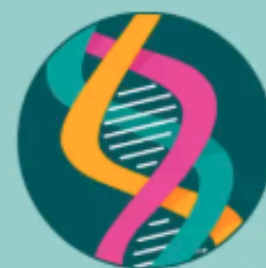


# School improvement blog



## Humber Education Trust: Curate clear goals and building capability and capacity



School  
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## Humber Education Trust: Curate clear goals and building capability and capacity

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In this blog **Paul Plumridge**, Deputy CEO and Strategic School Improvement Lead, Humber Education Trust, describes what trust-led school improvement looks like in their trust. Paul explores a range of components from CST's conceptual model, drawing particularly on components from the strands:

- **Curate clear goals**
- **Build capability and capacity**

## Trust Overview

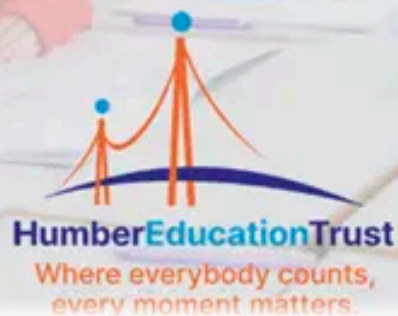
- Trust: Humber Education Trust
- CEO: Rachel Wilkes
- Founded: 2017
- Schools: 13 primary schools (4870 pupils) and 4 special schools (676 pupils), across the Kingston upon Hull and North East Lincolnshire Local Authorities.
- School sizes: Primary schools vary in size, from just under 200 pupils on roll at Woodland Primary to just almost 700 pupils at Broadacre Primary. Special schools also vary in size, from 110 pupils on roll at Frederick Holmes School to 217 pupils at Cambridge Park Academy.
- Pupils: One-third of primary school pupils in the trust are eligible to receive pupil-premium funding, compared with a quarter of pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in our mainstream schools is above average – almost 20%.
- Pupils speaking English as an additional language: Almost one in five pupils – 18.2%.
- Key stage 2: 79% of pupils achieved at least the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) in 2024 – 18% higher than the proportion nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) was higher than that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally (+8%).
- Ofsted: 5 HET schools are currently judged as 'outstanding', 12 are judged as 'good'.

### 1. USE EVIDENCE

As a Trust, we believe that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in the achievement of pupils. Since our inception in 2017, we have fostered a strong culture of collaboration and mutual support to develop this core aspect of our work. This has included developing systems and processes for sharing best practice. Headteachers retain autonomy over all curriculum and teaching decisions, with robust quality assurance processes (led by the trust's improvement team) in place to ensure schools are 'getting it right'. By 2022, this model proved largely successful, with the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving at least the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) above the national average. However, whilst the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils remained much narrower than that seen nationally (-5% vs -23%), we recognised that further work was required to eradicate it fully.

The changes to Initial Teacher Training (ITT), the Early Career Framework (ECF) and the introduction of reformed National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) in September 2021 presented us with an opportunity to reconsider and further improve our school improvement strategy. Our initial starting point was to draw on the best available research and evidence which underpinned the 'golden thread' to codify what effective practice needed to look like in schools and classrooms. This enabled us to agree a set of principles and strategies which could be implemented across all schools. Schools retained autonomy in deciding how to translate theory into practice as this not only helped secure 'buy in' but also ensured they streamlined approaches to context – both core components of the EEF's theory of change model. Alongside this, we considered the highest leverage improvement priorities for improving teaching at scale which would most likely drive significant and sustained progress in pupil outcomes. Developing the expertise of staff at all levels was key to this.

# Effective approaches to teaching



## CONTEXTUAL FACTORS



### What is being implemented

Consider whether the approach is:

- evidence-informed
- right for the setting
- feasible to implement



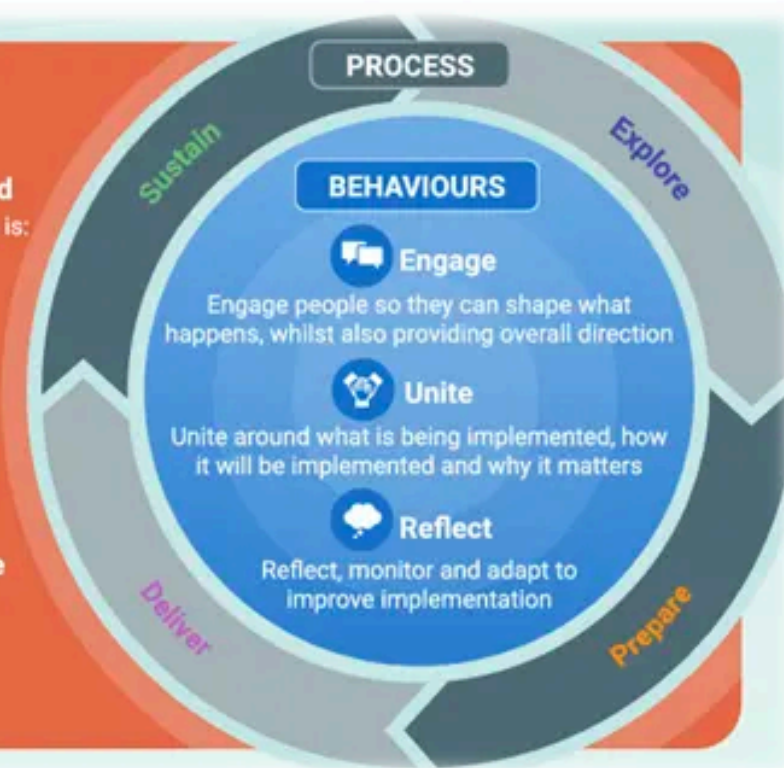
### Systems and structures

Develop an infrastructure that supports implementation e.g. time, roles, logistics



### People who enable change

Ensure people are in place across the school who can support, lead and positively influence implementation



## **DEVELOP EXPERTISE**

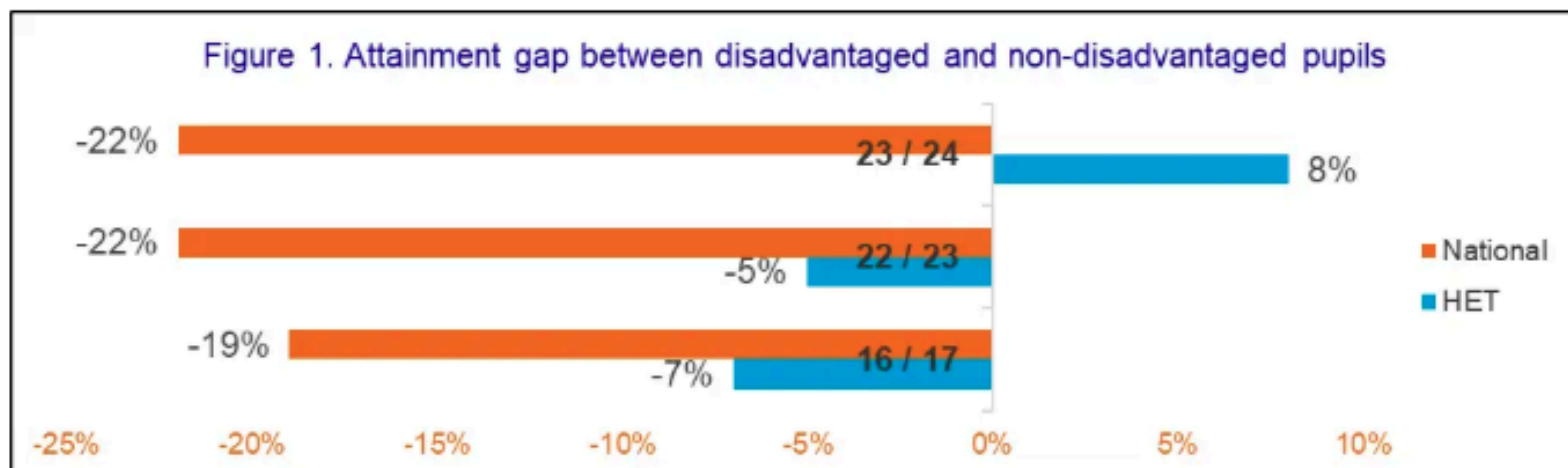
A simple yet effective way of exposing staff to the best available evidence and research is to promote and support engagement within the DfE's 'golden thread'. To date, just over two-thirds of our teacher/leader workforce have formally engaged with this content through completion of either the ITT, ECF induction process and/or at least one of the reformed NPQs.

Beyond securing high levels of engagement with the DfE's 'golden thread', we recognised the need to develop expertise at all levels of our organisation and foster a culture of continuous improvement which would empower and engage our workforce of over 320 qualified teachers and school leaders. Therefore, we took the strategic decision to align our entire school improvement strategy with the principles of the evidence-based effective approaches to teaching.

### **What this looked like in practice**

Our strategy included:

- codifying the effective practice and creating a 'shared language' for agreed teaching approaches, thereby laying the foundations for delivering high quality school improvement at scale.
- aligning the effective approaches to the Teachers' Standards, thus creating a shared understanding of what they mean and, more importantly, exemplifying what they 'look like' in practice. This, in turn, led to richer and more meaningful discussions during the appraisal process as well as sharpening priorities for teachers identified as requiring additional support.
- identifying two/three 'Teaching & Learning Ambassadors' from each school who then worked collaboratively to 'immerse themselves' in the research in more detail and consider implications for their own school.
- designing and delivering of a four-part 'train-the-trainer' Teacher Development Programme through which the Trust's School Improvement Team supported T&L Ambassadors and other senior leaders to build capacity and expertise.
- supporting schools to align the effective approaches to core policies (assessment, marking and feedback etc) and teaching strategies, building on strengths and de-implementing the things that did not align.
- ensuring all schools integrated the Teacher Development Programme as a core component within their school improvement plans, thus ensuring all teachers received training in the core principles, delivered by experts from within their own school.
- ensuring the principles underpinned wider school and Trust training, including SEND and subject-specific programmes.
- supporting schools to modify the Teacher Development programme so that they could then train the wider workforce – including Teaching Assistants – in core principles, such as how to avoid overloading pupils' working memory.



In 2024, 75% of disadvantaged pupils in Humber Education Trust primary schools achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths combined. Only 45% of disadvantaged pupils nationally achieved this.

Our four most recent Ofsted inspections have also highlighted the positive impact of our strategy:

- "The school works closely with the experts in the trust in providing an exceptionally systematic programme of professional development for staff. This is realised through high-quality coaching and research, as well as intensive training." (Highlands Primary School)
- "Staff are proud to work at Bursar Primary Academy. They value, and benefit from, the support and professional development available through leaders at the school and those within the academy trust." (Bursar Primary Academy)
- "The trust and school have invested in staff professional development. Staff appreciate this. They speak positively of their experience of working at the school." (Bude Park Primary School)
- "The academy trust provide effective challenge and support for leaders and teachers. This is helping the school to flourish." (St Nicholas Primary School).

## NEXT STEPS

We have always believed that high-quality coaching, rather than traditional monitoring, fosters a culture of continuous learning within schools. Considering research, we have codified our coaching model, ensuring the focus for personalised support is underpinned by the effective approaches to teaching (which all teachers are now familiar with). We are in the process of training almost 40 school leaders in the principles of Responsive Coaching. Through this approach we will build additional capacity and expertise to further support our teacher workforce.