

# **Success for All**

## **An Evaluation Summary**

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## 1. Executive Summary

- Schools feel there is a strong fit between Success for All and the learning needs of their pupils.
- Teachers feel that SFA offers a 'whole book' approach to teaching literacy which NLS does not.
- The strong behavioural component of SFA is seen by schools as an important feature of the programme. It has been extended in all sample schools as a whole curriculum approach to managing pupil behaviour.
- The training programme is viewed as high quality and an important medium for implementation.
- The training team were considered to be expert practitioners who could model best SFA practice.
- SFA has made a difference to literacy levels – in all schools there have been significant improvements, ie SAT levels have improved at each key stage.

- Pupils have become more confident as learners and critical readers as a result of SFA. There is some evidence that this confidence has extended to personal and interpersonal growth within SFA classes and across wider curriculum.
- SFA has had a positive effect on staff skills and motivation.
- Parents feel SFA has had a positive impact upon pupils willingness to read independently.
- There remain some challenges for SFA which largely concern issues of pupils engagement and progression. Some of the resources are not felt to be sufficiently challenging.
- Concern was expressed in relation to delivering the NLS writing targets. However there is evidence that the SFA Team has developed new resources for the SFA Programme which match these NLS demands.
- Some schools have moved to a 16 week assessment period.
- Overall, SFA is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in reading at all four schools.

## **2. Introduction**

This report is a summary of the main findings from a formative evaluation of Success for All in England, conducted in 2004. As a small-scale evaluation it provides general insights into the impact and effectiveness of the SFA programme. It is intended to highlight the strengths of the programme and to identify areas for development.

## **3. Methodology**

Data was collected from four primary schools (two in London and two in Leeds). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a cross section of teachers, pupils, parents, coordinators and headteachers. All interviews were recorded and analysed thematically. The following report outlines the findings under four headings: involvement, implementation, impact and challenges/reflections.

## **4. Involvement**

Schools were asked about their reasons for becoming involved in the SFA programme and gave a variety of reasons why they had applied to undertake SFA. All the schools commented that one main reason concerned the fact that SFA was a remedial reading programme aimed at schools in high poverty or disadvantaged areas. Schools felt that there was a fit between the needs of pupils in the school and the SFA programme. Generally, all schools felt that there was a strong match between their needs and the support offered by Success for All.

Schools had heard about the programme in a number of ways. One school had heard good reports about SFA from another school while others had heard about the programme via various networks e.g. EAZs, EICs. In all cases the teachers in the schools felt that SFA offered something that the NLS could not which was sound provision for speaking and listening. It also offered a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics and the training of staff to teach phonics. As pupils in all four schools had low literacy levels, SFA offered a way of addressing this problem that was 'tried and tested'. The other attraction of SFA identified by the schools in the evaluation was the fact that as all schools had a large spread of ability. SFA accommodated this through the grouping system. The grouping by reading ability has allowed teachers to meet pupils' reading need rather than to address a variety of needs within an age range or band.

The schools had also chosen SFA because of its strong behaviour component as many of the schools had severe behaviour problems. SFA was viewed as a positive way of dealing with pupil disruption and misbehaviour by modifying behaviour positively through cooperative group work approaches. In addition, in some schools the literacy levels had reached a plateau and schools wanted to increase the levels pupils achieved. SFA was seen as an important means of improving attainment and was a way of offering pupils a 'whole book experience' which the NLS was unable to offer.

## **5. Implementation Process**

Three of the schools have been in the programme for three years and one had been involved for four years. The schools acknowledged the importance of the two day training. All staff interviewed highlighted this as an important implementation process. All staff voted to join SFA and were committed to the project. Staff noted that the involvement of the SFA team was critical in the implementation process, and they were seen as skilled practitioners. The training team listened to the needs of the teachers and this was valued by staff. The training team could also respond to individual school problems. The team listened to the needs of the schools. For example, they assisted schools with writing as well as reading by developing a whole new set of material matched to NLS.

In the implementation process it was important that teaching assistants were also trained. In this respect, SFA was a whole school initiative and everyone was involved. Training for parents was not as successfully delivered as anticipated as in most schools parents were not involved or engaged in supporting pupils' learning. The training team were able to model effective SFA approach. This was viewed as very important in the implementation process. The quality of the training provided was considered to be very high quality. Trainers provided the schools with ideas that were practical and useful. This was appreciated by staff and assisted the implementation process.

The London schools were well supported by other schools following SFA and provided additional support. The training was considered to offer sound pedagogical advice that was relevant and was considered to be 'really rigorous that held everyone from TAs to the Head!' Two years on there is a shift in the implementation of SFA that goes 'beyond the script'. The schools in the study are now adapting, expanding and innovating the programme.

## **6. Impact of SFA**

The main impact of SFA is in the effective development of literacy as evidenced by increased SATs levels at all the schools and improvements at each key stage (1 and 2). SFA assessments also showed steady increases in reading performance. In all the schools involvement in reading and using whole texts, had improved. In addition pupils were engaged in buying books and saw themselves as 'readers'. In 'Roots' they have been given books and in 'Wings' the books are in the schools. Both these features were considered to be very important. All pupils interviewed as part of the evaluation spoke confidently, competently and critically. All were able to articulate critical opinions of books and authors. For some pupils this also included non-fiction genres. Pupils were clearly highly motivated by the SFA programme because they felt they were 'getting somewhere'. Pupils were involved with their own learning more as a result of SFA and understood the process of learning to read more deeply. When questioned pupils were able to explain the skills they used in learning to read and decode. In addition pupils identified the higher order reading strategies they used which included; analysis, inference, hypothesis and critical evaluation. Pupils' reading development had progressed beyond decoding skills. Pupils saw the teacher as another person who helps them to learn alongside their team and reading partners.

Staff suggested that there was evidence that pupils had developed higher order thinking skills as they could evaluate, critique all they were able to read. They could also analyse texts. Pupils felt that their reading skills would prepare them for secondary school. In all

SFA schools the group-work approach had infiltrated other areas of the curriculum – maths, geography which provided consistency across the curriculum. Classroom signposts had also gone whole school. Schools reported that pupils were quieter and calmer in lessons and that SFA has had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour. Teachers noted that generally pupils have more respect for each other and teachers around the school. The oral development component of SFA has meant that pupils can express themselves and have the means of articulating problems and expressing need, frustration and anger. SFA has therefore provided a powerful mechanism for improving classroom behaviour. SFA has also had a positive effect on staff skills and staff motivation. Skills in teaching literacy have been 'upgraded' e.g. the use of phonics. Teachers subject content knowledge has also been improved particularly the use of oracy in the learning process. In short, SFA had raised expectations and improved the pace of lessons.

It was evident that teachers' energy goes into teaching not into schemes of work and material production for lessons. Diagnostic assessment has been a powerful component of the teaching process allowing teachers to make informed decisions. The conflict resolution components of comparative learning has contributed to teachers understanding of managing behaviour. Parents feel this has had an important impact because pupils now talk about their reading and their work at home. Pupils go home with their profiles indicating achievement and success.

## **7. Challenge and Reflection**

- There is a challenge in involving more parents in the SFA process. Only one of the four schools had been successful in engaging parents through an

effective family support team. All the schools felt that engaging parents was an issue that they needed to work upon.

- Another challenge concerns the time available to offer extended writing on a full curriculum. Schools felt dissatisfied with the time allocated to extended writing.
- Schools talked about 'stalling pupils' because of not knowing how to move pupils through a certain level. This is an issue the SFA team are currently working on.
- In years 5 and 6 some pupils identified that they were getting 'bored' by some of the repetitiveness of the work. They stated that they wanted to think 'more deeply'.
- Some teachers felt that some of the resources for years 5 and 6 were not sufficiently challenging.
- A minority of staff and parents raised questions about what kind of resources were available for 'more able' pupils.
- Some teachers reported that the eight weeks assessment didn't allow sufficient time for progress to be made or identified. Therefore some schools

had moved to 16 week assessments with a teacher assessment at the eight week stage.

- It was acknowledged that heads need to be behind the SFA approach for it to be successful.
- In all four schools the opinions and evidence gathered confirmed that the SFA programme and SFA team had significantly added to the quality of work across the whole school, specifically in the areas of literacy and reading development; commitment to learning and behaviour.