



CASE STUDY REPORT

Using transfer to empower pupils to take responsibility for their learning

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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 increase pupils' understanding of how they learn and to use this knowledge to accelerate their progress in mathematics. This was achieved through collaboration between primary and secondary school teachers, CPD, and resources allocated by the senior leadership team.

Aims: The main aim of this development work is to increase pupils' understanding of how they learn and to utilise this to increase their rate of progress.

Methods: Participants included support staff, head of school improvement, headteacher, middle leader, National Strategies consultant, senior leadership team, SIP, subject leader, teacher, and pupils.

Methods used included collaboration between primary and secondary school teachers, appointing a transition coordinator and transition teacher, and employing a mathematics AST to promote continuity of curriculum and teaching and learning.

Findings: The main findings of this case study are that collaboration between primary and secondary schools is key to successful transfer and transition of pupils. Through CPD, teachers have been given advice and guidance to use these developments to support teaching and learning. Pupils have increased confidence and capacity to discuss their approaches to learning with teachers, resulting in accelerated progress.

Implications: The findings suggest that collaboration between primary and secondary schools, as well as the allocation of resources to support the development of pupils' understanding of their learning styles, can lead to increased confidence, improved engagement in learning, and accelerated progress in mathematics.

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

Keywords: Secondary education; Transfer and transition; Mathematics

Introduction

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

For pupils to have the best start to secondary school they need an understanding of their central role in their learning and teachers need an understanding of how to facilitate this role.

Since this case study was written, subsequent developments have been reported in 'Strengthening transfers and transition: sustaining improvement, building capacity' (May 2009). The relevant extract from this report can be found on the Summary page.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- 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?

Teachers from primary and secondary schools worked together to develop pupils' understanding of how they learned and to utilise this to increase progress.

What were your success criteria?

Pupils' increased ability to apply their understanding of how they learned to increase their rate of progress.

The intention was not to label children as particular types of learners but to increase their awareness that they are in control of their learning and that they have the ability to expand their learning style.

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

- Data comparison of cohorts
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupil consultation data
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Costello have ensured that teachers have been given advice, guidance and/or training about how to use these developments to support teaching and learning in their lessons.

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

The expertise of the deputy headteacher relating to pupils' approaches to learning was utilised.

Who provided you with support?

- Senior management

How were you supported?

The senior leadership from all the participating schools remained central to the work throughout. From the start it was recognized that the key to the success of this project would be collaboration. Discussions led to a shared vision for what they were trying to achieve and a sense of shared responsibility for achieving it.

The senior leadership at Costello Technology College have made some significant commitments that have promoted a stronger working relationship with partner primary schools:

- the deputy headteacher responsible for KS3 has taken overall responsibility for strengthening transfer
- a 'transition coordinator' has been appointed and a framework for discussing pupils as learners developed
- a 'transition teacher' has been appointed to support those that may be vulnerable at transfer
- a mathematics AST has been employed to promote continuity of curriculum and teaching and learning.

All were given time and resources to work with teachers and pupils from the main partner primary schools.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

- pupils' confidence and capacity to discuss their approaches to learning with teachers was increased
- the rate of progress in mathematics at the start of Year 7 was accelerated significantly.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Pupils' increased understanding of how they learned raised their self-efficacy and appreciation of the power they have to increase their rate of progress. The quality of learning discussions with teachers improved to have a greater emphasis on process and increased capacity to learn.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

A workshop was run with a sample of students to assess if they had developed an understanding of their learning styles. The children engaged readily in the various activities and were clearly familiar with this sort of reflection.

- "I am a logical thinker and enjoy challenges. I enjoy working in groups as well as on my own. I enjoy physical puzzles and take the role of leader whenever necessary."
- "I work better if I can see things so I draw things so I can understand. I like doing hands on activities."
- "I am an inquisitive learner. I like to know what goes on around me and enjoy doing things for myself. I work slowly but eventually get things done."

The pupils easily moved to identifying approaches to teaching and learning that suited their styles and how they can get the most out of lessons.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Data comparison of cohorts
- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Pupil consultation data

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

N.B. Please view attached documents for a more detailed analysis of impact on pupil progress.

The performance of the students has been analysed in relation to pupil attainment at the end of KS2. This has been compared with the previous cohort to establish improvement.

75% of Year 7 pupils arriving in September 2006 made progress in mathematics by the end of the Autumn term. The average progress was 0.25 sublevels.

90% of Year 7 pupils arriving in September 2007 made progress in mathematics by the end of the Autumn term. The average progress had increased to 1.35 sublevels.

A workshop was run with a sample of students to assess if they had developed an understanding of their learning styles. The children engaged readily in the various activities and were clearly familiar with this sort of reflection. They easily moved from reflecting on their learning styles to identifying approaches to teaching and learning that suited their styles and how they can get the most out of lessons.

Pupil engagement in learning also increased.

A system of grading each student in each student based on attitude to learning was introduced in September 2005. A numerical value is assigned to attitudes from 'Excellent' to 'Poor'. The 2007 data shows an improvement since the start of the project.

There is:

- a more consistent distribution around the higher mean and median
- both the upper and lower quartiles are higher
- the inter-quartile range is smaller showing consistency.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Year 7 teachers aim to build on the learning skills developed in primary schools. Pupils are given greater freedom to develop their own approaches to their learning.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Improvements in curriculum documentation
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

The planning for the different elements of this work has been done collaboratively between primary and secondary school teachers. Feedback from teachers from both phases indicates the this way of working has influenced their approach to teaching and learning.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The senior leadership at Costello Technology College have made some significant commitments that have promoted a stronger working relationship with partner primary schools:

- the deputy headteacher responsible for KS3 has taken overall responsibility for strengthening transfer
- a 'transition coordinator' has been appointed and a framework for discussing pupils as learners developed
- a 'transition teacher' has been appointed to support those that may be vulnerable at transfer
- a mathematics AST has been employed to promote continuity of curriculum and teaching and learning.

All were given time and resources to work with teachers and pupils from the main partner primary schools.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

See above – significant restructuring and allocation of resources.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The senior leadership from all the participating schools remained central to the work throughout. From the start it was recognized that the key to the success of this project would be collaboration. Discussions led to a shared vision for what they were trying to achieve and a sense of shared responsibility for achieving it.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

The key resources are the people:

- Senior leadership teams that see the potential in strengthening transfer
- Teachers with a willingness to collaborate with and learn from teachers working in a different key stage
- Teachers with the expertise and time to focus on the elements: a transition coordinator, a 'transition teacher' and an AST to work on a particular curriculum focus.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

For teachers to understand the purpose and potential of this work, the most important CPD is with the staff so they can take advantage of the confidence and skills developed by the students.

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

The starting point for this work is to establish a shared understanding between primary and secondary schools of how they can work together to support the development of children's ability to take ownership of their learning.

It is essential that leadership teams commit the necessary resources to allow lesson observations and professional dialogue between teachers from the different phases. Transfer is an opportunity to drive up standards and pupils who have the confidence, understanding and skills can make it happen.

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

Each element of this work is being expanded. It will include an focus on English as well as maths and links with primary school continue to be strengthened and developed.

Supplementary Materials

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

- Evidence of accelerate progress in mathematics
- Extract from Strengthening transfers and transition (May 09)

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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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