

# A Focus On Disadvantage

A Set of Focused Inquiries  
to Drive School Improvement



**Elevate**  
Schools Partnership

Knowsley Schools Working Together

A collection and celebration of inquiry based approaches from schools in Elevate Schools Partnership in Knowsley. With many thanks to Marc Rowland for his ongoing support and wisdom.

## Foreword

**Working with Knowsley colleagues has been a joy. Leaders have been welcoming, committed, reflective and good humoured.**

Leaders are proud of their communities, proud of their staff, proud of their pupils. Some of the practice in schools and classrooms is inspirational – and is comparable to the very best practice seen nationally.

We have worked to the following seven principles for an effective Pupil Premium strategy. These principles are evident in the inquiries shared by the schools.

Leaders have shared their inquiries in a spirit of professional generosity – and to support leaders in disadvantaged communities to improve the day to day experiences and attainment of pupils at risk of underachievement.

**1. Strategies should be something we have the capacity to enact effectively.** They should not be a wish list. The more we try to do, the less effective we are to implement well. Many interventions don't have an impact because they simply don't happen (or don't happen with fidelity). Focus on the things that are most in your gift.

- 2. Our disadvantaged pupils are not a problem to be resolved.** They are our children, and the most effective approaches focus on giving staff the capacity, expertise, professional development and the support to help pupils to thrive. Poverty puts pupils at risk of underachievement, not pupil premium eligibility.
- 3. Children thrive in school when they experience meaningful success in the classroom.** Success leads to motivation.
- 4. Focus on underlying causes, rather than symptoms.** Low attainment, inconsistent attendance are a symptom of underlying, complex issues. They are a lag effect. You cannot intervene to a symptom or a label. The earlier that we address challenges, the better all pupils do at school.
- 5. Whilst diagnostic and summative assessment are vital,** we also need to understand the challenges through observation of pupils and their learning experiences in the classroom. This is also key for evaluating the effectiveness of our strategies and how well they are being enacted.

- 6. There are some small things that we can do in the classroom** that can make a significant difference to all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Checking for understanding, addressing misconceptions at the point of learning, not making presumptions of language comprehension or background knowledge. Ensuring that pupils are socially and academically included.
- 7. Strategies are effective when they impact pupils as learners.** Don't mistake activity for impact. Use research evidence to shape practice and implementation. Our role is not to 'save' pupils – but to empower them with choice and agency – so that school is somewhere to thrive, not something to get through.

**We want Knowsley pupils to be proud of themselves, and feel empowered to have choice and opportunity. We want them to make a positive contribution to their community and wider society.**

**It has been a privilege to spend time talking with leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils. It has been a privilege to observe the efforts of practitioners in the classroom who are relentlessly committed to their pupils and their community.**

Marc Rowland  
Unity Schools Partnership

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## Elevate Achievement for Disadvantaged Pupils

**Over a period of 18 months, 9 schools in our partnership worked closely with Marc Rowland (Unity Schools Partnership) to consider the provision and attainment for disadvantaged pupils, and more widely for all pupils, in their schools.**

We were very much driven by wise words from Marc which he advocates and shares widely:

"Our disadvantaged pupils are not a problem to be resolved. They are our children, and the most effective approaches focus on giving staff the capacity, expertise, professional development and the support to help pupils to thrive. Poverty puts pupils at risk of underachievement, not pupil premium eligibility."

For context, Knowsley is identified as one of the most disadvantaged regions in England with the government report for **Priority Education Investment Areas: selection methodology (March 2022)** citing 42.9% of pupils eligible for deprivation Pupil Premium.

For the 9 schools taking part in this Case Study work the percentages of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium varied:

School	% Eligible PP
Hope Joint Faith Primary School	<b>63</b>
Huyton with Roby CE Primary School	<b>35</b>
Knowsley Central School	<b>48</b>
Knowsley Village Community Primary School	<b>28</b>
Park View Academy	<b>62</b>
St Aloysius Catholic Primary School	<b>36</b>
St Leo's & Southmead Primary School	<b>43</b>
St Luke's Catholic Primary School	<b>36</b>
St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School	<b>35</b>
Average for Group	<b>42.8%</b>

Each school chose a key area in which to facilitate a case study based on the 'Disciplined Inquiry' model. After reviewing practice, reflecting on provision and outcomes and considering this all within the context of their school, each Headteacher chose 1 area to reflect more deeply on and implement a number of solutions. There was no guarantee that these solutions would work; but this is the nature of the inquiry approach.

We closely examined current practice, drew on research and guidance, identified several solutions, considered possible challenges to implementation and how these could be addressed and then moved ahead with delivery of our strategies and approaches. Importantly, we reviewed and adjusted our approach through feedback from staff and pupils and consideration of our post impact measures; this prompted us to then refine, review and adjust continuously.

The **EEF Guidance on Implementation** was also a source of information and best practice here too (Education Endowment Foundation, A School's Guide to Implementation, Published 24 April, 2024).

Our schools were supported to focus closely on:

- ✦ High quality teaching, provision and learning environment being the expectation for all pupils
- ✦ Consider when and how any intervention or additionality is required; only outside of class when absolutely necessary
- ✦ The importance of building positive and empathetic relations with our school communities
- ✦ Considering the whole child from a pastoral perspective - reminding us that children learn best when they are emotionally safe. How does this affect the way we consider what we may previously have described as a 'challenge' such as behaviour and attendance?

Headteachers and Case Study Leads met regularly with each other and Marc to review progress and plan next steps. Reciprocal visits also took place for most of the schools involved; this was a positive experience and one which we have tried to continue. The incidental learning and sharing of best practice which also came from this was a bonus!



SEE PRESENTATIONS



WATCH VIDEO

Our aim and end goal was to communicate our learning more widely amongst other schools. We did this initially through a conference at which all schools presented their case study outline, implementation process including challenges, and impact up to that point. But we recognise that our learning here may benefit others, hence the decision to publish the case studies and findings for further distribution.

**We are very proud of the outcome but we also recognise that the work and focus here continues. We would like to thank Marc for his advice and guidance with this work; it was refreshing, challenging and extremely reflective.**

Julie Peach  
Strategic Lead  
**Elevate Schools Partnership**



**Elevate**  
Schools Partnership

Knowsley Schools Working Together

## Introduction to Our Partner Schools

### Hope Joint Faith Primary School

NOR: 450

Website: [www.hopeprimary.com](http://www.hopeprimary.com)

Instagram: [hopeprimaryhuyton](https://www.instagram.com/hopeprimaryhuyton) X: [@hopeprimarsch](https://twitter.com/hopeprimarsch)

Vision & Ethos: Believe, Respect, Achieve

Hope Primary is a vibrant, forward-thinking school of 450 pupils, 63% of whom are disadvantaged. Our mission – Believe, Respect, Achieve – shapes everything we do, creating a safe, nurturing environment where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally within a strong community.

### Huyton with Roby CE Primary School

NOR: 380

Website: [www.huytonwithrobyce.co.uk](http://www.huytonwithrobyce.co.uk)

Vision & Ethos: "Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their lives."

We are proud of our caring, inclusive community where every child is valued and supported. Our pupils show kindness, generosity, and a love of learning, supported by dedicated staff. Our Christian values create a safe, loving environment where all pupils can succeed.

### Knowsley Central School

NOR: 147

Website: [www.knowsleycentral.co.uk](http://www.knowsleycentral.co.uk)

Instagram: [Knowsley Central School](https://www.instagram.com/knowsleycentral)

Vision & Ethos: Everyone is a Star and Can Shine in our Learning Community

Knowsley Central School is proud of its focus on the hidden curriculum, ensuring every child can access opportunities and thrive. Through an inclusive approach, pupils build confidence, enjoy learning, and develop independence and resilience, preparing them for the next stage of education.

### Knowsley Village Primary School

NOR: 178

Website: [www.knowsleyvillageschool.co.uk](http://www.knowsleyvillageschool.co.uk)

Vision & Ethos: Respect for All

At Knowsley Village School, we are proud of our commitment to Respect for All, underpinned by shared values and an inclusive ethos. Through collaboration between staff, parents, pupils, and the community, we create a nurturing environment where every child feels valued and inspired to succeed.

### Park View Academy

NOR: 375

Website: [www.deantrustparkview.co.uk](http://www.deantrustparkview.co.uk)

Instagram: [DT\\_Parkview](https://www.instagram.com/DT_Parkview)

Vision & Ethos: For all our pupils to BELIEVE in themselves, ACHIEVE their potential and SUCCEED in their journey through life.

We pride ourselves on creating a safe and happy community where aspirations have no ceilings and every decision begins with the well-being of our children.

### St Aloysius Catholic Primary School

NOR: 342

Website: [www.staloyusius.co.uk](http://www.staloyusius.co.uk)

Instagram: [staloyusiusl36](https://www.instagram.com/staloyusiusl36) X: [@StAloysiusL36](https://twitter.com/StAloysiusL36)

Vision & Ethos: Together with Jesus we Love, Learn & Believe

St Aloysius Catholic Primary School is at the heart of its community, known as a family who care for each other. Our mission, 'Together with Jesus we Love, Learn and Believe', guides us in creating a warm place where every child feels valued and can thrive.

### St Luke's Catholic Primary School

NOR: 213

Website: [www.stluke.knowsley.sch.uk](http://www.stluke.knowsley.sch.uk)

Facebook: [St Luke's Catholic Primary School](https://www.facebook.com/StLukesCatholicPrimarySchool)

Vision & Ethos: 'We follow in the footsteps of Jesus, as we live, love and learn together'

St Luke's is a thriving, diverse community that embraces everyone's uniqueness. We are proud to help every child fulfil their potential by developing independence, nurturing wellbeing, and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in life.

### St Leo's & Southmead Catholic Primary School

NOR: 236

Website: [www.stleossouthmead.co.uk](http://www.stleossouthmead.co.uk)

Vision & Ethos: Nurture, Inspire, Succeed

We are a one-form entry school with a Nursery in Whiston. At the heart of the community, we pride ourselves on being a supportive family. We are expanding to include a 2-year-old Nursery and plan to become a two-form entry school, embracing this exciting period of change.

### St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School

NOR: 342

Website: [www.smmj.co.uk](http://www.smmj.co.uk)

Vision & Ethos: Loving, Learning & Growing Together with Jesus

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School serves the Huyton community. We ensure pupils feel safe and supported while receiving an inclusive education that develops the whole child. We aim for pupils to leave as well-rounded individuals with high aspirations and a love of reading.

## Case Study 1: Impact of Specialist Teachers

**Title:** Improving academic outcomes using subject specialist teachers and supporting class teachers' workload and wellbeing.

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Providing pupils with a rich, quality learning experiences
- ◆ Utilising teaching staff with a specific expertise
- ◆ Increasing outcomes across the curriculum for all pupils
- ◆ Address ever increasing workload pressures
- ◆ Creating time for quality subject leadership

### Short Commentary on Drivers:

Using a subject specialist in our school for music/art/DT has enhanced the quality of education, provided a richer learning experience for pupils, and supports professional growth among teaching staff. This approach helps cater to the individual needs of students while ensuring that the curriculum is taught effectively and with expertise. Utilising this approach for science will also provide teachers with 1 day release per week and time to plan less subjects more effectively. They will also have dedicated time for high quality subject leadership.

### Inquiry Question:

What impact do specialist teachers have on raising standards in their curriculum area?  
Does additional time out of class impact the academic progress in other subject areas?  
Are subject leaders more effective in their role?

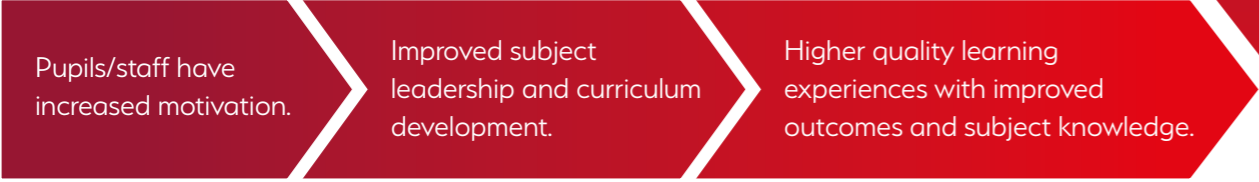
### Pre and Post Impact Measures:

- ◆ Looking at the quality of planning and delivery for music, art, DT and science
- ◆ Outcomes in books and assessments
- ◆ Pupil voice
- ◆ Wellbeing questionnaire
- ◆ Subject leader action plans/curriculum plans/journals
- ◆ Staff absence analysis

### Challenges with Implementation:

- ◆ Funding this approach for an extended period
- ◆ Scheduling of cover to ensure staff are release in a weekly basis.
- ◆ Appropriate CPD
- ◆ Resourcing subjects

### Key Highlights:



### What impact do specialist teachers have on raising standards in Science?

As a primary science subject specialist, teaching across Years 1 to 6 has had a significant impact on the quality and continuity of science education within the school. This approach offers several clear benefits:

- ◆ Curriculum Continuity & Progression
- ◆ Addressing Misconceptions & Revisiting Learning
- ◆ Increased Practical Engagement
- ◆ Vocabulary Focus
- ◆ Cross-Curricular Links
- ◆ Embedding Formative Assessment
- ◆ Recording Data and Drawing Conclusions

### Does additional time out of class impact academic progress? Are subject leaders more effective in their role?

- ◆ Teachers have additional 1/2 day out of class for subject leader time through Science specialist.
- ◆ More time spent working on their own subject leader role.
- ◆ Support for all colleagues (inc. in class).
- ◆ Regular review and adaptation of curriculum area.
- ◆ More focussed CPD/staff meetings.
- ◆ Staff utilising more research.
- ◆ Subject leadership and curriculum highlighted in recent inspection.



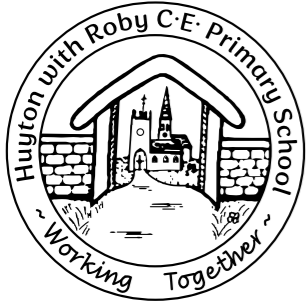
### Additional Outcomes:

- ◆ More time planning fewer subjects.
- ◆ 4 day teaching week supports our vision around staff recruitment and retention.
- ◆ Teaching staff absence reduced.

Teaching Staff Absence			
	Teachers with at Least One Period of Sickness (%)	Total Number of Days Lost to Sickness	Average Number of Days Lost to Teacher Sickness (per teacher)
School	<b>37%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1.3</b>
LA Primary Average	<b>56%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5.4</b>

### Next Steps:

- ◆ Enhanced Enquiry Ownership.
- ◆ Consistency and Depth.
- ◆ Improved Assessment and Tracking.
- ◆ The success of this approach has led to school building 3 new dedicated classrooms for Science, Art, DT and Music opening September 2025.
- ◆ To further enhance science teaching and learning, using the Science Capital Teaching Approach could be explored to help make science more relevant and inclusive, especially for underrepresented groups.



## Case Study 2: The Positive Effects of Consistency

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ To have a consistent teaching and learning approach across the school.
- ◆ To have consistent behaviour approaches across the school.
- ◆ Some children with multiple vulnerabilities were unable to articulate and manage their emotions.

### Contextual Commentary on Drivers:

On reviewing our strategies for teaching and learning and behaviour across the school we found there was a need for further development in ensuring a consistent approach across all key stages.

### Inquiry Question:

What impact does bringing consistency of approaches to teaching and learning strategies over two terms have on attainment and successful engagement in learning for identified pupils Y4 and Y5?



### Pre- and Post-intervention Measures:

- ◆ The autumn test data was used as a pre-measure and was compared to the summer term data to judge impact.
- ◆ Attendance data for the specified group of children was tracked to demonstrate improvements.
- ◆ Pupil, parent and staff voice was gathered at the start and end of the project.
- ◆ Book looks and learning walks were used to gather evidence of improvement in consistency of approaches.

### Intervention Strategy:

- ◆ Analyse the current 'Teaching and Learning' policy and use this as an audit.
- ◆ Staff to use five clear and consistent strategies based on our toolkit using the Walkthrus.
- ◆ Staff to receive CPD to enable them to implement the five strategies successfully.
- ◆ Teaching, learning and expectations to be the same in every classroom in order to ensure consistency throughout the school EYFS to Y6.

### Implementation Challenges:

That the key staff have enough time to research, plan and implement strategies in their classrooms.

That the staff involved may not be consistent in their approach because they are unclear or unsure of what approach to use from a wide range of options. Too many different approaches were in use.



## Progress Update:

At the mid-point of the project feedback from staff and pupils was positive.

Following training for staff, they felt well equipped to implement the strategies. Staff reported that their practice was more consistent and that the classrooms were more settled with fewer behaviour issues.

Pupil voice was demonstrating the improvements the project had made. Children could articulate the five consistent strategies in comparison to the start of the project. They were able to describe why teachers were using the strategies and how it was helping them.

Learning walks and book looks demonstrated that strategies had been introduced and were becoming more embedded across the school.

Consistent displays relating to behaviour strategies supported children in understanding and using them. Children described how they knew the expectations and how they could help themselves with focus and good learning behaviours.

"It has greatly improved since the new sanctions and behaviour policy have been implemented - I am very appreciative!" **Staff Voice**

"The classroom environment was calming as well as your approach, which I believe is an important factor. You ensure children's progress is recognised and rewarded via dojo points (which is always celebrated at home too)."

**Parent Voice**

Unstructured times of the day were reviewed in order to create opportunities for children to engage in structured and purposeful play. Lunchtimes were restructured to allow for 'free flow' of movement at lunchtime with more independent choice of when to eat and when to play. Children reported that they enjoyed the freedom to choose where to sit to eat and the opportunity for equipment outside.

As an extension of the project, the classroom environment became part of the work in the project. The consistency of approach led to a consistency of environments. This linked well to our work on trauma informed approaches with the introduction of a calmer and less demanding environment.

There was a significant improvement in Y4 for reading and particularly for children eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

"I think what you've both done to change attitudes in school has helped tremendously. These small steps have been manageable and have been effective in class. I have been particularly appreciative of how available you have both been in helping me with behaviour issues." **Staff Voice**

"I like the thinking time which gives me time to practice my answer." **Pupil Voice**

"I use the checklist without the teacher reminding me." **Pupil Voice**

## Key Highlights:

Children explaining that the strategies introduced had improved the learning environment and they felt more able to focus.

Classrooms are consistent and approaches are clear.

There are fewer behaviour incidents.

## Impact and Evidence:

- Leaders worked on a MAT wide research led approach to Teaching and Learning which staff are now able to build on.
- The plan was shared in staff meetings and staff were involved in designing the strategies so that they could see the rationale behind the strategies and the proven track record based on evidence and research.
- Dedicated meeting time is set aside to embed strategies with staff and regular monitoring activities take place to ensure that it is consistently applied across the school.
- Consistency is clearly evident across the school and staff and children identify the positive impact of this.

## Next Steps:

- To continue to develop trauma informed approaches.
- To develop children's role in leadership roles across the school.
- Refresh and re-visit training for new staff and to ensure fidelity to the strategies.





## Case Study 3: Empowering Futures through Attendance, Communication, Regulation & Life Skills

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Social isolation.
- ◆ Inclusion and access.
- ◆ Communication difficulties.
- ◆ SEND needs – particularly self-regulation and sensory processing difficulties.

### Contextual Commentary on Drivers:

Knowsley Central School recognised that many pupil premium eligible pupils had limited opportunities to access activities that promote the development of life skills, communication and self-regulation through engagement with the wider environment. Financial constraints and accessibility challenges linked to SEND needs were identified as significant barriers.

As a result, the school sought to broaden opportunities for pupils to access extracurricular activities, educational visits, and real-life learning experiences. These opportunities were designed to enhance pupils' independence, confidence, communication and emotional regulation.



### Inquiry Question:

What impact does enhancing and broadening life skills opportunities over the next academic year for Pupil Premium eligible pupils have on attendance and pupils' ability to self-regulate and communicate appropriately?

### Pre- and Post-measures:

Impact will be evaluated through comparison with the previous academic year and internal progress measures for pupils using the following indicators:

- ◆ Functional Communication Checklist.
- ◆ Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) screeners.
- ◆ Uptake of extracurricular activities.
- ◆ Educational visits data.
- ◆ Attendance data.

### Key Approaches:

- ◆ Enhancing and expanding the extracurricular offer.
- ◆ Increasing opportunities for curriculum-linked educational visits.
- ◆ Working with the school council to identify pupil interests.
- ◆ Creating structured opportunities for pupils to participate in enterprise activities.
- ◆ Bringing external environments into school through community partnerships, IT and immersive classroom experiences.
- ◆ Working closely with parents to ensure consent and confidence in pupils accessing events.



## Implementation Challenges:

Challenge	Implementation Strategy
Higher staffing levels required to access external events	Provide staff with a clear mechanism to request visits and submit risk assessments with sufficient notice to ensure appropriate staffing arrangements.
Raising staff awareness and confidence	Create and disseminate appropriate risk assessments for both internal and external activities. Ensure pre-visits take place where required.
External providers delivering experiences in school	Require providers to share their risk assessments in advance so information can be communicated with staff and parents appropriately.
Parental concerns regarding sensory needs, new environments, or overnight stays	Hold parent meetings to discuss activities and work individually with families to address concerns and build confidence.
Pupil attendance	Communicate clearly with parents about the importance and benefits of attendance, particularly when events are taking place. Ensure pupils are aware of upcoming activities.
Technology and access to environments	Explore the use of immersive rooms and collaborate with the technical support team to recreate external environments within school.

## Outcome Highlights:



## Impact and Evidence:

### After-School Clubs

- ◆ A targeted offer has been developed to meet the needs of different SEND groups.
- ◆ **2024–2025:** 42% of pupils accessing after-school clubs are pupil premium eligible pupils, representing a **25% increase** compared with 2023–2024.

### Lunchtime Clubs

- ◆ Clubs provide a wide range of opportunities specifically supporting the pupil premium cohort.
- ◆ **2024–2025:** 83.5% of pupils accessing lunchtime clubs are pupil premium eligible pupils, a **21% increase** from 2023–2024.



### Next Steps:

- ◆ Ensure the **sustainability of the wider curricular and enrichment offer.**
- ◆ Continue to review **cohort needs** to ensure activities remain inclusive, meaningful and accessible for all pupils.

### Educational Visits

- ◆ **70%** of pupils attending school residential visits this year were pupil premium eligible pupils.

### Attendance Impact

- ◆ Whole-school attendance: **93.7%**
- ◆ Pupil Premium pupil attendance: **92.2%**
- ◆ Both figures are **above the national SEND attendance average for special schools.**

"I have faced my fears."  
**Pupil Voice**

"I never thought my child would ever access a school residential like his older brother and sister."  
**Parent Voice**



## Case Study 4: What Impact Does Maths Fluency Have on Number Confidence & Problem Solving?

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Attendance (Disadvantaged children's attendance is slightly lower than Non disadvantaged)
- ◆ Parental involvement (their own experiences with maths)
- ◆ Resilience when problem solving
- ◆ EAL and Mathematical language
- ◆ Inclusion and access for disadvantaged pupils
- ◆ Low family income/deprivation

### Short Commentary on Drivers:

A small percentage of children both disadvantage and non-disadvantaged that are not as number confident when applying to problem solving. Focus group is children achieving greater depth through automaticity.

### Inquiry Question:

What impact does a focused maths fluency programme delivered over 1 year have on academic, emotional and social engagement for all children and parents but specifically those disadvantaged, in achieving greater depth?



### Pre- and Post-impact Measures:

- ◆ Outcomes particularly linked to automaticity
- ◆ Engagement in Maths lessons
- ◆ Pupil and parent voice- questionnaire
- ◆ Staff questionnaire
- ◆ Examples of pupil's work, where applicable
- ◆ Evidence of resilience/application in lessons and assessments

### Approaches:

- ◆ Whole school target on action plan
- ◆ Child questionnaire
- ◆ Parent questionnaire
- ◆ Staff questionnaire
- ◆ Parental Involvement through website, workshops
- ◆ Maths fluency programme delivered daily across the school
- ◆ Lesson visits
- ◆ Explicit support from pupil premium lead and maths lead rooted in pupil need
- ◆ Feedback and assessment methods
- ◆ Maths anxiety and confidence programme - changing the language of problem solving to Maths Stories/Comprehension

### Challenges with Implementation:

- ◆ School attendance
- ◆ Maths anxiety
- ◆ Parental Involvement
- ◆ Resilience
- ◆ Staff confidence/CPD and fidelity to the fluency programme
- ◆ Disadvantaged pupil access to resources such as technology outside of school

### Wider Learning:

Links to children's engagement and attendance with extended school offers e.g. Clubs and parents attending workshops/meetings.

Response to email questions reflecting on the Case Study.

## Key Highlights:



## Overcoming the Key Challenges

- ★ Attendance drive to improve percentages and tackle persistent absence.
- ★ Alteration of language such as problem solving to Maths stories.
- ★ Low stakes quizzes and repetition to boost confidence.
- ★ Workshops with children working alongside parents/carers and addition of current topic parent/carers booklets to the website.
- ★ Use of bespoke in school CPD and online National College, NCETM and local Hub training for staff.
- ★ Provision of additional opportunities to access technology devices for disadvantaged pupils and also access to additional support with homework etc.



## Next Steps:

- ★ Early indicators show some progress towards automaticity so continue with training, workshops etc.
- ★ New fluency programme to be embedded and assessed regularly.
- ★ Continue to work closely as a team to provide support and opportunity for our disadvantaged pupils.
- ★ Continue to monitor attendance and move forward with the drivers to improve.
- ★ Provide workshops for all year groups for parent/carers alongside their children.

## Changes:

- ★ Early success indicators have encouraged the widening of the study from Greater Depth pupils to include adaptations for pupils working just below and as part of SEND provision.
- ★ To consider assessment and feedback through the delivery of the programme to fine tune the support needed.

"Pre-teach training has made a real difference to my teaching. It's helped me to give children a clearer understanding and more confidence to tackle work successfully. I now feel much more confident delivering to small groups."

**Teaching Assistant**

"When children feel secure in their understanding of number facts and processes, they're more willing to take risks and tackle problem solving tasks with greater independence. It's not just about getting the answers right - it's about building the self-belief that they can persevere and think mathematically."

**Year 2 Teacher,  
SENDCO and Teacher Governor**

## When my teacher says it's time for Maths, I feel...

"...amazing and excited."  
**Year 1 Child**

"...excited, happy and enthusiastic!"  
**Year 2 Child**

"When a maths question is tricky, I can use my times tables and number bonds to help me."  
**Year 6 Child**

"Miss has helped me to improve my maths a lot. At the start, I wasn't really confident and I didn't like it but now I'm enjoying it because I've got better."  
**Year 6 Child**

"When I get my times tables right, I feel proud of myself and really happy and excited that I did it."  
**Year 5 Child**

"I enjoy maths now. When you gain more knowledge, the harder the questions you're able to solve."  
**Year 4 Child**

## Case Study 5: Strengthening Foundational Skills Through a Whole-School Handwriting Initiative

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Outcomes impacted by poor handwriting rather than lack of knowledge.
- ◆ Inconsistent staff training and subject knowledge in handwriting pedagogy.
- ◆ Early challenges in fine and gross motor development affecting long-term fluency.
- ◆ Limited handwriting practice beyond school.

### Contextual Commentary on Drivers:

As part of a wider review of foundational skills, leaders evaluated the quality of pupils' written work across the curriculum. Book scrutiny, pupil discussions and staff voice indicated that, for some pupils, handwriting fluency and presentation were limiting their ability to demonstrate what they knew and could do. This was particularly evident among boys in Lower Key Stage 2 (LKS2). The review identified variability in modelling, expectations and subject knowledge related to handwriting instruction. While handwriting was taught, the approach lacked whole-school consistency. In response, leaders introduced a targeted intervention model alongside the adoption of a structured whole-school handwriting programme. This decision was informed by research, in-school observation and programme evaluation, ensuring the approach was evidence-informed rather than reactive.

### Inquiry Question:

What impact does targeted handwriting instruction, delivered as an intervention over a 12-week period, have on boys in Lower Key Stage 2?

### Pre- and Post-implementation Measures:

To evaluate impact effectively, leaders established clear baseline and end-point measures:

- ◆ Initial pangram writing assessment to assess letter formation, spacing and line adherence.
- ◆ Comprehensive handwriting skills checklist to identify specific gaps.
- ◆ Homogeneous grouping based on identified need.
- ◆ Final pangram writing assessment at the end of the 12-week period.
- ◆ Comparative analysis of Week 1 and Week 12 handwriting samples.
- ◆ Ongoing book scrutiny across subjects to evaluate sustained application.
- ◆ Staff and pupil voice to assess confidence and perceived impact.

Three core elements were tracked:

1. Letter formation
2. Spacing between letters and words
3. Writing consistently on the line

This ensured monitoring was focused, measurable and aligned to intended outcomes.

## Intervention Strategy:

Fifteen pupils in LKS2 were identified as requiring targeted support, nine of whom were boys.

The intervention model included:

- ◆ Groups of 4–6 pupils
- ◆ Two 30-minute sessions per week
- ◆ A 12-week duration
- ◆ Continuous monitoring both within sessions and in class
- ◆ Explicit modelling and guided practice
- ◆ Immediate feedback and correction

At Week 6, the school transitioned to a structured whole-school handwriting programme. Although this required alignment to a new assessment framework, it validated earlier identification processes, as the same pupils were identified for support.

The programme provided:

- ◆ Clear progression models
- ◆ Explicit modelling guidance
- ◆ Agreed terminology
- ◆ High-quality pupil resources
- ◆ An online professional development portal

All teaching and support staff received training to ensure strong subject knowledge and consistency in implementation. Importantly, not all trained staff were timetabled to deliver interventions. This created operational resilience: in the event of staff absence, other trained colleagues could step in, ensuring that no intervention sessions were missed and programme fidelity was maintained.

Interventions were strategically timetabled during periods when intervention spaces were underutilised. Leaders prioritised handwriting within this allocation, protecting curriculum time while minimising disruption to other subjects.

Implementation was phased to support staff confidence and secure consistency, reflecting a deliberate and sustainable approach to change management.

## Implementation Challenges:

- ◆ Initial variability in staff confidence and subject knowledge
- ◆ Transition from a bespoke progression model to the structured programme framework
- ◆ Staff absence
- ◆ Limited physical intervention space
- ◆ Pupil absence

These challenges were mitigated through whole-staff training, access to the programme's online portal, timetable adaptations and cross-trained staffing capacity. Leaders maintained regular monitoring and feedback loops to ensure that implementation remained aligned with intended outcomes.

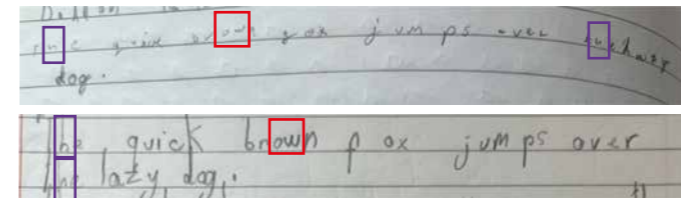
## Outcomes and Impact:

### Pupil Outcomes

Over the 12-week period:

- ◆ 100% of pupils made clear progress in at least one of the three tracked elements
- ◆ Progress was observed across letter formation, spacing and line adherence
- ◆ Increased legibility was evident in independent writing
- ◆ Pupils demonstrated greater confidence and pride in presentation
- ◆ Improvements were sustained across curriculum books

Teachers reported that improved fluency reduced the cognitive load associated with letter formation, enabling pupils to focus more effectively on composition and vocabulary. This supports stronger curriculum implementation by removing a barrier to written expression.



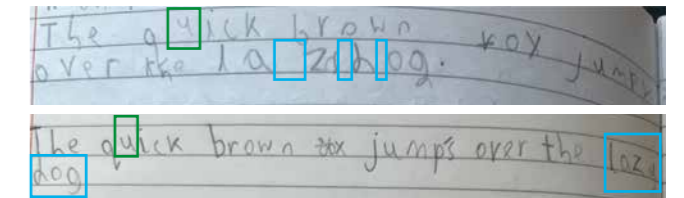
- Better use of letters sitting on the line eg. **ow**
- Clear formation of letters eg. **h**

### Quality of Education

The initiative has strengthened:

- ◆ Consistency in modelling and expectations
- ◆ Staff subject knowledge
- ◆ Shared language across the school
- ◆ Alignment between intervention and classroom practice

The structured programme, combined with whole-staff training, has improved the coherence of handwriting provision from class teaching through to targeted support. Monitoring demonstrates that improvements are not confined to discrete sessions but are embedded within the wider curriculum.



- Better use of letters sitting on the line eg. **u**
- More consistent spacing between letters and words eg. **lazy dog**

## Key Highlights:

### 1. Research-Informed and Strategically Planned

The initiative was grounded in in-school observation, staff consultation and programme research, ensuring alignment between identified need and chosen approach.

### 2. Thorough Staff Training and Shared Understanding

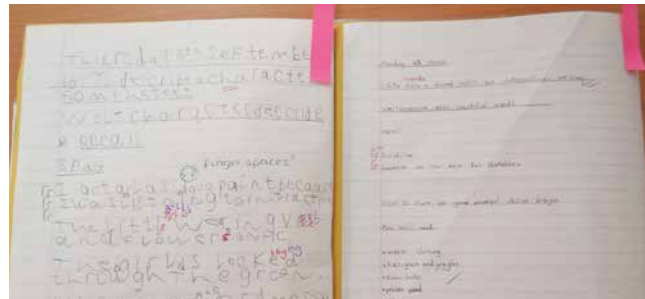
Whole-staff training and access to an online professional development portal established consistent modelling, agreed terminology and improved subject knowledge across the school.

### 3. Operational Resilience and Timetable Adaptation

Cross-trained staff ensured continuity during absence. Strategic timetable adjustments protected intervention time and prioritised appropriate space.

### 4. Measurable Impact on Target Cohort

All pupils in the intervention group made demonstrable progress, with sustained improvements visible across the wider curriculum and confirmed through staff and pupil voice.



## Quotes:

"The structured programme has strengthened my subject knowledge and given us a shared language for teaching handwriting. The consistency across classes means pupils now know exactly what is expected."

**Teacher Assistant**

"I've seen a noticeable difference in pupils' confidence. Because they are no longer struggling with letter formation, they are able to focus more on the content of their writing."

**Teacher**

"I don't have to think as hard about forming my letters anymore, so I can concentrate on what I want to say."

**Year 4 Pupils**

"At every parents' evening, my mum was told that I should keep working on my handwriting. This year, she was told how much it has improved — and she was so proud of me."

**Year 6 Pupil**

"Leaders have strengthened the teaching of handwriting through a clear and consistent whole-school approach. Staff understand the agreed methods and expectations, and pupils benefit from regular practice and targeted support. Consequently, the quality of pupils' written presentation is improving."

**Ofsted Pilot Inspection November 2025**



## Next Steps:

### ◆ Sustain consistency across year groups

Secure clear progression from KS1 through to UKS2, ensuring expectations build cumulatively.

### ◆ Embed handwriting across the wider curriculum

Strengthen modelling and presentation expectations in all subjects to reinforce transfer and application.

### ◆ Revisit training for new staff

Develop a structured induction pathway using the programme portal to maintain consistency and subject knowledge.

### ◆ Ensure whole-school consistency in modelling

Continue to refine live modelling practices to secure accuracy in joins, spacing and positioning.

### ◆ Maintain ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Continue regular book scrutiny, pupil voice and assessment checkpoints to sustain high standards and respond promptly to emerging need.

"My writing is much neater now and I feel proud when I look back at my work."

**Year 3 Pupil**



## Case Study 6:

# What Impact Does Consistent Attendance & Engagement in Extracurricular Clubs Have on Pupils' Attendance, Outcomes & Attitudes?

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Poor uptake of extra-curricular clubs
- ◆ Lack of engagement in home learning
- ◆ Concentration issues in class
- ◆ Relationships with school

### Contextual Commentary on Drivers:

Although the school offers a wealth of extra-curricular clubs ranging from hockey to well-being to origami many of our pupil premium eligible children don't attend. We have tried various ways to support engagement.



### Inquiry Question:

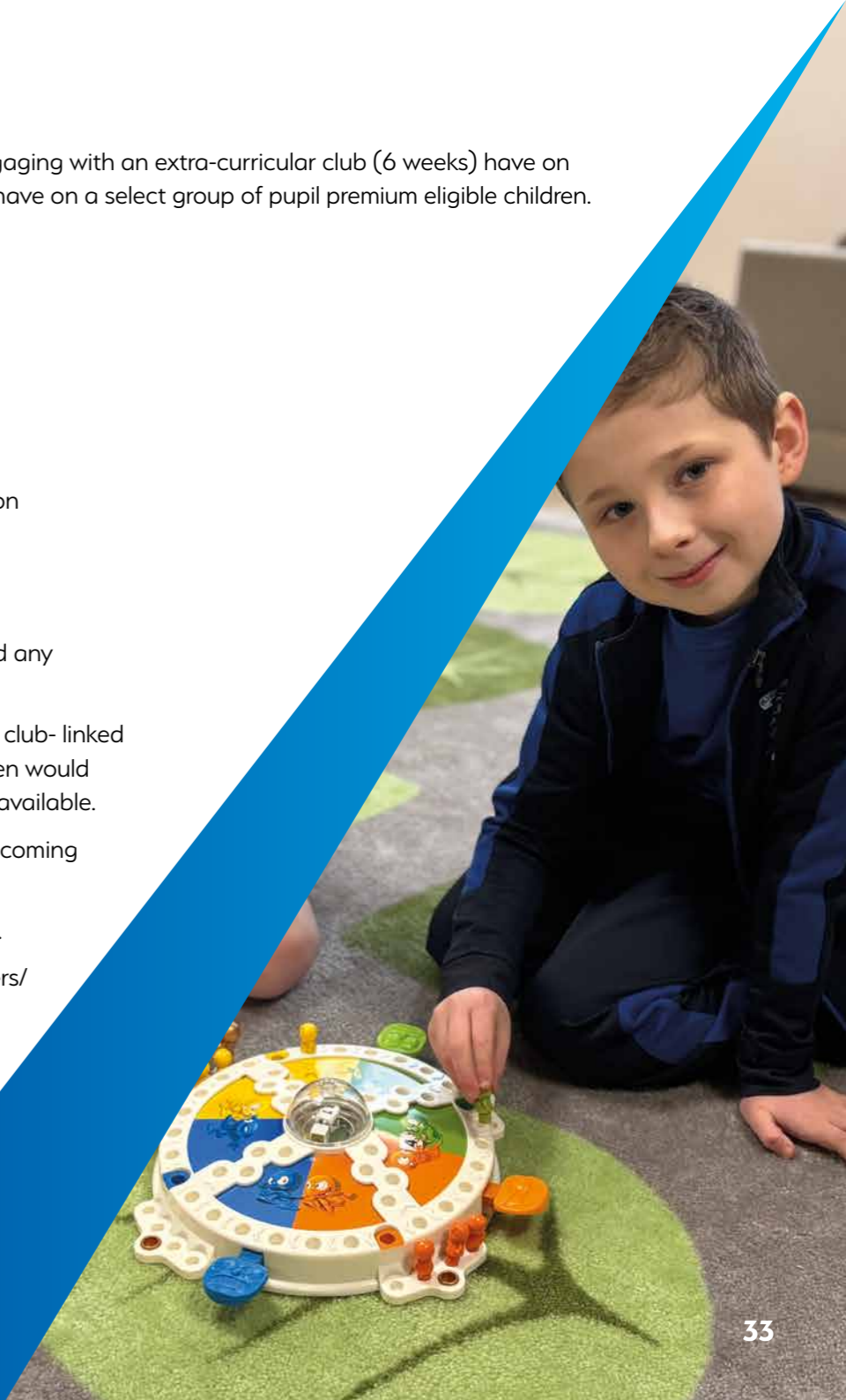
To what extent can attending and engaging with an extra-curricular club (6 weeks) have on attendance, outcomes and attitudes have on a select group of pupil premium eligible children.

### Pre- and Post-impact Measures:

- ◆ Attendance data.
- ◆ Outcomes/Progress.
- ◆ Pupil and parent voice- questionnaire.
- ◆ Examples of pupil's work.
- ◆ Evidence of engagement/concentration in lessons.

### Approaches:

1. Identify children who haven't attended any extracurricular clubs.
2. Decide with staff on the nature of the club- linked to pupil voice of what clubs the children would like to attend and make sure they are available.
3. Organise a room to make sure it is welcoming for the children.
4. Set up parent and pupil questionnaire.
5. Liaise with parents to overcome barriers/ encourage attendance.



## Implementation Challenges:

- ★ Ensuring club takes place each week and staff are available.
- ★ Attendance issues (PA pupils).
- ★ Quality and accuracy of parent/pupil voice.
- ★ Cost implication.

## Wider Learning:

This will help the school to measure more clearly the impact of extracurricular clubs on attendance, attitudes. The results of this project will feed into our Pupil Premium strategy as engagement in extracurricular clubs is part of our challenges.



## Key Highlights:

- Increased levels of engagement in taking part in clubs, from some pupils who hadn't taken part in a club before.
- Some pupils showed greater engagement and more positive attitudes to problem solving in Maths lessons, also some children have shown more resilience when tackling more challenging concepts.
- Staff are more aware of the positive impact of running extracurricular clubs at lunchtimes .
- From this club, some pupils went on to organise their own chess club where they taught younger children how to play chess.

## Next Steps:

- ★ To change school policy and to extend the lunch break for all pupils so that almost all extracurricular clubs can be offered during school hours.
- ★ Survey pupils, staff and parents so clear detailed feedback is gained.
- ★ Special invitations for pupil premium eligible pupils to ensure increased attendance.
- ★ To continue to monitor attendance to see if there is any impact on attendance, especially on those pupils eligible for pupil premium and / or persistently absent.





## Case Study 7: Investigating the Impact of Targeted & Precise Intervention

### Inquiry Question:

What impact does targeted intervention delivered over 2 terms have on reading and writing attainment for those children who have no additional needs, are eligible for pupil premium and are at risk of not achieving the standard expected for their age?

### Background and Rationale:

We are a one form entry primary school with 3YO Nursery provision. Plans are in place for the school to increase to 2.5 form entry by 2029 due to 1600 new homes being built within the school catchment area.

The demographic of our school has changed significantly in the past 3 years; our pupil premium has increased from 23% in 2022 to 45% in 2025. Our Pupil Premium assessment data has fallen significantly in this timeframe, with our pupil premium eligible children attaining lower than our non-pupil premium eligible children in all key areas across all year groups.

30% of our 93 Pupil Premium eligible children are on the SEND register, however our pupils with SEND have made the highest level of progress across all groups of children for the past three years. This statistic lead us to look at attainment and progress of non SEND Pupil Premium children compared to non SEND non Pupil Premium children, through this we identified a gap of 17% for GLD, 8% for phonics, 38% for KS2 Reading, 33% for KS2 Writing and 33% for KS2 Maths. Upon further data analysis it has been identified that this gap has been widening over the past 3 years and will continue to do so if direct action is not taken.

Of our 65 non SEND Pupil Premium children (70%), 51 are either below ARE in reading and/or writing or are at risk of being below ARE. This equates to 55% of Pupil Premium children in total and 23% of the whole school.

This disciplined enquiry will be implemented in addition to other interventions already in place for identified vulnerable groups, not in place of.



### Pre- and Post-impact Measures:

- ◆ Autumn Term Assessment Data/Summer Term Assessment Data
- ◆ Autumn Term Reading Ages/Summer Term Assessment Data
- ◆ Pupil Book Study
- ◆ Classroom Observations

### Approach:

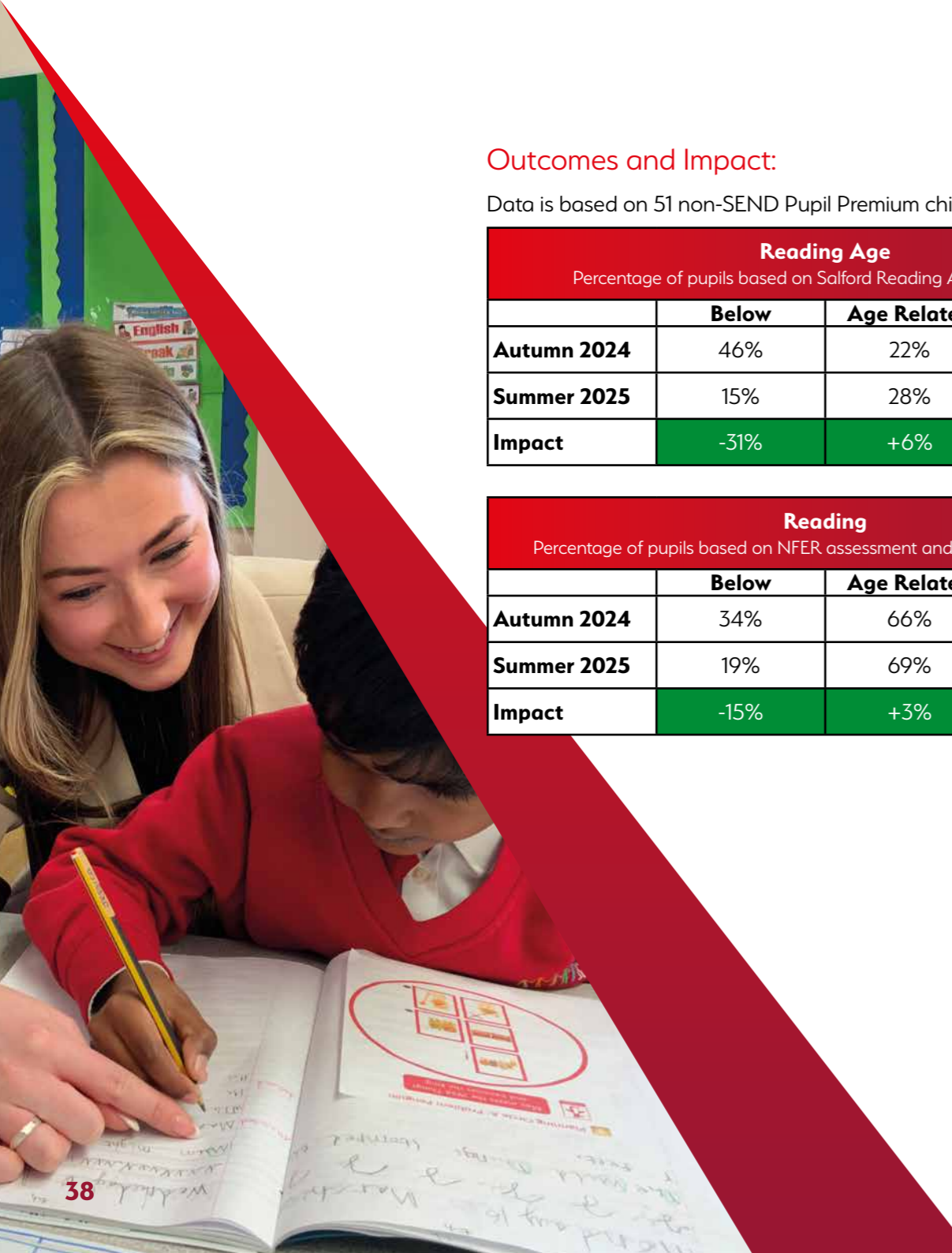
- ◆ Identify children who are non-SEND pupils and eligible for pupil premium children working below ARE in reading and/or writing.
- ◆ In depth tracking in place for reading age, spelling age, reading attainment, writing attainment and attendance.
- ◆ Wellcomm data used for EYFS pupils.
- ◆ School wide non-negotiable interventions to be implemented:
  - Additional reading during assembly
  - Pre-teach sessions
  - Sentence accuracy focus group
- ◆ Teachers implement additional interventions and identify on termly RAP (Raising Attainment Plan).
- ◆ Half termly data drop for non-SEND pupil premium pupils.
- ◆ Attendance tracker in place for non-SEND pupil premium pupils.
- ◆ High profile for weekly staff meetings.

### Challenges:

- ◆ Poor attendance
- ◆ Consistency in approach
- ◆ Adult availability for interventions
- ◆ Parental engagement
- ◆ Unidentified specific learning needs

### How we Planned to Mitigate Challenges:

- ◆ Learning Mentor and Headteacher monitor attendance and intervene on each day of absence.
- ◆ Teachers identify interventions on Spring and Summer RAP (Raising Attainment Plan).
- ◆ Deputy Head to meet with Learning Support Assistants each half term to discuss progress being made and strategies being used.
- ◆ Agenda item for each staff meeting.
- ◆ Parental contact in place for pupils not making accelerated progress by end of Spring Term.
- ◆ SENDCO to track data and support staff for children not making accelerated progress in event there is unidentified SEND provision needed.
- ◆ Any additional challenges raised to be discussed at SLT level and mitigated accordingly.



### Outcomes and Impact:

Data is based on 51 non-SEND Pupil Premium children.

Reading Age			
Percentage of pupils based on Salford Reading Age Assessment			
	Below	Age Relate	Above
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	46%	22%	32%
<b>Summer 2025</b>	15%	28%	59%
<b>Impact</b>	-31%	+6%	+27%

Reading			
Percentage of pupils based on NFER assessment and Teacher Assessment			
	Below	Age Relate	Above
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	34%	66%	0%
<b>Summer 2025</b>	19%	69%	13%
<b>Impact</b>	-15%	+3%	+13%



Writing			
Percentage of pupils based on Teacher Assessment			
	Below	Age Relate	Above
<b>Autumn 2024</b>	44%	56%	0%
<b>Summer 2025</b>	22%	75%	3%
<b>Impact</b>	-22%	+19%	+3%

Attendance	
Percentage of pupils based on FFT data	
<b>Persistent Absentee Autumn 2024</b>	37.5%
<b>Persistent Absentee Summer 2025</b>	21%
<b>Declining Attendance (Autumn – Summer)</b>	23%
<b>Stable attendance (Autumn to Summer)</b>	32%
<b>Improved attendance (Autumn to Summer)</b>	47%

### Next Steps:

- ◆ Continue to closely monitor non-SEND Pupil Premium data closely to identify gaps
- ◆ Build on programme of precise interventions each year – including maths
- ◆ Persistent Absentees to have continued targeted support to improve attendance on a regular basis

## Case Study 8: Improving Communication, Speech & Language within EYFS

### Key Drivers:

- ◆ Inclusion and access
- ◆ English as an additional language
- ◆ Social isolation
- ◆ Low family income/deprivation

### Contextual Commentary on Drivers:

A high percentage of our children join our school at well below age related speech and language expectations. We also have a significantly high level of children with English as an additional language (47 %). These numbers are steadily increasing.



### Inquiry Question:

How can school consciously focus on Speech and Language and Oracy in Early Years to raise standards in communication, language and literacy, for both Pupil Premium eligible and EAL children?

### Pre- and Post-intervention Measures:

- ◆ Autumn 2024 WELLCOMM data
- ◆ Summer 2025 WELLCOMM data
- ◆ Classroom observations
- ◆ Children's attainment
- ◆ Teacher voice
- ◆ Complete pre and post learning environment audits

### Intervention Strategy:

- ◆ Identify children who are below age related expectations for speech and language
- ◆ Disseminate Communication Friendly Setting training amongst all staff
- ◆ Lead Communication Practitioners (LCPs) to communicate and lead appropriate strategies and interventions for individual targeted children
- ◆ Complete environment audit to ensure that the setting is communication friendly
- ◆ Ensure that strategies are implemented within the setting



### Challenges with implementation:

- ◆ Consistent approach required to assess children's speech and language ability
- ◆ Staff training and release time required
- ◆ Significant numbers of children with EAL and SEND
- ◆ Communicating the intent of Communication Friendly Setting with all members of staff

### Communication Friendly Setting Verification Comments:

"Visuals and labelling of all resources and areas is exceptionally good."

"Environment audit shows quiet communication friendly spaces are available in all classes and also within outside provision."

"It was a joy to see all children fully engaged, focused and actively participating in this listening and attention activity."

"The layout of both the Reception and Nursery classes offer a low arousal, neutral environment, with well-planned areas."

"This is a strong 'Communication Friendly' Early Year's setting"

### Progress Update:

- ◆ Two members of staff have gained level 4 ELKLAN accreditation
- ◆ The school has received the Communication Friendly Setting accreditation
- ◆ WELLCOMM data has shown significant improvement:
  - Pupil Premium children's scores for children eligible for pupil premium funding have increased from 29% green to 72% green at the end of the intervention
  - EAL children's scores have increased from 11% green to 60% green at the end of the intervention



**ST MARGARET MARY'S**  
CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

## Case Study 9: Investigating the Impact of a More Inclusive & Recognition-based Approach to Attendance & Persistent Absence.

### Key Drivers:

- ✦ A dip in attendance over the past 2 years (in particular the attendance of our pupil premium eligible students)
- ✦ An increase over the past 2 years in the number of Persistent Absentees (in particular our pupil premium eligible absentees)

### Short Commentary on Drivers:

Although pupil attendance has consistently been in line/ above the national average for a number of years, the attendance of our pupil premium eligible children has consistently remained an area of concern (as there has historically been a significant gap between the attendance of eligible and non eligible pupils and a significantly higher number of Persistent Absentees). There have been various attempts in the past to address this issue so we felt that we needed to approach the issue from a different angle.

### Inquiry Question:

What is the impact of a more inclusive and recognition based approach to attendance and persistent absence, whilst also improving relations with families?



### Pre and Post Impact Measures:

- ✦ Attendance data
- ✦ Outcomes
- ✦ Pupil questionnaire

### Intervention Strategy:

- ✦ Identification of children who have historically been persistent absentees
- ✦ Class recognition chart implemented
- ✦ Weekly meetings of the attendance team
- ✦ Attendance reward system tweaked from 'individual' based to 'class' based.
- ✦ Individual pupils to be given 'secret' targets that acknowledge 'improvement'
- ✦ Adopting a 'Days' as opposed to 'percentage' approach to identify children at Risk of Persistent Absence and those locked into Persistent Absence

### Challenges with Implementation:

- ✦ Training requirements
- ✦ Adopting a consistent approach across the school
- ✦ Building and sustaining relationships with hard to reach parents

### Wider Learning:

This will help the school to measure more clearly the impact of a recognition approach on attendance and attitudes. Given that attendance is one of the key challenges for our Pupil Premium eligible children, the outcomes of the project (if positive) will feed into the Pupil Premium Strategy.



## Progress Updates:

- Working in conjunction with the school's attendance service during 2024 - 2025 (who also operate a recognition based approach), the school has seen an improvement in 13 out of the 15 cases - 86%.
- For Spring term 2026 the school has seen an improvement in 3 out of the 4 cases all of whom were eligible for Pupil Premium.
- Work still needs to be done on improving the attendance of our EHCP children who are also Pupil Premium.
- The Yr 3 cohort for 2025 -2026 are poorer attenders across all categories in comparison 2025 leavers. (data for Autumn term).
- Autumn term data for children eligible for Pupil Premium in school year 2025- 2026 is lower than that of the same period last year, however there are numerous cases of individual improvements and successes.

## Key Highlights, 3 Positives:

- Children love the recognition boards and their reward day when they reach 100.
- Schools are now using Insight as an attendance tracking tool and are able to identify children at danger of Persistent Absence earlier than waiting for them to reach 90% attendance. This is before the data is shared from the School Attendance Service.
- Positive relationships with some of our hard-to-reach parents that enable us to continue to work together for the benefit of the child.

## Quotes from Children Whose Attendance has Increased:

"We do lots of great things in school like PGL, London trip."

"I like having the routines, feeling safe and that I belong."

"Some of the recognitions we get are; coming in first for lunch, an extra play, or a non-uniform day."

"I love coming into school for football club, afterschool club TT Rockstars and because the teachers are kind."

"I like our star charts, being recognised in assembly for our attendance."

## Outcomes and Impacts:

- Autumn term attendance data for Pupil Premium eligible children 2025- 2026 is lower than that of the same period last year; but a number of individual success stories are evident.
- Second Learning Mentor in position to increase the number of vulnerable children who can be supported.
- Now have 4 Thrive 'Lead Practitioners' to support additional children.
- Current Yr 6 Pupil Premium cohort's attendance increased for 92.7% in 2023- 2024 to 93.1% 2024-2025.
- There are numerous cases of individual improvements and successes for example, a current year 4 pupil improved by 10% between Autumn 2024 and Autumn 2025; we will continue to build on these.

Attendance	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Whole School
Baseline April 2024 (End of Spring Term 2) Start of Project	95.1%	92.9%	95%	95.2%	94.5%
Spring 2025 (End of Spring Term 2)	95.2%	95%	95.8%	96.4%	95.6%
Summer 2025	95.9%	94.3%	96.1%	95.8%	95.5%

Persistent Absentees	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Whole School
Baseline April 2024 (End of Spring Term 2) Start of Project	6	10	2	2	20
Spring 2025 (End of Spring Term 2)	3	5	1	2	11
Summer 2025	3	3	1	3	10

No. Pupils < 90% Attendance	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Whole School
Baseline April 2024 (End of Spring Term 2) Start of Project	13	9	12	13	47
Spring 2025 (End of Spring Term 2)	11	8	8	9	36
Summer 2025	6	8	9	8	31



## Next Steps:

- Increase our intervention space so that those children who struggle to spend all learning time in the classroom environment can access learning more positively and therefore reduce absence.
- Full audit to be completed by 'Inclusive Attendance'.
- Increase the number of EHAT (Early Help Assessment Tool) trained staff.
- Improve internal communications of level 1 work carried out by key staff within school.

