

Ameliorating the COVID-19 Gap - Language and Literacy Strategy – an approach for disadvantaged including service children



We launched our work focused on improving literacy and language with a webinar led by the Education Endowment Foundation on effective learning and teaching practice in literacy and language (September 2000).

This was then followed by a second webinar (September 2000) which explored the implementation of these principles in Surrey Schools. It primarily focused on developing core classroom teaching strategies that improve the literacy capabilities of the whole class. With this in place, the need for additional support should decrease. Whilst Secondary schools do not tend to teach literacy specific lessons for all, we hoped that the best practice and learning that was shared would assist key Secondary professionals in their work (particularly at KS3) with children who would benefit from greater competence in literacy.

The additional funding SAFE provided to schools was aimed to support schools to implement one aspect of their audit. For example:

- Assessment – funding of a commercial programme to establish baselines.
- Staff Expertise – training/coaching/mentoring to support subject knowledge and deeper understanding of pedagogy
- Environment – developing provision to improve access to and effective use of high quality texts for disadvantaged children
- Parental engagement – supporting staff to create their own bespoke short video clips to empower their community's parents to support their children's reading and development of language skills

Findings from the project

In Autumn 2020, 195 schools received funding up to £600 to support literacy and language to ameliorate the impact of Covid-19 on pupils' learning. Schools chose to focus the catch-up funding on four areas:

1. Quality First Teaching/ Staff Expertise
2. Assessment and Benchmarking
3. Parental Engagement
4. Environment for Literacy

In the Summer term we asked schools to evaluate the impact of the funding against the expected outcomes. Many schools reported that the further school closures and period of remote learning in the spring term, had an impact on the implementation of the actions.

Most schools purchased resources to support the teaching of early reading and to train staff. Vocabulary development was also a focus.

Qualitative outcomes were reported in all schools including increased teacher confidence, pupil engagement, and increase access to resources to support learning. Quantitative measures were impacted on remote learning but many schools were able to demonstrate early impact on pupil outcomes. One school that implemented a new spelling and grammar programme to raise outcomes in writing of disadvantaged pupils reported an improvement from 20% to 100% disadvantaged pupils at expected standard in writing at the end of Year 2 and 0% to 60% of pupils at expected standard at the end of KS2.

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