

AN EEF SCHOOL CASE STUDY: DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

South Shore Academy

School context:



South Shore Academy in Blackpool is a coastal, comprehensive school for 11-16 year-olds. 70% of our 746 pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.

1 What problem were you looking to solve?



We were keen to make our reading provision as responsive as possible to the needs of our pupils. In order to do so, we needed to find out more about the gaps in their learning and areas in which they excelled using diagnostic assessment. We conducted a baseline reading assessment with all students. The resulting data revealed that, on average, pupils were achieving well below the national average, with a third achieving a Standardised Score of below 69 – which represents a reading age of approximately 5 – 6 years.

Although the baseline assessment can provide diagnostic information for those pupils within the average range, it does not give enough detail for those in the lower range. We needed to explore further diagnostic assessment and plan interventions accordingly.

2 What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?



We knew professional development would be essential for staff to feel secure in delivering high-quality, targeted interventions. To ensure staff grew in confidence with these specialist interventions, we knew we would have to plan carefully for training to become well-embedded.

We anticipated student buy-in might be an issue, as pupils would be out of lessons for some interventions.

3 What did you do?



For students with the lowest attainment, we used the British Picture Vocabulary Scale to establish their understanding of receptive vocabulary. Phonics screening tests were also administered to uncover the specific phonic issues these students were struggling with.

We developed a speech and language screener to help teachers and teaching assistants ascertain whether pupils were in need of a Speech and Language therapist referral.

Nurture classes were established with interventions which focussed on comprehension of short passages and word study. A bespoke programme of teaching was established for our learners with SEND, such as regular reading with a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA and paired reading).

Five HLTAs continue to run the interventions (one per year group). They receive coaching from our Reading Intervention Lead – a trained SENCo.

4 How do you monitor/evaluate that the intervention is working?



Every half term, we analyse pre and post intervention data for pupils in years 7 to 10 so that we can match interventions to individual students' needs. We share progress regularly with our board of Governors to ensure funding for staff deployment continues.

Our staff provide feedback on how the interventions are progressing and our regular 'register and read' sessions inform both which texts we select to use in intervention sessions and, our CPD schedule. 'Register and read' (a supported and structured approach to focused independent reading during morning form time) was continued during lockdown; recordings of the senior team modelling the approach were collected for staff to refer to. We envisaged that these recordings could also be shared as part of new staff inductions.

Reading ages are visible to all staff via SIMs and on every tracking sheet. These also include historical data to show pupils' progress and to pick up dips quickly.

Regular staff training is delivered to faculties so that it is bespoke to their subjects. Reading data is shared regularly in faculty meetings, in which staff also consider the level or quality of texts being used across subjects, and incorporating strategies for reading comprehension.

Additional:

Suggested reading:

- *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools guidance report: eef.li/literacy-ks3-ks4/*



- Read all about it [here](#)

Reflection questions



- How do you select assessments?
How diagnostic are they?
How is the information used?
- Do staff understand the purpose of the various assessments they use?