

Implementing the SEND Reforms: From intervention to inclusion – the role of the Family Support Worker in improving achievement All Saints CofE Infants, Huthwaite, Nottinghamshire

Background

All Saints had been in special measures for a year when the current Head teacher and SENCO took over in 2010.

New strategies were put in place where children's needs were identified in their IEP. These were met through a programme of interventions and booster groups. Small peer groups of pupils with SEN worked with teaching assistants who modelled and provided an opportunity for them to develop and practice the skills needed to raise their attainment.

Parents were invited into school each term to IEP meetings but the parents of around 15-20% failed to engage. When they did attend it felt one-sided on the part of the school and the school felt they were not providing a format that enabled parents to be partners in these meetings.

Data showed that interventions were raising attainment but the progress took place out of classrooms so children with SEND were missing important whole class times, not integrated into the school day and not the responsibility of the teacher. Practice had moved but attitudes to equality and inclusion were not embedded.

The school was prompted to join Achievement for All by a desire to build on what was working and address the issues. They wanted to adopt a more inclusive approach, tackle underachievement, improve behaviours for learning, and change the approach to pupils with SEND from a medical model to a social model.

The first set of Structured Conversations exploded the myth of low aspirational families: all parents and carers who were involved in the conversations wanted their children to be successful in the education system and ultimately to achieve economic security, good education and a good job

The priorities were to:

- Narrow the gap between pupils with SEND and their peers
- Become more inclusive and effective in meeting the needs of children with special needs, especially those then at School Action

Work with parents and carers to empower them to support their children and engage in their education.

Context

All Saints serves an ex-mining community, almost exclusively White British. It is in the top 25% of socio-economic deprivation nationally and in the top decile for employment and health deprivation.

Attainment on entry to reception is well below national averages. Weak literacy and numeracy skills on entry place many pupils into the 22-36 month band.

The school was placed in special measures in 2009 but attained a Good Ofsted inspection in 2011 and again in 2013. The school has been a fully-fledged SCITT

school in partnership with Nottingham University since September 2012.

Approach

The Barriers to Learning and Diamond9 activities from the programme were used to identify issues and encourage colleagues to see solutions. Governors attended the meeting to ensure leadership commitment across all areas of the school.

The Year 1 teacher took on Structured Conversations with parents for any pupil at School Action and in the target group. Her full engagement in modeling inclusive practice in her classroom gave confidence to the other teachers.

IEP meetings were replaced with Structured Conversations for the target group and the SENCO and class teacher met after each round to update on progress and targets. It was immediately obvious that these meetings were much more meaningful than IEP reviews and the quality of information was much richer.

Carefully designed development for staff focusing on quality first teaching, and the implications of Wave 2 and Wave 3 provision has enabled teachers to make learning more effective for all children.

In September 2013 a Family Support Worker was appointed. Her role focuses on improving attendance and increasing the power of pupil voice. She also provides insight and knowledge about the employment, debt, abuse, and anti-social behavioural challenges faced by families in the community, but is equally passionate about empowering them to manage their children. Most importantly she is non-judgmental which makes her approachable and trusted providing a bridge between

parents and school, classroom and playground.

The FSW designed Home Packs specifically for each child based on the findings from the Structured Conversations. This has led to learning successes not only for the children but for parents too.

The Zone, an after-school club, was set up to enhance children's personal, social and emotional development and to raise their aspirations through the activities they chose to undertake.

Parents are signposted to other agencies and the FSW often attends visits with them at first and offers guidance about family routines that support children to be ready to learn every day.

At school the FSW is present every morning to build relationships with parents and children to break down barriers and with the long term view of parents accessing early support and avoiding crises.

Impact

Early lesson observations had reported that children with SEN were spending long periods playing in the sand and water and peer integration was incidental. This has changed radically. All pupils are now integrated and involved in the whole range of classroom activities.

In September 2014 the SENCO and SEN governor did a range of class visits and witnessed two very challenging target group pupils having an engaging lesson in the outdoor area, fully engaged and integrated with every one and every thing.

The 2013 Ofsted Inspection reported that the school was very inclusive – something

that the school attributes wholly to the Achievement for All programme.

Classrooms are now set up to enable individualised learning, incorporating a range of pedagogies and routines based on the Every Child a Talker programme to enable staff and parents to follow the child's interests and embed language development.

Key Learnings

- The first set of Structured Conversations exploded the myth of low aspirational families: all wanted their children to be able to support their own families by getting a good education and a good job. Parents felt they benefited from the meetings as much as the school.
- The employment of a Family Support Worker enabled All Saints to maintain and develop good relationships with parents and carers.
- The school is much more strategic in terms of data analysis, monitoring, classroom observations and staff development. All these aspects of the school's work are more clearly integrated.
- Staff are now confident in evaluating the impact of strategies and in deciding to stop things that, after proper analysis, are not delivering – even if they took significant work to set up.
- The FSW had worked in this role in a children's centre for eight years prior to joining All Saints. In working alongside universal services she recognised that identification of vulnerable families was good but that there was resistance to agency intervention. She describes her role

as being to improve children's attainment, raise aspirations and secure emotional and social development. She is clear and specific about her role in relation to supporting parents in the management of their children, supporting children in managing their own behaviour and emotions, and the school in ensuring consistency of inclusive routines and systems that enable all partners to work effectively.

Parent X's Story

Parent X was a young parent with two children, the oldest of whom Child A had been brought up for the first two years by grandparents after X left the family home.

As Child A returned to X following legal intervention, X had a second child by her much older partner.

X presented as a parent worried about her daughter in school and was nervous about engaging with other parents. Staff had daily conversations with X about time in school, building a firm foundation for a trusting relationship.

As Child A started Year 1, X disclosed that she was finding it difficult to manage Child A's behaviour and sleep routines, which was impacting on her attendance.

X worked with school staff, being open about her past and her relationships, how lacking in confidence she felt as a parent and how she felt judged by other parents.

X acted on advice in relation to behaviour management and with persistence, perseverance and encouragement, became

empowered as a parent, able to set boundaries and ensuring that she and her partner were consistent and worked together, using a reward system that motivated Child A alongside implementing a structured bedtime routine. This has increased Child A's attendance levels.

Now in Year 2, Child A's learning journey is clearly tracked by Achievement for All and school data.

She presents as an articulate, confident child and has recently volunteered as a playground friend and is embracing the responsibility of this.

X is more confident in her parenting, asking for advice relating to managing behaviour and checking that the sanctions she puts in place are appropriate, which is encouraging evidence of a trusting relationship.

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