

# 2020 learning review

Lessons from seven schools on how to  
maximise impact in education



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## Introduction from the Managing Director

I am delighted to present this series of case studies from seven remarkable schools on how to maximise educational impact.

We first began working with Challenge Partners in 2017. Having come to them with a vision of what we were trying to achieve with ImpactEd, they helped us translate that into a model for partnering with schools that would function in the real world, and achieve our shared vision of reducing inequalities in education while improving the system overall.

We started ImpactEd with a relatively simple question: could we help schools to more effectively evaluate the impact of what they do, so that they could prioritise what makes the biggest difference on life chances and outcomes for young people? Done well, this could ensure that teachers' time is used in the best way possible, and help schools decide where to invest their limited resources. More importantly, this would ultimately result in young people that were better supported to thrive, flourish and excel, both in and out of exams.

Yet achieving change in educational contexts is not easy. And with real limitations on school capacity, time and expertise – teachers aren't researchers, and we can't expect them all to be so – we knew we had to develop a model that could work within the busy realities of school life, while moving practice forward.

There aren't any silver bullets to addressing those challenges. Getting these things right is inevitably a question of trialling things out, receiving feedback, refining and trying again. With Challenge Partners having been instrumental in this co-design process – including helping to convene our first cohort of 10 partner schools – it's fantastic to see the fruits of this effort emerging within their network.

Now having moved beyond those first start-up days, I'm delighted to share these narratives from schools that have put maximising educational impact at the heart of what they do. Whether it's been collaborating with us to develop the evidence base for how to increase student well-being and resilience, or evaluating the most effective ways to close entrenched gaps in performance at GCSE, these stories from the Challenge Partners network bear testament to an approach to school improvement that is reflective and not accountability-based, evidence-informed but also practitioner-led. We hope they provide you with inspiration to take back to your own context.

*Owen Carter*

**Owen Carter**  
Co-Founder and Managing Director, ImpactEd



## Foreword from Dr Kate Chhatwal, CEO, Challenge Partners

Challenge Partners was established in 2011 to facilitate collaboration and challenge between schools so that every child can benefit from the combined wisdom of the system.

Our belief is that many of the answers to the challenges schools face already exist, but are too often locked up in individual phases, departments, schools and trusts. Our job is to liberate them, capturing and sharing them so that excellent practice becomes common practice.

Where ready answers don't exist - to intractable problems like the disadvantage gap, for example - our task is to facilitate the collaboration and disciplined innovation which generates new knowledge and expertise. Before classifying emergent practice as wisdom worthy of sharing, we need to be sure *that* it works, *where* it works, and *how* it works, so that others can apply and reap the benefits of that knowledge for their school communities.

We are proud to be a founding partner of ImpactEd and that a group of our schools were able to work with Owen Carter and his team to develop and refine their model of school-based evaluation. Only through carefully planned evaluation can schools truly understand what is most effective, and learn from it, and ImpactEd's methodology enables schools to do this in a manageable, yet highly effective, way. This is important for the whole sector if we are to ensure our schools continuously improve themselves, each other and the life chances of the children they serve.

As our partnership with ImpactEd continues to develop, we hold ourselves to the same standard as our schools; we are innovating with discipline, testing, refining, testing again and sharing what we learn. This report marks an important step in our shared commitment to capture and disseminate knowledge about evidence-based practice so all can benefit. We hope you find it valuable and welcome your feedback so we may continue to test, refine and test again our approach to knowledge generation and exchange.

**Dr Kate Chhatwal OBE**  
Chief Executive, Challenge Partners



## Our Mission

To improve pupil outcomes and life chances by addressing the evaluation deficit in education.

## About us

ImpactEd is a non-profit organisation that exists to improve pupil outcomes and life chances by addressing the evaluation deficit. We help schools to evaluate, understand and improve the impact of the programmes they run. We do this through partnership to build capacity for research and evaluation, and our digital platform which makes monitoring and evaluation easy for schools.



## The Challenge

# £4 billion

ANNUAL INTERVENTION SPEND BY  
ENGLISH SCHOOLS (INC STAFF TIME)



FROM 31 SCHOOLS  
INTERVIEWED, **JUST  
ONE** WAS CONFIDENT  
IN THEIR IMPACT  
EVALUATION

# 70%

IMPACT EVIDENCE  
RATED 'POOR'  
OR 'AVERAGE' BY  
PAUL HAMLYN  
FOUNDATION



## Why do we exist?

'What works' in education is not an easy question to answer. In schools we invest substantial time, money and energy in different initiatives and interventions to improve outcomes for pupils. These might range from trialling new teaching and learning approaches, to curriculum redesigns, to mentoring, academic or behaviour interventions.

Through a range of evaluations, we know that some of these changes will be incredibly effective. However, we also know that all too often such programmes can work against their intended aims. And it is often extremely challenging for schools to reliably evaluate the effect that different initiatives have on pupil outcomes.

We established ImpactEd to help schools and school groups better understand what is and isn't working in their context, giving them access to robust research methodologies to assess impact, and making evaluation quicker, easier and more effective.

## How we work



**Partnership:** We provide a tailored support and training programme that helps schools identify what it is they are trying to improve, how they are trying to do it, and ways in which they might measure this. Our in-school training and ongoing consultation builds staff capacity for research and evaluation.



**Platform:** Schools use our unique digital platform to make monitoring and evaluation easy to run, accessing reliable research methods for assessing impact on both academic achievement and a range of broader skills.



**Impact:** The platform generates live impact reports making it easy to understand what is working, where. We work with schools to discuss findings, informing evidence-based decisions about what is making the biggest difference to pupils, understanding what hasn't, and sharing successes.



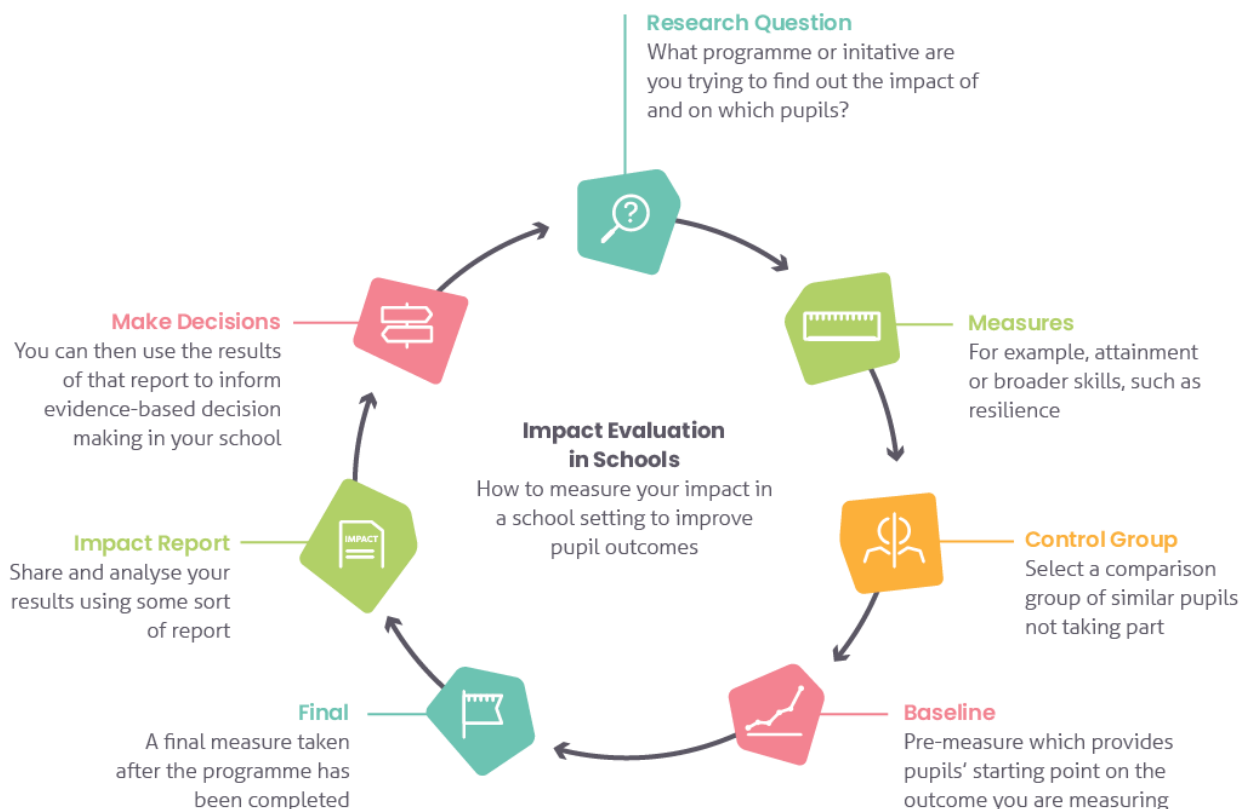
## About this report

This report has been put together based on a sample of Challenge Partners member schools who have worked with us to develop, deliver and evaluate projects aiming to achieve meaningful change at whole-school level. We have aimed to identify a sample of schools working across different phases, communities and contexts to illustrate how the fundamentals of evidence-informed practice can be achieved across a range of different settings.

Within each case study, we provide some context for the school, an outline of their main area of focus, and how we worked together to evaluate and learn from this process. Ultimately, we want impact evaluation to guide decision making, informing whether to expand, modify, or stop doing a programme or initiative. So we have tried to give particular attention to how schools have used evaluation findings – it's all well and good having evidence, but what's important is putting it to use.

All of these schools followed the inquiry cycle shown below, where we first identified an area of focus, then identified appropriate ways to evaluate it (typically over the course of an academic year, although sometimes in less time). We supported this through a hands-on partnership process, typically visiting schools at least twice throughout this journey and with regular check-in calls held remotely.

The schools in this report had a range of focuses and findings. We don't believe there is one single answer to the question of 'what works' to improve education for young people – what works is context-dependent, affected by how, what and when things are implemented, and who implements them. However, we do think there are common themes in what it takes to achieve systematic change in schools, and how impact evaluation can support that process. We outline a few of these below.



# Summary of findings

## 1. Planning for impact

Often in schools, we put impact last. We conduct some new project or programme, and then we look to understand its impact afterwards. In these schools, we saw a commitment to putting impact first – planning explicitly for implementation and being clear up front about the change they were hoping to see. At Keyham Lodge, baseline questionnaire data on pupil motivation and grit is used to target provision, and follow-up versions of those questionnaires are used to assess impact over time. In Rushey Mead Academy, the implementation of their 'PP Champions' scheme, focused on improving uptake in enrichment activity from more disadvantaged learners, was also accompanied by use of teacher case studies, questionnaires, and academic data to provide a holistic picture of what success might look like. This process helps use evidence as a formative part of school improvement, rather than something that is needed to justify the use of time or resources.

## 2. Learning from what doesn't work, as well as what does

The process of planning for impact evaluation was also accompanied by an understanding that this might point out areas of activity that weren't very successful, and that this is a positive thing. One school quoted Leonard Cohen to us: 'There is a crack in everything: that's how the light gets in' – the process of improvement was the priority. At The Reach Free School, we found that the explicit teaching of metacognitive concepts up-front was actually associated with lower improvements in metacognitive behaviours than in a control class. And at St Clement Danes School, the first year's implementation of a school-based study leave programme did not reduce achievement gaps between the target cohort and the rest of the year. Yet in these schools, these findings were used as part of a process of refinement – to discard certain elements, dig more deeply into why specific aspects were or weren't successful, and to guide the implementation of more effective strategies moving forwards.

## 3. A structure for sharing practice

Collaboration and sharing practice are terms often used in education, and sometimes mean a huge amount, and sometimes relatively little. Within these schools, we saw a commitment to sharing practice purposefully and designing structures around this, rather than relying on anecdote or chance meetings. In Hayes School, staff and pupil resources for developing evidence-informed learning are all shared in an open-access blog and modelled through videos and sketchnotes, which are then reinforced at staff meetings (hayestl.com). At The Reach Free School, staff take part in formal research networks such as HertsCam (led by the University of Cambridge), and run internal TeachMeets on a regular basis – ImpactEd projects were presented at these to provide a structure for how these lessons could be shared. Being part of the Challenge Partners network, these schools were also all more likely to participate in external partnerships and seek to share lessons outside their own school as well as within it.



#### 4. Impact meaning more than grades alone

All these schools saw development of pupil skills and attributes beyond academic attainment alone as being at the centre of their mission. Across Bengeworth MAT, they assess the impact of the full range of interventions they run – some of which have a social-emotional focus, some of which are academically focused, and many of which are both. Particularly for pupils with SEN or other learning needs, identified barriers were often seen as being around ability to self-regulate, motivation and wellbeing, as much as literacy and numeracy. This was echoed in Moorfield Community Primary School, where the use of outdoor learning was seen as serving both academic achievement and the development of a wider range of competencies. For Keyham Lodge School, this way of working has become core to what they do through their cross-curriculum 'My Skills' programme aimed to develop pupils' resilience. It can be easy to get caught up in dichotomies between knowledge and skills. But overwhelmingly across our partner schools we've found a pragmatism which acknowledges the importance and inseparability of both.

#### 5. Combining evidence and professional wisdom

Although we work with schools to help them better assess impact, and learn from this, we also encourage them to develop a healthy scepticism too. The findings of any one trial or study will often be inconclusive and should be weighed against other factors, including feedback, ease of implementation and unintended effects (that may not be directly measurable). These schools saw evidence as the start of a conversation, not the end of one, and often a source of questions as well as answers. In Rushey Mead Academy, the findings from impact measures (attainment, attendance, pupil questionnaire) were also weighed against teacher observation, more informal feedback, and what external research evidence suggested were 'best bets'. St Clement Danes talk about impact evidence as a 'framework' for staff to be more deliberate and specific about what they were trying to achieve, but as one which informs professional judgement rather than just prescribing to teachers what they should do. And in Moorfield Primary School there was particular attention to not just 'headline' impact, but what this meant in practice for specific groups and individuals.

#### 6. Building capacity for evaluation at all levels

The drivers for effective impact evaluation can often be at leadership level: reporting to governors or analysing Pupil Premium spend, for instance. Yet where this process has been most successful, it builds evaluation capacity at all levels, balancing whole-school projects linking directly to school development plans with equipping teachers and middle leaders to be more reflective about their work in general. Hayes School's work on developing evidence-based revision strategies at Year 11 shows the characteristics of a successful whole-school evaluation project: a clear rationale coupled with the potential for better understanding of successes/challenges to directly influence outcomes and contribute to strategic planning (with a similar scheme now being rolled out in Year 13). Yet in Bengeworth MAT, we have also seen the advantages of extending this approach across teaching staff, with impact becoming part of the common language and forming a basis for discussion in staff meetings. The combination of rigorous evaluation of high-priority projects with developing evaluation capability across all staff is what is likely to make the biggest difference in the long-run.



# Learning from seven schools

## About the case studies

These case studies showcase examples of learning and practice from seven schools in the Challenge Partners network. Although we have chosen schools that have been working with us long enough to show a developing approach to impact evidence over time, they deliberately represent schools from a range of different contexts with varied challenges – one of these schools serves 44 pupils, and another 1,780.

In addition to diversity in context, the schools' decisions on where to focus their impact evaluation efforts are similarly varied. However, what is consistent is a clear vision for how evaluation can support school development plans and be used to ultimately inform more effective decision making about how to improve outcomes for pupils. We've found this process is one that can be widely replicated across a range of different school contexts.

## How to use this document

The examples shown in the case studies may not reflect your context exactly, but as you read through, we would encourage you to consider if any elements of practice showcased could be applied in your setting. Some prompts that might help with this process are:

- ▶ In which aspects is this school similar to mine, and which different? Compare and contrast both on surface factors (phase, size, location, demographics) and the deeper ones (ethos, values) where possible.
- ▶ Focus more on the diagnosis of the problem rather than just the solution. Are the challenges the school has identified similar to mine, even if their solution might be different?
- ▶ Key words: do the phrases and vocabulary of each school feel similar or different to yours? One leader we spoke to described this as the 'internal shorthand' of a school.



To be connected to any of these schools, or to download resources supporting you with adopting an impact evaluation process in your own school, please get in touch with us directly at [hello@impactd.org.uk](mailto:hello@impactd.org.uk)

# Bengeworth Multi-Academy Trust

## Key information

**Location**

Evesham, Worcestershire

**School type**

Multi-Academy Trust

**Stage of education**

Primary, 2 schools

**Number on roll**

530 (Bengeworth CE); 44 (Bretforton Village School)

## Supporting a whole-Trust culture of impact

ImpactEd began working with Bengeworth CE Primary Academy in 2018 as part of our first cohort of Challenge Partners co-design schools. A three-form entry Church of England school in Evesham, Bengeworth CE Primary Academy has a long-standing commitment to high-quality inclusive practice and delivers a number of programmes aligned to this aim. They are holders of the Inclusion Quality Mark and inclusion is an identified area of excellence in their QA reviews.

One key challenge the school had identified early on was that, while the programmes they were delivering were based on sound research, effectively evaluating the impact of these programmes in their setting was a real challenge – especially as, for SEN provision in particular, individual responses to particular interventions can often be highly varied.

Forming a Trust in February 2018 with Bretforton Village School, Bengeworth MAT is now working with ImpactEd to systematically embed their approach to impact evaluation across all phases and subject areas.

## How did the journey start?

As part of their focus on inclusion, Bengeworth had a history of delivering several well-established programmes focusing on a full range of academic, social and emotional outcomes for pupils. The school had identified the importance of assessing the impact of these programmes, but also appreciated the very real practical challenges of doing this in a busy school setting. As such, they initially began by focusing on only a few targeted initiatives which were particularly well embedded in the school and already part of day-to-day practice, shown below:

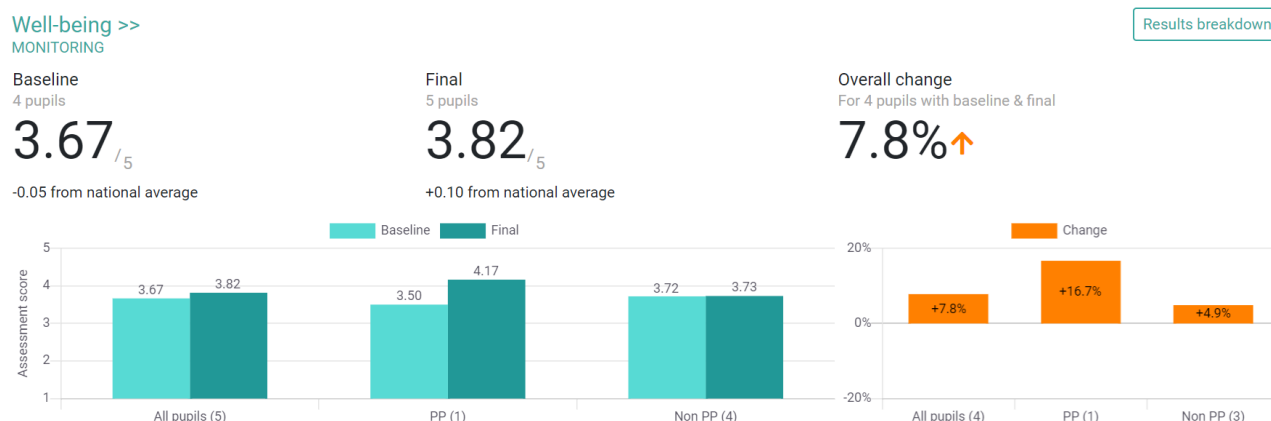
Programme	Description	Target outcomes
Talk About	A social and communication skills programme covering self-awareness and self-esteem, and the development of social skills including body language, effective speaking and listening, and conversational skills.	Wellbeing
Dancing Bears	Synthetic phonics programme delivered through exercises and structured teaching. Includes use of flashcards, training the child to read from left to right, looking at every letter in a word, and the flashback technique for self-correcting errors multiple times.	Reading (standardised score)
Top Dog	8-week intervention using a card-based personality game to encourage pupils' metacognitive habits and foster self-reflection on learning.	Motivation; COMA Scale
Rapid Read	Finely levelled fiction, playscripts, and thematically linked non-fiction texts. Uses assessment, guidance, and consolidation of the links between reading, writing and spelling. The text is designed to support dyslexic pupils, with a 'read to me' eBook and activities that allow students to check their comprehension and to develop their word knowledge, understanding of the author's style, vocabulary, and spelling skills.	Reading Age

The school had already made use of a number of internally developed assessment methods to understand impact. However, the bespoke nature of these meant comparing impact between programmes was challenging.

ImpactEd supported with this process, helping to select externally validated measures that matched with the school's overall aims for the programmes. As well as long-term academic achievement and standardised reading ages, Bengeworth also identified wellbeing and metacognition as particular areas of focus for their work. In the first term alone, results for their provision indicated greater impact for pupils receiving Pupil Premium, reinforcing the decision for their approach to remain targeted. Given the relatively small number of pupils involved in each programme, the variation in outcomes between individuals was often quite large. Therefore, as well as overall impact assessment, the results were used to inform personalised provision and action for each child.

**From our perspective working with ImpactEd provides access to a wider bank of comparative data that has never been available before, but is integral in ensuring an evidence-based approach to teaching."**

**David Coaché, Executive Headteacher**

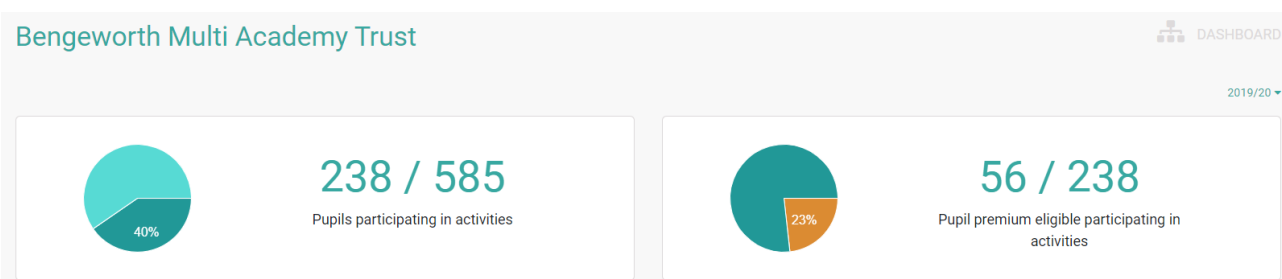


*Wellbeing scores for pupils who took part in the Talk About programme, PP and Non-PP*

## How has this developed?

Having established the overall approach to their impact evaluation with these initial pilot projects, the school then moved to roll this approach out across all key stages and teaching staff. The key outcomes of this have been:

- ▶ A range of different support programmes and projects are now consistently tracked and evaluated across the school
- ▶ This strategy has been extended across the new Bengeworth Multi-Academy Trust, with Bretforton Village School adopting the approach in 2019. This has enabled shared impact data between the schools and cross-school comparisons to clearly see what is working most effectively within different contexts.
- ▶ 37 staff members in total across the Trust are actively engaged with this process and regularly using the results to inform provision.



*Aggregated dashboard for Bengeworth MAT showing roughly half of pupils involved in evaluations*

Ultimately, this is providing a powerful school-led evidence base that can be used to inform decision making and guide approaches both at leadership and individual classroom level. The impact of this approach is also being profiled as part of an upcoming report from the Centre for Education and Youth on innovative assessment practice.

As we continue to develop the approach together, we are looking to use the evidence collected to inform greater insight at pupil level and support personalised provision, including where to invest most effectively to support future impact.

# Keyham Lodge School

## Key information

**Location**  
Leicester

**School type**  
City Special School

**Stage of education**  
Secondary, SEMH

**Number on roll**  
102

## Understanding the impact of developing student resilience

A city special school based in Leicester, Keyham Lodge School has been running a resilience focused enrichment programme since March 2018. The programme is targeted at 50 to 60 students across KS2/3 who are either eligible for pupil premium, have low levels of resilience linked to mental health and learning difficulties, or are from areas in the city identified as deprived or subject to high levels of crime. The programme provides pupils with a weekly opportunity to practice and succeed in a structured series of challenges, ranging from trail biking to joining the school band.

Having put the aim of improved resilience firmly at the heart of its curriculum and broader offer, Keyham began working collaboratively with ImpactEd to ensure the programme was well evaluated and worked as effectively as possible towards achieving this aim.

## Why resilience?

As an SEMH school in an inner-city context, Keyham Lodge is often serving pupils who have repeated experience of failure within education, or are particularly likely to be affected by disadvantage. Its demographic mix reflects this:

- ▶ 83% Pupil Premium
- ▶ 10% criminal convictions
- ▶ 46% of students are from East Leicester, which is ranked as 9th in the country for child deprivation

As such, developing the ability of pupils to deal with challenging circumstances, take ownership of their lives, and deal with both academic and non-academic challenges is core to the success of pupils within the school.

## How is this working?

As a programme that is focused on developing personal capabilities, in particular a broad sense of resilience, the main outcome measures that were considered most appropriate were:

- ▶ Meta-cognition (pupils' ability to self-reflect and think about their own learning)
- ▶ Grit (ability to persist, to keep trying on difficult goals)
- ▶ Motivation (intrinsic interest in activities, seeing the value of effort)
- ▶ Openness (openness to new experiences and curiosity about the world)

Keyham made use of academically validated questionnaire measures identified by ImpactEd's research team for each of these outcome areas. Pupils responded to these questionnaires before and after the programme. Pupils were also mapped to activities based on their scores from the pre-test, and were asked to complete reflective journals. Staff were actively involved in the evaluation and reviewed learning objectives and outcomes with pupils.

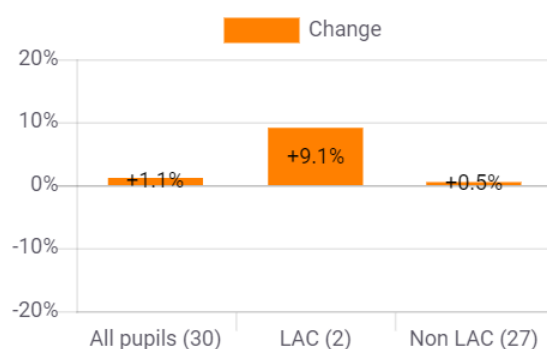
Through the 'My Skills' sessions, the students took part in specific targeted sessions based on their own scores. Crucially, this was a core part of their curriculum - there was no element of choice around the activities. Sessions were rigorously planned and there were specific learning objectives, with the sessions taking place every Friday from 11am-2.50pm for a whole term.



## What impact are we finding?

In both KS2 and KS3, pupils have consistently improved scores across all main skills measures. At KS2, we saw a particular increase in openness (6.2%), and in KS3 a particular impact on motivation for looked after children, with an increase of 9.1%.

The specific measures are changed with each cohort based on the identified needs – although some outcomes are kept consistent over time to allow for comparison of results. This adaptive approach to assessment enables Keyham to tailor provision more rapidly based on individual student needs.



Motivation percentage change for KS3 looked after children

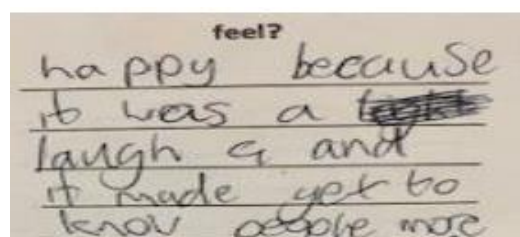
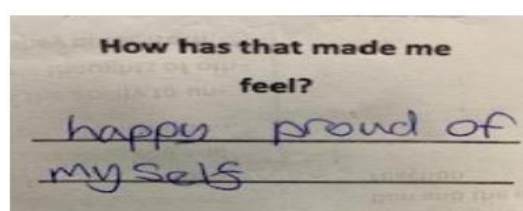
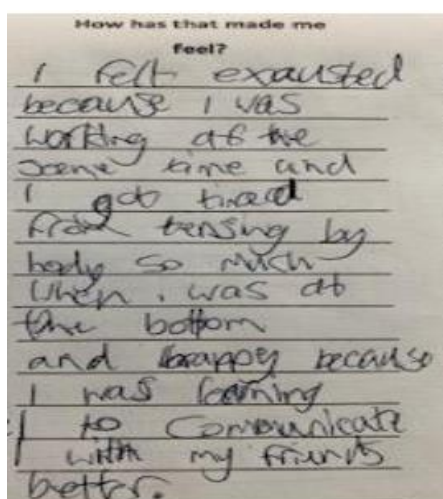
## My Skills KS3

Outcome	Baseline	Final	% Change*
Meta-Cognition	3.47/7	3.60/7	1.1
Motivation	3.75/7	3.97/7	3.5
Openness	2.90/5	2.87/5	2.7

## My Skills KS2

Outcome	Baseline	Final	% Change*
Meta-cognition	3.55/7	3.64/7	3.1
Motivation	4.72/7	4.9/7	4.4
Openness	3.49/5	3.69/5	6.2

As well as the positive improvement in skills measures, the majority of students also showed developments in their reflective journals. 90% progressed from one-word generic descriptions such as 'bored' to being able to write more in depth emotional reflections.



\* Throughout this document, percentage change is calculated based on the level of change for pupils who have both pre and post data. Because data may be missing, this is not the same as comparing the percentage change between the average pre-score and the average post-score.



**EMC has developed the depth of his emotional responses to activities in both structured and unstructured times at school. He now communicates more effectively and smiles around school and positively interacts with staff and students.”**

Long-term gains were also significant, with a 25% increase in pupils making expected progress in Maths (FFT), an 18% increase in English (FFT), and a 62% reduction in exclusions. Crucially, Keyham triangulate results between immediate pre/post questionnaires and long-term outcomes – for example, if a student doesn't demonstrate gains during participation in the resilience programme, this can support early intervention and targeted support before this affects long-term outcomes.

## Where to now?

Given the strong foundations built for evidencing impact over the last two years, the focus is on continuing to embed and sustain high performance, in particular given the massive variations in individual circumstance that can change radically with each new cohort in Keyham's school context. The use of pre-surveying is particularly powerful in this case, because as well as establishing a baseline for any future impact, it is proactively used to match pupils to the activities that are likely to benefit them most, and to give insight for teachers into any areas they may need to focus on with a given group.

The programme has also now given rise to a new curriculum called CORE (Character, Oracy, Resilience and Emotional Literacy) within which ImpactEd's assessment capabilities will form a central part of measuring the impact on pupils. As a result, what started as the school's recognition of the importance in building resilience, is now continuing to evolve and broaden its reach into the CORE skills, so that all young people are building the competencies to be successful in life.



# St Clement Danes School

## Key information

### Location

Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

### School type

Academy Converter

### Stage of education

Secondary

### Number on roll

1,285

## Creating a learning culture around impact

An outstanding school based in Hertfordshire, St Clement Danes has enjoyed very strong examination results year on year, but with areas of underperformance in some pupil groups. One challenge they identified was that in the run-up to GCSE examinations, a number of pupils struggled with motivation and the lack of structure provided in independent study. Based on this, in 2018 they launched a school-based study leave programme, where instead of traditional GCSE study leave, the pupils would attend school and take part in small-group lessons.

## How did the journey start?

The school identified target outcomes for the programme as GCSE attainment, engagement with school, and attitudes towards tests. ImpactEd matched appropriate measures, which pupils responded to before and after the SBSL programme, and also supported the school in analysing outcomes against a control group made up of a combination of pupils who were not taking part in the programme, and pupils who had been offered it but didn't participate.



Group 1: participating group

Group 2: control group  
(offered SBSL, but did not participate)

Group 3: control group  
(rest of year group, not offered SBSL)

Initial feedback from teachers on the programme was broadly positive. However, evaluation findings showed that the programme actually had a small negative impact on GCSE outcomes, and did not substantially change pupil attitudes towards school or examinations.

Across the three student groups (those who took part, those who didn't, and those who were offered the programme but did not take part), there were statistically significant positive increases between predicted grades and results for all non-participants, consistent with the school's track record of high performance. However, this effect was not observed for the intervention group, which persisted when we controlled for pupil premium status, prior attainment and attendance.

Although potentially a disappointing result, this robust evaluation process gave St Clement Danes evidence to look again at how the programme was implemented. In particular, areas that emerged from the evaluation were the SBSL sessions not being sufficiently personalised – sometimes occurring more as re-teaching of lesson content rather than targeted revision – and logistical challenges with implementing this for the first time.

Although the school could have chosen to discontinue the programme entirely, some of the positive feedback indicators encouraged them to look at how they could refine it in an evidence-based way to improve its impact and effectiveness.

## Learning from evaluation and using negative results

Key features of the revised programme were:

- ▶ A longer lead-in time to engage parents with the process, increase participation, and avoid perceptions of the programme being a negative judgement on progress
- ▶ Adapting the programme to be delivered in mornings only so that students could take responsibility for their own revision in the afternoons
- ▶ Structuring the programme so that, rather than continuing with timetabled lessons, the timetable was altered to reflect the examinations schedule with the result that each lesson was targeted at a student's next examination
- ▶ Further deliberate planning with staff around the content of the session and how these could be linked more closely to specific curriculum content and prior knowledge, with a focus on retrieval practice
- ▶ More wrap-around support before the study leave period formally begins, rather than a standalone 3-week period

These changes were received positively by parents and pupils, and in the second year of the evaluation the programme has demonstrated significantly stronger impact than was seen in the first year, particularly on qualitative indicators:

- ▶ Using validated student self-reported questionnaires, school engagement increased and test anxiety decreased in the SBSL group. This change was statistically significant for test anxiety, indicating that the sessions are likely to have helped young people become more prepared for examinations and accustomed to their demands. This was against a slight increase in text anxiety in the control group.
- ▶ Similarly, while school engagement dropped slightly for the control group during the programme period, the SBSL participants saw a small increase, although this difference is not statistically significant so can't be attributed with certainty to the SBSL programme.
- ▶ Impact on attainment was more mixed, although results showed significant gains relative to the previous year. Although the SBSL group still slightly underperformed in GCSEs relative to the control group, this gap was significantly less than in the previous year's evaluation. There was significant variation between subjects, suggesting that the nature of subject specific content and the quality of implementation are likely to be major influences on the success of the programme.



**For us the exciting thing about ImpactEd has been not just about evaluating the impact of specific projects, but beginning to embed this way of thinking in our school more broadly. We only want teachers to be spending their time on the things that are the highest impact, and so working with ImpactEd has helped provide us with a framework for, before we start doing anything, being really rigorous about what we are trying to achieve, how we'll know if we have achieved it, and what we will do as a result"**

**Toby Sutherland, Headteacher**

Crucially, this process is not about one-off improvements or quick fixes – some of the factors contributing to underperformance are systemic and to do with motivation, engagement with independent study, and family environment. The ambition is that as the school continues to test, refine, and iterate to improve its approach, this compounds over time to deliver long-term impact on both academic and non-academic success for young people.

# Hayes School

## Key information

**Location**

Bromley, Greater London

**School type**

Academy Converter

**Stage of education**

Secondary

**Number on roll**

1,650

## Developing and evaluating an evidence-based learning strategy

Hayes School is a large, mixed secondary academy within the London Borough of Bromley. It has generally strong attainment and progress outcomes on average, but significant variation between groups, with particular challenges around the relative underperformance of boys at GCSE level. Areas identified for potential improvement were:

- ▶ **Teachers** – There was a lack of awareness of actions taken by boys in their revision and an inconsistency of approach.
- ▶ **Learners** – A number of boys were perceived not to start revision early enough.
- ▶ **Leadership** – Evidence-informed approaches to revision and memory were not sufficiently embedded in classroom teaching and student preparation for examinations.
- ▶ **Outcomes** – The attainment and progress of boys in 2018 (as measured by A8 and P8) was significantly below that of girls and had declined from the previous year.

## What did they aim to do?

The school's focus was, in its own words, on "ensuring all students do what our most successful students choose to do". In particular, this meant encouraging the greater use of evidence-based learning strategies, development of student metacognition, and training teachers in teaching methods to encourage this. The programme therefore took place at three levels:

**Teachers - Professional Development** – particularly on metacognitive and memory strategies, leading to explicit teaching of evidence-based approaches to learning and revision for all students (male and female).

**Learners** – Student mentoring and monitoring for boys (and some girls) that were underachieving. Rewarding and recognising study habits.

**Parents** – Securing parental engagement, understanding and support.

In particular, the school collated a bank of evidence-based strategies for learning and revision, with supporting video clips and visuals (available online at [www.hayestl.com](http://www.hayestl.com)). These were used at all levels, being shared with pupils in whole-school assemblies, used as the basis of training for teachers and shared with families and carers.

Alongside this general work, the school also implemented a targeted support programme for boys at specific risk of underachievement. Year 11 boys who were not on target for their GCSE academic attainment were asked to use specific revision strategies, and then collected 'points' from their class teacher for two criteria: if the teacher saw them use the revision strategy and their general attitude in lessons. This was collected for every lesson in a report card, which pupils then gave to their mentor each week, who supported them in implementing specific learning strategies. The combination of general training around evidence-based revision strategies with targeted support for specific underperforming groups was integral to the approach.



## What did we learn?

The school was interested in testing several theories:

- ▶ Did boys who recorded higher learner points go on to perform better (a core hypothesis for the intervention)?
- ▶ Were there associations between improved attainment outcomes and self-reported increases in the skills of meta-cognition, motivation and self-efficacy?
- ▶ Did attainment and progress increase overall, both for the year group as a whole and the specific targeted cohort?

In terms of headline measures, we saw:

- ▶ Whole school progress for boys improved by +0.37 in 2019 Progress 8
- ▶ Whole school progress for girls improved by +0.04 in 2019 Progress 8
- ▶ The progress of targeted boys increased by +0.5 between CG2 (Current Grade 2 in Yr11) and final GCSE outcomes.

Qualitative feedback indicated:

- ▶ A significant number of boys demonstrated positive engagement with the scheme and acknowledged that they had completed more effective and earlier revision than they might otherwise have done.
- ▶ Parents expressed their improved understanding of effective study methods, how to better support their child and appreciation of the additional support in school.

We also collected engagement data looking at student usage of different evidence-based learning strategies. The ImpactEd analysis showed:

- ▶ A small statistical association between higher learner and revision points and improved outcomes (attainment and skills measures), providing support for the rationale behind the programme.
- ▶ Marginally higher results were achieved relative to predicted grades, although the small differences may also reflect margin for error in teacher predictions.
- ▶ In the context of general relative underperformance of boys, there were encouraging improvements in indicators against girls, although these results are not statistically significant.
- ▶ Higher learner and revision points resulted in slightly higher meta-cognition, motivation and self-efficacy scores, although this result was not statistically significant.

## Where are we going now?

Having used the last academic year to launch a first iteration of the programme, we are building in a continued evaluation process to refine and develop the methodology further. The current cohort of Year 11 students have completed baseline questionnaires and these results, alongside academic and revision data, are being used to identify target cohorts for the mentoring approach this year.

Alongside this, the programme is now being expanded to launch a similar metacognitive and memory-based scheme with Sixth Form students in Year 13. This will also enable us to compare relative successes across year groups and identify which aspects may work more effectively at Year 11 or Year 13.

### English Language

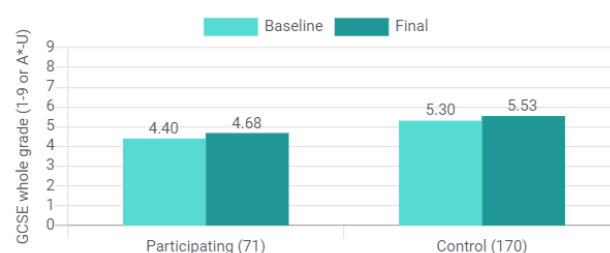
Moderated school assessment (PPE December 2018) → Final result (GCSE)

Baseline  
70 Participating pupils

4.40<sub>/9</sub>

Final  
71 Participating pupils

4.68<sub>/9</sub>



*Changes between participating and control groups in English Language GCSE results*

# Moorfield Community Primary School

## Key information

### Location

Irlam, Salford

### School type

Maintained School

### Stage of education

Primary

### Number on roll

138

## Evaluating the impact of outdoor learning on pupil attitudes, social and emotional skills

Moorfield Community Primary School, a small primary located in Salford, have been working with ImpactEd since 2019 to identify and better understand the impact of small group outdoor learning activities, particularly on Pupil Premium and more vulnerable learners.

The school has a strong ethos of inclusion, building relationships between home and school, and providing opportunities for pupils to engage with the world beyond the classroom. With well over half of the school population eligible for Pupil Premium, barriers to achievement are both in-school – for instance, speaking and listening skills in the classroom – and external: many pupils have limited experience of areas beyond Salford and support at home can be inconsistent.

Part of the way in which Moorfield looks to address some of these barriers is in investment in outdoor learning, aiming to develop group working skills and friendships in natural settings, whilst also improving independence and general wellbeing. This includes both therapeutic interventions around understanding self, as well as activities which are offered more widely to learn about nature and engage with the environment.

Although these curriculum opportunities are offered to all, there is a particular focus on disadvantaged children and how these activities may help in addressing some of the underlying barriers to achievement.

## What did we look at?

As part of their focus on outdoor learning, Moorfield identified two key programmes to evaluate: Wild Tribe and Nature Group. Wild Tribe is an engaging, active and varied additional provision where pupils take part in a variety of activities over 6 sessions in small groups. The outcomes they selected included extraversion, grit, self-efficacy and school engagement.

In addition to the Wild Tribe project, the Nature Group is run as an ongoing programme with a small targeted group of pupils. Pupils take part in weekly outdoor learning sessions, with a particular link to the science curriculum in Years 3 and 4. The key skills identified for this project included extraversion, openness, well-being and meta-cognition.



**Well-being** refers to a state in which individuals thrive and flourish, including contentment and sense of purpose as well as happiness. (Huppert, Baylis, & Keverne, 2004).



**Meta-cognition** means 'thinking about thinking': pupils' ability to think explicitly about their own learning (Flavell, 1979; Higgins et al., 2016). Meta-cognition enables pupils to develop strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.



**Grit** is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Pupils with high levels of grit may work persistently over years to achieve goals despite experiencing setbacks. (Duckworth and Quinn, 2009).



**School engagement** measures pupils' behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement with school. Higher levels are associated with improved academic performance. (Glanville & Wildhagen, 2006)

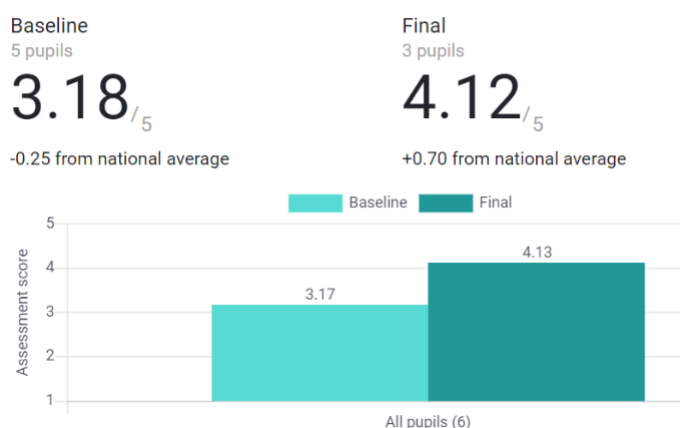
## What were some of the findings?

Pupils completed the skills measures before and after the programme. Results for Wild Tribe showed large changes in skills measures, with particular trends to note being:

- 1 Higher levels of increase in grit and self-efficacy for SEND children, though not in extraversion. The number of SEND children involved in the evaluation were relatively low, so future analysis will explore whether this effect is sustained over time and so is likely to be meaningful.
- 2 Generally higher increases for females than males in all skill categories. Females tended to show lower baseline scores on beginning the programme, but generally by its end were equal or ahead of males in terms of self-reported results.
- 3 Overall increases of close to 30% on the selected measures, which is a much larger improvement than the typical variance we would expect to see on these measures over time. This took results from well below the national average for pupils of the same age to significantly higher.

Qualitative data gathered by staff implementing the programme was also positive, but the strength of these results gave particular weight to the anecdotal positive feedback that staff had received. Those who completed the programme were all Pupil Premium, and they showed a particularly large increase for their scores in both school engagement and grit.

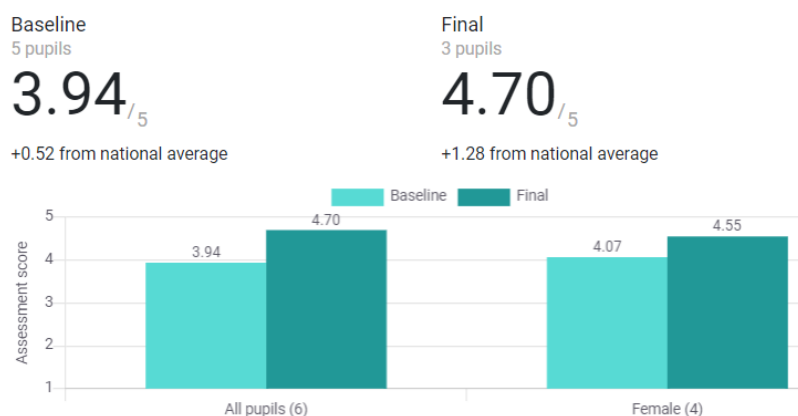
### Grit >> COMPETENCY



Grit baselines began below the national average for similar age pupils, and through the course of the programme increased to be significantly above this average. Improvements were notably larger for females, with a 26.6% increase relative to an increase of 3.1% for males. (Female starting points were also lower, which may explain some of the difference).

School engagement began above the national average for similar age pupils, but still increased over the course of the programme, showing results very close to the top of the scale. Results for males were stable, showing no change, so all the improvement was driven by the females in the cohort. Increases for pupils with SEND were also particularly large relative to the changes for the group as a whole.

### School Engagement >> MONITORING



## Where to now?

With the first evaluations of their provision now completed, Moorfield are continuing this process with upcoming cohorts in order to best identify:

- ▶ If these improvements are repeated with new groups of pupils, or if the provision is more effective for some individuals than others
- ▶ If the demographic trends are consistent over time
- ▶ If different types of provision are more effective for different purposes e.g. comparing Wild Tribe interventions against the Nature Group
- ▶ If the immediate gains seen in these competencies persist after the intervention, or if multiple experiences are required in order to sustain improvements

With all baselines completed in the Autumn term, the research for the next cohorts is still ongoing. Moorfield is continuing to measure the impact of their outdoor learning interventions and will use the results in March to make decisions about how best to improve their provision moving forward. Ultimately, this process will help inform decision making for the school about where to invest time and resources most effectively in providing learning to children beyond the walls of a classroom.



# The Reach Free School

## Key information

### Location

Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

### School type

Academy Converter

### Stage of education

Secondary

### Number on roll

1,285

## Testing the impact of teaching and learning approaches

Since inception The Reach Free School, a non-selective community school based in Rickmansworth, has had a strong culture of professional learning and a reflective approach to professional practice. While committing to the use of research in teaching, they also wanted to avoid prescribing specific teaching methods or practices.

One route through which they have looked to embed research-based approaches without prescribing checklists is through their development of The Reach Teach Toolkit, a collection of research, examples of what research could look like in practice, and subject examples built around five essential stages of learning:

- ▶ retrieval practice
- ▶ hooks (into learning)
- ▶ knowledge transmission
- ▶ deliberate practice/application
- ▶ review and re-teaching

The way they implemented some of the ideas in the toolkit was through an application and research cycle, with working groups identifying with different areas of the toolkit, testing approaches and sharing findings within their groups and more widely. Their collaboration with ImpactEd was used to support staff in systematically doing this and sharing findings as a result. Here we have profiled two examples, the first of which was used for an MEd project, and both of which were presented to HertsCam, a research network led by the University of Cambridge, to colleagues in other schools, and used as the basis of discussion and collaboration in internal TeachMeets.

## Meta-cognition in Maths

**Summary of intervention:** A research project looking at the effect that time placement of meta-cognition activities in maths has on pupil's awareness of misconceptions and retention of key information.

**Number of pupils:** 30 Participating 30 control.  
Year 8

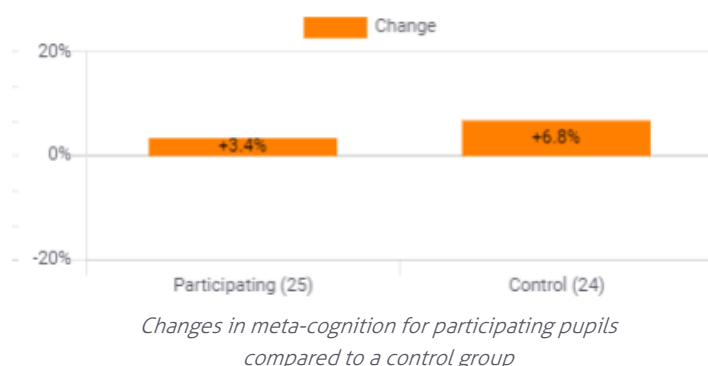
**Outcomes:** Meta-cognition and Maths attainment

Outcome	Baseline	Final	% change
Meta-Cognition participating	4.10/7	4.32/7	3.4
Meta-cognition control	3.85/7	4.30/7	6.8



**Overall change**

For 25 Participating pupils with baseline &amp; final

**3.4%↑**

Initial results for metacognition showed that participating pupils increased by 3.4%, with a particular increase for Pupil Premium (5.2%) and SEND pupils (8.6%). However, the identified comparison group actually increased *more* than the participating group – indicating that some positive factors were influencing student metacognition, but this specific intervention was not driving them.

Following analysis of the results, one area the teacher noted was that introducing metacognitive concepts upfront while also teaching key information for the first time was actually likely to lead to excess cognitive load, which makes it *less* likely that students will behave metacognitively.

A key finding of this micro-research project was that, while explicit teaching of meta-cognition may be beneficial, it is likely to have a greater impact if carefully sequenced following teaching of content rather than introduced at the same time or immediately before.

## Pupil vs Teacher Retrieval Practice

**Summary of intervention:** Pupil-led retrieval practice vs teacher-led retrieval practice, involving a trial conducted with two mixed ability classes. In one, a teacher led starter activities based on work from the first half term, and a range of activities were presented to the pupils allowing for adequate retrieval over each sub-topic covered. In another, pupils came up with three questions, each one from a different sub-topic covered previously as a method of retrieval.

**Outcomes:** Maths attainment classroom assessment: Before Retrieval (baseline) After Retrieval (final)

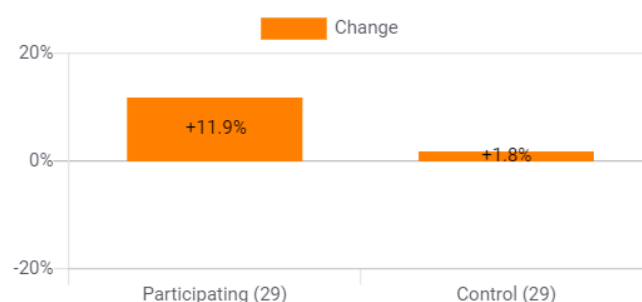
**Number of pupils:** 29 participating (teacher-led) / 29 control (pupil-led).

Outcome	Baseline	Final	% change
Maths Attainment Participating	48.7%	60.5%	+11.9%
Maths Attainment Control	49.4%	51.3%	+1.8%

**Results:** Overall, most pupils increased their result from the first test. There was a larger increase in attainment in classes using teacher led questioning in comparison to pupil led – this result was relatively consistent across pupils in both classes. Further areas for investigation in the future may be if this trend is continued if trialled at different times in the school year – for example, to test if pupils that have more embedded knowledge of a particular topic may be able to better generate retrieval questions.

**Overall change**

For 29 Participating pupils with baseline &amp; final

**12%↑**

*Percentage change for Maths attainment for participating pupils compared to a control group*

# Rushey Mead Academy

## Key information

**Location**  
Leicester

**School type**  
Academy Converter

**Stage of education**  
Secondary

**Number on roll**  
1,780

## Evaluating the impact of enrichment

Rushey Mead Academy, a mixed secondary school located in Leicester, have been working with ImpactEd on an extensive evaluation process to understand the impact of the extracurricular and enrichment support provided to pupils. With 'develop your whole self' as an expectation of all pupils at Rushey Mead, the academy has an explicit commitment to developing more than just academic excellence.

As part of this, Rushey Mead have been developing the 'PP Champions' programme, involving support for Pupil Premium and other more disadvantaged learners. PP Champions is an initiative designed to promote and improve student involvement in enrichment activity, revolving around the use of a pupil passport to record and reward attendance of clubs, with a focus on more vulnerable learners who would be less likely to naturally take part in such activities. The programme design involved four lead teachers - one from each year group 7 - 10.

## What did we look at?

Our evaluation design for this project involved triangulating a combination of academic and non-academic outcomes, including pre- and post- validated measures of skill development and additional outcome indicators including attendance and teacher assessed attitude to learning scores. Qualitative evidence was gathered by staff involved, consisting of observational measures and short pupil case studies.

Alongside pre/post measures before and after PP Champions, Rushey Mead also identified a matched control group, comprised of pupils in the school with similar characteristics who were not taking part in the intervention. Going further than a pre/post design, this approach allows us to reduce bias and isolate the cause of any change.

## What were some of the findings?

At a headline level, we found the following:

1

Participation in PP Champions was associated with an increase in both English and Maths attainment relative to the control group. As this result was not statistically significant, we cannot definitively say it was due to PP Champions, but the trend was consistent across both KS3 and KS4 cohorts.

2

Statistically significant increases were observed for attitude to learning and attendance relative to the control group in KS4. This means that we can be more certain that PP Champions has had an impact on those outcomes. This trend was consistent across key stages with smaller effects at KS3.

3

On average, the pupils involved in this evaluation scored lower than the national average on measures of school engagement and grit, indicating as expected that these are likely to be particular barriers to pupils at Rushey Mead. Changes on these outcomes varied between key stages, with more positive effects seen at KS4 and less at KS3.

## Grit &gt;&gt;

## COMPETENCY

Results  
breakdown

## Baseline

4 Participating pupils

2.69<sub>/5</sub>

-0.56 from national average

## Final

4 Participating pupils

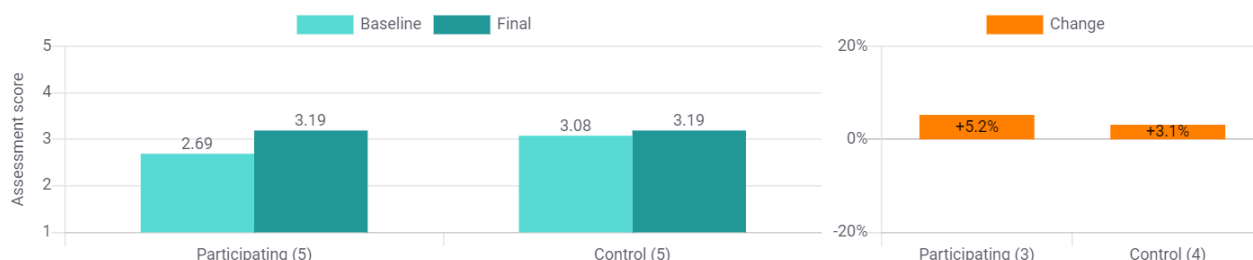
3.19<sub>/5</sub>

-0.06 from national average

## Overall change

For 3 Participating pupils with baseline &amp; final

5.2%↑



*Changes in grit for pupils who took part in ACE Champions for KS4, compared to a control group*

Teacher feedback was positive but also reflected the practical difficulties of challenging behaviour and the sometimes difficult home lives experienced by a number of students. Teachers remarked on pupils' increased ability to contribute in group discussions, alongside developing strong relationships with staff and peers, with comments such as the following being common:



**Pupil X developed a much better working attitude and even went to study support clubs twice a week to improve his learning and achievement across all subjects, particularly in Maths."**

Unsurprisingly, attendance was seen as a particularly important predictor of success in the programme, but this required active teacher participation and involvement – pupils' attendance at these activities could not be left down to chance.

## Where to now?

One of the key findings of the evaluation was the variance in impact across KS3 and KS4 cohorts: KS3 saw positive effects on attainment measures, but results on qualitative indicators and attitudes to learning were neutral; KS4 saw continued academic improvement alongside more significant improvements in student motivation, school engagement and grit. This may reflect the continued benefit of enrichment activity at a time in school when the curriculum focus can tend to narrow.

Another implication was around understanding more deeply some of the factors which are most likely to lead to successful implementation. For instance, teachers commented extensively on the cumulative value of repeated attendance at clubs – this is something that needs to be championed across all staff for the message to take root across all students.

As such, the main priorities now are around further developing this way of working, particularly to achieve more consistent impact at KS3 and follow that through to KS4. Key to this will be ensuring that the initiative is not treated as a one-off action but sustained as part of the school's focus on the impact that can be achieved through extra-curricular and enrichment activity, as well as what takes place within lessons.

# Concluding thoughts

At the beginning of this report, we noted six foundations for these schools that had helped them successfully develop a learning and evaluation culture, and more effectively prioritise what was contributing to the greatest educational impact in their setting:

1. **Planning for impact:** this should not be a retrospective process, but one that is deliberate and pre-planned
2. **Learning from what doesn't work, as well as what does:** being open about where projects didn't succeed, and using this to prioritise 'improving' rather than 'proving' impact
3. **Developing a structure for sharing practice:** giving substance, weight and structures to collaboration
4. **Thinking about impact on more than grades alone:** recognising that often what we are trying to do may not be measured directly by academic outcomes, using these alongside broader measures of success
5. **Combining evidence and professional wisdom:** not expecting evaluation to 'give the answers', but using it to begin a process of inquiry and reflection
6. **Building capacity for evaluation at all levels:** considering how and where all staff can be supported to strategically reflect and consider their impact, whether at the school, classroom or pupil level

We've chosen these themes to emphasise the process rather than the end results: although we hope many of the school-level findings in this report will be useful to you as you develop ideas for similar projects, designing things on the same principles by no means guarantees the same outcomes. There are no silver bullets in education, and what works in one setting may or not work in another. However, the journey through which these schools thought carefully about the issues in their setting, considered the educational improvements they wished to make, and then trialled, tested and evaluated their success, may well be something you can borrow – if nothing else, as a cycle to help you think carefully what impact looks like in your setting.

One final area to note is that embedding this process is not always easy. These schools help illustrate how approaches to engaging with and using impact evaluation can develop in a range of different contexts, but this is typically a change process that takes time. As with implementing any new idea, if you are a school considering how you can more strategically evaluate your work and use this evidence to good effect, we recommend starting small: identify a few focus areas and key staff to begin with, and start from there. The compounding effect of marginal improvements can often be greater than the big launch of a new initiative which may not always be sustained.

Done well, however, the prize is substantial: allowing teachers to work smarter, not harder, on areas where they can make the biggest impact; investing limited resources more effectively; and ultimately contributing to better outcomes for pupils through a cycle of continuous improvement. We hope these case studies have provided some insight into how you might develop a similar approach in your setting.

If you'd like to find out more about how we work with schools to support this process, or to access further resources related to this report, please do get in touch with us at [www.impactd.org.uk](http://www.impactd.org.uk) or using the contact details below.

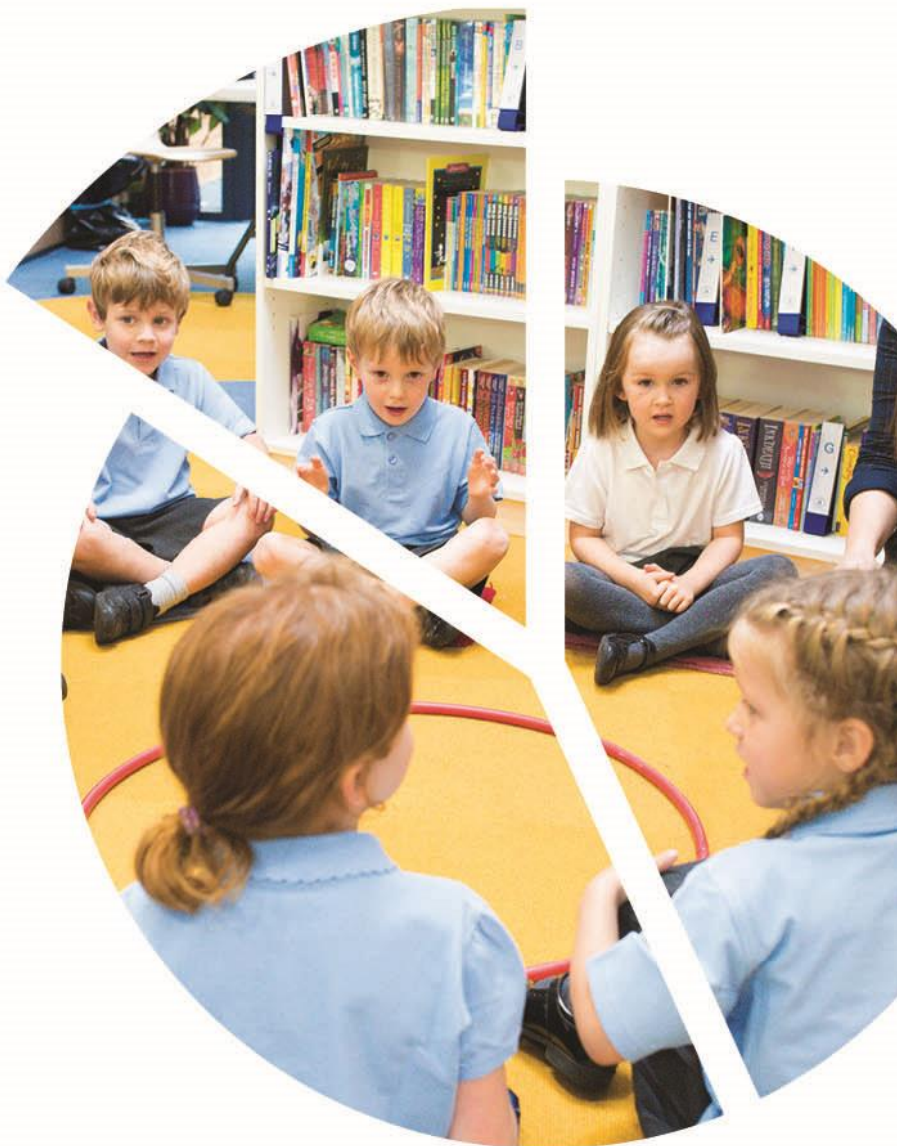
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