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A strategic approach to improving staff confidence and accuracy in writing SMART targets for learning plans

Improving SEND outcomes through effective target setting

School/Background Context

Montgomery Primary Academy is a large primary school in an area of high deprivation in central Birmingham. Most pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds – with the majority being Pakistani or Bangladeshi – and English is an additional language for nearly all pupils in the school. Sparkbrook ranks amongst the top 10% in terms of deprivation according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). The percentage of pupils supported with SEND is broadly in line with that seen nationally, but the school continues to be rigorous in the assessment and identification of SEND pupils and staff have a clear understanding of the difference between low-attaining and SEND pupils. Currently there are 454 pupils; 19% are SEND, over 95% have English as an additional language and 50% are Pupil premium.

The Challenge

Following an evaluation of inclusion across the school and a staff survey, we identified the area of learning plans, more specially the ineffective writing of them as a key area to develop.

Before embarking on the project, all staff completed a survey. The results revealed significant gaps in key skills. Only 27% of staff expressed full confidence in writing SMART targets, a crucial skill for effective planning and goal setting. Furthermore, just 40% of staff felt fully confident with the technology we utilize, hindering productivity and potentially impacting service delivery. These findings highlighted the urgent need for targeted training and support to ensure staff are equipped to meet the project's objectives.

As a SEND team, through the evaluation of previous learning plans, we found that the learning plans do not contain appropriate SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant and Time bound). Therefore progress is difficult to track and measure as well as potentially impacting potential progress as 'appropriate' targets were not set, which meant that targeted intervention work may not have been as focused as would have been desired.

What They Did

Project Focus

This project examined how setting long-term and short-term targets within Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), with teacher support, affected the progress and achievement of primary school students with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Training

The aim of this project was to develop staff confidence through effective training. There were a number of strategies utilised for training - Whole School Inset, PPA Support and Individual Support.

The Whole School Insets (two sessions) were delivered by the SEND Team. Prior to the sessions, all staff completed a survey, and the results of which were utilised as a base for the content of the insets.

The first inset provided the opportunity for the development of the principles and a common understanding, ensuring that all staff were fully aware of and committed to the development of this area of SEND. We also focused on developing the understanding (pedagogically) and confidence in the generation of targets and ensuring that they are SMART.

The second inset provided the opportunity for the SEND Team to review the previous training and deliver the 'practical' training to enable staff to access the system and produce the ILPs.

A third inset provided teachers and teaching assistants with time to work collaboratively in order to begin to write the ILPs for their classes, which was supported by the SEND team.

In addition to the insets, all staff were supported in one PPA session and had the opportunity to access further individualised support from the SEND Team if they required/requested this. The SEND Team were also available to proof-read all targets at the request of staff - with the focus on collaboration and support.

Resources

Templates have been developed by the Trust, with the opportunity for schools to personalise, where appropriate. Prior to the project launch, a small working party of experienced teachers and teaching assistants, was established to evaluate the templates and make appropriate changes.

At the initial training inset, we explored and agreed on a set of common principles for setting long-term goals and short-term objectives which would support the consistent and accurate writing of ILP targets.

- A technical flow chart to support staff in navigating writing the ILPs.
- A technical video to support staff in navigating writing the ILPs.
- A flow chart to support staff in ensuring that the ILP Targets were SMART.
- A video to support staff in understanding what SMART targets are and how to write them.
- A 'Padlet' which we have begun to populate with support and information.

Monitoring and Feedback

During the writing of the ILP Targets, The SEND Team met with year groups and individual teachers and supported them in the co-construction of these. Following the completion of the ILPs, The SEND Team have quality assured 20% of the ILPs written from across all year groups in the school. During this process we have identified possible areas of concern that we will need to focus on during the next round of writing ILPs. In addition, we have written whole-school feedback and also met with specific individuals who required bespoke support.

Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

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Staff: Staff feel confident and secure in setting long term and short term outcomes for the four broad areas of need. The exit questionnaire completed by staff demonstrated significant improvements in confidence: 65% of staff expressed full confidence in writing SMART targets and 35% of staff expressed confidence in writing SMART targets. Furthermore, 72% of staff felt fully confident and 25% of staff felt confident with the technology we utilize.

The resources that have been produced will aid the development of and writing of future outcomes and ensure that there is consistency and accuracy in the writing of appropriate outcomes.

Projected Outcomes and Impact

There has been a significant improvement in the targets set for ILPs. Staff have demonstrated an increased confidence and competence in setting long-term goals and short-term objectives across the four broad areas of need for SEN students. The developed resources have and will continue to support staff.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting