



CASE STUDY REPORT

A local authority's response to Every Child a Reader

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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 was to show that with the right resources, it is possible to tackle the literacy difficulties that blight many children's lives, particularly those of children who live in poverty. The initiative part-funds highly skilled Reading Recovery teachers in primary schools to provide intensive individual help to children most in need.

Aims: The main aim of Every Child a Reader is to narrow the achievement gap for disadvantaged children by significantly improving their literacy skills and engagement in learning.

Methods: The participants in Every Child a Reader are Reading Recovery teachers, primary school children, parents/carers, school staff, and Local Authority professionals. Reading Recovery teachers are trained in a year-long programme that combines theoretical understanding and practical experience. They are supported by a Teacher Leader who organises and facilitates professional development, and provides guidance on the content of the sessions. Observation of live lessons is a key feature of the training.

Findings: The main findings of Every Child a Reader are that with the right resources, it is possible to tackle the literacy difficulties that blight many children's lives. The initiative part-funds highly skilled Reading Recovery teachers in primary schools, providing intensive individual help to children most in need, resulting in accelerated progress and improved literacy skills.

Implications: The findings of Every Child a Reader have implications for children's services staff, headteachers, and other school staff. The initiative has shown that with the right resources, it is possible to improve literacy skills and engagement in learning for disadvantaged children. The CPD approaches used have enabled teachers to become reflective, thoughtful, and analytical, and the impact on pupil learning has been significant.

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

Keywords: Primary education; English - reading; English - speaking and listening; English - writing

Introduction

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

Every Child a Reader began as a three year, £10 million pilot project that aimed to show that, with the right resources, it is possible to tackle the literacy difficulties that blight many children's lives – particularly those of children who live in poverty. The initiative, now being rolled out nationally by government, part-funds highly skilled Reading Recovery teachers in primary schools, to provide intensive individual help to children most in need.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Children's services staff
- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- LA adviser
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Teacher

Description

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

- English - reading
- English - speaking and listening
- English - writing

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

Every Child a Reader began as a three year, £10 million pilot project that aimed to show that, with the right resources, it is possible to tackle the literacy difficulties that blight many children's lives – particularly those of children who live in poverty. The initiative, now being rolled out nationally by government, funds highly skilled Reading Recovery teachers in primary schools, to provide intensive individual help to children most in need.

Every Child a Reader aims to narrow the achievement gap for those children who are disadvantaged by significantly improving their literacy skills and more generally their engagement in learning.

What were your success criteria?

Success in Reading Recovery is referred to as Accelerated Progress where a child makes at least 4 times age-related progress and moves from the lowest ability in their age range to at least average in their peer group. Year 1 children are expected to read, independently, texts at Reading Recovery Book Level 16 whilst Year 2 children are expected to read independently texts at Book Level 22 (see document below for RR Book Level cross-reference).

Progress is also assessed through outcomes on the Observation Survey which is completed at the beginning of the series of lessons and then again at the end of the series of lessons (the second assessment is completed by a trained RR Link teacher and not the RR teacher who has taught the child).

A Standardised Word Reading Test (British Ability Scale) is also administered before and after the intervention. Three month and six month follow-up assessments are also completed.

All RR teachers across the country input this detailed data into the RR National database. End of Key Stage 1 and

2 data is also collected.

All RR teachers keep daily detailed records of each lesson including a daily Running Record. Progress in Reading Vocabulary and Writing Vocabulary are recorded each week as well as Book level progress and weekly reflections for each child.

At the end of every academic year Ohio University, who manage the National website, produce Local Authority as well as individual School Reports.

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

- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

The year-long Reading Recovery (RR) Professional Development programme trains teachers to become specialist literacy teachers who are reflective, thoughtful and analytical. The training is characterised by intensive interaction with colleagues over fortnightly, half-day In-Service Sessions. The objectives of the training are to develop teachers understanding of the reading and writing processes, develop competence in implementing the RR lesson procedures and enable teachers to critically evaluate their work and the work of their peers. Throughout the training teachers are encouraged to challenge their own assumptions whilst developing and integrating new skills. Learning the 'what' and the 'how' of RR is important, but understanding the 'why' is crucial.

Across the year the teachers attended fortnightly training sessions at the purpose-built ECaR Training Centre at Blue Bell Hill Primary School in Nottingham. Observation of live lessons is a key feature of the Reading Recovery training programme so all of the teachers taught twice at the one-way screen to provide learning opportunities for their colleagues.

The schools and teachers also received half-termly visits from the Teacher Leader during which teaching was observed, discussed and reflected upon. Each visit gave me the opportunity to collect feedback on pupil progress and to share progress and discuss developments with the Headteacher.

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

The Reading Recovery Professional Development Programme is unlike any other training. It interweaves theoretical understanding and practical experience. The theory stems from research and the extensive writings of Marie Clay.

The teachers were also provided with additional training on Communication, Literacy and Language as well as Letters and Sounds by one of the LA Literacy Consultants. Other primary consultants and LA professionals such as Educational Psychologists made it a priority to join an Inservice session.

Who provided you with support?

- External agency

How were you supported?

The Institute of Education in London train the Teacher Leaders who go on to train school-based teachers within their Consortium of Local Authorities. They hold the trademark for Reading Recovery which is an International initiative. As the Teacher Leader for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire I was trained at the Institute of Education throughout 2007-2008. I have received a great deal of support over my first year as a Teacher Leader. This has included regular high quality training sessions, local visits as well as telephone and e-mail contact.

The Teacher Leader (TL) is responsible for organising and facilitating the professional development, carefully balancing the learning demands, working responsively with an awareness that the pace and depth of the learning can be challenging. The TL is provided with guidance on the content of the sessions during the first half of the year. By introducing the sessions fully, systematically, working through tasks, offering clear rationales, summarising and finally evaluating sessions, the TL helps teachers to work at their 'cutting-edge' or their zone of proximal development. The TL is actually modelling good RR teaching practice by scaffolding the teachers' learning. Structure and support is in place where needed but withdrawn once the learner can work independently.

At the beginning of the year I focused on the mechanics of assessment and teaching by telling, sharing, exploring and demonstrating. The 'what' and the 'how' are initially important. Throughout the year I encouraged social interaction, active involvement and above all conversation. Challenging theoretical concepts are initially introduced and explored but are also returned to across the year. Links are made between the teacher learning and the child learning.

By the end of the year teachers were able to use the language of RR with understanding, responding to challenging, open, 'why' questions.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

In the Nottinghamshire ECaR Reading Recovery first cohort of 48 children, 36 children made accelerated progress (4 times age-related progress). That means that they moved from being the lowest achievers in their age group to working at or above average. Some children made as much as 6 National Curriculum sublevels (2 whole levels) of progress in reading in less than 80 lessons. Standardised reading ages improved on average by more than 18 months.

Progress was also monitored in terms of Phonic Phase progression and Guided Reading groupings.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Progress was seen in the broadest sense:

- motivation and engagement back in the classroom
- attitude to learning generally
- attendance and behaviour.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Teacher comments:

The look on his face as he is collected from the classroom tells me that this is something quite special.

I'm helping children to become readers and writers - that is wonderful!

It is amazing how far a child can come in such a short time.

(See an example of a teacher's reflections on her first year as a Reading Recovery teacher below)

Children comments:

I can concentrate!

I like reading books at home.

I go to the library now.

I'm a good reader.

Parent/carer comments:

What have you done to him? He just keeps wanting to read everything he sees that's written down.

He wrote Christmas cards for the first time.

He's coming on a treat.

This is brilliant!

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Of those children who completed their series of Reading Recovery lessons during 2008-2009, 77% made accelerated progress (40/52). Of those 12 children who did not make accelerated progress 4 Year 2 children actually achieved Level 2c at the end of KS1 in reading. 66% of all the Year 2 children achieved 2c or above in reading. One child who was predicted W at the beginning of Year 2 went on to achieve Level 2a in reading and 2b in writing!

The ECar Review by Nottinghamshire (below) describes what has worked well with parents and carers, at whole school, teacher and pupil level.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Twelve Nottinghamshire teachers are now fully qualified Reading Recovery teachers.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

The evaluation of the initiative includes reflection by the teachers, and also an evaluation of the wider impact in the schools involved.

Here are extracts from one teacher's evaluation; the full document is below.

It has been a fast moving, exciting eye-opening year of teaching and learning for me. I feel that I have learnt so much and have shared so much success with the children I have worked with. I am really looking forward to next year and developing my role further in school.

Being a teacher on the Reading Recovery Programme means you have to look very closely at your teaching- you might seek help and guidance from others- you refer to Marie Clay and reflect on what you and the child are doing. It's all about knowing the individual.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Half-termly ECaR Headteacher Network Meetings have provided a forum for Heads to share ideas and progress over the first year.

Useful developments that came from these meeting include:

- guidance on Reading Recovery Teacher Performance Management. (below)
- what is good progress in Reading Recovery (see What page)
- a review of ECaR (above).

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

The detailed assessment process which is central to Reading Recovery has challenged schools to review Teacher Assessment in KS1.

Links are being made between APP and assessment in Reading Recovery – such as Running Records.

Some schools have audited their reading books and organised them into Reading Recovery Book Levels. This will lead to children accessing reading material which is most appropriate to their learning levels.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Within the Local Authority there has been a collaborative approach from the start. School Improvement and Inclusion have shared the responsibility for the implementation of ECaR. Support has been in place from the very highest of levels, from elected members to school-based staff.

Pupil progress is due to the quality of training and teaching which is Reading Recovery. The key features are:

- early intervention
- an intensive year long training programme for the Reading Recovery teachers based on a constructive theory of learning
- daily 1/1 individualised teaching from an 'expert' literacy teacher.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Reading Recovery Teacher Leader training is provided by the Institute of Education in London.

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

Contacting the relevant National Strategy Advisers for ECaR – Anne High.

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

During 2009-2010 a further 23 teachers will be trained as Reading Recovery Teachers. There will be 4 from Nottingham City, 11 from Leicestershire and 8 from Nottinghamshire.

In Nottinghamshire in the coming year we are also planning to develop our programme of training and support for other layered interventions. An audit tool - Primary Literacy Layered Intervention Audit Tool (PLLIAT) has been developed and will be trialled over the Autumn term 2009.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- A support document for Headteachers re What is good progress in Reading Recovery
- Book banding cross-reference sheet
- ECaR briefing for Nottingham City SIPs Sept 09
- Overview of Nottinghamshire's ECaR programme 2008-2009
- Overview of 2008-2009.doc
- An analysis of first cohort of children 2008-2009
- An analysis of first year cohort 2008-2009
- Analysis of End of Key Stage 1 outcomes for children supported through RR
- A first year ECaR review booklet for Headteachers
- One teacher's reflections at the end of the RR training year
- Overview of the impact of the wider role of the ECaR teacher
- Guidance for Headteachers re Performance Management
- PLLIAT Cover
- PLLIAT Flowchart
- PLLIAT Introduction
- PLLIAT Menu
- PLLIAT School Audit sheet
- Zipfile of all uploaded files

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About 'What Works Well'

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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