

AINSLIE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

SWIFT IMPROVEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION



Ainslie Wood is a larger than average primary school in NE London. We have around 450 children on roll with over 70% ethnic minority and 43% EAL. Over the 19 years the school has been open it has survived significant instability, facing both highs and lows. Results under the four previous heads have varied greatly and the school has been placed in a category twice - the last time being 2009. When I arrived for my first headship in September 2013, the school was at another low point in terms of results. Following a three year downward trend, KS2 results were at an all time low with only 43% achieving L4+ in RWM.

These low results were easily explained away by the staff so investigation about



how they occurred was undertaken. One of the main underlying factors was that knowledge of levelling was insecure and many children had been significantly over levelled, causing huge dips at the end of each key stage and issues with understanding what to teach the children.

Staff found this news difficult to hear and we shielded ourselves through a mass exodus. Over the course of the year, 14 of the 18 teachers who were here in September left - including the Deputy and Assistant Heads. There was also a need to restructure the support staff into a model which would create more impact for children; slimming down numbers by 50%. The turbulence caused by such a changeover in staff was offset by the ability to almost create a 'new start' and we set a new, shared vision for the school which we got working on immediately.



- We set three priorities for the year:
- Meet children's individual needs
- Understand and utilise data

Develop leadership capacity across the whole school.

I'm a great believer in simplifying issues to deal with them effectively and with only three priorities; all staff were able to understand them and push forward together.

In order to meet children's needs, we needed to step away from the traditional approach of 'sage on the stage' which was common across the school - our new staffing structure helped with this. We hired an AHT who we called Leader of Teaching, whose job is devoted entirely to developing adults. She was able to work with individuals and set personalised plans for development. This model moved us from 60% inadequate teaching in September, to 90% good or better by July.

We also hired more teachers. In order to respond to need more flexibly, we hired enough teachers for three per year group (for our 2FE school) from Years 2 to 6 while EYFS and Year 1 were populated



with experienced EYPs as support.

The additional teacher model was a slow starter initially because we were simply hiring to fill in spaces left by teachers leaving, so we put a lot of focus into Years 6, 5 and 2. By breaking Year 6s into smaller groups which could target individual needs more closely, we were able to move a group who were on track for only 30% to achieve L4+ at the end of the year and convert it to 78% combined. 86% of our children achieved L4+ in Reading and SPaG and 83% in Maths.

Our focus on data was a process started by buying in a robust tracking system and then training staff in standardisation and moderating again and again. Over the course of the year, we moderated every



child in the school. This was a massive team effort and helped to consolidate the 'levelness' of levels.

Throughout all of this, the need to empower people to be responsible for themselves and the progress of the children was paramount and the new leadership team put the first steps in place towards a distributed leadership model. This shift in thinking wasn't an easy one but in just one year, we moved into a position which celebrates both continuous personal development and collaboration.

All staff are now engaging in research which we will be using to move us through the next stage in our development and towards our shared vision: To inspire active learning and exceed expectations. Watch this space!

