

Case Study

St. Hugh's School

Cromwell Avenue,
Woodhall Spa
LN10 6TQ

2 - 13 age group school
Semi-rural location

Key contact:
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The Context

The school's desire was to make sure that it supported and challenged its pupils in achieving the best possible outcomes. The work of Professor John Hattie provided the school with insight into what works best in education. The school realised that the Visible Learning^{plus} whole school programme, delivered by Osiris Educational (under licence to Corwin), would provide the change in culture that the school required.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate emphasis is on 'the impact of the teaching and not on the teacher, with inspectors taking particular interest in pupils' achievement and progress'.

The school initially needed to find out how effective the school currently was. This was achieved via a scoping day, undertaken by an Osiris consultant, who looked at all aspects of teaching and learning, talked to the pupils, undertook work scrutinies and looked at policies and procedures.

The report, even though it was based on just one day's investigation, was hard hitting and made it very clear that there were lots of areas the school could improve. The Visible Learning^{plus} journey is different for every school. For St Hugh's, it was clear that developing visible learners and making sure feedback was effective were the highest priority and an initial plan was formulated.

An Inset day, known as the Foundation Day, was run where the staff were then introduced to the five strands of Visible Learning^{plus}. Staff learnt which teaching strategies have the biggest effect size and which they should be paying less attention to. An effect size of 0.4 means that in a year, one make a year's worth of progress. The challenge was therefore to focus on those aspects that gave an effect size of more than 0.4 as they would have the greatest impact on pupil learning. John Hattie's belief is that 'every student should experience at least one year's growth over the course of one school year'.

This initial Inset certainly had an impact on staff – particularly the concept of Know Thy Impact. By studying the effect sizes, it made staff question exactly what they were doing. In order to produce an effective development plan, supported by a strong evidence base, they needed a much more detailed look at what was happening in school. The SLT were given training in how to gather, collate and examine evidence so they could establish where they were in relation to the 5 strands of Visible Learning^{plus}.

Establishing an evidence informed baseline took three months. This took the form of pupil interviews, either one-to-one or in a group, observations and 'walk throughs' around school, plus questionnaires. The data provided a much more rounded picture of the school and, more importantly, the pupils' views on how they were learning. The report emphasised where improvement should be targeted first.

The school's journey It was vital to understand that this was the school's journey and that what they did and do is only part of the story. The achievement of alignment and progressions through school, the collective story, was as important to the improvement.

Formulating a Plan

St Hugh's was then able to analyse and evaluate the data gathered and get a much better picture of where the school was based. The evidence clearly showed where work was needed and an action plan was developed accordingly.

This was primarily formulated during the 'Evidence into Action Day 2', with the SLT working closely with the Osiris consultant to explore the data collated in school. Evidence was drawn from the Visible Learning^{plus} research to help with the prioritisation.

The plan focused on:

- Learning Dispositions

Pupils did not know what a good learner looked like. It was therefore imperative that a shared language needed to be introduced.

- Data

The data from assessments needed to be more explicitly shared with the children and learning goals from them made clear. Effect sizes needed to be introduced as a means of analysing the data and measuring progress.

- Peer Observation

A culture of peer observation needed to be introduced, focussing on: - The amount of teacher talk - The type of questioning - The range of activities.

- Departmental Responsibilities

Heads of Department needed to focus on: - Assessment in their departments - Resources used - The range of activities - Use of group work.

- The SMT needed to: -

Have a timetable for weekly evidence gathering - Carry out 'walk throughs' - Look closely at the learning in each classroom - Promote a culture where it was acceptable to make mistakes - Ensure appraisals were linked to VL targets - Link work scrutinises to pupil interviews.

- The Learning Process

To remove the negative connotations around making mistakes, a way needed to be found to highlight to pupils that making mistakes was an important part of learning.

Implementing the plan

After the evidence was gathered, there were two whole school staff Insets led by Osiris.

Visible Learning in Action for Teachers Day 1

Teachers learnt how to gather, collate and examine evidence of learning for their class. They were also trained in how to conduct an inquiry in their classroom in the form of a structured Impact Cycle. The staff formulated a plan themselves to help support the school's targets.

Learning Dispositions

The first target was to agree the learning dispositions. The school decided upon: Curious / Reflective / Persevere / Independent / Creative / Challenge / Team player.

These were then introduced in the language to the children at assemblies alongside an image to act as a visual reminder for the pupils. This proved to be more challenging for the reception children until the reception teacher came up with the idea of animals to symbolise each disposition. This process also helped embed with staff what an effective learner was.

Data

The use of effect sizes was introduced to measure the

individual progress of each child so that we could compare the progress of pupils irrespective of their attainment level. A new tracking system was introduced, initially for the core subjects but then across the curriculum, which focused on what skills pupils need to progress. Data was extracted from this at regular intervals to measure the effect size for each child, shifting the focus of discussions on pupils by focusing on the individual progress of each child rather than their attainment. The tracking grids focussed on the skills needed in each subject and would then be matched with comments in books, so that pupils were able to reflect on what the next steps are.

The Learning Process

The 'Learning Pit' was chosen as a vehicle for highlighting the learning process to pupils. One of the issues the evidence found was that pupils did not know what to do when they were stuck. The Learning Pit was quickly grasped by the children and was implemented in different ways by subjects. For example, in science, pupils moved their faces at regular intervals to where they are in the 'pit'. Mistakes are therefore seen as a positive part of the process of learning.



Pupil voice

Methods of including the pupil voice more regularly needed to be identified and implemented. Staff needed to get feedback from their own pupils about how they feedback. Teachers now ask pupils at the end of a topic about how they can improve their teaching of a subject.

Visible Learning in Action for Teachers Day 2

This focussed on teachers' own development rather than just school-based targets. Teachers learnt how to use data to inform themselves of their impact on student learning and achievement. They produced an action plan and prioritisation of how to develop visible learners in their own classrooms.

Was the plan successful?

The school is now in the second year of the Visible Learning plus programme and there are definite signs of improvement. Learning dispositions are becoming embedded in the everyday language that the pupils use. Visitors to the school have commented on the language used and pupils, when questioned, are able to articulate their dispositions.

This belief was supported by repeating in November 2018 the pupil survey which asked 100 pupils from Reception to Year 8 – “What does it mean to be a good learner in this school”.

Answers given	Start of process	After 12 months
Unsure	10%	2%
Random answers	5%	1%
Focused on a particular skill or being good at a particular subject	12%	6%
Importance of the teacher	5%	2%
Listening and concentrating	48%	21%
Effort	13%	13%
Nuanced answers – learning dispositions	7%	55%

Videoring the answers clearly showed staff which pupils just repeated the names of the learning dispositions and those who had processed them deeply. For example, pupils came out with responses such as “a good learner is someone who makes errors work.”

The questionnaires that were given to pupils in Years 3 to 8 were also repeated. From last time, we targeted learning intentions and success criteria as areas to focus on alongside more collaborative learning opportunities. The questionnaire results show that this is having an impact though there is clearly still work to do.

	Start of Process	After 12 months
My classmates help in my learning	62.7%	67%
I always know where I am going in my learning	37.3 %	50.6%
I have learning goals to make me successful	84.3%	91.7%
My teachers explain what I am learning and why	88%	97.6%
Listening and concentrating	48%	21%
Effort	13%	13%
Nuanced answers – learning dispositions	7%	55%

The use of effect sizes had been instrumental in broadening the conversations that take place around pupils. For example, they are now able to measure the progress over CE mocks of Y8 pupils in a much more accessible manner, making conversations with both pupils and parents much clearer. Intervention, rather than just targeting pupils with the lowest marks, is now also used to target those pupils making the least progress. Teachers now focus on progress rather than achievement.

‘Walk throughs’, work scrutinies, lesson observations and conversations with pupils have all confirmed that learning intentions and success criteria are now evident in lessons and, more importantly, referred to throughout the lesson. The school decided not to use the term ‘success criteria’ but instead use the term ‘recipe for success’ as they wanted to emphasise that the success criteria do not need to be sequential but instead can be thrown together in different orders - much like a recipe. Pupils are more able to evaluate their progress in lessons and understand what their next steps need to be.

Feedback has become more related to the success criteria and next steps are becoming more evident in books. Teachers are also becoming better at using the pupil voice to improve the effectiveness of their own teaching. Self-assessment of topics includes opportunities for pupils to feedback on the teaching they have received and helps teachers to re-evaluate how a topic is delivered.

The individual impact cycle for each teacher culminated in a presentation which they gave to the rest of the staff, the governors and the Managing Director of Osiris, Stephen Cox. One of the key themes of visible learning is 'Know Thy Impact' and staff were encouraged to evidence their work at all stages so that they could measure the impact of their changes. For example, Y1, who focused on next steps in literacy, interviewed the pupils at the start, videoing their answers. They did this first at the beginning of the Autumn term, asking the children 'What is your next step in literacy'. The majority of children didn't know. The teachers then adapted their teaching. They gave each pupil two targets/ next steps in English and two in Maths which could be seen visually in the classroom. The green dots mean a child has achieved the step and a peg means they are working on it.



Irrespective of what was chosen, the evidence was clear that everything staff did had an impact on pupils' learning. Impact cycles will be part of an ongoing cycle of improvement, ensuring that they are having the greatest possible difference to pupils' learning.

The good news

- *Staff are on board, feeling their expertise is growing and sharing a collective journey .
- *Pupils are taking more responsibility for their own learning
- *CPD platform is in place from which to build .
- *Visible Learning ^{plus} clearly shows where progress is being made based on evidence.

What next?

St Hugh's are only a short way along the process and know there are gains still to be made in lots of areas. In the short term, the next targets are:

- Understanding more about the different levels of feedback.
- Embedding strategies for self and peer assessment further.
- Refine the use of effect sizes across all subjects.
- Revamp the reporting system in line with visible learning.