



Victoria Park Community Infant School Bristol A Leading Practice School

Victoria Park Community Infant School is a three-form entry school with 200 children on roll. The majority of the children come from local authority housing estates with high levels of social deprivation. 35% of the children are eligible for free school meals. Historically the school served a mainly white working class population, but the intake is now ethnically diverse. 25% of the children are from minority ethnic groups and 18% have English as an additional language. Languages spoken include Bengali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, Gujerati, Lithuanian, Polish and Portugese.

Victoria Park is a popular and successful school, gaining an 'Outstanding' report from Ofsted in 2006. 'Value added' in literacy played a key role in this judgement. Now, as a Leading Practice School, the excellence of the whole-school approach to literacy is shared with other schools both locally and nationally.

This Leading role has been achieved through a long-term commitment by the school community to improving educational provision for all.

The initial challenge

The journey began in 1998 when the school's Ofsted PANDA rated attainment at E* as 50% of the children left the school unable to read. From that moment the school's aim was that every child should become a reader.

Recognising the need for major changes, the school elected to become involved in two LEA literacy initiatives, resulting in systematic phonics teaching throughout the school and Y1 small group intervention with a skilled teaching assistant (TA). The effective teaching of synthetic phonics quickly had an impact and reduced the number of children struggling with early literacy skills but did not completely eliminate the problem. There were still eight to ten children who had made little progress and who were predicted to achieve Level W in end of KS1 national assessments.

The intervention strategy

To meet the needs of these children, the school decided to train a Reading Recovery (RR) teacher, an initiative then new to the Bristol LA. Her brief was to work with the lowest-achieving Year 2 children, on a 0.5 teaching timetable, delivering the RR programme.



In 2000-2, as the school wanted to use RR strategies to impact on a wider group of children, the RR role was increased to full time. Having reduced the number of 'Ws' to zero, the target then was to increase the numbers of children achieving Level 2B+. In addition to the continuing work with RR, short-term 'Booster' reading programmes were delivered to a further 30 Y2 children, according to each child's need. Within a few years, 94% of children achieved Level 2 or above in end of KS1 national assessments

The school's funding situation changed in 2002 and the Reading Recovery post reverted to part-time. Booster work continued but now delivered by a TA trained and supported by the RR teacher.



In September 2005 funding from the *Every Child a Reader* (ECaR) initiative transformed the school's approach, enabling the return of a full time Reading Recovery teacher and also to build on the expertise gained by TAs. Since 2006, Better Reading Partners (BRP) with its superbly organised band of volunteer Reading Partners, have joined Reading Recovery, Key Stage 1 Literacy Intervention and Booster Reading as a component in a carefully orchestrated system of support for the school's first quality class teaching.

Staff development

From the start the school's RR teacher led staff INSET on reading and writing. Early on, a staff meeting was held at the nearby RR centre, where staff watched and discussed RR lessons demonstrated behind a screen. Also, members of staff were trained in using Running Records to assess children's reading progress. Further opportunities to watch lessons in school were arranged and staff meetings continued to provide a forum of discussion. As a result, a number of general teaching strategies from RR have been incorporated into the school's approach to literacy. Teachers and skilled TAs (now Higher Level Teaching Assistants HLTAs)) have been trained in Reading Recovery principles, with ongoing support from the RR teacher. RR lessons continue to be the basis for training new members of staff, students and visiting teachers.



Assessment and pupil tracking

Each term, class teachers at Victoria Park assess children's progress in literacy. Running records are used to identify the book level at which children are reading. This is checked against a table of Reading Level Targets. A child who is under-achieving is quickly identified and additional help can be put in at an early stage. Meetings of The Literacy Team (the



Headteacher, the Literacy Co-ordinator, teachers and support staff) take place each term to review current provision and ensure appropriate support measures are in place for each child's continued progress.

Victoria Park as a Leading Practice School

The development and monitoring of these successful strategies have placed Victoria Park as an exemplar school, both at local and national levels as other schools seek to embed ECAR into whole-school policies. The Bristol ECaR Standard is based on the model of support for literacy as developed at Victoria Park. See appendix A

The success achieved through the development of ECaR is shared city-wide. At the 2009 annual Teaching Assistant Conference, the key note speech is being delivered by the acting headteacher and all workshops led by the school's key ECaR TAs and HLTAs. The positive and empowering culture of professional development was also recently shared by the acting headteacher when she presented to the area heads' meeting which focused on increasing outcomes for children in literacy through the whole-school approach of ECaR.

The school's Literacy Intervention map is being shared as an example of best practice at the annual city-wide SEN conference and the school features on the national 'Leading on Intervention' DVD.

The school's original RR teacher is now a RR Teacher Leader, leading on ECaR across the Avon Consortium of 5 local authorities. The school's outstanding practice is now being disseminated in many schools within the 4 neighbouring local authorities.

Other outcomes

The school has noted that success in literacy has had a big impact on behaviour and that there has also been improved achievement in other areas such as mathematics. Children's self-confidence and resilience as learners has improved greatly as they have experienced success with reading.

Parental involvement has increased. Parents of children who receive literacy support are quick to see the impact on their child's reading. This has had a positive effect on their engagement with the school and with their child's learning overall.

The future

Victoria Park Infants School is entering a period of change as it becomes absorbed into the new Victoria Park primary school, proposed for September 2009. This is seen as an opportunity to share and extend expertise with our KS2 colleagues and continuity of provision is already active with links through BRP. The acting headteacher is confident that the school will be able to achieve outstanding results and more importantly, make a difference in children's lives and therefore the wider community. As one child recently told us when describing his extra reading lessons, 'It's changed my bloomin' life!'



Appendix A

The Bristol ECaR Standard

- ECaR is an integral part of whole school policy, planning and management
- The school will establish an early literacy intervention team. This group manages the process of assessing the needs of children across the key stages, matching interventions precisely to these needs, and monitoring and evaluating progress.
- All staff will watch a live lesson at the Reading Recovery Centre in order to have a common understanding of the key features of the programme.
- All staff will be trained to take a running record to make sure that all children will be reading material that is within their zone of proximal development.
- All staff will be trained to analyse running records in order to see what strategies the child is using and what the next steps are towards the child becoming an independent reader.
- All staff will be given time to observe Reading Recovery lessons in the school to practise taking running records and work alongside the Reading Recovery teacher.
- The Reading Recovery teacher will undertake an audit of individual reading books. New books will be bought in order to ensure children have a selection of appropriate reading material to read.
- Books will be book-banded and levelled according to the Reading Recovery guide to book selection to ensure that all children will experience success and will progress from one level to the next. If a child is not seen to be making progress he/she will be identified for one of the targeted intervention programmes.
- Each term the class teacher will submit an up to date reading level for every child in that class. The Head teacher and Reading Recovery teacher will gather this information in order to analyse and discuss literacy across the whole school.
- Head teachers will also ensure that data is used effectively to identify children for intervention and to track their progress subsequently.
- The school will strive continuously to engage parents and carers involved in the programmes, and to work in partnership with them.
- All support staff and volunteers who are supporting reading in the school will be trained as a Better Reading Partner.
- The school will work in partnership with another ECaR school in the locality.