

# Setting new STANDARDS

Despite several concerted efforts, St Martin's was struggling to move beyond floor targets for progress and attainment in KS2. Then came the Achievement for All pilot, says Garath Jackson...

**W**hen I became the headteacher of St Martin's Church of England Primary School in 2004, like many similar schools it considered itself to be fully inclusive in its practice. However, the attainment levels were not where they should have been. The 2004 KS2 test results for those attaining Level 4 were 47% in English and 56% in maths. There was clearly a need to improve and the school was making strides to do this. By 2007, the KS2 results had risen to 69% in English and 59% in maths – still some way to go, despite implementing changes to the curriculum. The children were entering school at a below average level and then leaving the school at a similar level compared nationally. We

recognised we were maintaining – not narrowing – the gap with peers. We needed to consider other areas of development that would result in greater progress.

To begin with, we examined the challenges our community faced. St Martin's is an average-sized school situated in Oldham. Most of the accommodation is rented and some parts are undergoing regeneration. There is double the national average of pupils eligible for free school meals and the majority are white British, though an increasing number of children belong to minority ethnic groups. We knew that to make a real impact on children's life chances we would need to look both at the offer we made in school and at how we could have an impact on the wider school community.

As a result of this, we participated in a TDA pilot in 2007 to develop the School Improvement Framework, linking teaching and learning with the wider extended schools offer. We completed this in partnership with three other primary schools and one secondary school.

But by the end of 2008, despite being involved in the Intensive Support Programme for National Strategies, we had levelled out at 79% for English and 61% for maths. Progress was being made, but not enough.

## **Pushing past floor targets**

When the Achievement for All pilot was announced, the three strands of assessment and tracking, parental engagement and wider opportunities linked so well to the school development plan that I was quick to take the local authority up on its invitation to become involved.

Our school had a higher than average SEN register and one that was growing, particularly with an increase in pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis. The deputy headteacher was an experienced SENCo and over identification was not an issue.

Up until this point we had not considered the impact an approach such as Achievement for All could have on the

**AfA Careers**  
Achievement for All is building a community of best practice and offers the opportunity for school leaders to support the delivery of the programme as an Achievement Coach. For further details go to [afa3as.org.uk/careers](http://afa3as.org.uk/careers)

progress vulnerable pupils make within the classroom. Nor had we really valued the input parents could make to the progress of their children. Like many others, we conducted our regular parents' evenings for five minutes a child!

The school was hovering around the floor target for progress and attainment at the end of KS2 and I wanted to see if Achievement for All could get us to a safer position in relation to national benchmarking standards. I was appointed the local authority lead for Achievement for All, which meant a secondment out of school. However, I wanted to maintain an interest in what was developing at St. Martins. I had been working closely throughout with the deputy who became acting head, and I knew that implementation of Achievement for All was assured.

As the LA lead, I was able to shape the pilot to meet the needs of Oldham schools. There had to be a strong focus on all

# 37%

*The percentage of pupils in 450 schools that took part in the Achievement for all Pilot that achieved or exceeded expected levels of progress for all pupils nationally in English*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Garath Jackson has 19 years teaching experience across a number of contrasting primary schools. After a two-year secondment to the Local Authority to lead the Achievement for All pilot, he took up the Regional Lead (North West) post in September 2011.



strands of the pilot and we identified the need to develop the Quality First Inclusive Teaching offer to teachers in the target groups. This was supported by the writing of two programmes for teachers: one primary focused and the other secondary. These were delivered during the second year of the pilot and enabled teachers to develop their differentiation, use of assessment, and aspirational ethos. To ensure these skills were sustainable, we delivered lesson study training to our pilot schools so improvements to teaching could be shared among all staff.

### **Dramatic results**

The Achievement for All pilot had a massive impact on the schools, their leaders and the children, and this has been borne out in the results. An evaluation of the 450 schools from across the country that participated in the pilot,

“ A key feature of the school's *rapid improvement* is the development of a wide range of support and *intervention strategies* for pupils, including those with special educational *needs* ”

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conducted by the University of Manchester, demonstrated that 37% of children achieved or exceeded expected levels of progress for all pupils nationally in English, and 42% similarly in maths. With regards to wider outcomes, attendance improved with a reduction in persistent absenteeism of over 10%. The general behaviour of pupils also changed for the better.

The Oldham schools involved widely commented that the programme had improved their understanding of data analysis, and the need to closely measure the impact of interventions. They said Achievement for All

had enhanced leadership skills and highlighted the importance of senior management in driving provision for pupils with SEN. Another positive was that a focus on using structured conversations to work closely with parents had helped to develop wider outcomes for the pupils involved.

The impact of Achievement for All for St Martin's was dramatic.

By the end of the two year pilot in 2011, KS2 test results for those attaining Level 4+ in English and maths rose to 100%. A key part of the success of the pilot on the children's outcomes was the

strong commitment from the senior leadership team and the buy-in from all staff members. The school was committed to improving the outcomes and had high aspirations for all children.

Achievement for All is a huge step forward in the development of positive outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our schools. It is a proven programme that changes lives and I am very pleased and proud to be part of the Achievement for All 3As Team.



### **Find out more**

The Achievement for All programme is being rolled out nationally by education charity Achievement for All 3As, supported by PwC and with an investment of £14 million over three years from the Department for Education. Information on how to be involved is available at [afa3as.org.uk](http://afa3as.org.uk)