

## **Embedding Formative Assessment at Mersham Primary School**

### *A case study into the introduction and training of Embedding Formative Assessment*

Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA) is a two-year supported programme of monthly Teacher Learning Community meetings (TLCs) focusing on embedding key strategies of formative assessment. This is a whole school programme where teachers meet in groups of 10 – 14 with TLC meetings calendared every 4 weeks for 75 minutes. These groups are facilitated by a TLC leader who is a member of school staff, however, they are not expected to be a formative assessment expert.

### **Why Embedding Formative Assessment?**

*There had been a significant impact on children's attainment and progress as a result of the pandemic and the school saw their responsibility being to enable all children to make accelerated progress moving forwards, so that they are not disadvantaged long term.*

*Historically, the school had also had groups of children sitting on the cusp of nationally expected standards who have not always been able to achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 6. This was an area the school needed to address.*

*The Headteacher believed that effective formative assessment across the whole school was key to driving this area for development forwards. As a staff team, class teachers had different levels of expertise and experience and leaders needed to ensure that there was consistency across the year groups that enabled children's gaps in learning to be quickly identified and addressed.*

*The Headteacher also saw improving formative assessment across the school as a means to having additional benefits in terms of improving teacher workload. The school's improvement plan already had a focus on achieving the above but the impact of COVID meant that this had not been driven forward as much as leaders would have hoped. As such, the EFA project formed a key part of the school improvement plan going forward.*

### **The Training and Support**

An in-school EFA Lead is identified who is supported by an EFA Mentor for the full two years of the programme. The EFA Mentor provides tailored support, training and coaching around the effective implementation to ensure the school strategically maximizes the impact of the programme and it becomes a sustainable feature of the school. The support provided by an EFA Mentor includes:

- An initial day's training for school leaders and teachers leading the TLC meetings, this is delivered in-school or virtually.
- Regular emails/telephone calls with the EFA Mentor with key reflection and planning points.
- Two face-to-face visits at the end of year one and two to review the programme and plan the next steps in implementation.
- A wide breath of supporting resources, exemplars and case studies.

*The initial training by the EFA mentor was attended by the Headteacher, another member of SLT who had been designated the EFA Lead, and the two staff members who were to take on the role of TLC*



*Leader. All staff were positive about the face-to-face delivery of the training, and felt that it helped them to understand their respective roles. The structure of the programme came across as being valued by those in attendance, as each TLC is pre-planned and structured in a way that supports TLC leaders' delivery.*

*Part of the initial training focuses on understanding the 'Why?' of the programme and of the school's decision to be involved, and this was something else that was identified as being a clear positive to ensure that all involved understood the core purpose of the programme.*

*Leaders felt very positively about the programme dictating regular allocated time to teacher learning and reflection, as this is something that can at times be lost among other competing pressures.*

### **TLC workshops**

*Teachers attended monthly Teacher Learning Community (TLC) workshops.*

*Teachers have reported that they value the opportunity to discuss their learning and reflections within their TLC. This is because it allows them to not only share their experiences, but to hear other's perspectives and ideas around specific formative assessment strategies. This allows teachers to build further on their knowledge, and to refine strategies that they are already using in class, while also giving them the permission to stop using certain strategies that they do not feel effective, in order to try new ones.*

*The role of the TLC Leader allows for those teachers looking for new opportunities to step into a leadership role on the EFA programme. Staff at Mersham have valued the way the two TLC leaders have delivered and led each TLC meeting, leading to appreciation amongst the team as well as a worthwhile development opportunity for those in the TLC leader position.*

*In addition to the valuable learning that has taken place in the sessions, the school have also taken on the structure of the TLC meetings for other staff meeting opportunities as well, valuing the opportunity for peer discussion, reflection and development in other areas of work.*

### **Outcomes and Impact**

*EFA formed a key strategy on the school's improvement plan, and as such there was full buy-in from the school's leadership team. The structure of the programme was followed as intended, with monthly TLCs attended by all staff with a teaching responsibility.*

*In terms of monitoring the success of the approach and the impact of training, the school has developed a number of ideas.*

*Teachers have their own individual files, which act as somewhat of a learning journey – the action plans that form a part of the TLCs are stored in an individual's file, which then shows the decisions that have been made around which strategies to explore and which to stop using. Teachers' usage of strategies is monitored at class level, and through peer observations, which form a key part of the programme. In*

*terms of thinking ahead, leaders have already prioritized formative assessment as a focus for learning walks, once the formal first 2 years of the programme ends.*

*In terms of impact on staff, feedback suggests that there is a greater understanding of formative assessment and effective strategies that can be used to elicit high quality assessment information. This involves teachers having a greater toolkit of strategies for whole-class assessment 'in the moment'. The opportunity to engage in reflective professional dialogue with colleagues has also helped teachers to develop new ideas and ways of applying strategies, which has seen a positive impact on the variety of techniques being used across the school.*

*As a result of the embedded strategies in use across the school, leaders and teachers report that pupils' involvement and engagement in lessons has increased. The sharp focus on formative assessment that the programme provides has meant that teachers are more mindful at the planning stage of making decisions around whole class assessment, and that adaptive teaching strategies are evident more frequently around the school.*

*One of the Headteacher's initial hopes for the programme has also been borne out, with workload from marking being reduced, due to more in-the-moment marking and verbal feedback.*

### **Further Information about Embedding Formative Assessment**

Further information is available on [SSAT's website](#). Embedding Formative Assessment is one of the is [Education Endowment Foundation's \(EEF\) Promising Projects](#). The EEF ran an effectiveness trial in 2018 which found that students in Embedding Formative Assessment schools made the equivalent of two months additional progress, further information about this trial is available [here](#).

We, received 50% match-funding towards the training for Embedding Formative Assessment from the [EEFective Kent Project](#). This project is a partnership between [Kent County Council](#) and the [Education Endowment Foundation](#).

For more information about current and future funding opportunities for Kent schools and academies from the [EEFective Kent Project](#) visit [the project's webpage](#) or contact the project team directly ([EEFectiveKentProject@kent.gov.uk](mailto:EEFectiveKentProject@kent.gov.uk)).

