



# TIME TO INTERVENE

Funding for Every Child a Reader may no longer be ring-fenced, but the programme's success demands it should not be dismissed. Lest we forget, Julia Douetil charts ECAR's positive impact in schools...

**Y**ou've heard the government say it often enough – the best people to make decisions about what children need, in order for them to learn effectively, are the people who work with those children and know them as individuals. But the new Ofsted framework is a reminder that with power, comes accountability. It is no

longer enough to say 'we are doing what we can', schools now are charged with ensuring that each child makes good progress.

How are schools responding to this challenge? Sarah Kelly taught in different year groups at Hobletts Manor Infant and Nursery School in Hertfordshire for 10 years, before training as a Reading Recovery (RR)

teacher. Since beginning Every Child a Reader (ECaR) in 2009, Sarah and the literacy team have worked closely together to improve the learning and teaching of reading in classrooms, and in group and one-to-one interventions. They levelled reading books throughout the school to support independent and guided reading; arranged for

teaching and support staff to observe good teaching; led in-school professional development on guided reading and offered advice with individual issues.

In November 2010, Ofsted judged the school to be outstanding, noting that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress



# 7 out of 10

The proportion of both the best and the most improved primary schools in England that were also ECaR schools in 2009

“because interventions are planned and their effectiveness evaluated carefully...children requiring additional challenge or support are identified early and the success of any interventions evaluated and other strategies put in place if necessary”.

## Effective support

Hobletts shows how ECaR schools are capitalising on the professional investment in their Reading Recovery teachers to ensure that every child, whatever his needs or difficulties, learns to read and write. With RR at the core for children with the most difficult literacy problems, and lighter touch interventions for children with less complex needs, teachers like Sarah identify the most effective support for each child. When money is tight, it is important that schools are not using intensive support where a little extra practice would suffice, but support that does not work for a particular child is equally wasteful.

How do they do it? ECaR schools empower their teachers through professional development that focuses on observation, critical analysis and deep exploration of how children learn literacy. Assessment and monitoring are central, but as tools to guide and

inform teaching, rather than as sticks to beat teachers. As Linda, a RR teacher in Barnet, said, “It’s Assessment For Learning in the true sense of the word” The RR teacher becomes a core resource for the school, with the knowledge and expertise to support all those involved in teaching early literacy.

## Reaching more children

When Patricia Wick was appointed as headteacher at St Michael’s CE JJ School in Hansworth in 2008, standards were low and the school was given Notice to Improve by Ofsted. Patricia saw ECaR as an opportunity to raise attainment across the school as a whole, so the selection of the right teacher to lead the project was crucial. The decision to appoint Naseem Akhtar, a member of the leadership team, to be trained as the RR specialist teacher and to lead the ECaR project was a brave one. Given the difficult situation the school was in, this was arguably the person the headteacher could least afford to spare for such a large part of the week.

The decision paid off. Using her RR skills, Mrs Akhtar trained all teachers and teaching assistants in the school how to use

benchmarking and running records as diagnostic assessment tools, raising subject knowledge in reading across the school. As a result, teaching assistants are now able to take a teaching role in guided reading groups, so pupils across the school have two highly-focused guided reading sessions per week instead of one. With support from the LA ECaR team, layered interventions were set up in Reception, Y1, Y2 and Y5. One outcome of that work is that children identified for RR in Y1, having experienced the Reception intervention, needed shorter programmes enabling more children to be served.

Standards in reading are rising in all classes and there is strong evidence of accelerated progress across the school.

## Building capacity

In Redriff Primary in Southwark, Deputy head and ECaR teacher Sheila Cohning recalls that “Children came into Redriff at a low level in literacy and were not making sufficient progress throughout their time in KS1. Once the benefits of Reading Recovery and its wider impact were understood by the leadership team, it was agreed to build on the benefits of the intervention.”

The school employed a second RR teacher, Sarah Harrison, which

meant they had the capacity to establish complementary interventions, and to support the incorporation of RR techniques into classroom practice.

“We target specific children with time limited, focused programmes,” explains Sheila. “The outcomes for children are being monitored very closely. The leadership team is aware that quality first teaching is the priority and understands that this teaching can be supplemented by appropriate, specific interventions”

The Redriff model includes:

- > A planned, layered programme of interventions to include RR, Fischer Family Trust (FFT), and individual reading based on the Better Reading Partnership model
- > Quality First Teaching highlighting the power of speaking and listening for the writing process
- > All Y1 TAs and teachers were trained in RR-based transferable techniques for both reading and writing
- > Careful timetabling ensured interventions were not overlapping and were targeted appropriately
- > The continuation of the Letters and Sounds programme
- > The introduction of daily handwriting practice

In all of these schools, ECaR has had an impact which goes beyond the RR programme on which it is based. What is to become of ECaR now that funding for the programme is no longer ring-fenced? The DfE has confirmed that money for literacy intervention continues to be available as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the full three year period of the Comprehensive Spending Review from 2011–2014. LAs, in collaboration with their Schools Forum, can opt to use this money for ECaR. In the long term the government is committed to shifting ECaR to a market-led model, with schools buying into the services which support it. For more information about how schools can start an ECaR programme, visit [readingrecovery.ioe.ac.uk](http://readingrecovery.ioe.ac.uk)

“ For the past three years ECaR schools have improved attainment in National Assessments at the end of KS1 by 1% more than other schools in reading and writing

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