

## Teaching Schools Leicestershire

### East Midlands Challenge Project Tackling disadvantage and closing the achievement gap

#### Case Study – Performance Management and PP

##### Summary

Heather Primary School chose to use some of their pupil premium funding to join an Achievement For All research project, allowing involvement in the project at a significantly reduced cost to the school. The focus of the case study is on the aspect of parental involvement through structured conversations, which brought a much sharper focus to the home-school partnership in supporting key children in school.

##### Name of school

Heather Primary School

##### Brief description of what the case study is about

The 'structured conversation' takes the parent/carer and teacher through a discussion around very specific needs for support and opportunities for schools and families to work together, with targets set and work agreed between parent and teacher to support the child between meetings.

##### Why did this work take place?

Our data for disadvantaged children as defined by Pupil Premium eligibility was very strong. We were aware, however, of a few children within that group who were underperforming and more children who did *not* qualify for PP funding but who, we felt, were working at a disadvantage in school. As a school, we needed to consider new ways to support these children more effectively.

##### Description of the work undertaken

We began work with our AfA coach in January and this involved a number of sessions with him working with our whole staff and with governors. He also met with the KS2 AfA target group of children. Meanwhile, the teachers identified key AfA children in each class and began meetings with their parents, following the Structured Conversation framework for these discussions. The meetings identified targets for the children and opportunities for parents/carers to support at home. They established a timescale for future meetings and review points so that parents were aware of the long-term timescale for the project.

We built monitoring frameworks into our tracking software and Pupil Progress Meetings also focused on our AfA target children with a literacy theme at the end of the first Spring half term and a maths focus at the end of the second.

Running throughout the project is a theme of making our AfA target children feel special – boosting their self-esteem at the same time as trying to build their specific skills and general resilience.

### **Impact of this work**

At the end of the Spring term, we analysed the data for the AfA group across KS1 and KS2.

In terms of **'average depth' of understanding**, which is a key measure for us in school, the gap between the AfA and not-AfA groups of children narrowed across Reading, Writing and Maths – most particularly in Reading. This suggests that parents are responding well to encouragement to engage with their children in a reading routine at home, and this would probably be the first area of learning to show key impact in this context.

The gap in the percentage of objectives in which the two groups were secure narrowed in Literacy – again, significantly in Reading – but increased in Maths (although, as noted above, the average depth of their understanding did increase for the AfA group more significantly than for the not-AfA group).

### **Key learning points**

The focus of work/attention on the group has made a clear difference for our AfA target group of children. This is particularly clear in Reading, which we hope lays the foundation for work in other areas as we move forward in the project.

Our AfA children understand more about their Maths work, but their security against Age-Related Expectations is still an area that needs work.

We would speculate that our parents are most secure in supporting their children in Reading through a regular routine at home. Maths is traditionally a less secure area for our families and so the adults in our community will need support before they can support their children more effectively.

These observations correlate well with the data we have about our school community – the highest levels of deprivation for the school are found in adult education and skills.

### **Next Steps**

We will be part of the AfA programme for another year and a half. During this time we will be developing accessible materials for families to support their children in key writing and maths skills, with maths being a priority in the first instance.

### **Recommendations to other schools**

We have found the AfA programme and the support of our AfA coach have made a big difference to staff confidence and the structure of the programme has helped us to review and develop our skills and approach to working with parents and carers. We would recommend involvement to other schools.

However, there are key elements to the programme that schools can access readily elsewhere around parental involvement, self-esteem for children and carefully focused Pupil Progress Meetings and data analysis etc. Many of these are covered within the EEF Sutton Trust Toolkit.