

Littleham Primary School, Devon

School context

Littleham Primary School serves an area of significant economic and social deprivation and is identified by the Local Authority as a school facing “challenging circumstances”. Half of the children have special educational needs, 42% receive free school meals and, last year, there was 20% mobility. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is low with many children having speech, language and communication difficulties.

The school is a member of the Exmouth Learning Community which consists of 14 town and village primary schools and the local Community College. Schools in the learning community have well established structures and procedures to facilitate programmes of staff and curriculum development.

Having a wider impact at school level

The Reading Recovery teacher, Sara, combines her Reading Recovery role with the role of Literacy Co-ordinator and that of Intervention Co-ordinator. Sara has worked closely with a Literacy Consultant to support whole staff training in early reading and the systematic teaching of phonics and to share good practice from Reading Recovery in order to promote consistency of approach to the teaching of reading. She attended the Local Authority’s training on ‘Letters and Sounds’ and subsequently supported the Teacher Leader in delivering this training to all Reading Recovery teachers in Devon. She regularly takes phonic sessions across the phases and this helps to inform her Reading Recovery lessons. All children receiving Reading Recovery have a phonic phase target and Sara is able to tailor their Reading Recovery lessons to include specific scaffolding of tricky words that will arise in class lessons too. She has trained all Teaching Assistants in Letters and Sounds to improve their subject knowledge and to ensure that they are able to support children across all phonic phases.

What was the impact?

The school is able to show impact across all layers of intervention. First quality phonics teaching has ensured that many children who came into year 1 below age-expected levels at phonic phase 2, completed the year at phonic phase 5 – and at a level in line with their age. The school also used ‘Letters and Sounds’ as a Wave Two intervention by providing additional sessions in small groups for children identified as requiring additional support. At Wave Three, the school used a TA-led intervention based on the Fischer Family Trust Literacy Intervention for children who are struggling and Reading Recovery for the lowest attaining children.

The school’s most recent Ofsted inspection identified that ‘the *introduction of consistent approaches is beginning to show increased progress in year 1, with many children achieving the National Curriculum level 2C at the end of year 1.*’ End of Key Stage 1 outcomes demonstrate a significant rise for both reading and writing for all children. In 2007, 39% of children achieved the age-expected level 2 in reading. In 2008, this figure increased to 60% with 30% of these children exceeding national expectations by achieving a level 3. Similar gains were also made in writing with 60% of children reaching age-expected levels in 2008, as opposed to 31% the

previous year. Reading Recovery played a significant part in contributing to the increase as, last year, children who received Reading Recovery in Year 1 gained National Curriculum levels of 2A and above in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 – thus placing children who had been identified as having literacy difficulties ahead of many of their peers.

The Headteacher, Penny Hickman, points out that having *Every Child a Reader* in her school has not only impacted on standards in literacy but it has made a difference across the curriculum. *‘Children who have completed the RR programme are able to access all areas of the curriculum, which was not the case beforehand. Most significantly they see themselves as learners, and being able to read has raised their aspirations in all areas of work.’* Parents at Littleham are delighted with the progress made by their children. Comments include: *‘Reading Recovery has given K confidence’*. *‘Before Reading Recovery, H was very despondent about school and felt a failure, but Reading Recovery has turned him around. ‘It’s brilliant!’* Class teachers have noticed the benefits of Reading Recovery in school. *‘An equally important impact of Reading Recovery is to raise the children’s self confidence and their ability to participate in all aspects of everyday class work.’* (Class teacher).



What were the keys to success?

The Reading Recovery teacher has combined her role with that of Literacy Co-ordinator to ensure that the Every Child a Reader programme and the recent developments in the teaching of phonics have worked hand in hand to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. The school has worked hard to update and inform all staff and governors making this a high-profile, whole-school approach to school improvement.

‘The value of the Reading Recovery programme cannot be overstated. It is vitally important for children at an early age to be able to develop the confidence to read.’
Chair of Governors, Littleham Primary School.



Having an impact in the Local Learning Community

The ECaR model of layers of intervention advocates that the RR teacher works with the hardest to teach children whilst also acting as a mentor for the TAs who deliver the lighter-touch interventions. But what if the school does not have a RR teacher? The Exmouth Learning Community has worked collaboratively to show that a school could still effectively implement one of the less intensive interventions if they have the support of a RR teacher from a neighbouring school. Within the Exmouth community there are 14 primary schools. Three schools have experienced RR teachers and one school has a teacher in training this year. The RR teacher at Littleham Primary School has worked with the Teacher Leader and two RR colleagues from local RR schools to deliver five days of training for teaching assistants based on the FFT Wave Three Intervention. During and after the training, each RR teacher mentors up to four TAs from their own and neighbouring schools. The RR teachers also work together to run ongoing professional development for the TAs in the local learning community to keep their skills up to date and to ensure fidelity to the programme. In order to keep costs to a minimum and also to prevent TAs having to travel long distances, Littleham provides the venue for the training for all schools in the local area.

What was the impact?

At present, eleven of the fourteen schools have TAs trained in the FFT Wave Three. This means that one RR teacher has the potential to impact on the progress of up to 40 children during a school year. Sara, the RR Teacher from Littleham, mentors two TAs at her own school and two TAs from neighbouring schools. In addition to supporting her own TAs, Sara provides termly visits to the two TAs in nearby schools, observing lessons and offering support and guidance on how to help the children make progress. On average, children in the Exmouth Learning Community who are receiving the FFT Wave Three Intervention make between 10 and 11 RR book levels progress during the term of the intervention. This progress often takes them from reading at a level that is below their age to a level that is at least in line with their age and in some cases better than their peers. One Teaching Assistant said, *'This has been the best course I have ever been on, I now know a lot more about how children learn to read and how best to help them'*.

Devon's Teacher Leader attributes the success of this initiative to the commitment of the whole local learning community. The headteachers in the Exmouth Learning Community have seen the potential of ECaR and have been extremely supportive.

Effective collaboration and the sharing of expertise mean that the community is able to offer one-to-one support to a greater number of children with literacy difficulties.