diminishing the gap.
- Advisers from the STSA were also deployed to deliver governor training linked to establishing a development plan to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and support senior leaders to implement the plan to ensure that each school provided robust evidence for how leaders and governors have spent the pupil premium, their rationale for this spending and its intended impact. All schools participated in a Pupil Premium Review.
- Head teacher interactive workshops were delivered by STSA advisers to provide opportunities to share best practice, listen to external speakers from a wide geographical area and work together to secure improved leadership in relation to the impact of pupil premium funding in their own schools.
- Two PPG conferences were also held during the time of the project, which all participants in the project were invited to, in order to ensure that all leaders received the key messages in relation to disadvantaged pupils within the local and national contexts.
- External consultants were used to deliver additional professional development support for English and Mathematics. All schools accessed termly co-ordinator network meetings in addition to a further 6 days of support over the 5 terms to specifically address any barriers in teaching and learning that was preventing gaps to close between disadvantaged pupils and 'all pupils'. These partners were quality assured and had a proven track record of providing exemplary support for schools within the Telford & Wrekin area.
- Within the first three terms the National Support School (NSS), Apley Wood Primary, delivered training on the use of parental engagement strategies for disadvantaged

pupils in the vast majority of the schools involved in the project across the region (both secondary and primary).

Impact at the end of the project

1. Governors now have a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education for disadvantaged groups within their own schools. They have the skills needed to be able to hold senior leaders to account for pupil outcomes.
2. Senior leaders have been provided with school improvement tools in order to ensure that disadvantaged groups are tracked effectively and targeted CPD is directed at specific areas of weakness within KS2.
3. Teachers' increased subject knowledge has led to improved quality first teaching, which in turn, has improved outcomes for disadvantaged groups.
4. Parents of disadvantaged pupils have been involved in the project through the building of a stronger relationship with school. Through conversations, schools will be able to develop really effective partnerships with parents, get them more involved in their children's learning, develop effective learning targets and develop more individualised approaches to learning
5. The progress gap between disadvantaged pupils in these schools and disadvantaged pupils nationally improved from a baseline of more than -2.5 in reading and maths and -3.5 in writing (source of evidence DfE performance tables).
6. Disadvantaged pupil engagement will increase significantly- source of evidence In-school assessments and observations.
7. Best practice from the project was further disseminated across all schools within the Alliance. In addition, there was a legacy of PPG champions within schools.
8. Greater understanding of resources and strengths across Teaching Schools in both Teaching School Sub-Regional Groups through the joint bid and working

Feedback taken from end of project evaluations by Headteachers who participated in the project

How has the project changed what happens in the classroom? What is different about teaching and learning from before?

'There are now clearer systems in place in terms of planning and assessment. Teachers have a better understanding of pupil starting points and how to plan to meet the needs of all pupils'.

'In particular, the partner support has been effective in moving teaching and learning forward, particularly in relation to reading and developing the model of reading in Key Stage 2. The staff have been able to develop the sequencing of teaching, challenge and raise standards. The SLE support is developing the EYFS and looking at communication friendly spaces to develop talk and speech and language in our youngest pupils'.

'Increased teacher confidence, strengthening of the leadership team in supporting others in the planning and teaching of writing.'

Improved whole school approach to the teaching of writing at KS2. Increased confidence in subject leaders and the ability to hold staff to account.'

What other improvements has the project led to across the school?

'Sessions with governors have supported them in fulfilling their statutory duties. Governors have a clear action plans in place. Governors carried out a review of the PPG strategy and worked with staff to set challenging targets for pupils in receipt of PPG.'

The tracking of pupils has improved and appropriate interventions are in place to support any underachieving pupils’.

‘The engagement of pupil premium parents is continuing to develop and staff are better at approaching the ‘hard to reach’ parents. The effectiveness of the school to school support using the SLEs. Providing bespoke support for staff and to meet the needs of the school is crucial. The effects on teaching and the support provided to middle leaders has allowed the effects to be long lasting as those leaders feel confident to carry the work forward’.

What elements of the improvement activity or methodology would you recommend to others?

‘A very inclusive approach to school improvement; involving all leaders and governors. The school benefitted from working with external consultants and adviser. The use of SLE and consultant support for school improvement - writing and mathematics; evidence in the end of KS2 results supports this’.