



**Education Adviser Team Case Study:
Highwoods Primary School**

Planning to meet the needs of all pupils and accelerate progress

In March 2015, Ofsted graded Highwoods School as Good and identified the ‘challenge for the most able’ as a barrier to the school being Outstanding. Teaching needed to provide the most-able pupils with more challenging tasks so that they could achieve the highest levels of which they were capable and move their learning on quickly in lessons. The school had previously grouped children in sets for core subjects but this did not seem to promote the high challenge the school was hoping to achieve. Although many pupils reached a good level of learning, opportunities for children to surprise themselves with the progress they could make was limited. In April 2016, the EES for Schools Education Adviser team was commissioned by the school to present and develop with the senior management an

alternative way of planning for learning based on the principles already developed and shared with Essex teacher trainees and piloted in a Good school in West Essex.

Using research from Carol Dweck and Dylan Wiliam a ‘learning without limits’ protocol was suggested where ability groups would be abandoned in favour of ‘challenge for all’. Leaders and governors enthusiastically welcomed the opportunities to discuss and debate the key principles behind the strategy and were keen to look at the idea of planning for pupils to engage with a learning journey. This encouraged the pupils’ collaboration of where that journey might start and where it might progress rather than planning prescriptive and directed lessons.



For more information contact:

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Impact

A significant shift in the focus of lesson observations to learning observations

Rather than observing the teacher, the school was encouraged to look at outcomes and the process of learning more closely; this has continued and as a result observations feel more supportive and identify common strengths in effective learning, plus recommendations to develop learning further.

Limits are no longer set

The opportunity for all children to be able to ‘surprise themselves’ has now become a common saying. The school is looking for effective learning over time and one aspect of this is allowing children to have opportunities to make the most progress within sessions. Significant strides have been made in how they organise the learning environment to ensure pupils have the opportunity to do this.

Core learning habits have been created

The school staff now openly discuss what effective learning looks like and have created a set of core learning habits that underpin class practice.

A significant shift in the language used within the school

The school now conducts ‘learning observations’ rather than ‘lesson observations’, teaches ‘sessions’ rather than ‘lessons’ and more able/less able ‘tags’ have been removed from groups of children. The outcome of this is a greater discussion on learning and what the children have learned, rather than what the teacher did.

A clearer view of the impact of interventions within the school

The notion or phrase of ‘so what?’ is now often used when discussing what the school is doing – referring back to what impact this is having on the children.

Planning has been developed to focus on the steps needed to learn

There is less focus on attaching allotted amounts of time to each step. The school is beginning to focus on planning with children and really tease out what children know and feel confident with before they map out and plan the learning for the next concept.

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