Using research evidence in SPP improvement workshops

Case Study One - Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Workshop context:

Leaders at this large primary school asked the review team to seek evidence regarding the extent to which AfL practice was consistently applied throughout the school. The school has ambitions to further embed AfL practice and wished to establish which aspects of practice were well understood by all concerned. They also wanted to establish where good practice already existed and where there were gaps so that they could build on knowledge in the further development of AfL practice in the next academic year.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, the team suggested that the workshop should explore:

- what is already working well with regard to AfL, drawing in teacher and teaching assistant perspectives
- how the ambition for AfL could be further communicated to all stakeholders
- how the planning, review and feedback systems in the school could be further improved to support AfL

The workshop audience is the SLT, whole teaching staff team plus the HLTA for each year group (approx. 38 people). It is planned to be a 90-minute session at the end of the school day. The broad outcomes of the review have been shared with all staff prior to the workshop.

Research used:

Extract from 'Evidence Review – Our Impact – Breadth of Pedagogical Skill' (p9).
(See also Peer Review Templates and Resources.)

Ensuring assessment practices support learning

Assessment for learning is now a core part of classroom practice. There is a range of global evidence on the use of assessment models for learning that schools can consult. Husbands, C and Pearce, J (2012), cite AfL as one of the nine characteristics of highly effective pedagogy. Education Development Trust's *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) reviewed the international literature and then set out six guidelines for consideration to ensure that assessment for learning is successful in schools. In summary, schools should:

1. Implement a whole-school and whole-community commitment to the AfL approach.
2. Generate the right conditions for an adequate dissemination of AfL through measures such as creating a regular space and time for teachers to reflect and discuss with their colleagues, and ensuring a shift in the assessment culture of the school.
3. Inform and explain the shift to all stakeholders, including pupils and parents.
4. Ensure teachers attend well-developed and recognised professional development programmes so they develop appropriate skills and a flexibility of approach.
5. Study pupils' perspectives and attitudes and incorporate their evidence into the development and implementation of AfL, if necessary.

6. Advocate and enable further research on the effects of AfL on a range of pupil educational outcomes, such as academic self-concept, attainment, motivation and engagement behaviour in class.[1]

Activity to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up

This workshop would need to take place in a large room with tables for group work and space to move around to access flip charts on the walls. Workshop participants are given red, orange and green post-it notes. Initially, they are asked to work in year group teams with SLT members dispersed among the groups. The six guidelines from the research are displayed (individually) on six large flip chart sheets at various locations in the room. The HT introduces the facilitators and reminds colleagues briefly of the outcomes of the review and the purpose and style of the workshop.

Step 1: 10-minute brainstorm to identify what is working really well (green), what is working so-so (orange) and what is not yet working well (red) in relation to AfL practice.

Step 2: ICs then introduce the six guidelines from the research.

Step 3: Participants are then asked to move their post-it notes to one of the flip chart sheets considering, for example, if their post-it note is related to the time available for AfL practices.

Step 4: Participants are then asked to work in mixed year group teams (6 teams) with each team taking on one of the guidelines sheets, which will now potentially have red, orange and green post-it notes attached.

Step 5: Each team is then tasked with identifying possible actions to address the orange and red post-it note issues.

Step 6: ICs explain/demonstrate a **prioritisation matrix**. Next, each team completes a prioritisation matrix to identify which of the actions that they have identified would have the greatest impact and be easiest to implement.

Step 7: Photographs are taken of all post-it notes and prioritisation matrices as a record of the meeting.

Step 8: Each team feeds back the key action that they believe should be taken from their discussion.

Step 9: The ICs draw together the key actions identified by each group and invite the participants to agree next steps for the school.

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Case Study Two – Pupil Premium

Workshop context:

Leaders at this medium sized primary school asked the review team to seek evidence regarding the extent to which their plans for pupil premium funding were having an impact on eligible pupils. Their hunch was that despite a broadly similar approach being used the practice was inconsistent across the school and they were keen to understand why.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, which agreed with the school's view of inconsistency in provision and outcomes for PP eligible pupils, the review team suggested that workshop should explore where the strategies were working well and the factors that had led to this success. In particular, the review team suggested exploring:

- How additional support staff time was being used across the school
- The additional training and support that may be needed for staff
- How the additional support time allocated to these pupils could be more consistently woven into the teaching & learning experienced by the whole class rather than always used for withdrawal from the lesson.

The workshop audience is SLT of the school, all teachers and teaching assistants who work directly with pupils eligible for pupil premium. (approx. 20 people).

Research used:
'Evidence Review – Our Impact – Collecting and Using Data'

Extract from 'Supporting the attainment of disadvantaged pupils: articulating success and good practice', DfE NFER 2015 (pages 71 to 73).

4.3 Implementing the same strategies differently
Staff in more successful schools emphasised that there is no simple answer to helping disadvantaged pupils achieve success. None of the headteachers and senior leaders in more successful schools felt able to identify a single approach that they believed had led to raising attainment among disadvantaged pupils. Both the survey and the interviews found that most schools were using a range of strategies, many of which are recommended by the Sutton Trust/EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit. **However, there appeared to be some differences in the way more and less successful schools were using the same strategies.**

Table 3 provides some examples of how more and less successful schools were adopting similar strategies but differed in the depth, quality and detail of implementation.

Table 3 – Differences in how schools were adopting the same strategies

Strategy: Small group additional teaching

- Less successful school: Struggling pupils are taken out of English lessons to work on an online literacy programme, supervised by a TA who has received no specific training.
- More successful school: Pupils with similar needs are withdrawn from alternating non-core curriculum lessons for tailored support from a TA trained in literacy interventions.

Strategy: Improving feedback between teachers and pupils

- Less successful school: Teachers give pupils grades for their work.
- More successful school: The school has developed detailed marking schemes that identify each pupil's strengths, areas to focus on and next steps. Pupils have time allotted during the lesson or tutor time to respond to the feedback and discuss it with teachers.

Strategy: Metacognitive/independent learning

- Less successful school: 'Metacognition - what's that? I imagine we're probably doing it.'
- More successful school: All staff are trained in Assessment for Learning, encouraging pupils to think through what and how they are learning, and making links between their learning in different subjects.

Strategy: Parental involvement

- Less successful school: Staff provide pupils with homework books showing the day's assignments. Pupils take the book home. There is space for teachers and parents to leave comments about pupils' progress.
- More successful school: Higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) go to community centres to talk to parents about the importance of learning and aspirations. They show parents the curriculum pupils are covering and how to support their child.

The study identified a few differences between more and less successful schools in relation to their choice of strategies. More successful schools tended to place more emphasis on teaching and learning strategies (in addition to emotional/social support and providing additional resources). They also tended to put more emphasis on honing their Assessment for Learning systems, so they were straightforward to administer, provided clear feedback for pupils and contributed to their data systems. In addition, several interviewees in the more successful schools said they focused on improving pupils' ability to learn through metacognitive strategies, sometimes before addressing subject-specific problems through additional teaching (this reflects the finding from the survey analysis reported in Chapter 3).

Interviewees from more successful schools said they had adapted interventions or developed new ones based on their experience and understanding of what they were trying to achieve. Their adaptations and developments were based on clear use of evidence, direct experience and observations of the initiative in practice. Less successful schools were more likely to be using 'off the shelf' interventions and less likely to be deviating from the prescribed approach. Leaders in more successful schools outlined a set of approaches at three levels (whole-school; strategies for underperforming pupils; and strategies specifically targeted at pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds), consistent with the findings of previous research into effective leadership in using the pupil premium (Rea *et al*., 2013). This demonstrates that it is not simply implementing targeted strategies that leads to success, but that the effectiveness of such strategies relies on them being embedded in a whole-school ethos of aspiration and attainment.

Activity to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up

This workshop would need to take place in a reasonably large room with tables for group work and space to move around to access flip charts on the walls. The members of staff have already had some feedback on the review and are aware of the focus for the workshop. The HT introduces the ICs and reminds colleagues of the outcomes of the review and the purpose and style of the workshop. Ideally, the short extract from the DfE/NFER report is circulated in advance to attendees as pre-reading.

Step 1: Teachers and teaching assistants from each year group work as a group for this activity. The ICs lead a 10-minute brainstorm to collect examples of how pupils eligible for pupil premium are currently being supported in their year group.

Step 2: ICs re-introduce the short extract from the DFE/NFER report, which examines how different schools adopted the same strategies differently with different outcomes, using a reading protocol activity for 10 minutes in groups of five. Plenary of key points to be gathered by ICs.

Step 3: Year groups now pair up to compare the strategies that they currently use and identify similarities and differences in how those strategies are used, creating a flip chart to display and share with the group. (approx. 30 mins)

Step 4: **Dotocracy activity** to identify which of these strategies the school should further refine and improve. (5 mins)

Step 5: Participants are asked to identify the top two or three ideas and then split into groups again with a representative from a mixture of year groups. **Radiant thinking** activity to respond to the question, ‘How can we…’ for the ideas selected, e.g. how can we better integrate focused PP support into classroom practice?

Step 6: Each group feeds back the key action that they believe should be taken forward from their discussions.

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Case Study Three

Workshop context:

Leaders at this medium-sized secondary school asked the review team to seek evidence regarding the extent to which middle leaders hold colleagues to account for their impact on outcomes. The school had restructured middle leadership earlier in the year and there are a significant number of colleagues new to the role this academic year.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, the team suggested that the workshop should explore:

- the areas of their leadership role in which middle leaders felt most confident/most challenged
- the potential strategies to grow confidence and skill/knowledge in these areas

The workshop audience is middle leaders throughout the school and the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for leadership support and development in the school. The Principal has deliberately chosen not to attend the session suggesting that the middle leaders may feel more confident to be more honest about their roles and associated challenges in her absence.

Research used:
Extract from 'The key role of middle leaders - an Ofsted perspective' (Mike Cladingbowl 2013)

What does Ofsted look for in an outstanding middle leader?

High quality middle leadership is about more than managing a subject or an aspect of school life. Middle leaders are enthusiasts for their subject, good managers and administrators - but to be truly effective they embrace the more challenging characteristics of leadership, which are to do with vision, strategy and a drive towards improvement.

There are a number of consistent messages here running through recent Ofsted subject reports, including the importance of:

- senior leaders having a high regard for the subject and placing it at the heart of the drive for improvement
- subject leaders modelling best practice and challenging colleagues to explore and innovate
- having a well-articulated, ambitious vision based on high expectations for all pupils and an excellent understanding of current developments and thinking in the subject
- high quality monitoring, self-evaluation and action planning clearly focused on improving standards and the quality of pupils' learning
- consistent use of evidence about pupils' performance as the basis for high quality planning and self-assessment
- provision of regular and well-focused training for all those involved in teaching the subject in order to foster and share best practice
- effective use of resources to support excellent teaching and learning

Activity to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up
This workshop would need to take place in a large room with tables for group work and space to move around to access flip charts on the walls. The middle leaders attending the workshop have been asked to read the 3-page article 'The key role of middle leaders – an Ofsted perspective', (Mike Cladingbowl, 2013) in advance of the session.

Step 1: Reading protocol. Working in groups of four, with each person having 3 minutes of uninterrupted contribution to share the element of the article that most resonated for them in their role. (15 mins including task set up)

Step 2: Groups are then given a set of cards with each card describing an element of the middle leader role, e.g. modelling high quality teaching in the subject. They are invited to place these cards on a matrix as in the diagram below. (25 mins)

Confident but low skills	Confident and skilled
Low confidence and low skill	Low confidence and skilled

Step 3: Plenary to draw together any common development themes that have emerged. (10 mins)

Step 4: Depending on how many development themes have emerged, the ICs may need to ask the group to prioritise. This could be achieved using a **diamond nine.**

Step 5: Working on priorities using the **fishbone analysis** tool to explore issues.

Step 6: Using the output from fishbone analysis to begin to identify possible actions to address the identified issues.

Step 7: Agreeing priorities for action.

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Case Study Four – Feedback and Marking

Workshop context:

Leaders at this two-form entry primary school had identified that, over time, a plethora of well-intentioned approaches to providing verbal and written feedback for learners had become burdensome for teachers and learning support staff. As the range of approaches accumulated, the school leaders felt they had lost sight of which were the most effective and therefore asked the review team to help them understand which approaches were having the greatest impact. They wanted to understand this from the perspective of teachers, learning support assistants and the pupils.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, the team suggested that the workshop should explore:

- the range of verbal and written approaches to feedback, specifically in response to pupils' writing, as this was where the review team saw the greatest range and diversity of approaches
- how pupils' self-assessment and peer assessment approaches compliment feedback from adults

The workshop audience is the whole-school teaching and learning support staff, with a total number of approximately 30 people. It is planned to be a 120-minute session as part of a school INSET day.

Research used:
Extract from '[*Evidence Review – Looking Inward – Effective Teaching*]*' (p28)*

Feedback to learners is, according to the EEF toolkit, among the most cost-effective and impactful techniques that teachers can use to support pupil learning[2]. This is not the same as marking pupils' work. EEF say that their evidence suggests that good feedback should:

- be specific, accurate and clear
- encourage and support further effort
- be given sparingly so that it is meaningful
- provide specific guidance on how to improve and not just tell students when they are wrong
- be supported with effective professional development for teachers
- be used for the most important tasks only
- be done consistently so pupils get used to it and the expectations of their response to it

This workshop will also refer to the EEF publications referred to above; *A marked improvement – A review of the evidence on written marking (April 2016)*

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[2] EEF, 2016

Activity to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up
This workshop would need to take place in a large room with tables for group work and space to move around to access flip charts on the walls.

Step 1: Introduction to the workshop by the HT of the school who explains that the focus is on all forms of feedback on pupils' writing. The ambition of the workshop is to enable the school to streamline processes, ensuring that they adopt the most effective and manageable processes.

Step 2: ICs introduce the diagram from the EEF report representing different forms of verbal and written feedback and the relationship between marking and feedback.

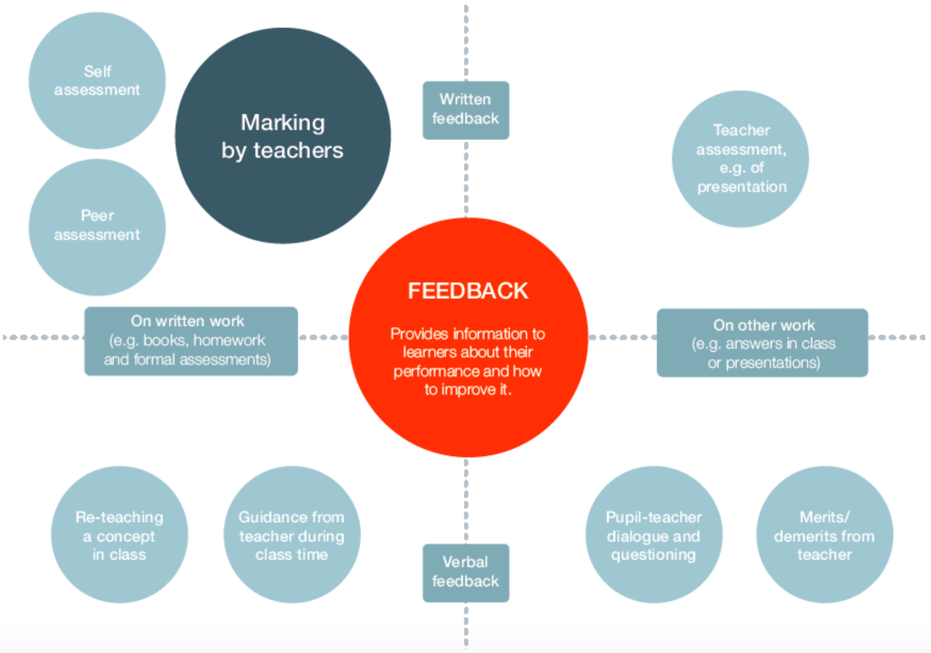
Self assessment
Marking by teachers
Written feedback
Teacher assessment, e.g. of presentation
Peer assessment
FEEDBACK
Provides information to learners about their performance and how to improve it.
On written work (e.g. books, homework and formal assessments)
On other work (e.g. answers in class or presentations)
Re-teaching a concept in class
Guidance from teacher during class time
Verbal feedback
Pupil-teacher dialogue and questioning
Merits/ demerits from teacher

Figure 1. Examples of different forms of feedback.

Step 3: Working in small groups (with staff from each KS represented in each), colleagues are invited to populate a similar diagram drawn on a flip chart with the practices that they currently use in relation to feedback and marking on pupils' writing.

Step 4: The flip charts are displayed on the wall and the staff teams are invited to conduct a gallery walk to review the other groups' work. The flip charts are then cut into the four sections.

Step 5: Next, the whole group is split into four new groups. Each group takes responsibility for one of the quadrants of the flip chart, reviewing all contributions. They are tasked with summarising the practices described onto postcards.

Step 6: The groups now place the cards on a prioritisation matrix that considers impact and how manageable the approach is.

Step 7: Each of the four groups feed back to the rest of the group, summarising which approaches are deemed to be the most effective and least onerous.

Step 8: ICs invite the groups to reflect on who will take responsibility for pulling together the outcomes of this activity into a short and simple guide to feedback and marking for writing.

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Case Study Five - Writing

SPP Theme: Looking Inwards

Dimension: **Effective Teaching**

Review question(s):

- To what extent are writing composition strategies taught, modelled and supported?
- To what extent are pupils developing transcription and sentence composition skills through extensive practice?

Workshop context

Leaders at this primary school federation, recently created by the bringing together of one-form entry infant and junior schools, identified writing as the area of focus for their review. The bringing together of the staff across KS1 and KS2 had identified areas of inconsistency in the teaching and assessment of writing, and the new leadership team was particularly keen to use evidence-based practice to inform their review and action-planning.

The review team looked at selected examples of pupils' writing, met with the subject leader for English (newly appointed and also KS1 lead), spent time in literacy lessons throughout the school, looked at writing across the curriculum (for example, in foundation subjects and project work), met with pupil groups and reviewed planning.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, the team suggested that the workshop could explore:

- how to ensure consistency of high expectation for writing throughout the school.
- how to develop a clearer understanding for all staff of the key elements in the teaching of writing

The workshop audience is the whole staff, including teaching assistants.

Research used

EEF Guidance reports – *KS1 Literacy, September 2016* and *KS2 Literacy, April 2017*.

See attached summary poster.

Activity to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up
This workshop would need to take place in a large room with tables for group work and space to move around to access flip charts on the walls. The HT had also requested that the workshop formed part of an INSET day at the school, so it was based on having 2.5 hours available. As the HT of the school was particularly keen to engage the staff in evidence-based research, it had been agreed that a short pre-reading task would be set. The KS1 teachers had received the writing section of the KS2 guidance report, while the KS2 staff had received the equivalent sections from the KS1 report. The ICs had planned this with the HT. Colleagues were given this text one week prior to the workshop.

Step 1: The HT to set the scene for the workshop and thank staff for their engagement with the review process. The role of the IC is explained.

Step 2: **RAG Rating** activity. Colleagues were invited to contribute to a brainstorm reflecting in cross phase groups on the following in relation to teaching of writing:

Green post-it notes: What do we currently do well?
Orange post-it notes: What do we do that's okay, but we could tweak to improve?
Red post it-notes: What could we improve?

Step 3: Working in small groups with a mixture of KS1 and KS2 staff in each, participants refer back to the extracts from the EEF KS1 and KS2 literacy guidance on writing, considering links to the post-it notes they have produced.

Step 4: The groups identify a theme for improvement from their discussion.

Step 5: The groups are invited to explore the possible solutions to these challenges using a **Radiant Thinking** approach.

Step 6: Key actions from each group are recorded and, if required, prioritised using a **Dotocracy** approach.

Step 7: The ICs pull together a summary of the workshop and invite the school team to identify what is going to happen next to take forward some of these suggestions. This is recorded by the English subject leader.

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Case Study Six

Workshop context:

Leaders at this three-form entry junior school had identified that attainment and progress in maths was significantly weaker than in literacy for the same groups of pupils. Their own self-evaluation, drawing on feedback from staff including teachers and teaching assistants, classroom observations and an audit of planning had identified a number of lines of enquiry for the review. Subject knowledge and confidence in teaching mathematical concepts, understanding pupil misconceptions and identifying appropriate interventions appeared to be a concern. This also raised questions about the modelling and teaching of problem-solving strategies.

The review team found that there were inconsistencies in the teaching of key concepts in mathematics that may be contributing to confusion for pupils. During the review, some teachers readily shared that they lacked confidence in teaching maths. Where pupils have been identified for further intervention in maths there was a lack of structure and overview of key misconceptions to inform the intervention. Interventions tended to be lengthy and lacked specific focus.

Based on the evidence collected during the review, the team suggested that the workshop could explore these three areas:

- how gaps in teacher subject knowledge might be addressed
- how resources and tasks for problem-solving could be developed and more widely understood and used
- how misconceptions could be addressed by more specific short-term interventions

The workshop audience is all teachers in years 3 to 6, teaching assistants who support maths, the SENDCo and the SLT of the school.

Research Evidence Reference:
EEF Guidance Report – *Maths in KS2 and 3, November 2017*

See summary poster attached.

Activities to engage with the research in the workshop:

Set up
This workshop was scheduled to take place in the classroom of the maths subject leader and Year 5 teacher.

Step 1: The HT and maths subject leader introduce the workshop and relate it back to the review day. Staff are thanked for their honesty and willingness to contribute to the review. The role of the ICs in facilitating the workshop is explained.

Step 2: ICs share the three key areas that the workshop will begin to address and reiterate that this is a solution-focused approach.

Three key areas:
- Confidence in the teaching of maths
- Teaching problem-solving

- More effective short-term interventions to address misconceptions

Step 3: Exploring the key areas in more depth - The group is split into 3 smaller groups, with each year group and SLT represented in each group. The groups work on a large sheet of paper to complete a fishbone analysis of their theme.

Step 4: After the initial groups have had some time to develop the fishbone analysis, the groups rotate so that they can add to each other's work.

Step 5: ICs introduce the EEF Maths Guidance report.

The three groups are given a short extract from the report relevant to their area of challenge, e.g. the sections beginning on pages 14, 24 and 28.

The one-minute reading protocol is explained to the group. Groups are given 5 to 10 minutes to read and annotate their extract. Then the reading protocol is followed where colleagues have one minute to share their reflections. Each person contributes twice. Finally, the group summarises the key learning from their reading that they should pay attention to. These are written on flip charts and displayed.

Step 6: The three groups now take a solution-focused approach using radiant thinking and the starter questions below:

- How can we ensure we all feel equally confident in the teaching of maths?
- How can we get better at teaching problem-solving?
- How can we design more effective, short-term interventions?

In doing so, they reference the two previous activities, e.g. the issues that surfaced from the fishbone analysis and the ideas they extracted from the EEF guidance.

Step 7: Prioritising and deciding on actions - Dotocracy activity.

Each person is given 10 sticky dots. They visit the large radiant thinking recording sheets and vote for the key actions that they feel will ensure the greatest impact.

Step 8: The ICs draw the session together and secure agreement from the groups as to who is going to take away the output from workshop and develop an action plan. They also ask for feedback on their workshop and note anything that has emerged from the workshop that might be relevant for the wider partnership.