

## **SSIF Transition Project**

### **Case study**

#### **Secondary school:**

St Mary's Catholic High School (Project lead – Anne-Marie Horrocks in 17-18; Carlie Loftus in 18-19)

#### **Supported by:**

Parbold Douglas CE Academy (SLE lead – John Coxhead)

#### **Context:**

St Mary's Catholic High School is a smaller than average-sized school with 605 pupils on roll. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (14.2%) is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is low and the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average.

In September 2013, a large part of the school was burnt down by an arson attack – this resulted in a period of instability. In October 2014, an Ofsted inspection found the school's overall effectiveness to be 'inadequate'. Ofsted reported: *'Leyland St Mary's has experienced a considerable amount of staff absence and unrest, low morale and little unity of purpose. This situation has not been resolved and has contributed to the significant decline in the school's effectiveness, which is now inadequate.'* During the construction of a new school building, the school was housed in temporary accommodation on the existing site and at nearby school. During this time, pupil numbers dipped. The new school building was eventually opened in September 2015.

The school appointed a new head teacher and improved rapidly. In a June 2016 Ofsted inspection, St Mary's was found to be 'good' in all areas. The report stated: *'The culture of the school has shifted to a pupil-centred, harmonious, equitable haven for learning'*.

To further support the school's journey of improvement, a partnership was established in September 2017 with Parbold Douglas CE Academy (via the *SSIF - Strategic School Improvement Fund*). The project focussed on enhancing cross-phase links with neighbouring schools in an attempt to improve KS2 to KS3 transition.

#### **Project priorities and partner schools:**

Our critical analysis identified the following areas of focus:

- Transition partnerships
- Writing achievement and engagement
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in KS3
- Boys' achievement in all areas (in September 2018, approximately two thirds of the school's intake was boys)
- Pupil self-belief / resilience

All actions taken were focussed on ensuring improvement in these core areas.

Partner primary schools:

- St Anne's Catholic Primary School
- Seven Stars Primary School
- St Catherine's Catholic Primary School
- Euxton St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Summary of actions and impact:

Key actions	Impact
<p><b>Cross-phase visits</b> to develop staff awareness of curriculum coverage, teaching approaches, assessment practices, levels of challenge in other key stage (i.e. KS3 staff to gain better understanding of KS2 and vice versa).</p>	<p>KS3 teachers have a more developed understanding of teaching strategies and marking and feedback practices used at KS2. Greater understanding of higher order literacy skills taught at KS2 raises expectations at KS3 (SPG)</p> <p>KS2 teachers reported their key learning to be about the pace of learning at KS3. Desired impact would be additional teaching time in Year 7 – sadly, financing / staffing cannot offer sufficient capacity this year. That said, the school will explore this in the future.</p>
<p><b>Secondary English teachers trained in Y6 primary writing assessment</b> using 2018 KS2 assessment frameworks.</p>	<p>Teachers now confident with and able to apply KS2 assessment criteria. Knowledge of KS2 standards is informing planning at KS3. KS3 teachers delivering writing lessons to more able pupils in Year 6, aiming to produce evidence of writing which is beyond the expected standard.</p>
<p><b>Cross-phase writing assessment and moderation</b> – the same writing activity to be completed by pupils in Y7 at secondary and Y6 at feeder primaries. Teachers from KS2 and KS3 meet for moderation of assessments.</p>	<p>‘Shrunken Jumper’ assessment conducted across primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Cross phase moderation has taken place.</p> <p>Teachers in both phases found the process incredibly useful – the discussions around individual pieces of work were really beneficial and helped strengthen KS3 understanding of the KS2 assessment frameworks.</p>
<p><b>Growth mindset / resilience CPD</b> delivered to staff from secondary and feeder primaries.</p>	<p>Training delivered 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – 2 senior staff, 2 middle leaders and 2 intervention teachers plus non-teaching staff from secondary school participated, along with support staff from link primary schools.</p> <p>All staff found the training to be incredibly inspiring. Actions planned to help pupils develop growth mindset beliefs.</p>
<p><b>Motivational speaker (Olympic gymnast Craig Heap) visit to St Marys</b> – assembly and workshops.</p>	<p>Two motivational resilience and team building days hosted at St Mary’s during March 2018. Year 7 PP / disengaged pupils along with pupils in Year 5 and 6 from 4 of the 6 linked schools.</p> <p>Rewards scheme in place for 14 boys – all very enthused at the outset.</p>
<p><b>Reward scheme established</b> for pupils following motivational speaker sessions and growth mindset workshops.</p>	<p>Pupils identified. Rewards established and tracking cards in use with a target group of 14 disengaged boys in Year 7.</p> <p>Pupils engaged and enthused.</p>
<p><b>Author visit</b> (Billy Bob Buttons).</p>	<p>Visiting author for full Year 7 cohort at St Mary’s. Aimed at raising the profile of reading and focused on training pupils as young writers. (Techniques to engage the reader.)</p> <p>Pupils enjoyed the visit and felt ‘inspired’.</p>
<p><b>Blogging project</b> – Experienced English consultant David Mitchell leading a long-term blogging project with Year 7</p>	<p>Project underway. Blogging platform constructed and being used. Long-term plan in place to ensure platform continues to be used effectively beyond the life of the project.</p>

<p>pupils (including a launch day and 5 face-to-face workshop days).</p>	<p>Digital Leaders (Year 8, 9, and 10) already blogging and commenting, and constructing scaffolds for writing for younger pupils. Year 7 pupils (target group of PP / disengaged / underperforming pupils) have been involved in blogging activities throughout May and June.). Staff launch has taken place successfully.</p> <p>This has resulted in a significant improvement in engaging with writing – the pupils received comments on their blogs from people around the world. The pupils who worked with David have a renewed enthusiasm for writing and understand that writing can take many forms.</p>
<p><b>Training in KS2 English expectations for non-English specialists at St Marys</b> - this will ensure expectations of writing across the curriculum can be as high as they are in Year 6.</p>	<p>Training delivered to entire staff team at St Mary's during staff meeting slot – it was well received and prompted good discussion.</p>
<p><b>Transition programme and transition meeting days</b></p>	<p>Several events (MFL, computing and technology, sports hall athletics, English writing sessions for more able pupils) have taken place. Very successful. Stakeholder voice indicates high levels of satisfaction with transition activities offered by secondary school.</p>
<p><b>KS3 English teacher(s) to deliver lessons in Feeder primary schools</b></p>	<p>Various sessions have been delivered at St Anne's and at Euxton St Mary's. Both schools reported very positive impact.</p>
<p><b>Key actions</b></p>	<p><b>Impact</b></p>
<p><b>Compilation of transition action plan in conjunction with feeder primary schools</b></p>	<p>Year 6 teachers from feeder primary schools met at St Mary's with new HT, project lead and Year 7 leader. Transition actions discussed to ensure that robust and effective approach to transition is in place. Subject leaders for English and Maths at St Mary's attended and shared books from new Year 7 cohort. These were discussed with the Year 6 teachers. This was a really useful conversation and similar meetings will continue in the future. In Spring, the meeting will repeat with Year 6 teachers visiting St Mary's to look at work in books. In Summer, St Mary's will visit the feeder primaries and take photos of work, etc.</p>
<p><b>Design and delivery of professional development package (linked to aims of the project) in the form of 'teaching and learning workshops':</b>  Metacognition and self-regulated learning  Retrieval practice  Raising boys' achievement</p>	<p>Sessions well-attended by staff from across school departments. Staff have responded well to the training they've received so far.</p> <p><i>Some sessions to take place in the new year.</i></p>

<p><b>Further embedding reward strategies (linked to work on resilience and mind-set)</b></p>	<p>Building on the schemes implemented last year, reward schemes continue to be used effectively (with a focus on the disadvantaged).</p>
<p><b>Year 8 pupils mentoring Year 7 pupils</b></p>	<p>Year 8 pupils are really enjoying the responsibility they've been given; it's made them feel important and has improved their confidence. Year 7 pupils have settled in to secondary school life quickly, thanks to the help of their mentors. There has been a particular benefit for the white British disadvantaged boys.</p>
<p><b>David Mitchell blogging sessions (2 days) with new Year 7 intake</b></p>	<p>Switch of focus to higher attaining Year 7s (but pupils who were at risk of underachieving; some pupils had been in trouble). Children felt it was a real positive and boost for them; instant satisfaction of comments on their blog posts. They had an audience and were motivated.</p> <p>One pupil who had been excluded earlier in the year "really grew" during the two days; came away saying he'd finally found something he can be good at.</p> <p>RE teacher appointed for Sept 2019 who has additional responsibility for school publicity (inc. blogging / social media, etc.). Going forward, the school newspaper (which is currently used) will become a school blog – this member of staff will take responsibility for this. Pupils will write the blogs. David will come back later in the year to work with the new member of staff on this.</p>
<p><b>Raising boys' achievement:</b> To build on the success of the work so far, we will now do more to transform practice with a focus on boys. This is in response to a continuing change in cohort structures (the current Year 7 cohort at St Mary's is approximately two thirds boys). A large number of these boys are white disadvantaged. The focus of this work will be legacy; we will ensure lasting impact beyond the current project timelines.</p>	<p>The 2-days of consultancy delivered by Gary at St Mary's in March 2019 had high impact.</p> <p>The 2-days included a really intensive whole-staff training session for 2.5 hours. This had instant impact; the following day, teachers put ideas into practice. Staff feedback on the training was really positive; they were enthused.</p> <p>Every department is now completing an audit, focussing on barriers to achievement for boys within their subject. In the summer term, this audit will inform action plans ahead of the new school year.</p> <p>The visit also included a parent meeting; the parents who attended (most from Year 7) were really positive about the session.</p> <p>Feeder primaries provided with copies of Gary's books to ensure that strategies to support boys are used in KS2. These were sent out to any schools who were unable to attend on the day.</p> <p>Whole-school action plan/strategy for raising boys' achievement currently being drafted ready for implementation in September 2019.</p>

### **Wider impact:**

Between September 2017 and April 2019, the project contributed to the ongoing improvement of St Mary's Catholic High School. During the project, pupil numbers began to rise again (now up to over 600) – the school hopes this will continue so that they may return to capacity within the next few years. In September 2018, a new head teacher took post to oversee the school's continued improvement.

One of the most important outcomes has been partnership. At every stage, teachers from both phases thoroughly enjoyed working with colleagues from another Key Stage. The partnerships established throughout the project continue to thrive and, we hope, will continue to do so for many years to come. This dialogue and willingness to work together has had the most significant impact on the project's success.

### **Next steps:**

A 'legacy plan' is in place. This maps out key actions to ensure the project's priorities remain areas of focus and development:

- **Raising boys' achievement:** Building on the work carried out with expert consultant Gary Wilson in spring 2019, we seek to narrow the attainment and aspiration gap between boys and girls. This is in response to a continuing change in cohort structures (the current Year 7 cohort at St Mary's is approximately two thirds boys).
- **Writing:** Building on the success of working with David Mitchell throughout the project, further develop the use of blogging within school to raise attainment in (and motivation for) writing within a range of contexts.
- **Transition partnerships:** Having developed stronger links with feeder primary schools throughout the project, sustain these links to support continued improvements to the transition experience (from KS2 to KS3).
- **Resilience:** Building on the work done throughout the project, strategies will continue to ensure children develop 'growth mindset' beliefs and academic resilience through metacognition.

In addition, the school has appointed a Key Stage 2/3 teacher to join the team in September 2019. The teacher will work primarily on maths and English with low attaining Year 7 pupils as well as carrying out work with Key Stage 3 pupils who would benefit from intervention in maths and English outside the classroom.