



BETTER READING SUPPORT PARTNERS

Action Research to Improve Teaching and Learning at
Kilburn Park School



THE PROJECT

Better Reading Support Partners is a ten-week reading intervention

Marina Shah

Senior Teacher & Project Manager

BETTER READING SUPPORT PARTNERS (BRSP)

BRSP is a 'light-touch' wave 2 Intervention programme that aims to raise the attainment of children who can read but who lack fluency, understanding and enjoyment and may need support with decoding skills, vocabulary and/or comprehension. A Better Reading Support Partner is a trained teaching assistant or volunteer who gives regular individual support to children who have fallen behind in reading. The children read a range of texts in each session, and the Partner provides a relaxed environment that is designed to give them the time and space both to practise and apply their skills, and to talk about their reading with an interested adult. The sessions are designed to boost children's ability to apply phonics skills and to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. The Partner assesses children's progress regularly and discusses it with their class teacher, and is supported by a Link Teacher who manages the partnership in school, and acts as the main link with the school's senior leadership team, class teachers and the parents of the children involved.

WHY BRSP?

After several years of underperformance, Kilburn Park School has established itself as a school at which the majority of children make good or outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy. Attainment is consistently above national average for all pupils and in particular for those disadvantaged children who are entitled to pupil premium funding. Rapid progress has been achieved through quality first teaching, a focus on 'reading for enjoyment' and targeted interventions. To ensure that continuing improvements were maintained it was decided to provide additional training for support staff in supporting children's reading.

Over the past decade the school has established a highly skilled and well trained team of teaching assistants and teaching tutors. To increase both their expertise and effectiveness a decision was made to provide additional training in supporting children's achievement in reading.

TRAINING AND PREPARATION

Training for this project took place over three consecutive days in January 2016 and consisted of:

2 days training provided by 2 accredited BRSP trainers focusing on:

- Delivering BRSP sessions
- Understanding the reading process
- Talking with children about their reading and learning
- Selecting suitable texts

Two National Advisers from Edge Hill University who were involved in the development of the BRSP programme delivered the training.

A 1-day OPTIONAL refresher course on teaching phonics using 'Letters and Sounds' was delivered by 1 National Adviser.

OVERVIEW

The BRSP programme uses reading texts that are already available in the school. The texts, to be read over a ten-week period, should be from a wide range of genres. Book Bands were used to identify suitably challenging texts for each reader. The school purchased an online subscription to 'Bug Club' (Pearson Education) to increase the range and titles of texts available on the programme.

The programme was delivered over ten weeks with 3 x 15 minute sessions each week. It was important that the programme was delivered in full with no missed sessions or shortening of the length of the programme. Each session was arranged so that children did not miss the same lessons every week to ensure that they did not fall behind in other areas of learning. Staff delivering the interventions were given allocated time to plan and prepare for each session (15 minutes immediately following each reading session). In addition each member of staff was given a laptop that allowed them to access on-line reading materials and phonics software.

Each week, a diagnostic reading analysis was completed on each child to identify any weaknesses that were then addressed in the following weeks sessions.

Identification of pupils:

Pupils were identified for the BRSP programme through termly pupil progress meetings. Ten children across Key Stage 2 were selected and assessed to establish their suitability for the programme. Children who were on the SEND register or who were within 24 months of learning English were not considered for the programme.

To establish a baseline level to measure progress against, the New Salford Sentence Reading Test was used. This provided standardised data on reading and comprehension ages. At the end of the programme a different version of the test was used to provide 'exit data' to allow progress to be measured. The reading and comprehension ages of three children not involved in the programme were also measured to determine whether the value-added justified the cost of the programme and the time out of class for both the pupils and staff delivering the programme.

At the end of the programme both children and teachers were surveyed.

Note: Children were assessed at the mid-point of the programme and progress in comprehension skills was relatively poor

As part of the reading process training the staff explored how comprehension skills develop before reading, during reading and after reading. The importance of asking open questions to clarify and deepen understanding was explained in a practical way.

Section 11 on pages 25 & 26 of the handbook provides many samples of asking questions to promote understanding.

The progress in comprehension 'picked up' by the end-point assessments.

RESULTS

Baseline and exit scores

Pupil Data			Baseline Assessments		Exit Assessments		Progress Data	
Name	Year	Chrono age	Reading	Comprehension	Reading	Comprehension	Reading	Comprehension
YF	3	8;03	7;01	5;06	7;11	7;03	+10	+21
KB	4	9;04	8;01	8;09	9;07	9;04	+18	+7
CP	3	7;06	5;06	6;03	6;08	6;08	+14	+5
SA	3	8;00	5;04	5;10	7;06	7;03	+26	+17
HP*	6	10;07	6;11	5;10	7;06	6;08	+7	+10
AA	4	8;09	7;10	8;02	9;06	9;04	+20	+14
AP*	4	8;06	6;05	5;06	7;00	7;03	+7	+21
AA	3	7;10	6;10	7;09	7;09	8;02	+11	+5
HA	5	9;07	6;10	5;04	7;11	8;02	+13	+32
MA	3	8;00	7;10	7;03	9;10	9;03	+24	+24
Average progress (in months)							+15.0	+15.6

Control Data (Three children not involved in the programme)

Pupil Data			Baseline Assessments		Exit Assessments		Progress Data	
Name	Year	Chrono age	Reading	Comprehension	Reading	Comprehension	Reading	Comprehension
HF	4	8;07	10;06	9;04	10;08	9;08	+2	+4
AEJ	3	7;09	7;05	7;07	7;11	8;02	+6	+7
SS	3	7;10	8;05	8;09	8;08	9;04	+3	+7

Results of Surveys

The **pupil surveys** showed a high level of improvement in the following areas:

- **Enjoyment** of reading
- Greater **confidence** in decoding unfamiliar words
- **Willingness** to take part in whole class reading
- Ability to **talk and answer questions** about what they have read

The **teacher surveys** were all very positive and the following areas came out as greatly improved:

- **Taking an active part** in reading activities
- **Increasingly prepared** to read something unfamiliar
- **Continuing to read** even when faced with challenging texts
- **Confidence** in talking about what they have read
- **Enjoyment** in reading

During the programme, staff were subjected to monitoring using the school's very rigorous systems of assessing the quality of teaching and learning. The majority of sessions observed were judged to be **outstanding**. Staff are also transferring the skills learnt from delivering the BRSP programme across all lessons throughout the school.

****It was interesting to note that these children made less progress in reading than their peers. Both are relatively new to the country and at a comparatively early stage of learning English. This confirms the BRSP guidance that the programme is not intended for EAL or SEND learners.***

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the results at the end of the first wave of the programme concludes that:

- This is a **very effective** reading intervention
- BRSP pupils are making accelerated and outstanding progress in reading compared to others
- BRSP pupils are more confident in class and are actively taking part across all lessons
- An unexpected, but very positive, outcome of the programme is that pupils are building more resilience in their learning and are willing to 'take a risk' in lessons.
- BRSP pupils are closing the gap between themselves and their peers in reading and are less likely to be designated as having special educational needs in the future.

Provision for reading across the school has been further improved through the BRSP programme.

There are high levels of progress made by pupils in the programme and an established core team of professionals who are able to deliver a high quality wave 2 intervention that can be delivered three times per year for many years to come.

This programme provides excellent value for money.

NEXT STEPS

- The BRSP programme to become a permanent wave 2 intervention strategy addressing the needs of children at risk of underachieving in reading at key stage 2.
- As time progresses, the focus of the BRSP programme will be on new arrivals to the school either at the start of Year 3 or through in-year admissions
- There will be an opportunity for pupils to receive an additional wave or waves of BRSP support as they progress through the school.