Case Study
An Daras Trust

OSIRIS
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Pennygilliam Way	Ages 3-11 Primary School	Key contact:
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The Issue

The An Daras Trust was formed in 2015 as two schools, swiftly growing to five schools by September 2016 and has continued to grow since then.

The An Daras Trust set out a clear vision statement

> *'To be the primary gateway for life-long learning ensuring every child in the trust is ready for present and future success'.*

The Trust also defined a clear School Improvement Strategy where 'Clarity, Consistency and Capacity in Context' are the building blocks for school improvement. The ADMAT school improvement model encompasses and 'joins the dots' between the vision and aims, strategic planning, Trust non-negotiables, school improvement programmes, performance management processes, curriculum design, pupil and parent voice, standards, CPD and whole school effectiveness.

Evidence gathered across all the majority of schools indicated that pupils were predominantly passive and most were not actively engaged in the learning process. Analysis of achievement data also highlighted variation from school to school, particularly for vulnerable groups. Variation was a common theme across the Trust - variation in pupils' experience, pupil voice, ability to talk about their learning and parental engagement.

> *At the start there was no common expectation or shared understanding of the learner experience across our Trust.*

As with learning, there was no shared understanding of what makes a great teacher.

A range of evidence found that teachers heavily directed the content and pace of learning, leaving little opportunity for pupils to practice independence. Not all school settings had benefited from the opportunities for teachers to collaborate to support each other, plan together and share practice. Before joining as a Trust some of the strategies in place to develop teaching from school to school were inconsistent, although there were some pockets of excellence. A Trust structure for assessment was introduced in the move to assessment without levels and this initiated the need to establish a common understanding of progress; some schools had excessive planning and assessment that was not effectively used to inform next steps, whilst it was very effective in other schools.

As the Trust was established, a number of senior leaders moved from school to system level roles thus creating within school posts. Heads of School were appointed who brought a range of expertise and experience however, it was clear to see that a common approach/language for leadership development was needed, to enable leaders to collaborate effectively within and across schools to strengthen consistency in achievement outcomes. Within the schools, middle leadership existed for subjects but there was not a wider understanding of the role and impact of middle leaders; effectiveness was person dependent. There was a lack of shared expertise in core subjects across the Trust

> *with most of the focus of middle leaders being on the management of their subjects rather than leaders of teaching and learning.*

There was variation across schools with regards to structured systems and processes for leaders to lead subjects. Relational trust was varied within the settings, in some schools there were

few deliberate opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other and leadership. However, the three town schools had already began to process of year group moderation and pupil trust events a few years before formally becoming a Trust.

The newly formed Trust leadership team established a clear vision and platform required to build communication and collaboration with a strong focus on strengthening outcomes for pupils across the Trust. There needed to be a vehicle to be able to align the systems, structures and approaches across the Trust,

<blockquote>to build a Trust culture of cohesion and collaboration.</blockquote>

The Trust needed an approach that was long-term to ensure changes were firmly embedded and the Trust were keen to draw from current educational research.

Over the course of a year, discussions took place with the Visible Learning consultant to explore how Visible Learning could provide a common framework to implement the vision of the Trust. As a result of the variation of the schools,

<blockquote>it was clear that a one-size fits all model was not the solution.</blockquote>

Each school had very different starting points and therefore an approach was needed that would account for this, but would also help to support the schools in responding to the challenges of the changing educational landscape. The Trust wanted a commonality but the opportunity for schools still to grow in their own way; each school to retain its unique identity within the shared understandings of the Trust.

Analysis of the issue

The triangulated findings from in school monitoring and the Ofsted report from St Stephens prompted the review across the Trust schools where similarities were found. Following the School Capability Assessments, conducted in September 2016, evidence showed that the weakest strand was the 'Visible Learner', followed by 'Inspired and Passionate Teachers', 'Effective Feedback' and 'Know thy Impact'. Schools had a

wealth of information from data and assessment to inform them of their impact on pupils' outcomes. The outcome of the Initial School Capacity Assessments supported the internal findings from the schools and the Trust.

The evidence gathered informed the Trust that there were some key areas for change.
- The focus being on moving passive leaders to active and engage learners.
- To provide schools with an agreed shared professional development programme that would provide the Trust with a structure and format to use beyond the programme as well as providing a structure to support teachers with a shared understanding.
- A need to develop consistent approaches to teaching and learning and for all teachers to gain a shared responsibility across the Trust for their learners.

The evidence showed that

<blockquote>'aspiration' was the strongest component across all strands</blockquote>

although in the early stages of evidence collected this was predominantly from the Trust leadership team, who had a clear vision of the direction of the Trust and schools. However, strategic tools and shared understandings were less evident which is then reflected in the baseline for professional practices.
Across each component there was variation with all components being low.

Development of the plan

The annual Trust Improvement plan ensured a strong focus on implementing the principles of Visible Learning across the schools. The Visible Learning priority was drawn from the individual evidence base in each school, triangulated with the Trust improvement team evidence. The plan sets out very clear KPIs which are used to monitor the effectiveness of the plan on a termly basis. Each individual school then used the Trust Improvement Plan to inform their academy improvement plans and more specifically, their Visible Learning Action Plans. This ensured that a common focus was maintained across the Trust.

Since January 2017 the Trust AIPs have ensured

that Visible Learning has become embedded into the Trust and school's practice. For example, in 2017/18 the Trust identified Visible Learning under a key priority area:

to continue to improve attainment and progress outcomes for pupils at all Key Stages through effective Trust systems.

The Trust identified the need for schools to develop visible learning approaches into all Trust planning and learning opportunities.

The Trust Improvement Plan focused on the following actions or changes that were wished to be addressed:
• Developing leadership at different levels across the Trust.
• Developing middle leadership through Visible Learning Impact Coaches - a platform for leadership development based upon research and evidence.
• Developing school leaders - building the capacity of newly appointed leaders to drive improvements in outcomes using evidence-based, research-informed approaches.
• Developing clarity and consistency of language, pedagogy, planning and assessment through structured professional learning and development.
• Developing the impact, role and understanding of support staff at individual school level.
• To ensure that parents were kept fully informed and actively engaged with the Visible Learning journey to raise parental engagement – through forums such as: websites, newsletters, parent consultations, electronic communication.
• Enhance communication across the Trust due to geographical location barriers - through forums such as the Trust Gateway letter where Visible Learning successes/pictures of resources reported here; Twitter; Visible Learning display in each school and resources for reading being widely shared with staff.
• To develop Visible Learning approaches into all Trust planning, assessment and learning environment systems and learning opportunities

Implementation of the plan

professional learning accessed by heads prior to introduction in the schools. This enabled us to build capacity and shared understanding with a newly formed leadership level ensuring high levels of school readiness when we launched the programme.

The following key steps were taken:

At System Level:
• **Trust improvement plan.** This was created based on review of the previous years/ school's academy improvement plans and was communicated to each school leader. School leaders during the autumn use this to inform their own Academy Improvement Plan to launch in January for 12 months. This ensures consistency and continuity being schools and the Trust as well as triangulating professional development and resource needs.
• **Within performance management** there is a set targets for all school staff, at both leadership and teaching level that links to the Academy and Trust Improvement Plan to ensure delivery of key performance indicators
• **Role of Trust Improvement Lead.** As the Visible Learning Journey evolved, the Trust recognised the need to establish a Trust Improvement Lead, with a specific element of the role being the coordination of Visible Learning.

The role encompassed auditing across leadership teams to ensure consistency and continuity in implementation.

• The Trust recognised throughout the Visible Learning journey that this has been a key role, to have a key strategic lead across all schools. The role as also included signposting schools to each other; running staff meetings where teachers report back on their own Impact Cycles; triangulation between leaders, professional development and Impact Coaches to gather evidence of impact. The improvement lead regularly summarised this information to communicate key messages across the trust and liaised with the Visible Learning consultant for assessment day and the Final Capability Assessment.
• The Trust Lead has been significant in then ensuring the readiness of Heads of School and a key communication link with Consultant.

The starting point for implementation was in the

- **Trust prioritised the time -** and resources to facilitate implementation. This was achieved through a structured Trust Staff Meeting/ professional development timetable that provided a balance of Trust directed and school directed time. The Trust ensured that at least two INSETs a year was allocated to Visible Learning training and twilights were also used to deliver the Inside Series Workshops.
- **Collaboration at every level** – The Trust directed and facilitated opportunities within and across school.
- **Recruitment** – the Trust also used the principles of VL to inform the process of recruitment at all levels of leadership and teaching.

At Middle/Senior Leadership Level:
- **Impact Coach development** – Schools identified the development of Middle leader through the Visible Learning Coach Role. The coaches were active in the development of their own school action plans, building capacity of support staff and succession planning for new staff at all levels.
- **Leadership and professional development** - Visible Learning provide a research based platform to develop leadership across middle and senior leader level.
- **Signposting-** Visible Learning provided a platform for signposting of resources and good practice through electronic forms as well as designed visits to settings at all levels of leadership and staffing.
- **Monitoring and evaluation-** the Trust developed formats and systems for monitoring, establishing the 'Five Star Model' as a process for triangulation of evidence.

At Teacher Level:
- **Shared Professional Development -** The Visible Learning programme facilitated the Trust with a structure to bring all schools together for shared professional development and as well as in-school staff development. Schools had their own Visible Learning staff meeting time to deliver and implement aspects of their action plans and training. Heads were supported from the Trust to provide release time for teachers and staff to facilitate the implementation.
- **Documentation-** there was a consistency in approach to documentation that was

implemented throughout the VL journey. With vehicles and tools from the VL process used to support implementation. Documentation included examples such as: S Planning/ learning walls/non-negotiables
- **Moderation -** these had taken place previously before the formation of the Trust. However, these began to evolve further with the number of schools joining. Systems and processes for moderation were reviewed to develop staff expertise. It also provided a platform for shared understandings for assessment and evidence. The implementation of moderation also provided staff with the opportunity to visit other settings as part of professional development. The moderation opportunities also reinforce the Trust expectations and shared understanding about assessment and progress.

Was your plan successful and what was the impact?

The Visible Learning Plan was successful because there is evidence in:

- Achievement gains and pupil outcomes
- Development in Professional Practice
- Learning Environments
- Middle Leadership through the role of Impact Coaches
- Clarity and consistency across the Trust settings
- Visible Learning has helped to enhance work on other approaches across the Trust such as Maths Mastery

Visible Learning was provided a platform for Collaboration at every level with a shift from being directed from the Trust to now proactively being pursued by leaders at all levels. It has provided a cultural change model that develops impact over time. It has shown evidence of early achievement growth with a view to long term impact.

The Visible Learning process has also supported the Trust development with further Standardised Operating Procedures under the School Improvement Framework such as:

Context, clarity, consistency, capacity
- **SOPs** – planning, assessment, pedagogy
- **SOPs** – monitoring, leadership, reporting

The drive for development of shared understandings within the coherent framework has ensured higher clarity. This has resulted in greater consistency within and across schools. Professional learning within and in addition to the Visible Learning programme has ensured the building of capacity to enable all schools to align with the Trust vision and core aims.

Impact has been recognised by external monitoring bodies, as 4/5 schools had an Ofsted during the Visible Learning Journey.

All schools achieved a 'Good' outcome, in one particular case raising a school from 'Requires Improvement to Good'.

Further impact has been captured through impact quotes from different stakeholders within the An Daras Trust. One of the Executive Headteachers has quoted that 'the greatest impact across all of the schools, has been on pupil attitudes towards their learning and pupil voice. Pupils of all abilities are able to talk confidently about their learning using a shared language of learning. They are able to describe the journey they are on talking about what they have learned, what they need to do to improve and most importantly how they are going to improve. They are able to articulate their next steps and know what to do if they need support. Throughout all of the schools there is a real buzz around learning'.

The An Daras Trust Directors and school governance has closely monitored the impact of Visible Learning and the Trust Governance officer has summarised from meetings that 'the teacher's expectations of the children is much better and the awareness of the impact of certain teaching methods is also improved. It was noted that the children's approach to problem solving, particularly in maths, has improved. In essence, the children's understanding of being a learner is very positive and the feeling is that this will set them up well for the future.'

Where to next? What will you do next to further to embed the Visible Learning principles and practices into your school?

The An Daras Trust is especially excited about the next steps and ensuring that the Visible Learning principles and practices continue through the impact cycle process. The evidence gathered has enabled us to identify a clear focus for next steps.

- Develop effective feedback across all schools, moving to more effective pupil to pupil and developing pupil to teacher feedback to improve learning outcomes
- Leaders and teachers to continue to have clear Visible Learning performance management targets, the next focus being on feedback.
- They are also required to develop action research within their school or classroom and complete case studies.
- The Trust to continue to provide allocated time for staff for the Visible Learning professional development at Trust and School level.
- There is also a Trust curriculum review taking place to ensure that Learning Capability are underpinned within the curriculum.
- The An Daras Trust is developing an online shared space for the schools to share impact cycles and resources and provide a forum for the Visible Learning Coach 'book/ resource club' where the Improvement Lead signpost current research out to schools. There continues to be a focus on Professional Learning Development through more varied and accessible approaches using online tools.

The An Daras Trust during this time has grown to seven schools, supporting an eighth. The Improvement Lead and Impact Coaches have made time to provide a two year training programme structured around the learning of the Visible Learning programme to ensure that all schools are aligned with the same systems and processes, with individual autonomy within schools.

For more information, please contact: the Visible Learning team on **01790 756751** or email **kcavill@osiriseducational.co.uk**

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