



CASE STUDY REPORT

Pupil tracking for progress: First to middle school

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This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study is to develop a common system for plotting the progress of pupils across transfer from primary to middle school, with the aim of maximising their progress.

Aims: The main aim is to maximize pupils' progress across transfer from primary to middle school by developing a shared tracking system, joint planning and delivery, and a cohort handbook.

Methods: The participants in this development work include headteachers, senior leadership teams, school improvement partners, teachers, and middle leaders. The schools organised joint training and planning meetings, developed a tracking package with the expertise of a headteacher, and used feedback from teachers to inform the design process. They also used a cohort transfer handbook, visits, a buddy system, and a programme to build self-esteem.

Findings: The main findings of the project are that there has been a measurable improvement in the rate of progress at the start of Year 5 in mathematics compared to previous years, due to a shared vision among school leaders, joint training and planning meetings, and a tracking package developed with the expertise of one of the headteachers.

Implications: The findings suggest that collaboration between schools and a shared vision are essential for successful transfer and transition of pupils. This is supported by data tracking, CPD, and joint planning and delivery.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Middle education; Transfer and transition; Mathematics

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

To ensure that pupils' progress is maximised across transfer from the first schools into the middle school. (Pupils transfer to the middle school for the start of Year 5.)

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Teacher

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Transfer and transition
- Mathematics

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

At the heart of the project is the common system for plotting the progress of pupils. (See Summary page for example)

A close working relationship between Year 4 and Year 5 teachers is at the root of its effectiveness. Teachers from all schools were involved before and during the design process and the result was a system that is easy to use, simple to read and contributes directly to planning.

The elements that make the system so easy to use for planning are:

- data is entered termly to inform early response
- each child's progress is monitored in relation to age-related expectations. These are broken down to take into account expected progress each term
- each child's termly trajectory is plotted from Y1 allowing teachers to see where they have made the most progress and where it has slowed
- each class' attainment in relation to age-related expectation is plotted to identify successful practice
- a series of simple tables and charts, with colour coding and ease filtering makes interpretation of the data quick and easy.

The tracking system is aligned with a complimentary target setting package that ensures continuity of curricular target setting between schools. Its design has also been informed by teacher feedback which aimed at establishing consistency, identifying appropriately challenging targets that build on prior learning, and facilitating pupil involvement in setting expectations.

A booklet is used by all schools with parents to support their involvement in children's learning of calculation methods.

To supplement attainment data and information acquired during meetings between Year 4 and Year 5 teachers, a common 'Cohort transfer handbook' has been designed. All schools have agreed to what should be included ensuring it is seen as efficient and valuable. It covers medical, social, personal, academic and curricular aspects

of the child's circumstances, abilities and experiences. (See Summary page for example.)

Year 4 visits to the middle school occur throughout the year. Three key events focus on maths, science and PE but a regular programme of contact encourages pupils to see the transfer as the next step in their learning journey rather than a new one.

A joint primary school education visit is arranged to give an opportunity for pupils to work with children they will meet after transfer.

A buddy system and peer mentoring system operate to ensure pupils feel they have someone to turn to from the first day of the Autumn term.

Children who may be vulnerable at transfer are given added support. Learning Support Assistants travel between schools in the summer term to work alongside pupils, additional pupils visits are arranged, and a programme to build self-esteem and self-efficacy all contribute to a their preparation for the move.

What were your success criteria?

- An increase in the proportion of pupils exhibiting continued progress in the first half term of Y5 compared with the end of Y4.
- Evidence that teachers were using the information to inform planning and enhancing AfL practices.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Periodic teacher assessment

Describe the CPD approaches you used

The schools organised joint training and planning meetings to increase continuity and develop greater professional understanding between teachers from different schools.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

The expertise of one of the headteachers was used to develop the tracking package.

Relevant National Strategies resources:

Who provided you with support?

- Middle leader
- Senior management
- Subject leader

How were you supported?

The project has been led by the headteachers from the schools. They have committed the time and resources necessary to making collaborative working effective.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

There has been a measurable improvement in the rate of progress at the start of Year 5 in mathematics compared to previous years.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

It is common for pupils to experience a 'loss of learning' over the summer break and this, combined with coping with a new learning environment, often leads to a dip in attainment at the beginning of the first year in a new school. Through close liaison between schools, sharing of pupil level information and intelligent planning and target-setting this dip can be eliminated.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

After transfer in Autumn 2005 66% of pupils exhibited a dip in attainment in Maths during the first half term and 34 % exhibited sustained performance or improvement.

After transfer in Autumn 2006 36% of pupils exhibited a dip in attainment in Maths during the first half term and 63% exhibited sustained performance or improvement.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers have been able to use the frequent tracking of pupil progress in relation to age-related expectations to plan for individual pupils' needs.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Headteachers from the schools involved have observed changes in practice informed by the pupil progress data.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The strong collaborative approach adopted by the schools' leadership has been enhanced with a clear, shared vision. Planning for school improvement is aligned to planning for improvement within the 'pyramid' of schools as a whole.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

More detailed pupil tracking data is enhancing the joint strategic planning of the headteachers from the participating schools.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The key to successful collaboration between schools with regard to improving pupil progress across transfer is a sense of collective responsibility for all the children, before and after transfer.

This is founded on trust and an understanding of the ethos and operation of each others' schools.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Feedback from teachers to inform the development of the pupil tracking package.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Establishing a shared vision among school leaders is the essential first step to making this work.
- Time and resources are needed to allow ongoing collaboration in the design and implementation of the shared tracking system.
- It is vital that the system is applied consistently by all teachers and feedback from them during the design process is important.
- The system will work most successfully where there is an understanding of teaching and learning across transfer and this is best achieved by mutual visits and where possible joint planning and delivery.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

- The pupil tracking system is being developed to support the identification of curricular targets for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Develop the cohort handbook so it is started for pupils in Year 3.
- The transfer plan for vulnerable pupils will be enhanced. Middle school LSAs will have a significant role prior to transfer with visits to the primary schools to work with pupils and establish relationships.
- A cover supervisor will be shared within the family of schools. This is cost efficient, provides a familiar face to pupils as they move, and will be someone with their finger on the pulse of similarities and differences in teaching and learning between schools.

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This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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