

## St Andrew's (Barnsbury) CE Primary School, Islington, London

### Context

St Andrew's Church of England Primary School is a small one form entry primary school in the regeneration area of King's Cross in Islington, London. It has 192 children on roll from Reception to Year Six. Most families live in the immediate vicinity of the school and occupy the large housing estates off the busy main road that leads to King are Cross. Many families are single parents on low incomes and there is high unemployment in the area. Attainment on entry for the majority of our children into Reception class is well below average. Many of the children have immature speech and communication development, coupled with an inability to recognise basic letters or numbers.

The school serves a multi ethnic community with children coming from a variety of backgrounds. The highest proportion represents children who come from a Caribbean and African background (35%).

We currently have on roll 65 children learning English as an Additional language. The percentage of our children eligible for free school meals is 48%, which is above national average. Also, our social deprivation factor is twice the national average. We have a high mobility at 40%, (which is higher than average for Islington) and this is a key factor in our school context.

There are 37 children on the Special Needs Register, (19 identified at School Action and 19 at School Action plus) which, at 19% of our total roll, is below average when compared with schools with similar FSM and within the overall Islington context. Four children have Statements of Special Educational Needs.

### Why Reading Recovery?

In the academic year 2005 -2006, St Andrews's Head Teacher, Michelle Thomas, identified a declining rate in reading results at the end of Key Stage One and looked for a solution. A number of children were struggling to apply the knowledge of sounds and letters gained through quality first teaching, to decoding text. She decided to investigate Wave Three interventions which would help. As a native Australian, Michelle had knowledge of Reading Recovery and as a trained teacher herself, had seen at first hand the benefits of the programme.

## Reading Recovery - The 'Ripple' Effect

In the academic year 2006 - 2007, Michelle decided to accept the local education authority's invitation to participate in the Every Child a Reader programme and to train a Reading Recovery teacher and approached her then Literacy Co-ordinator with the opportunity. Maryanne Josephs is now in her third year of Reading Recovery teaching and sits on the school's Inclusion Team which takes responsibility for allocating, monitoring and evaluating the schools' layered literacy and mathematics interventions. The school also has a second Reading Recovery Teacher, Miranda Cullen who is in her training year.

In addition to the Reading Recovery Teachers, the school has three Link Assessment Teachers who are responsible for discontinuing children at the end of the programme. The school recognises the value of having as many staff as possible trained in high quality diagnostic assessment which gives a detailed view of children's literacy ability and difficulties. This in turn creates an educational dialogue across the school staff which enables the school to develop as a learning community.

Maryanne's knowledge and skills as a Reading Recovery Teacher have been used to good effect on the school's Inclusion Team in her role as Interventions Programme Manager. The Inclusion team meets half termly in order to discuss referrals, evidence from tracking data and the overall provision of interventions and support services. Maryanne also leads on other literacy interventions such as Talking Partners, (oral language communication) and Reading Power, (reciprocal reading).

St Andrew's does not exclude any child who meets the programme selection criteria from the opportunity to be involved in this intervention. However, the school is mindful that Reading Recovery works most effectively where parents and carers work in partnership with the school. In response to this, Teaching Assistants have been trained as Reading Support Assistants for vulnerable children, to provide additional support during the series of lessons and also after these cease. This has been an invaluable strategy for children who, for various reasons, are unable to access support at home. This practice has also helped to minimise the usual 'dip' in book level that many children experience once the intervention ends.

St Andrew's is fortunate in also having on the staff an Advanced Skills Teacher, whose specialism is Communication, Language and Literacy Development. She works in close partnership with the Reading Recovery

teacher and the two regularly discuss how Reading Recovery fits into the Primary Framework for Literacy and the Letters and Sounds programme.

The ECaR programme has led to whole staff training on Running Records and all guided reading books have been further divided into Reading Recovery Levels. All staff have developed greater awareness of reading development and supportive practices.

The ECaR programme has had a pleasing impact on attainment. Reading results for the last academic year's Year Two class show that they have made above average progress. The average for the class was 2b. The seven children who had received Reading Recovery achieved either level 2c or 2b. These children entered the programme in Year One at level 1c or below and all made three sub levels of progress which shows outstanding achievement.

### 'Ripples' Beyond St Andrew's Primary School

Reading Recovery at St Andrew's Primary School has been a success and the Head Teacher, Michelle Thomas and Reading Recovery Teacher, Maryanne Josephs, have been actively promoting Marie Clay's effective intervention to other local authorities. In July 2007, both were asked by Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Liz Campbell to present their model of ECaR to Westminster and Camden schools that were joining the London Central Consortium. Michelle engaged heads in a dialogue about staff training, funding, sustainability and the wider impact of Reading Recovery. Maryanne was able to enlighten potential Reading Recovery Teachers about the day to day running of the programme, the paperwork involved and the job satisfaction received from seeing results.

The passionate belief in the effectiveness of Reading Recovery which is experienced at St Andrew's Primary School has also been disseminated to a range of visitors from other agencies. The school operates an open door policy and most recently welcomed a Regional Adviser for the Primary National Strategy CLLD team, who was interested in the way in which the school has ensured that Reading Recovery aligns with Letters and Sounds. This has led to a scheduled visit by Sir Jim Rose which will take place in the coming weeks.

With such expertise held at St Andrew's, the local education authority has welcomed Michelle's willingness to share the competencies of her staff with neighbouring schools and Maryanne is currently seconded to another school with the remit of setting up Reading Recovery

and implementing the ECaR programme until a replacement teacher can be found. She has also been invited to teach a lesson for The Institute of Education Reading Recovery DVD and often teaches lessons behind the screen for new teachers in her borough. This support extends to maintaining colleague visit networks which offer reciprocal assistance for all Reading Recovery Teachers.

At present, St Andrew's is about to embark on a programme to develop guided reading in Reception and Year One classes. This programme will see Maryanne, Liz Campbell, (Teacher Leader) and Sarah Hughes, (Advanced Skills Teacher), developing and delivering a CPD opportunity for all CLLD Lead Teachers and Reading Recovery Teachers in Islington.

### Next Steps

The school wishes to use the skills developed in Reading Recovery to enhance current strategies in guided reading across the school. This will enhance class teachers' diagnostic skills during sessions and help children of all ages with reading difficulties.

The school has also identified the need for a focus on comprehension skills. Most children are now reading well, however they do not always have a clear understanding of the main points of the text. Through the development of Reciprocal Reading, the school intends to raise comprehension of the text and to ultimately make reading enjoyable.