

Dorothy Barley Infant School

Dorothy Barley Infant School is a four form entry school in Dagenham, a town built in the 1930s to house the work force from the local Ford plant. The school serves one of the largest housing estates in Europe. Most children enter the school at well below average levels, a quarter of pupils receive free school meals and only 5.5% of parents have received any higher education. So we were proud of our record of consistently achieving at or around the national average in our English and Maths National Curriculum Assessment results. However, there was always a significant 'tail of underachievement' with far too many pupils leaving the school with very low levels of literacy and potentially facing an educational future filled with struggle, disillusionment and certainly, no jobs at Ford.



So, when the opportunity arose to train a teacher in Reading Recovery, the Headteacher, Shan Evans, leapt at the chance. She nominated Rosie Phipps, the English co-ordinator and senior leader, to the post, made her non class based and gave her the task of making 'Every Child a Reader'. It was quite a challenge, particularly in such a large infant school (414 pupils including the nursery) with many Newly Arrived English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners raising the overall percentage of pupils learning EAL to 30%.

It was clear that Reading Recovery would have a significant impact, but in such a large school, it was never going to be enough. Successful intervention at group level would be the other key to success. With support from Joy Olive, the Borough's Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, the Governors and the Senior Leadership team embraced the idea. The school invested several thousand pounds in converting two old offices and a cloakroom area into dedicated support group rooms and fully resourced each one with guided reading books, white boards, magnetic letters and writing materials.

Rosie decided that all children in Years 1 and 2 who fell below minimum expected standards on the existing school assessments (benchmark reading levels and writing continuum) would be given a full Reading Recovery assessment. The four children in Year 1 with the lowest stanine scores are selected as the first cohort to receive Reading Recovery. The remaining underachieving children in Years 1 and 2 are grouped across classes according to ability and Rosie sets targets and accompanying recommended teaching strategies for groups of six children. Four Teaching Assistants have been trained to organise, run and teach the groups in order to enable children to reach their targets. They use an intervention programme, developed by Rosie, consisting of a combination of Early Literacy Support, Letters and Sounds and Reading Recovery techniques.



After ten weeks the children are reassessed, the groups are reorganised, new targets set and intervention strategies identified. Children who have made little progress are considered for the next cohort for Reading Recovery. Children who have reached national expectations are discontinued from their intervention group and the available places allocated to children identified as making less than expected progress in class. Children new to the school are assessed on entry and support put in place according to identified need. After another ten weeks the programme is reviewed again.

Impact

Of the 17 children who received group support in Year 1 of the programme in 2007/08, all of whom began either on Reading Recovery dictation level 0 or level 1, the average progress achieved was 8 Reading Recovery levels. In Year 2 of the programme, the average progress achieved was 12 Reading Recovery levels. One of the reasons for the success is that the programmes are made to fit the needs of the children, with clear targets, targeted teaching strategies and the use of good quality resources. The programme is carefully tailored to meet the needs of the children. Also, the TAs are trained, their work is regularly monitored, and their professional development is supported by the Reading Recovery teacher. Once trained, the TAs organise and run the groups themselves and, consequently, have ownership of the programme. Because all staff and parents see the progress made, the TAs enjoy many expressions of thanks and praise from both class teachers and the Senior Leadership Team. They feel appreciated, valued and enjoy running the groups. They often come to ask for advice or have ideas for things they want to try.

The TAs have enjoyed the challenge and the responsibility of running the groups. Kay Samuels, a TA in Year 1 said *“I like helping the children and seeing their progress. It makes every day rewarding and worthwhile.”* Karen Johnson, a TA in Year 2, added *“They learn to read with confidence, which many of them lack at the start of the programme as they do not see themselves as readers. I felt very proud of my group last year and seeing how the group work had impacted on their SATs results.”*

In order to monitor progress, a system of effectively tracking underachieving children was developed. This was designed to track progress in reading levels and also to enable the school to record other potential barriers to learning including whether the children were summer born, had identified Special Educational Needs or were from a particular ethnic background at risk of underachievement. Children whose progress is being tracked are assessed four times a year. Once all class and group assessments are collected and analysed, a meeting is held by the school’s ‘Core Assessment Action Group’. This group consists of the Reading Recovery teacher, the Assessment co-ordinator, the SENCO, the EAL co-ordinator and the leader of the Every Child Matters agenda. At these meetings the progress of underachieving children is discussed and appropriate support is put in place according to need.



Amanda Fasham, the Assessment Co-ordinator (pictured) said *“When analysing the school assessment results, it is a real pleasure to see how much progress the underachieving children make. The impact the programme Rosie has implemented has been amazing. It’s wonderful to see these children becoming real readers and working with more confidence.”*

In 2007/08 the school was lucky enough to be able to employ Maureen Nixon as the second, part time, Reading Recovery teacher. With two skilled teachers able to work with the very lowest attaining pupils there was a significant rise in attainment at the end of Year 1. Teachers and teaching assistants were able to observe lessons and share reading targets and teaching strategies. Rosie and Maureen were always available to give advice or quickly assess a child and find out what precisely was holding that child back.

The Reading Recovery programme within the school has been a resounding success. With two Reading Recovery teachers on board the school managed to target 19 children, most of whom went on to read at nationally expected levels.

Reading Recovery has changed the lives and prospects of the children who have received it and can probably be best summed up in the words of the mother of Morgan Laing (pictured in a Reading Recovery lesson with Rosie).



Morgan found it exceptionally difficult to learn to read as she also had to deal with speech and language difficulties. Her mother had despaired over her being stuck on pink level for nearly two years and had begun to dread parents' evenings. After 92 lessons of Reading Recovery, Morgan is now beginning to work at the average national level for her age and is continuing to make good progress. "As a parent, I am probably the happiest and proudest mum in the school at the moment. I can't believe how far she has improved in such a short space of time."

In 2008, the school's national curriculum assessment results speak for themselves. 83% of all Year 2 pupils achieved scores of 2B and above compared to the national average of 71%. 91% of pupils achieved scores of 2C and above. As another bonus, because teachers were able to spend more time working with higher attainers as the children with reading difficulties were being catered for, the school achieved the highest number of level 3 readers in the borough. The non-achieving children were those with specific Special Educational Needs, those very new to English or those new to the school.



Shan Evans, the Headteacher, has been thrilled with the results. She said "Embracing *Every Child a Reader* has enabled us to have a significant impact on children's attainment, not only through academic levels but by raising their self esteem. It has enabled us to work more closely with families and it has been an integral part of the staff's professional development. It has also enabled us to cover many aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda."

The school's achievements have also been noticed by the Borough. Nigel Sagar, the School Improvement Partner wrote in his report that the school is good at:

- Assessing levels of need, some of which are profound, on entry.
- Providing high quality, early and sustained intervention, particularly in reading which ensures that no child is allowed to fall below an acceptable level of success.
- Supporting children to gain self-confidence, mutual care and respect.
- Combining and applying knowledge and expertise of the whole staff to provide high impact on priorities.

In 2008 Rosie also became a Better Reading Partnership trainer and has trained all the support staff to use this programme. So far it has been particularly effective with EAL learners and those children coming new to the school who do not qualify for Reading Recovery. In light of the growing number of children arriving at the school as early stage learners of EAL, this year the school has also employed a TA to provide specialist language and reading support for these children.

Rosie has now been asked by the borough to become a Leading Teacher, providing help and support to other schools in the area. So far she has addressed SENCOs in Barking and Dagenham about effective intervention and addressed teachers on a training course about layered intervention. She will shortly be training support staff in Better Reading Partnership at the attached Junior School.

Rosie herself is very grateful for the opportunity that has been given to her. Not being asked to cover classes has enabled her to give a full time commitment to raising standards of literacy. "I am so lucky to be working in such a supportive school and to work with such a committed and enthusiastic staff. We feel we really are making a difference to children's lives."