

Final Evaluation Report

Portsmouth TSA SEND Project

[Strategic School Improvement Fund, ref. SSIF450692]

Talent 4 Transition

January 2019

Contents

Acknowledgements

Glossary of terms

Executive Summary

Scope of the Report

1. Background

2. Methodology

3. Findings (i) structural characteristics

4. Findings (ii) content & output characteristics

5. Implications & Potential

References

ANNEXES

1. Research Format / Instruments

2. Project schools – data capture

3. Project Work-plan

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have generously provided inputs to this evaluation. Effective scrutiny of our work is optimised when the voices and evidence of all participants are included. In consequence, my gratitude is extended widely to the schools and their teachers who have been directly involved in this project – in particular, the SEND leads in each setting. They have provided me with full access to the school-based documentation that has informed their inputs. Moreover, they have been patient and generous in committing time to accommodate my enquiries.

I'd also wish to express thanks to the team of coaches who have made an integral contribution to the project's actions.

I have benefitted from observing the workings of the project's Steering and Advisory Group meetings and from engaging directly with key participants to inform my greater understanding of the project's context, focus and direction.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution, as research assistant, of Yumy Zhao; she has been steadfast in supplying quality insights into the assembled data. Finally, Sandi Otto has been of immense help in responding quickly and positively to my (frequent) requests for administrative assistance, making the evaluation process more straightforward.

No-one has been mentioned by name in these acknowledgements: but this should not diminish the value of their contributions. Thank you.

Professor Philip Garner
Talent4Transition
January 2019

Glossary of terms

AfL: Assessment for learning
ASP: Analyse School Performance
C: Coach
CPD: Continuing professional development
HEI: Higher Education Institution
HLTA: Higher Level Teaching Assistant
KPI: Key Performance Indicator
KS: Key Stage
LA: Local Authority
LLS: London Leadership Strategy
NLE: National Leader in Education
OAP: Ordinarily Available Provision
OfSTED: Office for Standards in Education
PC: Project Commentator
PLC: Professional Learning Community
PEP: Portsmouth Education Partnership
PTSA: Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance
SEF: Self Evaluation Framework
SEN: Special Educational Needs
SENRG: Special Educational Needs Review Guide
SENCO: Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLE: Specialist Leader in Education
SLT: Senior Leadership Team
TA: Teaching Assistant

Executive Summary

- **General**

- Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA), with the Mary Rose School as nominated lead, secured a DfE grant in 2018 which established a project designed to address issues highlighted locally in respect of SEND populations in its schools
- 6 KPIs were identified, based on the perceived needs of the schools involved; the agreed KPIs were integral to the project activities and to its evaluation
- The KPIs focussed on: Improving Outcomes; Leadership; Teaching and Learning; Engaging with Families; Identification, Monitoring & Tracking; and Developing Provision
- An independent evaluation exercise was conducted which examined a range of issues linked to the project's (i) structural characteristics and (ii) its content & output characteristics
- Data were obtained from 4 sources: SENCOs, Coaches, other project stakeholders and project documentation.

- **Structural Characteristics**

Planning

- The project took full account of the needs of participating schools, as identified by the pre-project SEND audit; subsequent school actions were based on this needs analysis, an approach which was recognised as crucial by SENCOs and school leaders.
- Participating schools were volunteer partners, who had each expressed a strong interest in the project; 20 schools participated
- Each partner school received explicit commitment from its school leader; this was ongoing throughout the duration of the project.

Operational Approach

- The coach formed the key mediator in project actions, as a catalyst for peer-led professional learning within a 'community of professional practice'; their ongoing engagement with schools was regarded as vital by the SENCOs
- A designated work-plan formed the template for all the project's actions; this comprised 4 phases. Key features of the plan included expert inputs, support for professional reflection, shared responsibility and leadership development and opportunities to explore alternative 'ways of doing'.
- Value was placed on enabling 'multiple perspectives and practices' to be acknowledged and where necessary adapted for use in partner schools
- The project was managed by a Steering Group
- A rudimentary financial algorithm was developed to illustrate the overall value-for-money of the project

Generic Experiences of Participants

- Participants believed that involvement in the project represented high-quality CPD which was ongoing rather than episodic in nature
- SENCOs developed both generic skills (in peer coaching) and specific skills/knowledge (related to SEN and inclusive practice)
- The participants' view of peer coaching was that it was an essential component in promoting a school-wide 'community of professional learning'; most of the SENCOs expressed a wish that the process of peer-supported learning should be continued

- School participants believed that the project had provided opportunities for them to develop as middle/senior leaders in their school and to be more confident in decision-making in respect of SEN
- **Content and output characteristics: KPIs**
 - All participating schools provided evidence of progress towards the project's 28 KPIs in its 6 thematic areas; significant progress was reported by most schools. No schools indicated nil progress
 - Performance in KPI thematic areas indicated two groups: greater progress was evidenced in the data in KPIs 2, 3 & 6 (relating to leadership, teaching and learning and about future action planning) than in KPIs 1, 4 & 5 (monitoring & tracking, pupil outcomes and engaging families). Factors informing this grouping are presented
 - SENCOs and other project stakeholders highlighted the systemic interrelationship between the 6 thematic KPI areas, thereby illustrating both the complexity of SEN as a field of professional activity as well as the need to adopt an interdisciplinary response to this
 - Project activity in KPI 1 indicates that the progress made in improving pupils' academic outcomes cannot be fully illustrated at the time of data collation, because of the absence of progress data; SENCOs pointed out the need for ongoing monitoring of nationally-developed statistical data
 - Feedback from participants suggested that pupil outcomes linked to improvements in behaviour/attendance and exclusions had significantly improved
 - In KPI 2 there was substantive evidence that leadership skills had been enhanced as resulting from project engagement – this was connected to the empowerment of SENCOs to instigate structural changes in the organisation and delivery of SEN provision in the schools
 - The involvement of school leaders in the project was identified as a significant factor in the effectiveness of the project in addressing/reaching its targets
 - The principal feature of KPI3 was that there appeared to be an incremental development of more widespread whole-school orientations regarding SEN provision. Most notably this was indicated by narrative data reporting a greater involvement of non-specialist staff in SEN matters
 - A growth in whole-school commitment to SEN is perhaps a signal that the project schools are at various stages in the process of developing or further enhancing a professional learning community
 - Engaging with families was a KPI area in which participants reported rather less progression than others – although there were some significant practical actions which were a direct result of paired reflection on provision
 - For KPI 5 some participants indicated a sharper and more strategic approach in identification and monitoring. This was helpfully linked in a direct way to curriculum interventions for pupils with SEND
 - KPI 6 placed an emphasis on school and SEN leadership as the principal catalysts for development
 - A second algorithm was devised to illustrate the project's capacity to deliver value-for-money in addressing the KPIs identified. It is suggested that the merits of the project approach are particularly potent at a time of financial insecurity and restriction

- **Strengths & Challenges**

- Feedback from all participants indicates that the organisation, delivery and content of this project has highlighted many more strengths than challenges. In part this is accounted for by the supportive methodology adopted, which has been echoed by coherent, collaborative actions within many of the schools
- The project's strengths, resulting in acknowledgement practical actions, have been discernible at individual, whole-school and system-wide levels
- The key strengths, identified by key-word & phrase analysis, are defined in areas of ongoing CPD, development of shared leadership in SEN, maximising existing knowledge & skills by using peer-led coaching and contributing to personal and professional well-being of the participants
- The cost-effectiveness of the project's composite set of actions was noted by most participants as a strong positive feature
- Relatively few drawbacks or challenges were highlighted in the data generated. Amongst these were an initial concern over workload (which was addressed in phase 1 of the project), and the challenge of focussing on many KPIs (approximately 28) in such a short project duration

- **Future Potential**

- The evaluation identified potential for further development of the project's approach for individual schools, MATs and at a system-wide level
- Significant advantages are highlighted in scaling-up the methodology across communities of schools, and in aspects of provision tangential to SEN (for example, pupil behaviour, mental health and social interventions for 'families under stress')

Scope of the Report

This Evaluation seeks to provide a credible and authentic picture of a local initiative to support SEN in schools. Its parameters are specific, and linked directly to 2 issues of the project's operation and delivery: (a) the structural aspects of the project's activities (encompassing its planning, operational approach and the 'lived' experiences of the participants) and (b) the project's performance against 6 key performance indicators (KPIs) identified in the original proposal to the Strategic School Improvement Fund (linked to improving outcomes, leadership, teaching and learning, engaging with families, identification, monitoring and tracking and developing provision). The evaluation sought data directly from those most closely involved in the project (teachers in the schools and peer coaches) and from other available evidence (school-related performance data). Thus, the Evaluation provides a ground-level overview of impact, from the perspective of its key stakeholder groups.

1. Background

Introduction

Concern regarding outcomes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has been a consistent issue within schools in England for many years. As such it has been at the forefront of policy and intervention, resulting in many practical steps to address the situation – this activity has been apparent at both national and local levels. The present project has emerged as a direct result of a *Department for Education* (DfE) initiative, which has sought to add momentum to the quest to identify the approaches that optimise provision for pupils with SEN in schools, with the potential that these might be more widely disseminated nationally.

National

Provision for pupils with SEN in English mainstream schools has represented an ongoing area of activity in both policy and practice. It has remained so for over 40 years, since the advent of the Warnock Report (1978), which provided a major impetus for the inclusion of children experiencing learning and other challenges within primary and secondary schools. Subsequently, landmark policies were implemented to ensure that such children were more effectively supported. Successive governments have been instrumental in directing and resourcing further change, resulting in a contemporary national context in which inclusive provision for pupils with SEN is viewed as the norm. It is not the place of this evaluation to chart these historical initiatives; suffice it to say that the current project represents a local example of school-focussed development which seeks to further progress the progressive and meaningful approach which was heralded in the ‘Warnock era’.

Portsmouth

Prior to the project’s inception, Portsmouth Local Authority (LA) reported that outcomes for pupils with SEN were ‘extremely low’. Its schools ranked near the bottom of national performance tables in this regard and compared unfavourably with its statistical neighbours. In common with other LAs, the gap in SEN pupil attainment indicated a gradual widening from Key Stage (KS) 1 to 4. Gap analysis (2016) showed that pupils experiencing SENs and who were in receipt of SEN Support underperformed compared to similar groups nationally. In its submission to DfE, the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA) highlighted this situation, directly referencing the LAs gap analysis. This showed the following headline performance statistics: KS1 (ranked 80 of 152 nationally), KS2 (143 of 152), KS4 (145 of 152 - Attainment 8) and KS4 (149 of 152 - Progress 8). It additionally reported that, at KS4, Portsmouth schools ranked 11 out of 11 compared with its statistical neighbours.

Project origins

These performance characteristics indicated a need for systemic change, with the development of strong senior and middle leadership for SEND being a priority to promote more effective, school-based actions to improve the quality of learning and teaching, implement more purposeful assessment and identification measures and to provide more effective deployment of support staff to ensure that interventions are better targeted and more personalized. In addition, there was a recognition that the most effective school-based developments in SEN were those in which there was evidence of increased engagement by all

school staff, and the emergence of a 'professional learning community' (PLC). The focus of the PTSA proposal, therefore, directly addressed these issues and accommodated the approaches they advocated. An important element in this process has been the use of the SEND Review Guide, developed by the London Leadership Strategy (LLS) in 2016. This tool has become widely acknowledged for its capacity to secure a reliable overview of provision, as well as identifying key issues for further development by schools (LLS, 2016).

2. Methodology

Introduction: project outline

Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA), with the Mary Rose School as nominated lead, secured a DfE grant in 2018 which established a project designed to address issues highlighted locally in respect of SEND populations in its schools (see above). The agreed work would be undertaken between 1 October 2017 and 22 March 2019 (18 months). The project comprised a collaborative, peer-learning approach to enhancing SEN provision in 20 schools, all of which agreed to participate voluntarily.

The project used an intervention which had been successfully applied elsewhere (*SEND Review Guide*, 2016). 6 KPIs were identified, based on the perceived needs of the schools involved; the agreed KPIs were integral to the project activities and to its evaluation. Participating schools were paired, with one school requiring high levels of SEN support linked with a school which was viewed as having more effective policy and practices. Both schools were supported by an SEN Outstanding Leader (coach), identified from outside the LA with others from within it (who received pre-project training and orientation). The expectation, based on evidence-bases, was that through the process of peer-led mentoring, both schools would show progression against the 6 KPIs; sharing models of effective practice to enhance the development of SEND provision in both locations.

An initial provision audit, based on the *SEND Review Guide* was conducted; this provided a set of baseline characteristics, personalised for each school and linked to the project KPIs. A series of inputs by the SEN Leaders/coaches was undertaken. These visits provided opportunities for SEN leaders and the schools to interrogate the audit, share good practice and provide support and challenge. This process resulted in a set of planned practical actions which were to directly impact SEN practice in schools, the teaching and other staff involved and, importantly, the pupils with SEN themselves. A further feature of the projected intervention was that continuous professional development was embedded via ongoing specialist support and opportunities to provide shared inputs to SEN events. Towards the conclusion of these inputs a final audit, using the *SEND Review Guide* to identify the progress made, was completed.

It is important to recognise several distinctive components of the project's approach, given that these comprise an essential dimension in the independent evaluation reported in the present document. Thus, the project was configured to operate based on (i) collaborative working (ii) peer review (iii) personalised professional learning (iv) shared knowledge-building and (v) dealing with 'real world' challenge. Each characteristic has been substantiated by evidence from research (see (i) Nelson, Mehta, Sharples & Davey, 2017; (ii) Bowman-Perrott et.al., 2013; (iii) Domenech, 2013; (iv) CUREE, 2009; (v) Ellis, Tod & Graham-Matheson, 2012)

Evaluation approach

The evaluation of the project has been conducted in accordance with the working principles underpinning the LTSA project (as described above); namely, that it adopts an inductive and collaborative approach. This informs an evaluation exercise which places a focus on 2 elements of project delivery – (i) structural characteristics (examining planning, operational, and experiential) and (ii) content & output characteristics (examining the extent to which specified

KPIs have been evidenced in each of its 6 thematic fields – improving outcomes, leadership, teaching and learning, engaging with families, identification, monitoring and tracking and developing SEND provision (and their linked KPIs). This process enables project participants (both the LA and the participating schools) to draw benefit from the evaluation experience itself, using it as a potential means of stimulating further professional reflection and advancement.

This approach to evaluation has been securely validated (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Elliott, 2005) and is now widely established as a credible way of enhancing professional practice in education. Notably, for example, this approach is embedded within the current guidance relating to the *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years* (DfE, 2015). The intuitive, mixed-methods approach to data generation and analysis that it emphasises is based on continuous feedback to the PTSA project Steering Group. This helps to maximise the potential of an evaluation approach which is developmental and models the ‘community of professional practice’ methodology that lies at the heart of the project itself.

Data generation

The Evaluation Report utilises data drawn from 4 sources. At the inception of the evaluation process the intention was to adopt a mixed-methods approach, to provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the project’s impact. In accordance with this, the data-generation sources and instruments were identified to inform responses to questions linked to each KPI, as follows:

KPI	Phase 1 (Term 1)	Phase 2 (Terms 2,3,4)	Phase 3 (Term 5)
1 - Improving outcomes	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data
2 - Leadership	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data
3 - Teaching and Learning	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data
4 - Engaging with Families	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data
5 - Identification, Monitoring and Tracking	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data
6 - Developing provision	Pre-project Audit / School documents / Informal narratives	Interviews with SEN Coach / School visits & SENCO interview / SEN Coach Report / School data	Post-project Audit / Feedback from SEN Coach/ School Leader Feedback / School data

Figure 1: data generation sources

Evidence was generated from all 20 schools who volunteered to participate in the project, with a smaller sample of schools being purposively selected to illustrate 3 levels of project impact:

a. Schools whose audit exercise indicated an increased score of at least 20% b. Schools whose audit exercise indicated an increased score of between 10-19% and c. Schools whose audit showed some increase in audit score, however small. If any school indicated a decline in their post-project audit score compared to that of their pre-audit it would be scrutinised separately.

Within each location data were secured from the nominated SEN lead in the school (usually the SENCO), from other staff (including the head-teacher), from the coaches allocated to each pair of schools and from a range of documentary sources (including the *SEN Review Guide*).

Analysis

All interviews were professionally transcribed; transcriptions also included any reference to non-verbal expression and gesture. Each narrative was interrogated using both key-word/phrase searches alongside both inductive and deductive approaches, in which thematic content was grouped and similarities and differences noted. Each of the transcripts was coded and a coding index was compiled of key terms, their location in each transcript being noted, an approach validated as a credible way of securing reliable commentary regarding school-related activities (Elliott, 2005). A research diary, noting key issues emerging in these conversations, as well as supplementary information that emerged, was maintained throughout and used to assist in data-interpretation; the diary also contained notes of informal discussions and any telephone conversations with project participants. Finally, the interview transcripts were read by two practising school-leaders, to provide independent ratification for the themes identified during the coding process. This process allowed for additional, non-partisan professional perspectives to be highlighted, for further consideration.

Ethical considerations

This evaluation has been conducted according to the research/consultancy protocols consistent with that recognised by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). This conforms to ethical procedures that are internationally recognised as constituting good practice.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the following aspects of the above policies are indicative of the approach taken in the study:

- A requirement to disclose any conflict of interest between the evaluation team and the participants of the PTSA project (individual or institutional)
- Retain confidentiality in respect of all data, in all forms both during and following the evaluation exercise
- Ensure that data (in all formats) are securely stored during and after the evaluation exercise and disposed of securely by agreement with the PTSA project Steering Committee
- Obtain informed consent from all participants (schools and individuals)
- Report all data fairly and accurately
- Explain openly the limitations of the evaluation exercise, indicating any shortcoming in data collection or its veracity

In this Report, all the names of all participants providing data have been anonymised. Any real names of teachers, pupils, SEN leaders or others, including information which might reveal a school's location, have been changed. Each school has been assigned an alphabetical indicator

(A to V, omitting 'I'); each school informant has been given a numerical indicator linked to their school (thus, A1, A2 etc., according to the number of informants from each school); the SEN leaders acting as coaches are notified as 'C' in the datasets and given a numerical indicator (thus, C1 – C10). Finally, all other informants (for example, from the local authority, the teaching school alliance, conference/workshop attendees who are not directly involved in the project but nevertheless important stakeholders) are notified as 'PC' (to denote their evidence as that of a 'project commentator'). Confidentiality of sources (individual/school) was further assured by randomly allocating alphabetical and numerical identifiers, rather than sequentially to lists held centrally by project administrators.

All transcribed or verbatim statements from project participants are given in *italic* font.

Further information regarding both research methodology and ethical matters can be obtained from philipgarnerassociates@outlook.com

3. Findings (i) structural characteristics

Evidence to support the findings highlighted in this section of the Report have been drawn from that which was assembled by a composite range of instruments, both qualitative and quantitative. Notably, this includes an emphasis on the commentaries of key participants in the project. A full list of sources is contained in Figure 1.

Data presented here reflects the project's activities relating to structural aspects of its delivery – this includes such considerations as project planning, connecting with the needs of target schools, training of project participants, resource allocation and a record of the 'lived experience' of those engaged in project delivery, and their professional viewpoint on its impact and effectiveness. In scoping these issues, 3 aspects of the project are considered in turn.

Planning

The SSIF project based in Portsmouth sought to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND in Mainstream Schools. It involved 20 schools, all of whom had signalled a willingness to participate. The core of the project was a bespoke package of support and training using a quality assured collaborative approach, based on an already recognised process. Both these project features have been significant in its capacity to retain momentum and focus during the project (12 months). In the case of identification of schools, partnerships within the Teaching School Alliance (TSA) were important in enabling existing shared practices to continue; the project's schools were established as a series of pairs, with the advantage that many SEND practitioners were aware of each other's work via existing LA networks. Illustrative of these conditions were the observations that *'As we had already done a bit of work with _____(school) it was an easy thing for us to link with them in the project'* (B1) and *'Professional trust and a feeling of confidence meant a lot, so when we were joined up with _____(school) it felt very secure'* (F1). One school leader stated that *'Being a part of this work was strongly connected to our development planning...we were very keen to participate'* (PC).

The work completed was also seen as contributing to some existing LA-wide initiatives, rather than being bolted-on as an afterthought. For example, one SENCO explained that (for her) the project had achieved school-based targets because *'we saw it as a natural extension of the new provision map* that we were familiar with...so it reinforced the work we were doing rather than being separate to it'* (G1).

The substantive actions within the project were planned to take full account of the needs of participating schools. These were formally identified by the pre-project SEND Audit, and conversations with the coach assigned to each school. This was a distinguishing characteristic of the project, and supported buy-in by the schools as well as ensuring that the work being proposed could be kept on track by a structured set of interventions. A secondary SENCO thus remarked that *'Even before we did the audit we had a good idea of where the issues were...which was definitely confirmed...and so being given support through our coach to explore this was the big bonus as far as I was concerned'* (N1). Finally, recognition of the value-added dimension of coaching activity for schools was provided by a school leader: *'The benefit to us of having _____ [name of coach] in our school was felt by the whole community – it influenced not just work we're doing in SEN, but getting us to think about whether our systems*

in general need to be refined in some areas – target setting for instance, to meet needs more efficiently and quickly’ (PC)

Links with schools

The inputs from the project’s SEN coaches formed the key link with schools. This group of expert practitioners had been identified based on an appointment process that secured the involvement of 10 experienced SEN leaders as coaches; several of these were from within the LA, others recruited from high-performing schools elsewhere.

The coaches were an essential component in enabling the project’s intention to address KPIs in 6 thematic areas (see above) by promoting ‘Systemic change is required and the programme will focus on: the ‘Development of strong senior and middle leadership to secure a clear vision and commitment to pupils with SEND’ and ‘who lead on SEND’ and promote ‘Improved quality of learning and teaching giving all teachers the tools to provide appropriate learning experiences for pupils on SEN support’ (Portsmouth TSA, SSIF Application, 2017).

Conversations with both school staff and the coaches illustrated that such a peer-led approach, located within a ‘community of professional practice’ model enabled critical reflection resulting in some clearly apparent systemic (school-wide) changes. C2, for instance, commented that *‘I was able to see some actual change in the way that things were being done, actual procedures were altered to make them definitely more fitting to the needs of the pupils...so it was encouraging and showed that the school was incredibly on board’* (C2) whilst a SENCO noted her *‘...being gently influenced to shift the ways that we’d been trying to connect with SEN families, so that we are I believe much more parent-friendly now’* (L1).

Coaches within the project have also been instrumental in growing both an in-school ‘community of professional practice’ as well as a wider, more systemic engagement amongst the project schools as a group. Professional learning communities are now strongly evidenced as a means of ensuring shared effective SEN practices as well as being vital to support the well-being of teachers, TAs and others. It is therefore reassuring that this was illustrated in substantive feedback from all participants in the project sample. One SENCO noted that *‘My coach was wonderful. She was professional, supportive, gave me ideas...and still I felt that my own skills were being recognised by her. Every school should have one’* (Q1). From the perspective of the coach, *‘it was striking both how much the secondary SENCOs gained from sharing concerns and problem-solving as a community, and that this was the first time they had had this opportunity to do so’* (C1). Another coach stated that, resulting from this approach to professional networking, *‘teachers and teaching assistants [were]now leading and sharing good practice’* (C10).

This aspect of project operation is notable in its alignment with recent acknowledgements that both peer-led coaching and communities of professional practice have visible impacts on school culture and staff engagement, the positive development of both being vital to addressing the project’s KPIs (ACER, 2016; Lofthouse, Leat & Towler, 2010).

Work Plan

An analysis of the SSIF project’s work plan (see Annex 3) indicates that it has comprised 4 interrelated phases, as summarised below.

PHASE 1	Establishing context / Training / Self-Audit (1)	½ term
PHASE 2	Target setting / Coaching inputs / QA visit	1½ terms
PHASE 3	Reporting / Coaching inputs / QA visit	½ term
PHASE 4	Self-Audit (2) / Coaching inputs / Dissemination / Evaluation	½ term

Figure 2: Work-plan phases

The activities undertaken within each project phase have been consistent with those set out in the original proposal. Importantly, they have each been linked to the 6 KPI areas that have driven the project’s rationale. Certain attributes of the work-plan are identified by project participants as being of importance in enabling schools to engage with the overall process. Key word/phrase analysis of the narratives from SEN staff in the 20 project schools highlights the following characteristics:

Work-plan feature	Response from school participant	%Frequency
Expert inputs	<i>‘I can’t tell you how stimulating this opportunity has been for me...how much more I’ve learned’ (P1)</i>	85%
Supports reflection	<i>‘The great thing is that we’re actually able to look at our practice with a different lens, if that’s understandable and that we understand, I think, that this is an important aim of the project’ (E1)</i>	80%
Alternative perspectives	<i>‘I have gained so much by being able to compare what I usually do with practice elsewhere as a result of being involved in the project. And its led to some changes too’ (G1)</i>	60%
Shared responsibility	<i>‘For me it’s about getting the rest of the school involved, so that we all understand our role and inputs in SEND’ (R1)</i>	45%
‘Room to think’	<i>‘The project has meant that I’ve set aside time to really unpack my work and...sort of...make better sense of it’ (K1)</i>	40%

Figure 3: Work-plan characteristics

Figure 3 shows that participants welcomed the overall format of the project and the way in which its individual elements had been structured and delivered. Each of the features is highly relevant both to growing leadership talent in SEND and in providing teachers and others working in schools with levels of support which make a value-added contribution to their professional and personal well-being. In the schools scrutinised in the sample, 7/10 SENCOs mentioned this affective dimension, illustrated well by one participant who believed that *‘I don’t think I’ve ever been involved in a project that’s been so incredibly tightly focussed on what’s really important to me – making a really effective impact on all my pupils. That’s made me feel great, very valued and has removed such a lot of feeling isolated...you’ll get that from others as well, because that’s something we talk quite a bit about amongst the group’ (Q1)*. This finding is of significance, given the current educational climate in which teacher retention is a pressing issue for schools and systems and has been recognised as a challenging issue in England (Worth, De Lazzari & Hillary, 2017) and has assumed perceived levels of crisis as reported in the national press (*The Guardian*, 2017).

Identifying needs

In its original proposal, the PTSA indicated that the project’s emphasis, articulated via 6 KPIs, was to enable ‘schools to identify areas for improvement within existing SEND provision’ and

to ‘Equip those supporting school improvement to review and create robust improvement plans’ (PTSA SSIF Bid, 2018, p. 8). Accordingly, the project’s structure emphasised the use of the *SEND Review Guide* (2016) to identify the key issues obtaining in each of the project schools. The substantive attention was then directed to areas of need prioritised by this process throughout the duration of the project.

The use of the *SEND Review Guide*’s audit was universally welcomed by the schools, who recognised it as being easy and not time-consuming to administer and a means of facilitating and structuring professional conversations leading to actions to address the needs identified. It was also viewed as a robust and credible tool, which had been subject to a rigorous development phase, including field-testing. As such it was a reliable and effective tool for pre- and post- review for the project: it addressed all 6 KPI’s and gave participating schools detailed salient information with which to frame their on-going interactions with the project. It was also a consistent tool that coaches used to facilitate their discussions with schools from a common framework – so while context was different, the *SEND Review Guide*’s audit framework gave consistency to the findings – this is evident in Figure 4 below especially with the first three functions.

The *SEND Review Guide* process itself was also seen as a supportive way of scrutinising current practice and a potential way of structuring a response – leading to action planning in collaboration with a coach. A feature of the audit was that it enabled multiple perspectives on provision to be assembled, whilst it additionally provided a way in which progress against areas of need might be robustly measured.

Audit function	Response from school participant	%Frequency
Identify need	<i>‘The audit work really well, and confirmed that there were 2 issues that we needed to work on during the project’</i> (H1)	100%
Measure progress	<i>‘Being able to use the audit to look at the progress we’d made so far was helpful to us, confirming that we were doing things right’</i> (J1)	80%
Scope current practice	<i>‘What we got was an excellent overview and showed us where our strengths were which is often something overlooked’</i> (J1)	80%
Time	<i>‘I found it really quick to use, and of course you can be selective too’</i> (G1)	50%
Ease of use	<i>‘Compared to some other audit-type tools, this was a really user-friendly’</i> (E1)	40%
Create action plan	<i>‘We worked on it with _____ [coach] to develop our action plan more’</i> (Q1)	30%
Involve non-SEN staff	<i>‘There was a fair amount of interest as well from staff who’d not normally be involved in an SEN-related resource’</i> (R1)	30%

Figure 4: SENCO views on the use of the SEN Audit

Resource allocation / effective use of grant

Little substantive information was elicited from project participants regarding their views on the adequacy of funds allocated to each school to undertake the actions described in the work-plan. Several respondents did however provide unsolicited observations within their interviews that the project was cost-effective because it had resulted in a range of benefits to pupils, teachers and schools. Funding concerns are consistently at the forefront of school leaders thinking at present, given the current reduced funding climate; even though this was not a feature of the feedback sought in the evaluation it was, however, provided in several instances. Evidence of the level of participation in the fiscally tight environment in which

schools operate demonstrates that the additional funding resources were used in cost effective manner.

Whilst this evaluation did not undertake a formal cost-benefit analysis, it is indicative that none of the participants openly expressed reservations about project funding being directed to inappropriate activity. On the contrary, scrutiny of transcripts, written feedback and reporting documents suggested that the actions constituted a positive value-for-money exercise; an attempt to illustrate this in more explicit terms is briefly described in this section. Firstly, a summary of project benefits, based on content analysis of participant interviews, written feedback and project reporting documents, was assembled. From these data 4 thematic areas were identified, each with 4 concrete areas of impact, with an estimation of the concrete actions that have been undertaken within the project's schools. This calculation is contained in Figure 4.

Impact Area	Exemplar Comment	Actions (Practice/Content) n=
PUPIL		
Academic Progress (Maths)	<i>'We have highlighted progress by Y6 in Maths, linked to the changes' (A1)</i>	9
Academic Progress (English)	<i>'The system has led to an increased awareness of effective target setting in English' (B1)</i>	11
Social: exclusions	<i>'There has been a reduction in the number of days excluded for learners with SEND' (C1)</i>	8
Social: behaviour	<i>'The school has sought to re-structure its behaviour system and policy' (E1)</i>	6
SENCO		
Leadership development	<i>'The school is now recognising and building systems to support distributed responsibility using Edukey software' (D1)</i>	17
SEN Skills/Knowledge	<i>'I learned new things as part of my coach's input – very worthwhile' (J1)</i>	12
Assessment/target-setting	<i>'Approaches for assessment are more manageable and realistic, driven by targets' (H1)</i>	9
Working with others	<i>'SENCO has a greater understanding of managing and getting the best out of others' (D1)</i>	17
WHOLE SCHOOL		
Development planning	<i>'There is an improved strategic overview of the school's SEND provision' (PC)</i>	11
Teaching & Learning	<i>'Due to a regular focus on a specific KPI, the SENCOs kept a focus on the quality of learning and teaching' (PC)</i>	15
Staff Development	<i>'This has been a brilliant opportunity to gear some really sharp training for all staff' (C1)</i>	8
Staff engagement (SEN)	<i>'It was striking how much the staff gained from sharing concerns' (PC)</i>	16
LA / PTSA		
Community of Learning	<i>'Both SENCOs asked if this scheme was going to be continued – more opportunities across Portsmouth' (PC)</i>	23
Strategic planning	<i>'I feel I'm in a better place to contribute something to the LA about SEN provision for the future' (F1)</i>	6
Staff well-being	<i>'Several of those involved are explicitly talking...and a very clear...about the way that the project has brought greater job-satisfaction' (PC)</i>	9

Staff retention	<i>'I feel I'm in a better place to contribute something to the LA about SEN provision for the future'</i> (F1)	2
-----------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

Figure 5: Project impact areas & initiatives

The purpose of the above illustration is to point to an algorithm which, it is suggested, can illustrate the extent to which this SSIF project is delivering value-for-money and cost effectiveness. Whilst this calculation is generic and illustrative only of a potential way of evaluating financial effectiveness, it has been generated as a point of discussion.

SENP(20) x APC (179) = VFM unit per initiative person (where SENP = SEN participants; APC = Actions - Practice & Content).

Calculation: 20x179(£187909). This represents £52.48 per SENCO action across the participating schools.

Such estimations, although by no means a comprehensive indication of the intrinsic value and added-value of this project, can nonetheless lead to fruitful discussions around what constitutes effective use of relatively scarce professional development funds and the way that such funds are structured. A further illustrative algorithm is provided in Part 4 of this evaluation, linked to the project's 6 KPIs.

Operational

Management

The project has been overseen by a Steering Group (SG), comprising representation from the participating schools, PTSA and with external inputs. It is supported by an administrator and has met at timetabled intervals throughout the project's time-line. Details of both its agendas and confirmed minutes have been made available as part of the supporting documentary evidence available for the purposes of this evaluation. Additionally, and in keeping with the formative approach to project evaluation that has been adopted, the external evaluator has participated as an *ex-officio* member of this group.

Training & Professional Development

Initial training for participating schools was provided by experienced trainers who had substantial knowledge of school-based SEND provision and of the *SEND Review Guide's* Audit process. The initial SSIF proposal indicated that training inputs would be led by 'The initial SSIF proposal indicated that training inputs would be led by current SEN leaders as 'NLE and SLE involvement was highlighted as giving credibility' (PTSA SSIF Proposal, 2017). This approach was valued by those attending training: one participant stated that '*Hearing about the project's intentions from people I felt spoke my language and did this from actual experience in schools was definitely a big influencer to me*' (H1). An added dimension was that the project had been planned so that local specialist leaders (SLEs) were recruited as part of the training team, further amplifying the credibility of the training experience: '*As I knew that one of the trainers was from a Portsmouth school it meant that I could be much more confident that she was fully aware of what the real situation is here*' (F1).

This stage in the project was viewed as a vital one to ensure full engagement by participants – many of whom had little prior exposure to the *SEN Review Guide* or to involvement in peer-led coaching. This view is amplified by the observations of two SENCOs: *‘When I first attended I was quite expectant but also pretty unsure as I think you can be phased by experts who tell you how to run things. But it turned out to be a great experience for me, and I felt that if I’d just received that [training] it’d have been worthwhile. But the whole project has been a revelation for me’* (C1); *‘The training part at the start was essential, as auditing our own schools is vital to get the focus right. I thought it hit the mark’* (F1).

A subsequent need to reinforce any of the content covered in the Phase 1 training was not apparent in participant feedback, although one coach mentioned that *‘It was useful to be able to run through certain bits of the Audit with [SENCO name]...I think giving space to that was appreciated and allowed us to sharpen up what we wanted to work on’* (C6). Elsewhere, the importance of the training linked to the SEN Audit was highlighted, as it was essential that each school SENCO could recognise its use as the principal analysis tool which would inform the peer-coaching approach being adopted: *‘Now that the project is almost finished, I realise that the audit has been a great way of making sure I have kept on track – I did keep going back to it as a double-check’* (H1).

Finally, the training enabled school participants to obtain a clearer picture of the peer-coaching methodology, used throughout the project. Very few respondents indicated that they were completely unaware of this approach, although not many had formally engaged in peer coaching as part of their professional development: *‘Being supported by a skilled and experienced practitioner was something of a new experience for me, though I’d read enough about it to be familiar with it’* (N1); *‘I think we were all excited at the chance of working with experienced people in the way that it had been described’* (P1). Subsequent responses to the peer-coaching utilised in the project (see below) confirmed the positive expectations of this group of SENCOs.

Peer Coaching

As was indicated in the original proposal, the project’s actions were extensively structured around inputs from specially selected coaches. Feedback from the SENCOs and from the coaches themselves indicates that both groups regarded the process itself as successful, as it led to recognisable and concrete progress across the KPIs each of the project schools. The use of peer-support using experienced SEN practitioners as the key support methodology in the project required considerable planning on the part of the SG. This was because it enshrined several essential characteristics of the project content itself. Analysis of the narratives obtained from participants highlighted the importance of 5 of these – shared/sharing practices; exemplifying effective SEN pedagogy; support and challenge; promoting leadership opportunity and building confidence through skills/knowledge development.

Peer Coaching Feature	Evidence from SENCO (S) & Coach (C)	
Shared/sharing practices	S	<i>‘I felt I was an equal partner, even though I knew that [Coach] was vastly more experienced than I was’</i> (B1)
	C	<i>‘It’s a naturally occurring relationship, so that it is almost like discussing and sharing an SEN issue with a teacher in my own school’</i> (C3)
	S	<i>‘What was great was that I could actually see a real strategy, not a theoretical one...this made it so relevant to my own situation’</i> (H1)

Exemplifying effective SEN pedagogy	C	'Schools have used the project to re-evaluate and improve their school systems in place for supporting learners' with SEN/D, to bring them in line with the principles of the Code of Practice' (C2)
Support and challenge	S	'There were definitely a few cases when I really had to dig deeply to find the right intervention, but she [coach] made this much easier as I knew I could ask for her input' (F1)
	C	'We had robust discussion about different ways to make the differences we were wanting to make' (C8)
Promoting leadership opportunity	S	'I definitely feel a lot stronger, more confident as an SEN lead in my school' (Q1)
	C	'The real work and change lies around Leadership development' (C4)
Building confidence through skills/knowledge	S	'I've learned such a lot as a result...I've also got a good idea of where to look for new ideas...I'd count the other SENCOs in the project as a big resource' (R1)
	C	'They [SENCOs] have a much-improved understanding of both how to interpret whole school data and its utility, setting realistic and important aims and measures for impact' (C3)

Figure 6: Positive features of peer coaching

The value of the coaching input was also recognised by school leaders, who strongly inferred that the inputs from the coach over the course of the project had resulted in value-added gains for their school. For example, the response from one head was that she believed that *'across a number of aspects of the work we're doing here [coach's name] has been noticeable...I think that she was regarded as a critical friend, and I know that even second hand, some of the staff were using her as a kind of sounding board'* (PC).

Other positive features of peer coaching were signalled alongside the 5 principal features identified. One, which has seldom registered in the literature concerning peer support in SEN, is that there were several schools who had indicated that they regarded peer-coaching as a way of stimulating developments in other parts of the school – for example *'I've no doubt that it's a valuable way of supporting school development as it enables us to reach a reasoned but common understanding on some quite difficult areas'* (PC); some participants also intimated that staff were keen to see such a supportive approach being continued beyond the lifetime of the project (*'I'd like to see the project extended because we have benefitted such a lot from sharing ideas and learning from specialist inputs'* D1).

QA Monitoring

Several mechanisms were established during the proposal/planning stage to ensure that the project's activities and outputs were appropriately quality assured. The key strategies sought to oversee QA issues on a generic, project-wide basis (via (a) independent external scrutiny, of which this Report forms a substantive element and (b) the formation of a project reference group (PRG) comprising experienced senior leaders, teaching schools directors, LA and University representatives and the Portsmouth Education Partnership. The project proposal indicated that *'These partners will ensure effective monitoring of project management and administration as part of the quality assurance role'* (PTSA SSIF project proposal, 2018).

In the case of the PRG, little evidence was available regarding the direct engagement of some of the named professional groups; nor was it easy to fully recognise the brief to which this QA body was working to. Whilst there was an absence of the PRGs visibility across the project, it remains the case that key deliverables have been achieved, activities and their outputs delivered on time and within the specified funding parameters.

Regarding school-focussed QA of the project, there were distinctive inputs from the coaches. These were widely welcomed by school participants, although at least one SENCO stated that

'I was a bit worried at first because it was like...powerful people examining my practice and I think I felt quite exposed' (G1). Such sentiments were not apparent elsewhere amongst the cohort, and indeed were soon replaced by a more confident stance: *'I came to regard them as fellow professionals who could really be trusted to give me non-judgemental feedback'* (G1).

External input

The project has benefited from receiving key contributions from several external sources. Notably these occurred during the initial training inputs and substantively in the concluding Regional SEND CPD event, planned as a structured component of the project in Phase 5. Both external inputs were viewed positively by the school participants, for several reasons. First, there was a widespread sense that expert, high-profile inputs brought credibility and status to the project and gave these SENCOs a feeling that they were recognised as *'...being worth quality, nationally-recognised trainers who had presence on the SEN and inclusion scene and who are regarded as giving good, grounded advice'* (K1).

Experiential

This section of Part 3 is intended to provide evidence of the extent to which the main project stakeholders felt engaged with and included within, the whole project. As such it offers some snapshot feedback regarding their overall sense of personal and professional 'well-being' as key actors within the initiative. The data used are again abstracted from interview transcripts, informal conversations (as noted in the research diary – see Part 2, Methodology) and project documents. They provide illustrations of the generic experience of SENCOs, Coaches, School Leaders and External Contributors and can be viewed as reinforcing the substantially positive remarks expressed by these groups regarding specific project components, as discussed elsewhere in this Part of the Evaluation as well as subsequently, when project contents within each KPI area are interrogated. Ultimately, they are presented as a validation of the overall efficacy of the methodological approach adopted, the mode of delivery and the appropriateness of the project focus as seen through the differential lenses of the stakeholders.

The SENCO perspective was exclusively positive, and is best captured in two remarks – one from a Primary-phase setting, the other from a Secondary school. The former reflected on the *'Level of personal achievement I have obtained by just being associated with this work'* (J1), whilst the latter suggested that *'It has been a growth period for me...I get a feeling that in professional terms I have been through a pretty intense learning encounter'* (B1).

The coaches gave similar feedback, in recognising personal gains resulting from their project involvement. One intimated that *'I must add that it has been a pleasure to be involved in the project from a professional and improvement perspective'* (C2); another coach stated that *'As with other experiences as a coach, this has been a two-way learning exchange...I have certainly come away from these exchanges being more knowledgeable'* (C7).

From the perspective of school leaders and CEOs of MATs, further confirmation of these feelings of professional well-being was made available, including the recognition by one school leader that *'...it has been enriching for everybody I think and I'd say personally that it is the closest I've been in many years to a project that has done what it said and achieved such a lot of good things of direct relevance to all of us involved'* (PC).

Finally, one of the external contributors provided a summative, generic and powerful view which appears to reprise the evidence derived from the project's key stakeholders: *'I've been involved in a fair number of training and development events...(and) from what I've heard during the day it sounds like there's been just about 100% engagement...I'd love to connect with some of these SENCOs in the future to see just how much this has influenced their development. Quite a lot I'd expect'* (PC).

4. Findings (ii) content & output characteristics

Participating schools demonstrated progress against each of the KPIs identified, evidenced by the metrics available via the online Audit tool (www.spiritcrm.co.uk). This section seeks to provide an overview of these results, both in respect of the project schools' themselves and by examining the 6 individual themes and their constituent KPIs. In undertaking this task, because of some internal changes within the cohort of participating schools, it has been necessary to adapt data reports from the audit. A full explanation of the rationale for this process is contained in the final part of this section, where the challenges and limitations of data generation and collation are briefly considered.

The substantive content in this final reporting section in this evaluation examines the extent to which progress has been made in achieving the KPIs established at the inception of the project. Each of the 6 thematic KPI areas being addressed by the project had a set of 28 agreed KPIs, identified by the project team in the original proposal. These are summarised in the Figure below.

KPI 1 Improving outcomes (8)

- High levels of pupil engagement
- Appropriate & motivating learning opportunities
- Clear and measurable learning intentions and outcomes
- High levels of differentiation.
- Resources meeting individual needs
- Effective use of adult support.
- Support to ensure pupils are resilient.
- Pupil work demonstrating clear in year-progress

KPI 2 Leadership (4)

- Logs recording engagement of senior and middle
- Level of resourcing provided (e.g. CPD, staff release)
- Leaders understanding & commitment to pupils with SEND
- SEND issues were on agenda for all SLT meetings

KPI 3 Teaching and Learning (4)

- Non-specialist teachers more reflective about classroom practice
- Subject teachers are aware of SEND practice and curriculum differentiation.
- Wider awareness of the value of pupil progress data and its future use in curriculum planning
- Effectiveness of interventions introduced (evidence of in-year progress)

KPI 4 Engaging with families (4)

- Frequency of opportunities offered to families to engage with the school
- Quality of interventions
- Level of take up by 'SEND families'
- Level of satisfaction by families

KPI 5 Identification, Monitoring and Tracking (5)

- Robust identification processes
- Provision maps
- Personalised programmes
- Strengthen assessment systems
- Monitoring and evaluation processes

KPI 6 Developing provision (3)

Detailed action plan in place with agreed outcomes/actions/success criteria. Monitored Robustly monitoring by school SLT, SENCO and SEN leader
Commitment of the school leadership team to provide improved provision for SEND

Figure 7: Description of KPI thematic areas &

Analysis of each KPI area was undertaken using data obtained using the instruments listed in Figure 1. These provided a global, composite view which took account of (a) the experiences/viewpoints of the SENCOs, those of the coaches and (b) the data accessible from the Audit tool. Key-word/phrase narrative analysis was undertaken to isolate performance evidence in each of the KPI areas, and scrutiny of interview data from schools as well as informal/verbatim feedback from other project participants was used to illustrate the progress made. These are each explored in turn.

Prior to that, however, it is important to re-emphasise the global picture in respect of progress towards the KPI targets across the entire cohort of schools involved in the project. Though there are some schools where less development has occurred in a KPI area (although never more than in 2 per setting), such instances are very much in a minority, as the Audit mapping demonstrates. To reflect the positive progress made in some/all of the KPI areas this evaluation has used data from the audit, interviews and project documents to arrive at an overview of school engagement and progress in the 6 aspects of SEN being examined. It has adopted a 'RAG' analysis to provide a graphical illustration of the current situation; in this, Red = progress made in at least 50% of KPI areas; Amber = progress made in at least 75% of KPI areas; Green = progress made in all KPI areas. The overview, using this approach, is captured in Figure 8, below.

SCHOOL	KPI 1	KPI 2	KPI 3	KPI 4	KPI5	KPI 6
A	Red	Green	Amber	Red	Green	Green
B	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green
C	Amber	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Green
D	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green
E	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green
F	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green
G	Red	Amber	Green	Red	Green	Green
H	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
J	Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber
K	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Green
L	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green
M	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green
N	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Amber
O	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green	Amber
P	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Green
Q	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green
R	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Green
S	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Green	Green
T	Amber	Green	Green	Red	Amber	Green
U	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Figure 8: School Progress in KPI Areas: composite data overview

Whilst this presentation of data should be accompanied by a methodological ‘health-warning’, insofar as it uses an incomplete dataset from the specified sources (for example, audit reports were unavailable from 5 schools), it nevertheless reveals some important dimensions of the project’s actions in the participating schools. Firstly, the RAG analysis suggests that whilst overall progress across all KPIs has been accomplished, KPIs 2, 3 and 6 infer more comprehensive progress against the individual descriptors – as compared to performance in KPIs 1, 4 and 5. By allocating nominal scores to each colour code (viz. Red=1; amber = 2; green = 3) the KPIs can be prioritised in approximate order of progress made: this rudimentary process illustrates the two groups and the rank ordering of the KPIs in total (see below).

KPI	Score	Rank
6	57	1
2	56	2
3	55	3
5	53	4
1	52	5
4	48	6

Figure 9: 2 groups of KPI performance

Some generic comments can be made regarding the two groupings of KPIs suggested above. Those KPIs in the first grouping (relating to leadership, teaching and learning and about future action planning) appear to be those elements which practitioners in schools are more able to have a direct and more immediate influence on. They are more susceptible to change resulting from concerted action on the part of a professional learning community, being less reliant on external factors. The second group of KPIs involves aspects of professional practice which are more systemic in the impact of external factors – engaging families and pupil progress are cases in point, and both have been identified in the interviews conducted as being worthy of more longitudinal inputs (and consequently measurement).

Such an analysis is illustrated by extracts from the interview narratives: these illustrate that participants encountered greater professional challenge in evidencing progress in pupil achievement, provision mapping and, notably for this cohort, their actions to secure greater engagement with families. It should be added, however, that this analysis is explicitly not indicating that project impact in these areas has not taken place – more that teachers have encountered greater professional challenge within them, in a climate where progress is measured quantitatively in limited time-frames. For example, it was stated that *‘The focus here has been in getting right down to pupil-level achievement – asking deep questions so that we understand the drivers more; but we know that this is a staged process, where awareness and training play a big part initially’* (D1). This comment is also revealing in that it implies that each KPI area is not free-standing, and global progression can only develop where there is consistency of focus across all 6 KPI thematic areas. Hence, this analysis – whatever its shortcomings – reveals a significant awareness of this systemic interdependence. This was neatly articulated by one SENCO, who felt that *‘Where we’re trying to get to is a situation where multiple actions are taking place which are all aiming at one end-point and that’s the pupil who is having learning challenges’* (F1). In a further comment, acknowledging the difficulties of engaging with families (KP4), it was felt that *‘The school, all schools really, are trying to make*

ground in this area but it is maybe the most hard to shift of all the issues we face in SEN, because so many other external things are involved and we don't have much control over them' (L1).

Finally, prior to considering each KPI thematic area individually, it is important to re-emphasise that the 6 KPIs are systemically linked, and that this is an issue which the project participants recognised as a factor in ensuring that its aims were being more effectively met. It was stated, for instance, that *'...needing to work across every part of the project is a good way of showing how complicated and inter-connected SEN actually is, and that there aren't quick-fixes...it needs a big effort on everything' (H1)*, whilst a coach noted that *'I hope to continue supporting these schools in unpacking further linkages between pupil achievement and the various parts of SEN provision in the schools' (C7)*

The remainder of this section comprises brief commentaries and data illustrations regarding each of the KPI thematic areas and the indicators of progress within them. They are considered in numerical sequence, rather than in order of perceived importance as evidenced in the data considered.

KPI 1: Improving outcomes

Performance indicators relating to 'Improving Outcomes' (KPI 1) proved to be one element of project action about which participants expressed caution in their claims that progress had been made in all 8 of the individual KPI descriptors. Stakeholders were keen to emphasise that this aspect of impact is better assessed in a more longitudinal way, over time. One school leader, for example, optimistically stated that *'I would...expect staggered improvements in outcomes for SEN learners over time, becoming more discernible over the next year (2019-2020)' (PC)*. Elsewhere there were frequent comments regarding measuring pupil progress and the need to adopt a linear approach, which took account of (for example) ASP data (previously RAISEonline) which became available beyond the project's time-line. Nevertheless, numerous comments were forthcoming which pointed to more immediate learning gains by pupils. For example, one coach observed that *'settings are seeing an upward trend in current rates of progress in reading and writing across KS1 and 2. Mathematics in one setting, remains a priority for improvement. Partner school to share good practice as part of substantive relationship' (C4)*.

One notable aspect of pupil outcome data were the high numbers of comments from all project stakeholders regarding pupils whose SENs were linked to behaviour. These provided a strong body of evidence that some of the focussed actions taken concerning this have resulted in concrete, positive progress. This is well-illustrated by data from interviews: *'As part of the project both schools re-examined and have sought to progressively re-structure behavioural systems, towards a tiered approach supporting learners at risk of exclusion, with strategic reintegration into lessons and whole school structures' (C3)* and *'We are seeing a lot more in-class actions by subject teachers to minimise the risk of exclusion – effective and well-thought through teaching plays a big part in this' (G1)* are two indicative examples of this widely expressed sentiment.

As in other analyses of the composite data assembled, it is useful to highlight the emphasis placed on specific KPI descriptors which are employed in the project to demonstrate impact on pupil outcomes (see Figure 10, below). These reveal that there have been ground-level

actions in the schools in the project cohort which are acknowledged by the practitioners most closely involved with its delivery.

KPI 1	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Clear and measurable learning intentions and outcomes	14
2	High levels of differentiation.	11
3	High levels of pupil engagement	10
4	Effective use of adult support.	8
5	Appropriate & motivating learning opportunities	6
6	Pupil work demonstrating clear in year-progress	4
7	Support to ensure pupils are resilient.	3
8	Resources meeting individual needs	2

Figure 10: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 1)

KPI 2: Leadership

Data from all sources has indicated that the project has impacted positively on professional growth of SENCOs and others in schools who have had an association with the project. The work undertaken has had discernible effect at various levels of school organisation of SEN in all the schools who have participated. Evidence of leadership change is most apparent in the extent to which SENCOs are acknowledging personal efficacy and empowerment by *'Feeling that I can have a much bigger influence on making changes to what we've been doing for years in SEND as a result of feeling that my ideas are echoed elsewhere in the Authority'* (J1). School leaders have been quick to highlight this shift in orientation, in which the SENCO is being more 'self-actualised' and confident: thus, one school leader indicated that *'SENCOs have been recognised as leaders. Feedback from one of the SENCOs in my group was that she had been through 2 Ofsted visits in autumn term 2018 and that because of her engagement in this project, she was confident to discuss outcomes and progress with inspectors and felt her expertise has grown over the course of the project due to the challenge and regular visits'* (PC).

An indication that professional development for leadership was an ongoing feature in the project can also be drawn from a wide acknowledgement that school leadership teams themselves were highlighted as having been fully engaged in an institutional change process which placed SEN and inclusion issues close to the centre of professional discussion (see Figure 11). Evidence from the project coaches suggested that this was an essential feature in driving the emergence of a learning community which was more closely geared to pupils' needs and outcomes. Hence, it was remarked that *'System development has led to an improvement in target-setting for learners with SEN/D, and raised expectations for Quality First Teaching'* (C2), whilst one SENCO observed expansively that *'We live and breathe SEND for the first time, from the top to the bottom: it's everywhere'* (E1)

KPI 2	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Leaders understanding & commitment to pupils with SEND	34
2	Logs recording engagement of senior and middle leaders	19
3	Level of resourcing provided (e.g. CPD, staff release)	16
4	SEND issues were on agenda for all SLT meetings	11

Figure 11: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 2)

One encouraging aspect to be drawn from the narrative evidence secured is that SENCOs and coaches were confirming in their feedback that school-level actions were more visible to the

whole community, exemplified by the recognition in many schools the SENCOs are integral to SLTs. It was further noted that school leader commitment to this project was resulting in greater potential to develop a sustainability plan to assist in maintaining the momentum that the project had developed: this potential was acknowledged by several SENCOs, as exemplified by the remark that *'We are thinking and working 1 or 2 years ahead in some aspects of our provision...sketching out what might be good scenarios to aim for'* (H1)

KPI 3 Teaching and Learning

The project schools provided some solid evidence that there were dynamic and ongoing changes in the way that teaching and learning was being thought about by non-specialist SEN teachers and by those who regarded themselves as 'subject specialists'. Both these groups are identified in research studies as viewing SEN as part of provision that is usually addressed elsewhere in the school; during the lifetime of this project, for example, the current Secretary of State warned that *'SEND pupils are not someone else's problem. Every school is a school for pupils with SEND; and every teacher is a teacher of SEND pupils'* (Hinds, 2018). It is reassuring that two KPI 3 descriptors within the project highlighted that these schools placed significant emphasis on 'whole school' responsibility, as is illustrated by the frequency of comments regarding this issue (see Figure 12, below).

KPI 3	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Non-specialist teachers more reflective	29
2	Sub. teachers aware of SEN practice/curric. differentiation	24
3	Wider awareness of the value of pupil progress data	14
4	SEND issues were on agenda for all SLT meetings	11

Figure 12: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 3)

Ownership of teaching and learning planning and interventions relating to SEN was consistently voiced as a factor in the project's perceived success. One SENCO argued that, in her school, *'Every single member of staff has bought into it'* (T1), whilst another commented that *'Staff here seem more comfortable in engaging with me about what needs to be happening to move SEN learning forwards for SEN pupils...this for me is very encouraging, as it shows that we're coming out of the box we've been in'* (L1).

In fact, the widespread acceptance that SEND issues are 'whole staff' concerns are perhaps an acid test of the success of the project's desire to create 'professional learning communities', in which a corporate sense of ownership of hitherto 'difficult' or intractable problems in schools was visibly being demonstrated.

KPI 4 Engaging with families

Whilst progress was made in all aspects of KPI 4 it remained one of the project's most challenging thematic areas. As has been intimated, this is not because of within-project shortcomings, but as a direct consequence of external factors beyond the immediate control of schools. These have been well-rehearsed elsewhere (Parsons & Platt, 2013). Moreover, it proved difficult, within the time-frame and methodological parameters of this evaluation, to secure data relating to the level of acceptance of new initiatives or to level of satisfaction by families, resulting in the modest responses regarding the impact of interventions on families

(see Figure 13). In consequence, it is suggested that project schools, who are better placed to interact purposefully with families where SEN issues prevail, maintain this KPI as an agenda item in their post-project sustainability planning.

KPI 4	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Frequency of opportunities offered to families	23
2	Quality of interventions	16
3	Level of take up by 'SEND families'	12
4	Level of satisfaction by families	4

Figure 13: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 4)

Irrespective of the reservations regarding data shortcomings, what evidence that has been forthcoming is sufficient to highlight what one coach in the project referred to as '*green shoots of a developing engagement with families*' (C5). It is noticeable, in support of this view, that the work undertaken around KPI 4 resulted in a wider range of opportunities for families to engage with schools on matters relating directly to SEN. The project's SENCOs were explicit in noting this as both an important activity area, but also as one where they required more persistent and multi-professional support. Responding directly to questions regarding interventions, SENCOs indicated a wide range of practical steps had emerged – often resulting from paired school visits, inputs from their coach, or from discussion with colleagues from other schools in the project. Included amongst the ideas were such things as a 'parents space', the nomination of an SEN 'representative' for parents and families, school-home message books which highlighted achievements or positive behaviour, and more pro-active home-school visits where the school took the lead in planning and communicating. One SENCO stated that whilst '*...we've still got some way to go, I think that we've moved forwards in many ways and I can feel that some of our hard-to-reach families are now on our radar*' (J1).

KPI 5 Identification, Monitoring and Tracking

Participants in the project explained that they had benefitted from sharing in SEN identification and monitoring approaches from the inception of the project. The *SEN Review Guide* provided an effective and proven starting point in this respect; it was therefore acknowledged as a tool that evoked feelings of confidence amongst those utilising it. The SENCOs believed it to be a viable means of examining school-wide provision, as its application was straightforward and not time-consuming. This perception accounts in part for the substantial reference made to the *SEN Review Guide* in the interview narratives (see Figure 14, below).

KPI 5	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Robust identification processes	28
2	Strengthen assessment systems	17
3	Monitoring and evaluation processes	15
4	Personalised programmes	9
5	Provision maps	5

Figure 14: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 5)

The SENCOs interviewed inferred that the project had enabled them to purposefully examine existing process for identifying the needs of learners in their school and to make any refinements or adaptations to their system. The opportunity to engage in a structured professional discussion with a coach or with an SEN leader in a partner school was welcomed as an effective way of enabling this. For example, one SENCO stated that '*I was able to fully*

explore the ways that we organise our SEN teaching, right from the stage of prioritising the needs of our children’ (D1), with this observation being confirmed by a second view, that ‘I have taken it as an opportunity to reflect on how we do this (identification) and that has been really good as its meant that I’ve been able to make some tweaks to things...and I think we’ve got a better system as a result’ (M1).

KPI 6 Developing provision

Responses regarding emerging ideas and more formal plans across aspects of SEN provision in the schools was the most frequently identified KPI area mentioned by project participants. In many respects the KPI indicators in this thematic field demonstrate the interest and commitment of the schools to overall sustainability. Key elements of this, which had been firmly established as core aims in the original proposal, were the emphasis on leadership and the emergence of explicit action plans to ensure that the results of the peer-led dialogues and collaborations with partner schools led to concrete steps to maintain the work of the project. Thus, Figure 15 (below) signals the extent to which these preoccupations characterised the interview feedback and the documentary evidence secured.

KPI 6	Individual KPI descriptor	N=
1	Commitment of the school leadership team	36
2	Robustly monitoring by school SLT, SENCO and SEN leader	27
3	Detailed action plan in place	19

Figure 15: Ranking of KPI characteristics (KPI 6)

Verbatim evidence gathered from some school leaders supports this general picture. One indicated that ‘...feedback is that they will be continuing this focus on ensuring the ‘ordinarily available provision’ is in place’ (PC), another that ‘Strategic planning including regular delivery for CPD in SEN is now built in to our strategy’ (PC). The SENCOs also highlighted a positive view of likely future actions; in one school, for example, it was stated that ‘As SENCOs we are already thinking of the best ways that the work we’ve done can be continued’ (E1). Finally, a coach indicated that he had seen SENCOs ‘develop into a regular and dedicated space for reflection, share more openly, provide complimentary space, and become more aware of their own expertise and how they could support each other going forward (they have both resolved to continue the visit cycle this year)’ (C2), acknowledging both the complex nature of change in SEN as well as the need to underwrite efforts in this area with a time and resource commitment.

Value-for-Money: a KPI illustration

Previously in this Evaluation Report a value-for-money dimension of the project’s activities has been suggested, in respect of the generic impact of the project’s activities. At this point a similar illustration, with accompanying provisos, can be provided. This represents a further indication of the extent to which this SSIF project is delivering value-for-money and cost effectiveness. Thus, the algorithm used is as follows:

(20s x PDI) = VFM unit per school (where PDI = professional development input). The PDI is calculated as follows: 3 x coaching inputs (notional, 4.5 days); 2 x monitoring inputs (notional .5 day); audit training activity (.5day); project planning event (.5 day); regional conference (1 day) = 7 days.

VFM = (20 x 7) = 140(£187909) = £1342.20 per school.

To restate, such an estimation provides only a crude headline indicator of the benefits accrued by schools resulting from engagement in work across 6 KPI areas that most would regard as vital aspects of effective SEN provision. This has provided 179 identified practical changes in SEN work organisation and delivery (and its associated practices) in the schools involved. It is argued that the global sum per school represents a substantively more cost-effective direction of scarce public funds. The model adopted, therefore, is well worth further interrogation and longer-term scrutiny to determine its capacity to deliver sustainable impact in each of the targeted KPI areas.

Strengths & Challenges

The evidence presented in this Evaluation Report highlights significant learning gains in each of the KPI thematic areas integral to the project. This penultimate section summarises the strengths of the approach taken, from the perspective of individual, school and system-wide stakeholders. It also deals with the challenges encountered in securing appropriate evidence for the judgements made and the provisos to be considered when considering the analyses and interpretations made. This summation adopts an interpretative style, its suggested areas of strength being distilled from the evidence base utilised elsewhere in the project evaluation. In mapping the apparent strengths and challenges in this way it is important to recognise that an overwhelming body of data-led evidence suggested that the project's strengths far outweighed any perceived weaknesses.

Strengths

Individual

Supporting professional development – a feature of this aspect of project organisation and functioning is that teachers felt that support available to them was consistent, high quality and directed towards the needs that they had been able to self-identify.

Refining SEN skills/practices – the teachers believed that they had acquired further skills and insights regarding their own SEN practice which was already instrumental in enabling changes in provision and impacts on pupils with SEN

Enhancing reflective practices – the growth of awareness regarding the practical use of peer-driven reflective practice is enabling these teachers to move beyond 'headlines' and to think more deeply about (for example) more targeted assessments in SEN, linked to a subsequent teaching intervention.

Inputs & engagement with all KPIs – enabled further consideration of the systemic nature of SEN, and that – in keeping with theoretical and evidence-based models that inform this thinking – teachers bought in to a work-plan which addressed 6 interrelated KPIs.

Practising & modelling peer support – engagement with a coach in a supportive and yet challenging manner provided a model of practice which could be grown within individual schools with the development of personally acquired coaching skills.

Developing collaborative/shared practice – all project schools illustrated a willingness to share emerging effective practice within a ‘community of professional learning’, directed towards SEN issues but (importantly) with value-added benefits to teaching and learning across curriculum subjects/specialist areas.

Growing leadership skills – the school SENCOs in this project were unequivocal in acknowledging professional growth as middle and/or senior leaders in their schools; in recognising this these teachers mentioned empowerment and professional confidence resulting from heightened awareness and skill/knowledge levels as underpinning factors.

Well-being – the participants recognised that involvement in the various activities has given them a sense of greater satisfaction in their work, and for some this was noted as resulting in less work-related stress

School

Developing community of professional learning – this was a major impact feature of the project and was consistently highlighted by all the stakeholders. Further, it was viewed as an important factor in ensuring resilience and sustainability of existing activities in the future.

Linking to school development planning – there was a notable inference that the project was, in many schools, firmly linked to existing school improvement intentions and to future development planning. The role of SENCO in making inputs to these was recognised.

Enhancing well-being & links to retention – the project’s focus on a ‘community of learning’ enabled a supportive professional environment to be recognised, grown or enhanced in the project schools which may have an inferential impact on teacher-retention beyond SEN

Supported practices in distributed leadership – several project participants recognised that awareness and skill development relating to SEN provided a catalyst to greater engagement in decision-making processes and consideration of shared responsibility for this across school staffs.

Whole-school SEN development – illustrated by the recognition that non-SEN specialist class teachers (Primary) and subject-teachers (Secondary) were an important contributor to provision and key players in supporting individual pupil progress.

Cost effectiveness – a high number of participants commented that the project activities represented practical, evidence informed opportunities which brought concrete benefits to school delivery of SEN provision with far less negative impact on their time or performance of their regularly assigned duties.

Potential for sustainable actions – there was a consistent acknowledgement that whole schools would commit to taking forward the project’s collaborative, cluster-based and/or peer-led approaches in the future, in respect of both SEN and more widely in other aspects of school provision.

System

Enabling professional development based on paired (peer-led) practice – the project model of peer-supported individual and whole-school development has implications for more widespread, generic CPD across systems. It enables new insights and common understandings to be generated and inhibits silo-thinking regarding fundamental features of schools' delivery of effective teaching and learning for all pupils.

Cost effectiveness – at a time of significant budgetary restriction and projected future shortfall, the project's capacity to economically deliver substantive practical benefits to its partner schools can provide a positive model for system-wide adoption.

Connecting to LA strategic planning – effective school-based projects need to be securely connected to the overall vision and strategic plan of the LA to retain momentum and focus.

Challenges

Concern over external judgements – some participants expressed initial concern regarding the project approach, and an initial circumspection regarding the merits/value of the peer-coaching that was to be central to project delivery. Carefully structured explanatory inputs and training on the part of the project team limited the extent of this to the first few weeks of project operation. Subsequently, following the initial visit to a school by the coach it was evident that any reluctance to participate openly and fully was significantly diminished.

Teacher work-load – there was only a superficial indication by participating SENCOs that the project would add to their existing workload. The inception phase of the project performed an essential function in enabling participants to obtain examples of the benefits of the paired work they would be undertaking, so that what reservations were expressed in this respect were again restricted to the initial phase in the project. In addition, the external evaluation itself sought to build in a strong recognition that the project schools are busy places, and those working within them have pressing schedules. It was therefore a feature of this evaluation that (a) there would be no comprehensive survey questionnaire (b) all face-to-face interviews with the sample of SENCOs should be kept to a maximum of no more than 30 minutes and (c) requests for additional information (e.g. from school leaders and coaches) should be restricted to manageable proportions. This approach, which is consistent with current best-practices in data capture from the professions, can result in gaps in data which could impact on the quality of evaluation insights provided. The potential for this occurring was offset by adopting mixed methodology approach, ensuring data capture from multiple corroborating sources.

Impact assessment – some project participants expressed views that illustrated concern regarding the way that impact in certain KPI areas were to be monitored and evaluated. Principal amongst these was that relating to pupil outcomes. Consistent with evidence available from school-based research elsewhere in England (see EEF, 2018), there was a view that intervention effect in SEN required monitoring over an extended period to gain a reliable indication of impact – although a commonly held view was that informal and anecdotal evidence suggested that pupil progress was being demonstrated by other means.

Duration of the project - the length of the project and the pace of learning of SEND pupils do not lend themselves to show the significant gains in learning in national data collections. Thus, greater reliance is needed on school-based 'assessment for learning' rather than externally directed 'assessment of learning'.

5. Implications & Potential

The final section in this Evaluation Report summarises the implications and potential of the model and practices enshrined within the overall project approach and in its individual actions as specified in the work-plan. 5 areas have been highlighted as offering scope for ongoing consideration and development. These are proposed for discussion purposes and represent a set of suggestions rather than recommendations. They are also those project characteristics which may best support a process of scaling-up the approach followed, so that benefits might accrue for other schools/settings and geographical locations beyond the immediate stakeholding community of the present initiative.

Methodology

The project's approach offers several advantages to its key stakeholders. It enabled a focus to be maintained on local school contexts, where an individual needs analysis using a professionally credible and authenticated instrument (the *SEN Review Guide*) was used to underpin action in 6 associated KPI thematic areas. Each of these had distinct and measurable dimensions. The engagement of school leaders was an essential ingredient for successfully achieving project targets and the corresponding buy-in by teachers was secured by the project's demonstration of the ground-level, practical aspects of SEN provision in the schools.

These project characteristics, all evidenced in the data secured in this evaluation, suggest the future initiatives should be structured in such a way that are:

- Leadership driven
- School-based & school-led
- Built around authenticated baselines enabling monitoring of progress
- Geared to identified SEN needs of schools
- Sensitive to the 'real world' of SEN practitioners
- Supportive to the growth of a community of professional learning in SEN
- Based on credible, expert-informed SEN inputs
- Capable of maximising existing SEN skills/knowledge within schools/services

Individual Schools

Participating schools will derive the most benefit from project activities where there is clear direction and senior leadership involvement for the duration of the project. The participating schools should be recruited based on their expression of interest in the project theme: volunteer participation rather than externally selected by sampling. Schools will develop project momentum by having systematic and ongoing contact with a facilitator (coach) who can develop as a trusted colleague/discussant. Effective practices are those that have been validated elsewhere and have been sympathetically adapted to a new school context. SEN staff in school gain confidence and become more empowered when project actions are made relevant beyond explicitly SEN contexts.

The summative features described above are exemplified in the data obtained in this project and indicate that school involvement in future projects should be:

- Based on self-selection/expression of interest
- Informed by project topic & its relevance to school development plans
- Built around commitment of school leaders
- Structured to maximise school-to-school support and cluster networks
- Inclusive of all staff
- Led by schools
- Connected to clearly defined baselines and outcome measures

MATS & school clusters

The opportunities for scaling-up the benefits derived from this SSIF project represent a notable value-added aspect of the accomplishments thus far. Certain features appear likely to provide MATs and other clusters of more loosely affiliated schools with the necessary project components to enable an effective initiative to be developed and delivered. Several useful lessons, drawn from the experiences of partners involved in this SSIF project can assist this process. Amongst these are:

- Engagement & commitment at executive level
- Nominated and resourced research lead
- Agreed practice-based research protocol for all staff – including terminology
- Develop systematic and accessible mixed modes of information sharing
- Identify lead schools for designated SEN skills/knowledge
- Promote SEN-based MAT initiatives to generic teaching audiences
- Generate SEN & Inclusive Education development plan based on current audit

LAs & Organisations

A parallel series of opportunities to those highlighted above (for MATs) are available to system-wide groups (whether LAs or organisations with a common thematic interest). Again, effective project delivery is likely to be driven by commitment from leaders and a willingness to demonstrate a shared approach to decision-making and responsibility. For such organisations, it also appears essential that a connection is maintained between the lead partner's motivation and the realities experienced by school-based practitioners. These needs to be articulated throughout the duration of the project. Summary characteristics of potential at system-wide level include:

- Connection to existing and anticipated development plan(s)
- Direct involvement of organisation leader(ship)
- Facilitating knowledge and practice exchange in SEN
- Specialist inputs via local/regional SEN networks
- Commitment to sustainability planning

Dissemination & sustainability

A feature of project delivery that is sometimes overshadowed or at best included as an afterthought is the mechanism to ensure appropriate dissemination and sustainability of the project's actions/resources and results. The following features appear to be relevant underpinnings for the most effective attributes:

- Maximising use of all SEN networks (e.g. *nasen*)

- Extend reach to wider educational networks
- Agreed dissemination & sustainability strategy & plan (with indicators)
- Nominate lead partner/individual to support dissemination & sustainability planning
- Strategically target key SEN events (inc. conferences)
- Identify appropriate media (including www)
- Connect to key influencers in SEN

References

Australian Council for Educational Research (2016) *A Guide to Support Coaching and Mentoring for School Improvement*. Camberwell, Vic: ACER

BERA (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th Edition). Available at <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018> [Accessed 9 January 2019]

Bowman-Perrott, L. & Davis, H., Vannest, K., Williams, L., Greenwood, C. & Parker, R. (2013). Academic Benefits of Peer Tutoring: A Meta-Analytic Review of Single-Case Research. *School Psychology Review*. 42. 39-55.

CUREE (2009) *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why* Available at: <http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/1260453707/Robinson%20Summary%20Extended%20Version.pdf> [Accessed 9 January 2019]

Department for Education (2015) *Special educational needs and disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years*. London: DfE

Education Endowment Fund (2018) *Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress*. Available at <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/assessing-and-monitoring-pupil-progress/measuring-impact/> [Accessed 8 January, 2019]

Elliott, J. (2005) *Using Narrative in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications

Ellis, S., Tod, J. & Graham-Matheson, L. (2012) *Reflection, Renewal and Reality: Teachers' Experience of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion*. Rednal: NASUWT.

The Guardian (2017) Secret Teacher: funding cuts leave us unable to help SEN children in school'. 2 December. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2017/dec/02/secret-teacher-funding-cuts-leave-us-unable-to-help-sen-children-at-school> [Accessed 10 January 2019]

Hinds, D. (2018) Speech to the Association of Directors of Children's Services, Manchester 5 July.

Lofthouse, R., Leat, D. & Towler, C. (2010) *Coaching for teaching and learning: a practical guide for schools*. Reading: CfBT.

London Leadership Strategy (2016) *The SEND Review Guide*. Available online at <http://londonleadershipstrategy.com/content/send-review-guide> [Accessed 5 January 2019]

Nelson, J., P. Mehta, J. Sharples and C. Davey. (2017). *Measuring Teachers' Research Engagement: Findings from a Pilot Study*. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/resources-centre/research-use-survey/>. [Accessed 9 January 2019]

Parsons, S. and Platt, L. (2013) *Disability among young children: Prevalence, heterogeneity and socio-economic disadvantage*. CLS Working Paper 2013/11. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies

Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Warnock, M. (1978) *Special Educational Needs. Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*. London: HMSO

Worth, J., De Lazzari, G. & Hillary, J. (2017) *Teacher Retention and Turnover Research: Interim Report*. Slough: NFER.

Annexes

1. Research Format / Instruments

(i) SENCO/SEN Leader semi-structured questionnaire

DISCUSSION SCHEDULE / INFORMATION ON PROCESS

I hope to visit a sample of schools involved in the project. My visit is intended not to be onerous: hopefully it will allow opportunity for further helpful reflection on the progress made. I am not visiting to 'inspect' or 'evaluate' teachers or schools: my purpose is to obtain insights on the way that the project is operating, with an emphasis on its successes.

I would like to spend about 30-40 minutes in conversation with the SENCO, or nominated participant. The conversation will focus on SIX key areas highlighted below and seek your views on aspects of each.

All the information collected will be strictly confidential, and its use will guarantee the anonymity of all participants. I can be contacted either by email or mobile phone if any queries arise in relation to this process.

Content areas

IMPROVING OUTCOMES (Key successes? Areas for development? Exemplars of effective practice?)

LEADERSHIP (Changes in SEND orientation? Middle leadership development in SEND? Shared leadership skills?)

TEACHING & LEARNING (Key initiatives undertaken? Associated training? Targeted approaches in SEND?)

ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES (Effective engagement strategies? Dealing with 'barriers'? Concrete examples?)

EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT / IDENTIFICATION / INTERVENTION ETC (Focussed use of pupil data? AfL?)

WHOLE-SCHOOL SEND PROVISION & SUSTAINABILITY / KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER (Promoting 'buy in'? Impact?)

(ii) Correspondence – coaches & school/MAT leaders

A sample of coaches and school leaders and MAT CEOs was identified to provide an overview picture of the project's activities, from their perspective of executive responsibility for whole schools/groups of schools. Recognising the heavy work-load experienced by these groups, this request for information was restricted to a request to provide feedback on 2 aspects of project delivery, as indicated in the following correspondence extract:

I as part of the external evaluation of the Portsmouth TSA SEND project I would be Grateful if you could provide a brief response to the following 2 questions - from your perspective as School Leader:

Has the project had a discernible impact on pupil attainment (social & academic)?
What other practical benefits have resulted so far from the project

I'd be happy to give you a short phone call, or alternatively you may prefer to respond in writing. All responses are treated in strict confidence & anonymity

2. Project Schools – summary of evidence sources

School	Phase	SENCO feedback	Coach Feedback	School Visit	AUDIT
A	S	Y			Y
B	S			Y	Y
C	S	Y	Y		Y
D	P		Y	Y	Y
E	P	Y	Y	Y	Y
F	P		Y		Y
G	P			Y	Y
H	P	Y			Y
J	P		Y	Y	Y
K	P				Y
L	P	Y			Y
M	P		Y	Y	Y
N	P/S				Y
O	S	Y			Y
P	P			Y	Y
Q	P	Y			Y
R	P		Y	Y	Y
S	P		Y	Y	Y
T	P				Y
U	P	Y		Y	Y

Annex 3. Project Work Plan

Term	Date	Activity	Action	SEN Leaders
Half Term 1	Friday 12.01.18 All day	SEND Reviewer Training. TLC	Led by David Bartram, Alison Robb-Webb	
	Friday 26.01.18 8.00am – 9.00am	Breakfast Briefing for Headteachers and Chairs of Governors		
	Friday 26.01.1 8.00am – 12.00pm	SENCO Training for participating schools		Attend training for SENCOs
	29 th Jan to 9 th Feb	Schools conduct self evaluation: SEN audit	Completed by SENCO + SLT Input from school staff, pupils, parents	
Half Term 2	12 th Feb – 23 rd Feb	Analysis of School Audits	Led by David Bartram	Receive copies of audits of allocated schools
	By end of Feb	Schools paired and SEN leaders allocated	Led by David Bartram and Sophie Venables	Familiarisation with schools audits, Ofsted, data, SIP etc..
	By end of Spring Term	Schools visit one (full day). Coaches visit each school separately to review self evaluation and create a shared vision of planned long term outcomes by the end of the visit. To include identification of any CPD needs, additional support (SLE/PSENSP)	Coaches complete visit log: summary and impact of visit, key points for the school to address	Lead visit Summary to David Bartram
Half Term 3	First half of Summer Term	QA activity commences (Lesley Cox/David Bartram)	Visit to each school with SENCO + SLT member minimum	
	First half of Summer Term	Schools visit two (half day). Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree short term actions/identify any CPD needs	Coaches complete visit log: summary and impact of visit, key points for the school to address	Lead visit Summary to David Bartram
	23 rd April 2pm – 4pm	Networking for SEN Leaders 1 hour + 1 hour separate follow on session with SENCOs	Coaches problem solve together. SENCO session to focus on sharing/planning joint professional development activities etc..	David Bartram to chair first session SEN Leaders to lead Part 2 session with SENCOS
Half Term 4	4 th June – 8 th June	Schools visit three (half day). Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree short term actions/identify any CPD needs	Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree short term actions/identify any CPD needs	

	Second half of Summer Term	QA visits to schools (Lesley Cox/David Bartram)	Visit to each school with SENCO + SLT member minimum	
Half Term 5	First half of Autumn Term	Schools visit four (full day) Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree short term actions/identify any CPD needs	Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree short term actions/identify any CPD needs	
	September 2018 Date tbc	Networking for SEN Leaders 1 hour + 1 hour separate follow on session with SENCOs	Coaches problem solve together. SENCO session to focus on sharing/planning joint professional development activities etc..	SEN Leaders to lead both parts of the session
	September/early October Date tbc	Project lead brings schools and SEN Leaders together to QA progress and learning so far and to plan carousels for SEN Regional Event	Led by David Bartram/Sophie Venables	SEN Leaders attend
	3 rd Sept – 20 th Oct	Project Evaluator schools	Involves school staff, pupils, parents, other relevant agencies	
Half Term 6	Thursday 8 th Nov all day	Regional SEND CPD Event. Compulsory for all participating schools and SEN Leaders	Participating schools presenting in carousel format	SEN Leaders attending and some presenting
	Second half of Autumn Term	Schools visit five (full day) Coaches visit each school separately to review and evaluate progress and identify next steps	Coaches visit each school separately to review progress and agree next steps	
	Second half of Autumn Term	QA visits to schools (Lesley Cox/David Bartram)	Visit to each school with SENCO + SLT member minimum	