

Maths Hubs Evaluator in Residence 2022/23

Evidence and reporting summary

Hub: Kent and Medway

Evaluator in Residence Summary	
Maths Hub	Kent and Medway
Strategic Goal	Secondary
Research question(s)	What factors influence school level impact on students and staff in sustaining schools?
What is the case?	Two sustaining secondary schools

Context

Kent and Medway Maths Hub covers the whole of the region covered by Kent and Medway Local Authorities. In 2022/23, there were 13 schools engaging the with Development TfM Work Groups and 23 schools with the Sustaining TfM Work Groups, four of which were in their Embedding year. These Work Groups were led by six different Secondary Mastery Specialists.

For the Evaluator in Residence programme, the hub wanted to contrast the impact of the Teaching for Mastery Programme between two schools with similar sustained engagement, and to provide an opportunity to reflect on the features of the schools/departments that affect the impact and implications for the hub's Sustaining provision.

The two schools involved were Canterbury Academy, a large 11-18 non-selective school in an urban area, and St Anselm's Catholic School, an 11-18 non-selective school with approximately 1000 students.

Canterbury Academy was a Development school in 2020/21 and has consistent TfM engagement since. The current HoD is a Cohort 2 Secondary Mastery Specialist. The school has a large maths department with some non-specialists and part-timer teachers. In 2022, the school's maths P8 score was -0.6 and in line with the whole school P8. 53% of students gained Grade 4 for both English and Maths and 31% gained a Grade 5 for both.

St Anselm's Catholic School was a Development school in 2018/19 and has had consistent TfM engagement since. One of the consistently engaged advocates is now a Cohort 7 specialist; this teacher will be leaving the school at the end of the academic year. The department is fully staffed with subject specialists. In 2022, the school's maths P8 score was -0.18 which is below the whole school P8. 68% of students gained Grade 4 for both English and Maths and 43% gained a Grade 5 for both.

Activity and data collection

We held an initial online meeting for both schools in January 2023. This was attended by the Evaluator, AMHL (Secondary), AMHL (QA), both heads of department and both participants from St Anselm's.

Two day-long visits were planned with both schools, the first being in March and the final one in June. It was left to the school to design the timetable for the days and share in advance. These were joint visits between the Evaluator and AMHL (secondary) for St Anselm's, and Evaluator and AMHL (QA) for Canterbury.

The March visit to St Anselm's involved an extended interview with the HoD, meeting with the second in department, observation of one of the advocate's lessons, observation of an ECT's lesson, and observation of the HoD teaching a Year 11 intervention group. The second visit was cancelled by the HoD and we were unable to rearrange before the end of term.

The March visit to Canterbury Academy involved Year 7, 8 and 9 learning walks, various meetings with HoD, interview with new KS3 coordinator, meeting with SLT, and Year 7 student voice. The June visit involved an update with the HoD, learning walks, time with SLT and staff voice.

Notes were written up and shared with the schools, who then had a chance to seek clarification before a final copy was agreed. Notes were also shared with SLT at Canterbury Academy.

Significant themes

Themes (findings and process)	Possible implications
<p>The extent to which barriers impact on the development of teaching for mastery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In successful schools, reluctant staff can be influenced by a positive learning culture • If key staff, such as a head of department, are reluctant, this acts as a major barrier to change • In departments with a strong collaborative culture, resistant staff may move on • In resistant departments, keen Mastery Advocates may move on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have knowledge of maths departments and the position of the advocates within them • Mapping of engagement in multiple programmes, including across MATs and phases, would give a clearer picture of the collaborative culture
<p>The key role of the head of department in affecting change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In successful schools, the head of department is likely to be a strong advocate and powerful role model for teaching for mastery • In less successful schools, the head of department can prevent engaged advocates from sharing and embedding their learning • Where teaching for mastery is embedded, the head of department ensures a high-quality department CPD programme and looks to continually grow pedagogical leadership capacity • A less effective head of department relies on a much more ad-hoc informal approach to departmental development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that a least one advocate from a school has appropriate departmental responsibility • If the head of department is not an advocate, ensure effective and regular communication including check-in conversations during school visits • If concerns are identified by the specialist, AMHL to follow up with HoD/SLT
<p>How a departmental culture allows the development of teaching for mastery to impact on students' learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality departmental professional development clearly impacts classroom practice positively • In a department with a strong culture of development, teachers reflect on the impact of their practice on student outcomes. For example, a member of staff reported that the focus on higher order questioning elicited deeper responses from the class. This challenged perception of lower attaining learners • In successful schools, the impact of use of manipulatives and representations was evident in lower prior attaining Year 7 students • In less effective departments, there is likely to be no consistency in pedagogical approach visible in lessons • In departments with no, or limited, formal professional development activities pedagogical practice will not reflect any agreed shared approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring teaching for mastery Work Groups include a sharp focus on advocates being able to describe the impact they are having on the students they teach • Preparing advocates for how they can work effectively with their department to share their learning and plan strategically to prioritise changes for long term impact

<p>High quality collaboration is possible in challenging circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective heads of departments are able to develop strong collaborative practice despite challenging whole school circumstances • An effective collaborative culture is a significant differentiating factor between departments that are able to establish the principles of teaching for mastery widely compared to those where Tfm exists in isolation only with individual teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting heads of department with effective change management whether or not they are an advocate in a Work Group • When modelling collaborative activities as part of Work Groups, ensure that advocates understand how they can take the leading role in replicating such activities with their departments • Use successful department as an explicit model of good collaborative practice
--	---

Conclusion

The cases considered provided a sharp contrast between similarly ‘engaged’ schools; in one school, engagement in teaching for mastery has had little or no impact on the department, whereas the other department has built strong collaborative structures and actively used these to deepen pedagogical understanding and strengthen the team dynamic. Similar themes were identified with each school lying far apart on the development continuum.

The project has allowed a significant opportunity for evaluators and the hub to work collaboratively, with all school visits done jointly and the final completion of the reporting document being a joint piece of work completed face-to-face. The range and depth of activities with the schools has allowed the hub to get under the surface of school-level impact and the factors that influence this.

These illuminating case studies offer an opportunity for reflection which the hub has found very helpful in thinking about adaptations to future approaches to working with schools. One question for further consideration is ‘What does the school get from it?’. Consideration needs to be given to the extent to which the hub gets drawn into school improvement conversations as part of the payback to schools. A key piece of learning looking forward would be to provide schools with more guidance as to the range of activities required during school visits.