

FINDINGS SO FAR:

December 2017 (updated for February 2018)

- All staff involved have found participation extremely beneficial. The opportunity to step outside our own phases and visit other sectors has been insightful, inspirational and informative.
- Establishing regular and open face-to-face communication between the primary and secondary schools has really helped. Teachers feel they understand the other sector better. Trust is stronger.
- A real eye-opener was a discussion around curriculum time devoted to English. Pupils receive daily English input at primary (with 90 minutes often devoted to reading, writing, handwriting, spelling and grammar). At KS3, pupils typically study English for 3 hours per week. This means there is often little time to devote to the discrete teaching of basic skills.
- Having different teachers throughout the day makes it much more difficult to ensure on consistency; this impacts significantly on the standard of writing and standards of presentation.
- Some primary colleagues are concerned about pupils' speech and language skills (due to less interaction, more use of technology, etc.) – this is being addressed in some schools using 'Talk for Writing' approaches. This could be used in secondary to engage some boys.
- Preliminary interrogation of some school data suggests that term of birth continues to have an impact on attainment – we will explore the link between this and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in transition from KS2 to KS3.
- Some secondary teachers were surprised by the requirements of the 'expected standard' at KS2.
- 'Growth mindset' training was a huge success with many teachers adapting their practices in the subsequent weeks. The Deputy Heads at St Mary's high school are eager to ensure these strategies are adopted across the whole school.

Recommendations (Primary)

- Consider how UKS2 teaching can be organised to make the changes encountered at secondary easier. E.g. Personal organisation, range of teachers, etc.
- Maximise the impact of curriculum time in June and July (after SATS) using 'retrieval practice' learning approaches to ensure that pupils are better able to remember all they have learnt. If successful, these approaches could be continued in Year 7 so that pupils consolidate learning from KS2 on a regular basis.
- Introduce discrete teaching about the brain, praise effort (not ability) and adopt a wide range of strategies to support children in developing a growth mindset from a young age.

Recommendations (Secondary)

- Find space within the curriculum that allows more time for the discrete teaching of core English skills (grammar, spelling, punctuation, handwriting, etc.). This may be achieved by deploying staff more strategically (e.g. teaching assistants, Year 7 catch-up teachers).
- Upskill secondary teachers (typically non-English specialists) who are less confident in correcting pupils Literacy errors. This will pave the way for improved consistency in writing across the curriculum. Spring term training delivered by primary colleagues will begin to address this.
- Find ways to reinforce consistent standards and high expectations for writing and presentation across all curriculum areas. One idea is to use 'marking ladders' or 'checklists' in all subject areas so children understand what is expected.
- Use cold tasks (formative assessment) and hot tasks (summative assessment) to measure progress in writing.
- Continue to teach children about how the brain works so they understand the cognitive science underpinning growth mindset and can adopt such a belief about their own potential.