

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

We wanted to review our quality assurance processes regarding the quality of education (such as lesson observations, work scrutiny and data analyses). We felt our system was labour intensive, time consuming and largely judgemental. It seemed to be rigorous but did not necessarily provide an accurate picture of learning over time. Furthermore, it was not conducive to the reduction of teacher workload and feelings of well-being. We developed an 'achieving excellence' framework that encompasses lesson observations, work scrutiny and data analyses within a supportive coaching triad. We also wanted to ensure that whilst teacher meeting time was reduced it was focused clearly on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

An uncontrolled retrospective cohort study was used. The effects of a workload reduction strategy (Autumn Term 2019-February 2020) were compared to the situation which existed in the previous academic year. In terms of attainment, we measured pupil on-track or off-track status before and after implementation of the intervention with the same sample of pupils.

Research Design



Dependent Variables

- DV1 – Pupil attainment (on-track/off track status)
- DV2 – Teacher Workload Survey Responses

In addition qualitative data was collected from teachers

Aims of the research:

- Workload reduction through combining elements of the QA of teaching and learning.
- Improved feelings of well-being from the replacement of existing coaching practice with focused peer led coaching conversations around teaching and learning.
- Improved pupil outcomes through sustained and sustainable improvements in the quality of education.

LIMITATIONS

This research is limited because of the use of one sample (with no control group). This meant that the data could not be compared with a cohort who had not undertaken the achieving excellence framework in order to rule out other factors that could have impacted on teacher workload and well-being.

Future research could address this by using two samples from separate schools with similar attributes in order to have an independent control and intervention group (a parallel group quasi-experimental design).

METHODS

Participants and sample size

Participants for the research included the whole population of teachers from The Beacon, Folkestone, an all age special school for children with profound and complex needs. This generated a sample size of 45 staff and 372 pupils. All participants were asked to take part in the intervention as it was a school wide initiative. Participation in the surveys was not compulsory but the surveys generated an uptake of 100%.

Procedures

Participants were surveyed using the workload and well-being surveys to collect pre- and post-test data. Participants then received training on the achieving excellence framework and a twilight training program was established to replace training during directed time. Post-test measures were taken in February 2020 using the same surveys as the pre-test data. Qualitative data was obtained in the form of responses to discussion questions.

Materials and apparatus

- Workload survey.
- Pupil asset – system for tracking assessment data.
- Well-being survey.
- Proforma for capturing overview of teaching and learning on Perspective, the school's information management system.
- The iris system of recording lessons.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The improving excellence framework impacted positively on teachers' feelings of well-being. This is shown by responses to the workload survey which indicates an increase in the number of participants who said that they had a good work-life balance and that they had an acceptable workload. Qualitative data suggests that the system has encouraged an ongoing dialogue around the quality of education and an increased focus on pedagogical excellence. Looking at a recorded lesson, pupil data and pupils' work as part of the same coaching conversation has encouraged a far more holistic approach to our quality assurance systems. Progress data shows clearly that there has been no negative impact on in year progress, in fact there has been a small increase in the percentage of pupils making expected or better progress in English across the course of the project. This project built on an existing ethos of collaboration, collegiate working, coaching, smart trust and a commitment to being the best that we can be.

RESULTS

Qualitative data provided the following responses:

'More reflective and collaborative, focusing on better outcomes for children.'
'It makes our teaching better because we closely analyse what we do.'
'Definitely no extra work.'
'Suits our children better.'
'A great opportunity to discuss teaching in an in-depth way.'
'A really positive experience, I feel more in control and relaxed.'

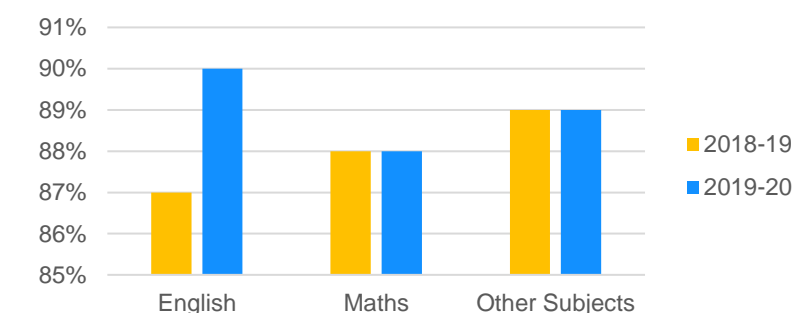
Table 1

Attainment data

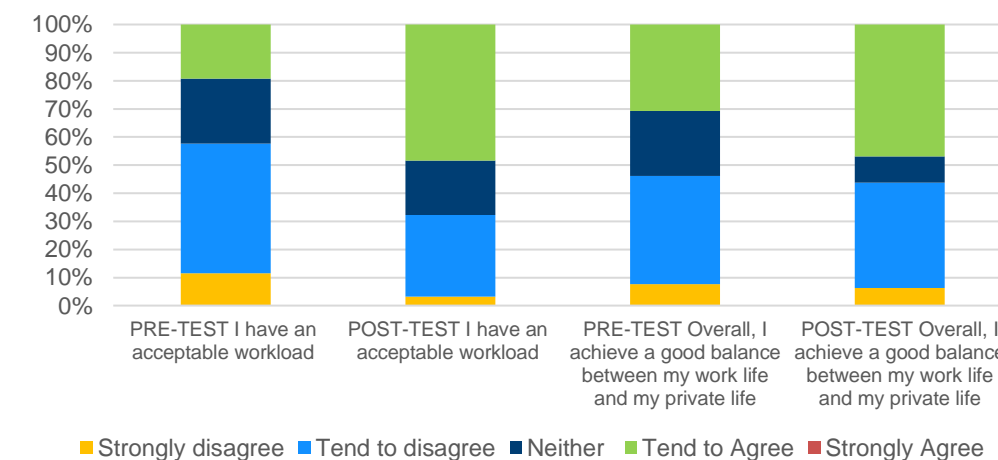
Separate 2x2 Chi-squared tests of independence were used to compare the number of pupils that were on-track or off-track across year 1 to year 4. The school uses an assessment system which measures in year progress. (Table 1 and Figure 2).

	Effect Size (d)	CI (95%)	p value	w
Maths	0.092	-0.06 – 0.244	0.240	0.046
English	0.058	-0.09 – 0.206	0.466	0.029
Other Subjects	0.142	0.06 – 0.224	0.001	0.071

Figure 2 – Pupil progress data



Workload Survey Responses



This research was carried out with funding and support from the Department for Education and Education Development Trust.