



CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP INTERVENTION FINAL OUTCOME REPORT

Nithsdale ASL Team, Dumfries & Galloway

A short-term, targeted intervention designed to accelerate progress in reading and writing and *Close the Literacy Gap*. Based on high quality pedagogy, specially trained Learning Assistants deliver one-to-one coaching sessions, four times a week, for a period of 8 weeks. It uses a book-based approach, with opportunities to read and write in every lesson.

During this 2016-2017 session, 40 Primary 2 learners across have been supported by this intervention in 8 Nithsdale schools. They made **an average Reading Age gain of 14 months in only 2 months, eight times the average rate of progress.**

Parents were highly committed to supporting the programme, and enjoyed sharing their children's success. All pupils, parents and Learning Assistants were motivated by rapid progress and success.

The Background

In August 2016, Nithsdale's Additional Support for Learning Team was awarded *Innovation Funding* by Education Scotland to develop an intervention programme that had been successfully closing, or narrowing, the literacy gap for many young learners at St Ninian's Primary School for a number of years.

The approach is based upon pedagogy promoted by the Strathclyde University Chartered Teaching *Closing the Literacy Gap* module, but has been adapted to reflect the most recent research and pedagogy advice from Education Scotland. Its updated design also means that its delivery can now be supported by Learning Assistants.

The funding supported the enhancement of Intervention resources so that it could be more easily shared with other schools. It also facilitated the collection of data required to provide a robust evidence base, demonstrating its potential impact on children's progress in literacy and achievement.

Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Innovation Fund



In our shared ambition to achieve excellence and equity for every child, this particular Innovation Funding Bid successfully met a number of core criteria, all promoted by *National Improvement Framework* Key Priorities and the *Scottish Attainment Challenge*.

- A clear focus on **raising attainment of learners who experience economic disadvantage.**
- A focus on **targeted improvement in literacy,**
- The development of **evidenced based approaches** to raising the attainment.
- A **clear plan to measure outcomes.**
- **Parental Engagement**

In addition to **NIF** priorities and key drivers, the intervention design includes 6 of the 12 approaches recommended within the recent *Interventions for Equity* framework.

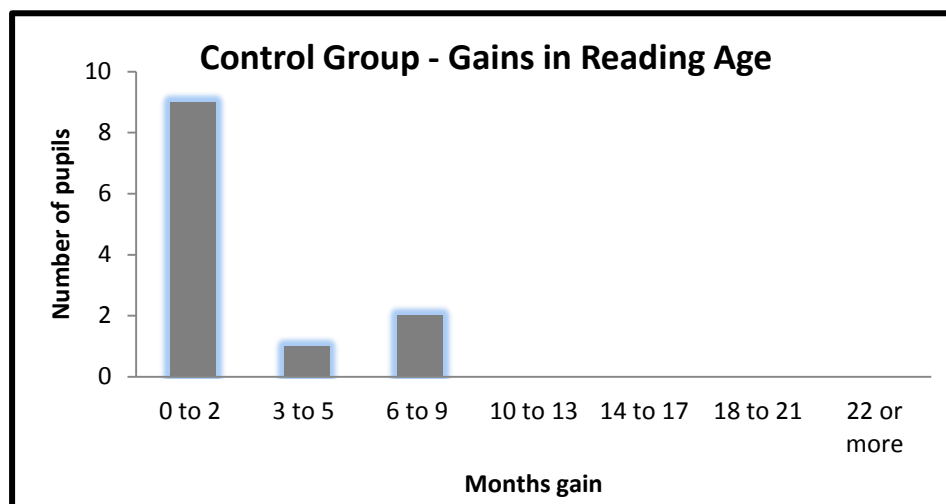
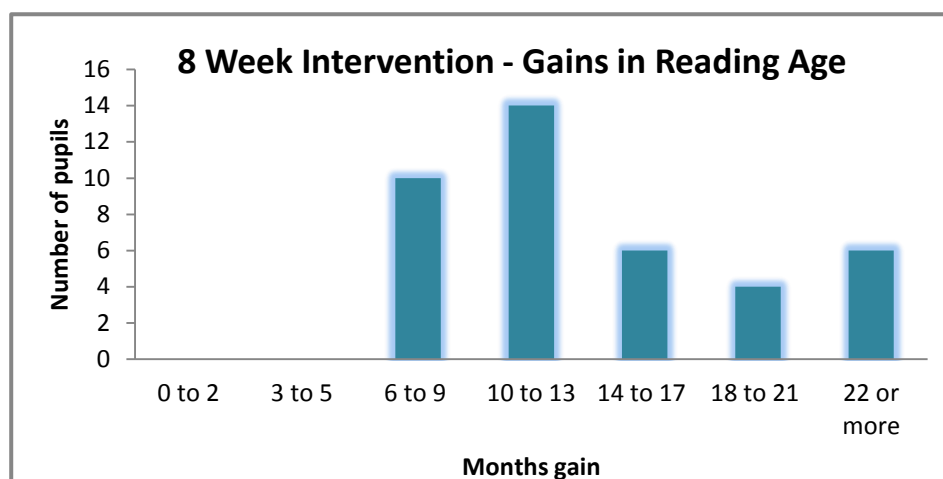
Project Aims

- To demonstrate how effectively the intervention accelerates progress in reading and writing, narrowing or closing the literacy gap for under-achieving Primary 2 pupils who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- To 'package' what was working so well in one particular school.
- To develop a Professional Development Programme so that Additional Support for Learning Teachers and Learning Assistants in other schools could support the coaching of these reading and writing skills with improved knowledge and expertise.

Impact on Children's Progress and Attainment in Literacy

During the 2016/17 Nithsdale Closing the Literacy Gap Project, 40 Primary 2 children were supported by this intervention, across 8 different schools. Impact was carefully measured by both formative and standardised assessments.

- Learners made **remarkable gains in their Reading Age, averaging 14 months** in only 8 weeks. Learners in the Control Group made an average gain of 2 months in Reading Age.
- Average Standardised Scores in reading showed an **improvement of 13 points**. Learners in the Control Group made an average gain of 0.5 points.



Enriching Professional Knowledge and Practice

- Two Intervention Trainers are now available to support future developments in schools across the Authority.
- 6 Additional Support for Learning Teachers have been trained to strategically manage this literacy intervention, across 8 schools. As these teachers work in several schools, they are keen to cascade this training to support staff deliver it more widely.
- One Senior Learning Assistant and 23 Learning Assistants have developed the skills required to support its delivery, across 8 schools in Nithsdale.
- One Depute Head Teacher, who undertook full intervention training, is beginning to look at ways to adopt the pedagogy within mainstream teaching of literacy.



Wider Impact

- All 40 learners, their parents and their Learning Assistant Tutors have been motivated and excited by rapid progress and success.
- Noticeable improvement in pupil perceptions, mind-sets and personal engagement.
- Improved learner confidence, behaviour and engagement in the curriculum.
- Whilst the project focus group were Primary 2 learners who experience socio-economic disadvantage, schools are already widening the net, and a further 23 children with additional support needs are already benefitting from the intervention.
- Every school is keen to continue next session, targeting pupils with Pupil Equity Funding.

Parents as Active Partners in their Child's Learning

A high level of parental engagement is encouraged through initial meetings, homework tasks, home/school diaries, invitations to take part in a lesson, and progress feedback meetings.

- 80% of parents fully engaged with the homework tasks for the full 8 weeks and proudly reported how much they enjoyed sharing in their children's success.
- 10% of the parents showed a slight waning of interest after week 6.
- Only 4% of parents did not engage at all, and although their children still made very good progress, gains tended to be around 30% less than children from fully engaged families.

Parental Feedback: Favourite things about the project?

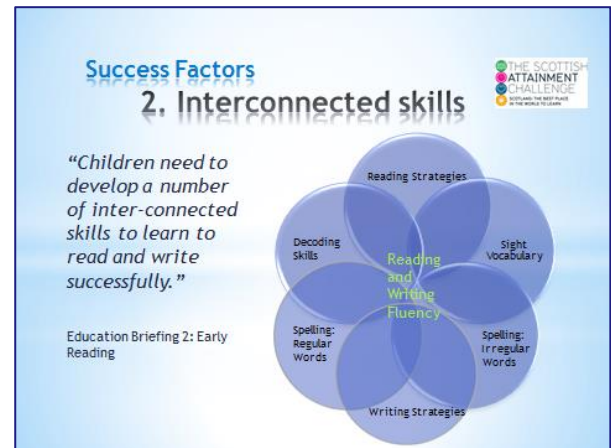
"Being more involved with L's Learning and seeing how far he has come."

"Being able to work closely with the school and see K's progress."

"Interacting more with my daughter and seeing how well she has achieved her goals every day."

What is 'Closing the Literacy Gap' Intervention?

- Is based on **well-researched and evidence-based** Closing the Attainment Gap research and pedagogy.
- Guided by a Learning Framework that promotes a **balanced, interconnected approach** to improving the tools learners require to read and write fluently.
- An intensive **one-to-one, personalised** literacy intervention that enables learners to make **rapid progress in reading and writing**.
- It uses a **book-based approach**, with opportunities to read and write in every lesson.
- Implements a **range of teaching strategies** that promote a **coaching approach** to the teaching of reading and writing.
- **High quality training** is offered so that Learning Assistants can support reading and writing effectively.
- Provides **detailed, measurable evidence of progress and impact**.



How Does it Work?

- The School Management Team, Class Teacher and ASL Teachers identify Learners who meet the criteria for Equity Funding and are likely to benefit from *Closing the Literacy Gap* intervention.
- Standardised data is collected to evidence impact at the end of the intervention.
- The ASL Teacher administers a range of diagnostic assessments which inform starting points on the programme.
- The Intervention Trainer models and supports the Learning Assistants as they acquire the coaching skills required to deliver the intervention.
- Learning Assistants provide a 6—10 week block of four 45 minute one-to-one sessions per week, designed to accelerate progress.
- Each session offers responsive, personalised coaching within a supportive framework.
- Each learning session is also supported by a parent each night.
- The ASL Teacher continually monitors progress and adjusts the lesson structure and pace to maximise outcomes.

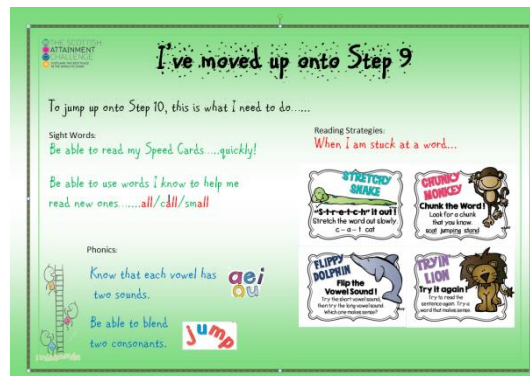
Who would benefit most?

- Any Primary aged learner who is achieving below expectation in reading for his/her age-group, and has not yet attained a reading age of 8 years.
- Learners with a starting Standardised Score of above 85 make most progress.
- Some older learners may benefit, but only after consultation with the Lead Co-ordinator.

Lesson Focus and Structure

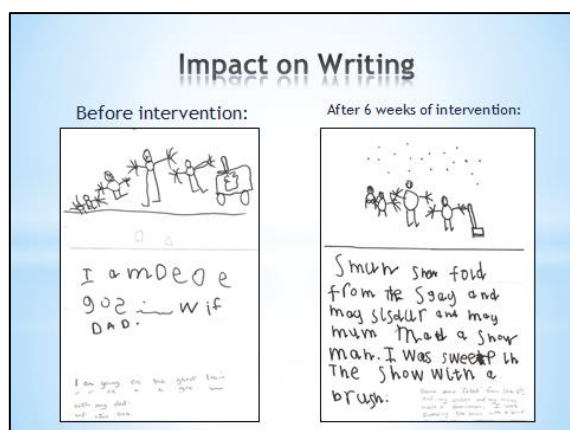
Every lesson typically incorporates the following interconnected strands, each facilitating increasingly complex reading and writing skills.

- Observation of unsupported reading (*Running Record*).
- Decisions in relation to next steps in learning (informed by the above observation).
- Coaching of new words or reading strategies.
- Phonics Practice —decoding and encoding.
- Speed Word Practice (promoting morphemic strategies).
- New Reading (promoting a widening range of reading strategies with a slightly more difficult text).
- Tricky Word Spelling Practice.
- Constructing and Writing a Sentence.



Success Factors

- Balanced teaching approach that promotes interconnected reading and writing skills.
- A carefully graded, sequential Learning Frameworkwhere success is measured in small steps and is easily achieved!
- Ongoing assessments that inform next steps in learning and teaching.
- Recognition that every child has a different learning style and pace.
- Working within each child's own level of 'easy difficulty' (ZPD).
- Coaching that is responsive to need, and nudges learning forwards, step-by-step.
- Parents feel involved and share their children's success.
- Promotion of metacognitive and self-regulation strategies that ensure learners are more likely to continue to use their newly acquired skills independently beyond the intervention period.
- High Expectations, and....and a determination to make a difference!



Discussion

This intervention programme is appropriate for any child who is struggling to read, but evidence suggests that Primary 2 is the optimum period for intervention: any later, and the effects on the child's self-confidence and attitudes to learning of not being able to read make remediation increasingly difficult. Intervening at age six to address literacy difficulties is also more cost-effective than later intervention. The gap is less wide and less time is needed to bring children up to average attainment. Evidence from 'Every Child A Reader' has also shown that attainment is more likely to be sustained if the 'gap' is closed at this age.

In the early years, we endeavour to give our children this wide range of 'tools' required for fluent reading and writing. Some children acquire sound and word knowledge with ease, make connections between what they hear and what they see, and then use a range of strategies to help them read and write with increasing confidence. Others struggle to make connections between each of the strands you see above, and make little progress. Recent research has suggested that the development of phonics is very important, ***"but in practice, a mixed approach is probably beneficial for most pupils, targeted according to need."*** (Steve Higgins).

This particular approach makes real links for learners between different aspects of reading and writing. The teaching resources and books are carefully structured to help children make connections.....and our Learning Assistants are trained to 'prompt' the children to make these connections independently. As a result, neurologically, the cortical networks created are much more secure and more likely to be sustained over a period of timelearning is rarely 'lost' over a holiday, and more likely to be sustained over a longer period of time.

Teachers continue to tell us about the sustained progress made by children who have had Closing the Gap intervention. As yet, evidence is anecdotal e.g. A P4 teacher who said she could spot the children who had benefited from Closing the Literacy Gap in P2 because of the wide range of reading strategies they used and could talk about. In other instances, teachers are seen to be genuinely surprised to learn that a particular child had been struggling in P2. It is our intention to try and monitor the progress of our targeted children over the next few years and gather an evidence base to support the sustainability of learning gains. Schools have already started to monitor continuing progress and some have started to provide short in-class booster sessions where data show that a child's progress is slowing e.g. paired reading, focus group for a few weeks, catching up with parents.

When planning how to spend their PEF, schools are being encouraged to adopt evidence-based interventions with reliable evidence of effectiveness and avoid programmes that are 'unproven', The evidence base for Closing the Literacy Gap is as yet quite narrow, but it does replicate some common elements and approaches of widely proven interventions (e.g. Reading Recovery, FFT Wave 3, Reading Success, better Readers).

Seeking academically effective as well as cost-effective interventions for PEF is a challenge for Head Teachers, and they frequently draw breath when considering the cost implications of 45 minute, one-to-one lessons! However, the evidence base from this research project has initiated many interesting conversations in relation to the effectiveness of some of the current Additional Support 'group' sessions. Many of the children in our 'Control Groups' had been receiving additional support within a group, but only one in every four of these learners was actually making any significant gains. The average gain for children in these groups was 1.5 months.

"Small group tutorials can be effective, but are not as effective as one-to-one instruction by teachers or teaching assistants."

What works best for Struggling Readers, York University 2009

Next Steps & Challenges

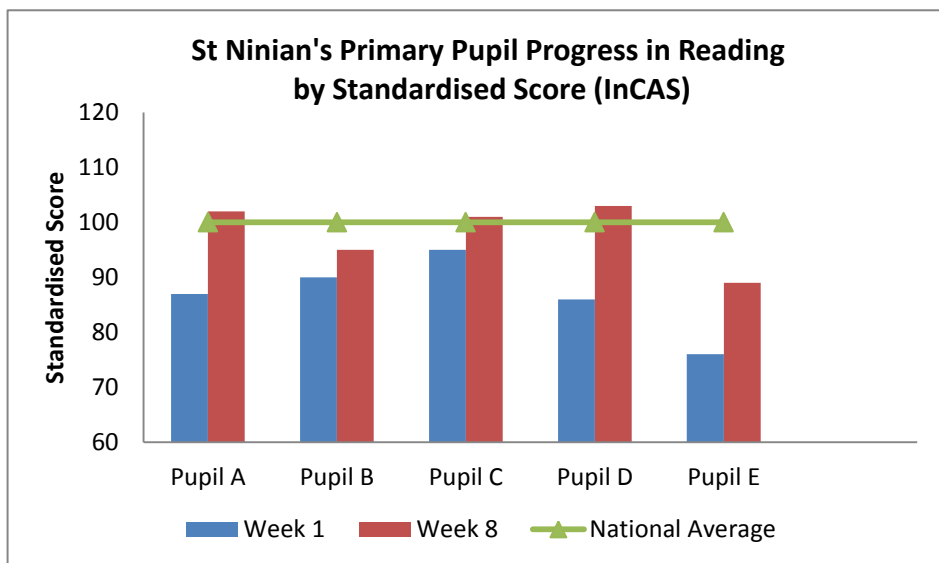
Although the research project has only been evolving over the past ten months, the impact and positive influence on teaching and learning, and subsequently children's outcomes, is already exceptionally positive. Indicators to date would suggest that the impact of this intervention on delivering Excellence and Equality will continue to be significant. The rich professional learning experience for Additional Support Teachers and Learning Assistants has been well-received and has equipped them with a range of evidence-based strategies to support the accelerated development of reading and writing skills. In addition, the intervention programme also provides detailed, measurable evidence of progress and impact.

APPENDIX 1: PUPIL PROGRESS GRAPHS

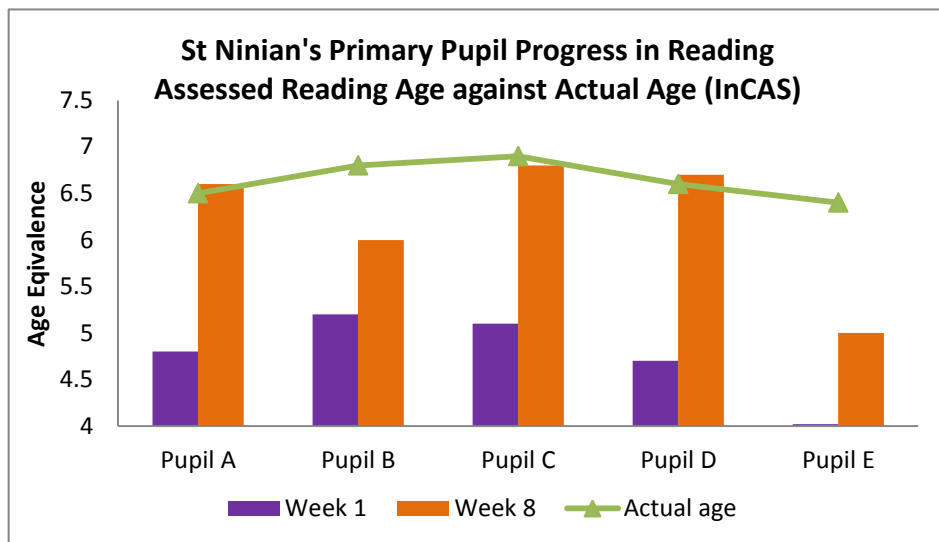
Pupil Progress is usually monitored through change in Standardised Scores or in Reading Ages.

Outcome Data was represented, school by school, in both ways.

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at ST NINIAN'S PRIMARY PHASE 1 Sept-Dec 2016

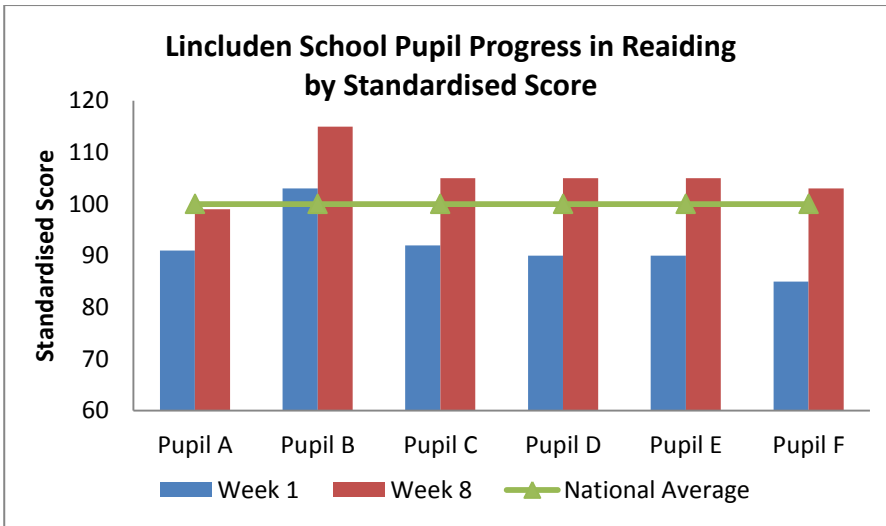


Average Gain: +10.8 points
 Lowest Gain: +5 points
 Highest Gain: +17 points

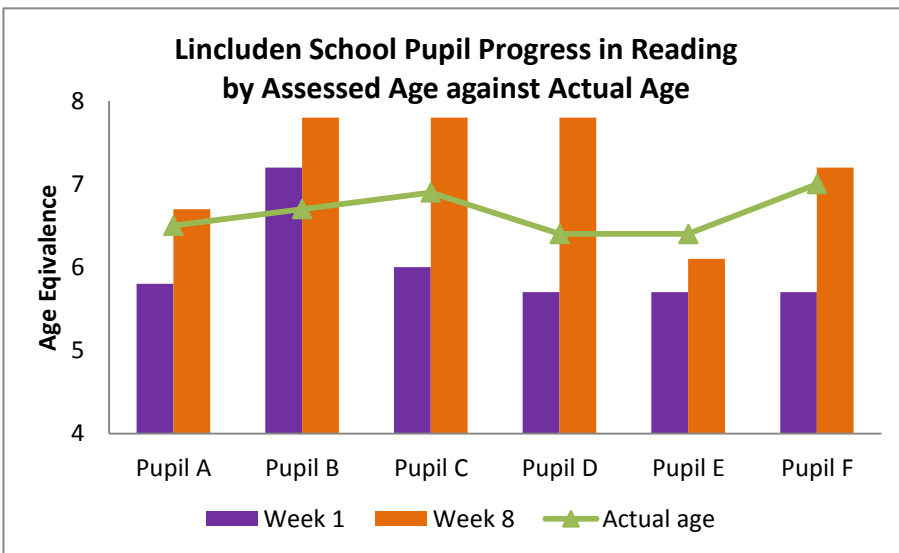


Average Gain: +15.6 months
 Lowest Gain: + 10 months
 Highest Gain: + 24 months

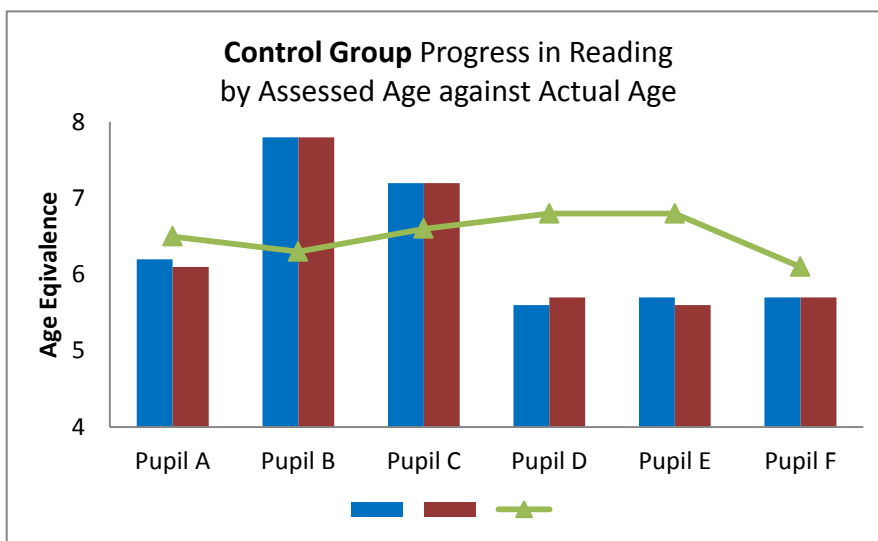
CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at LINCLUDEN PRIMARY PHASE 1: Jan – March 2017



Average Gain: + 13 points
 Lowest Gain: + 8 points
 Highest Gain: + 17 points

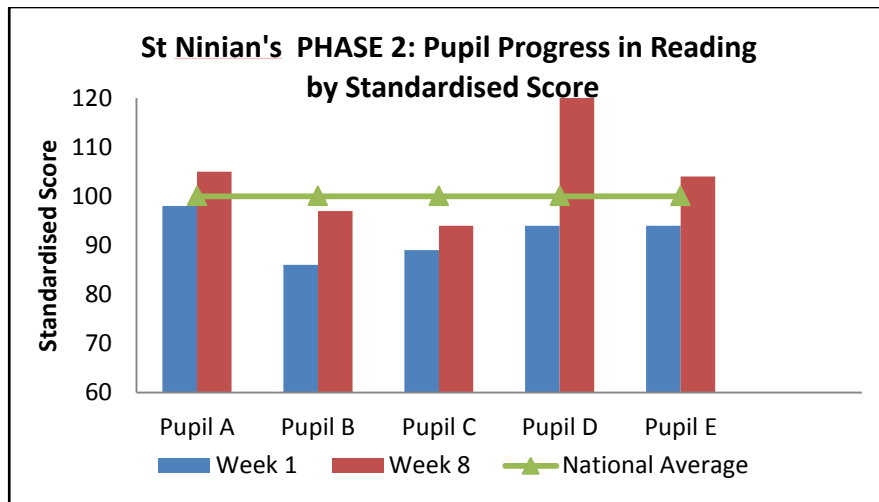


Average Gain: + 14 months
 Lowest Gain: > +6 months
 Highest Gain: + 19 months

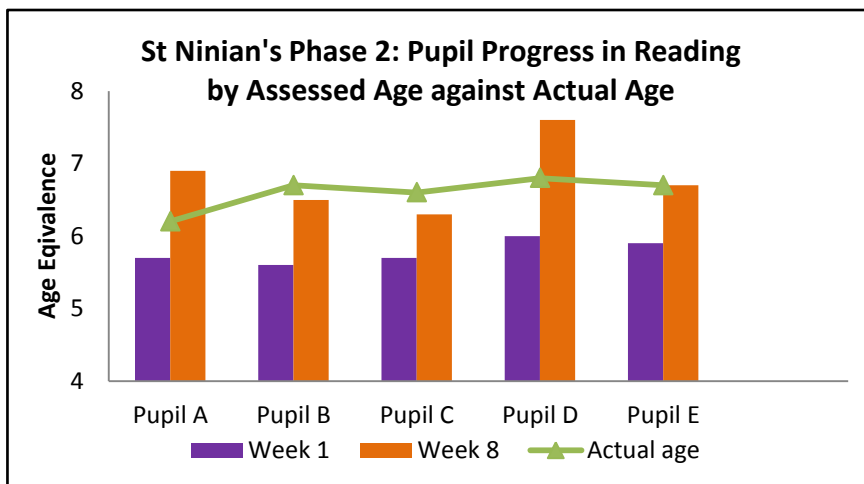


CONTROL GROUP
 Average Gain: + 1 month

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at ST NINIAN'S PRIMARY PHASE 2: Jan – March 2017

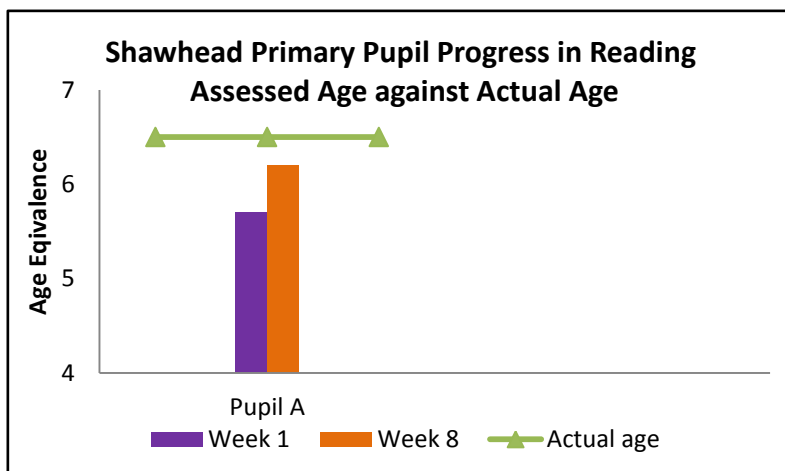


Average Gain: + 10.8 points
 Lowest Gain: + 5 points
 Highest Gain: + 17 points



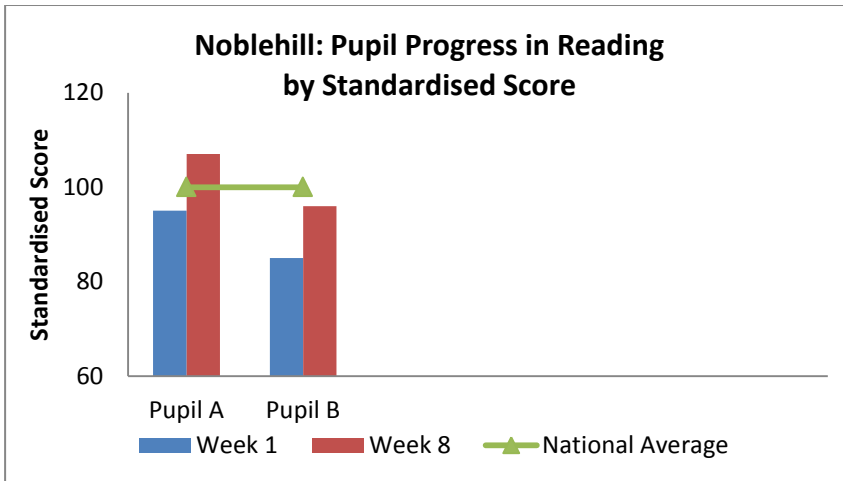
Average Gain: + 12.2 months
 Lowest Gain: + 7 months
 Highest Gain: + 18 months

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at SHAWHEAD PRIMARY: Jan – March 2017

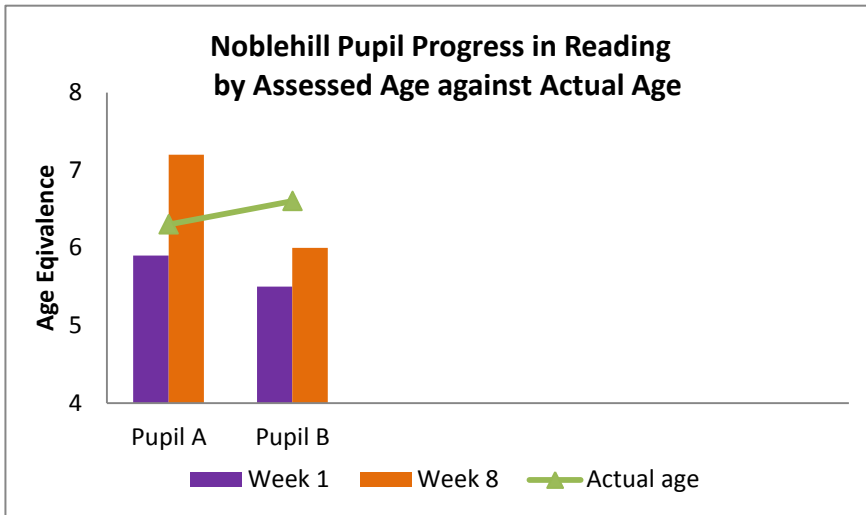


Gain: + 7 months

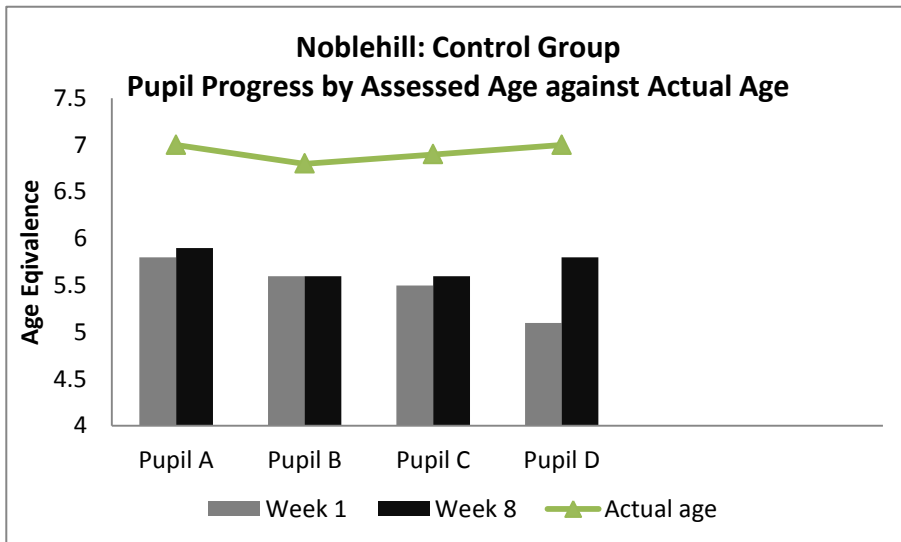
CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at NOBLEHILL PRIMARY: PHASE 1 Jan – March 2017



Average Gain: + 11 points
 Lowest Gain: + 11 points
 Highest Gain: + 11 points

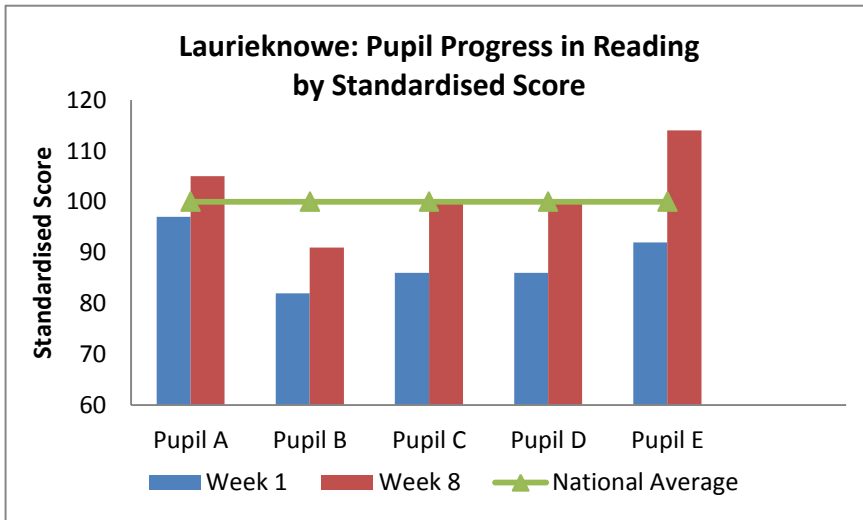


Average Gain: + 11 months
 Lowest Gain: + 6 months
 Highest Gain: + 11 months

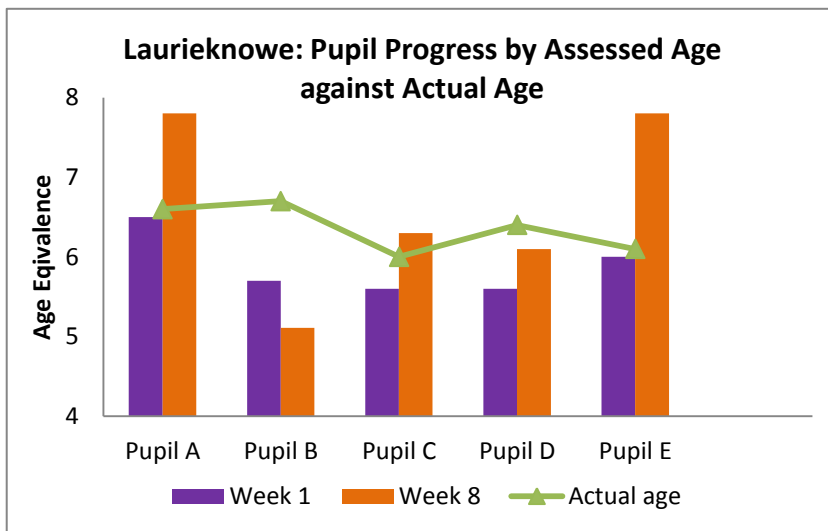


CONTROL GROUP receiving Phonics group intervention
Average Gain: + 2 months
 Lowest Gain: + 1 month
 Highest Gain: + 7 months

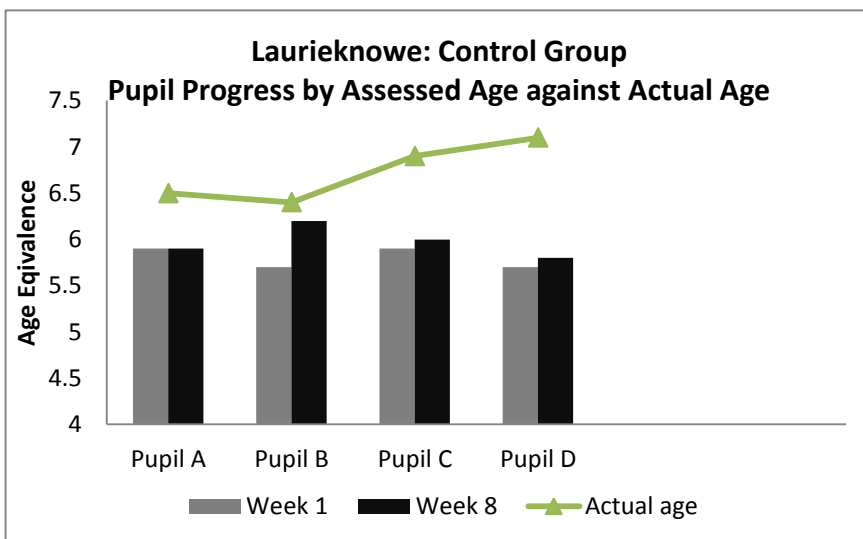
CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at LAURIEKNOWE PRIMARY: Feb – May 2017



Average Gain: + 13.4 points
 Lowest Gain: + 8 points
 Highest Gain: + 22 points

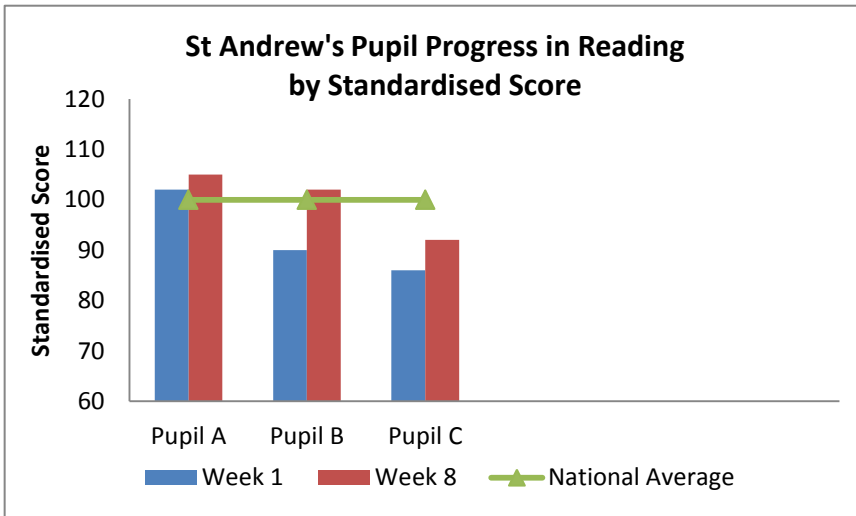


Average Gain: + 12.8 months
 Lowest Gain: + 4 months
 Highest Gain: + >20 months

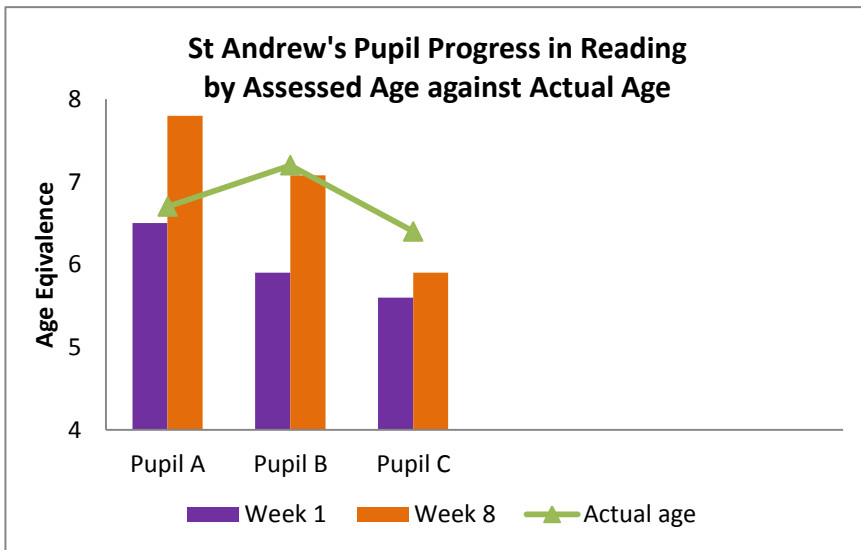


CONTROL GROUP receiving Phonics group intervention
Average Gain: + 3 months
 Lowest Gain: + 7 months
 Highest Gain: + 0 months

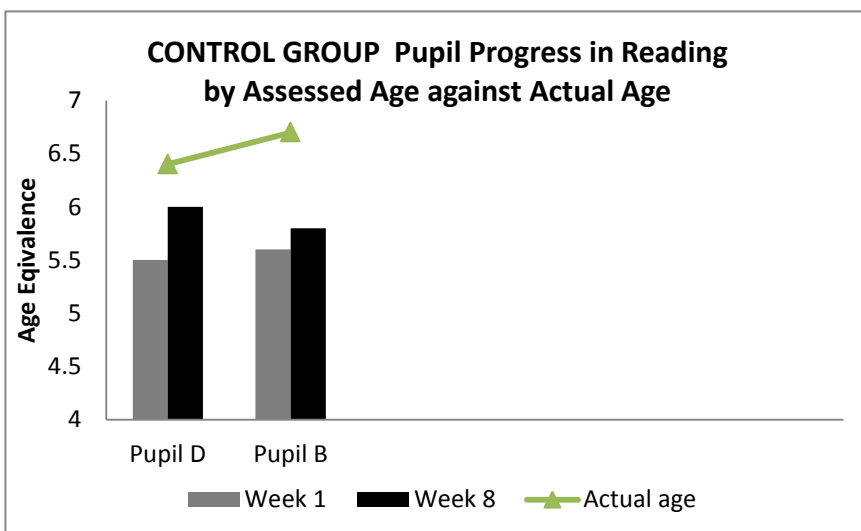
CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at ST ANDREW'S PRIMARY: Feb – May 2017



Average Gain: + 7.6 points
 Lowest Gain: + 12 points
 Highest Gain: + 3 points

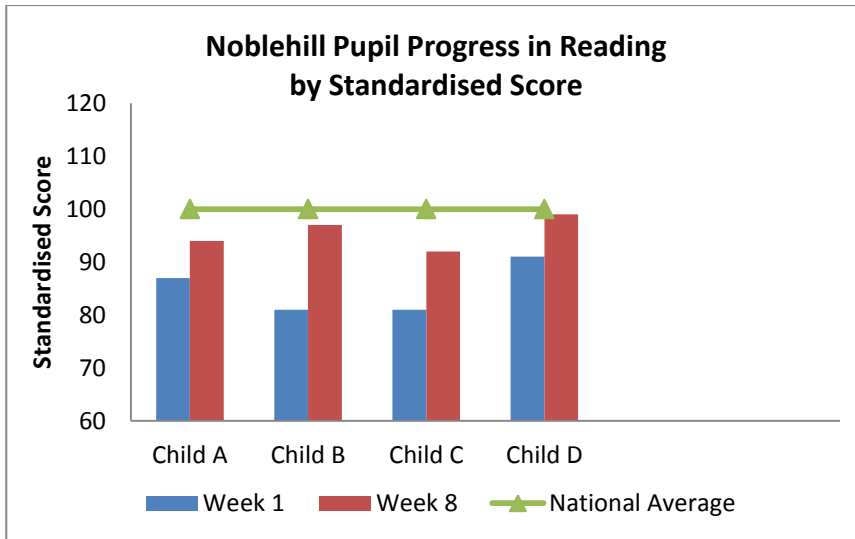


Average Gain: + 13 months
 Lowest Gain: + 3 months
 Highest Gain: + 22 months

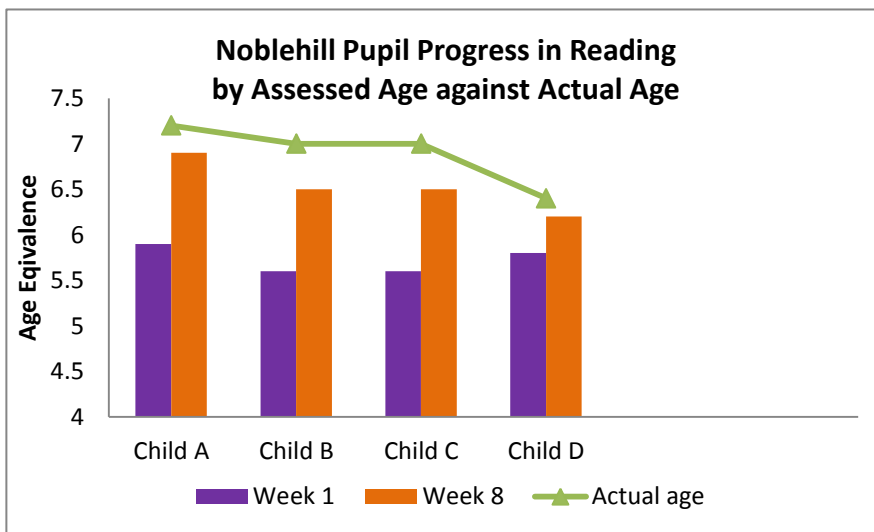


CONTROL GROUP receiving Phonics group intervention
Average Gain: + 5 months
 Lowest Gain: + 3 months
 Highest Gain: + 7 months

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at NOBLEHILL PRIMARY PHASE 2: May – June 2017

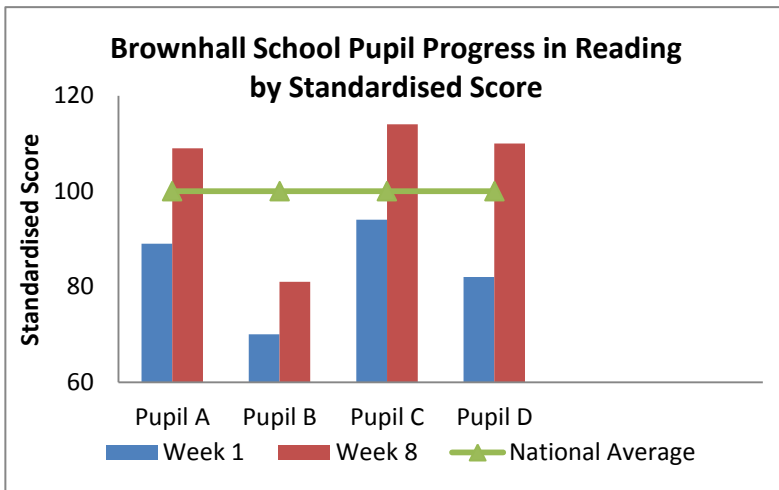


Average Gain: + 10.5 points
 Lowest Gain: + 7 points
 Highest Gain: + 16 points

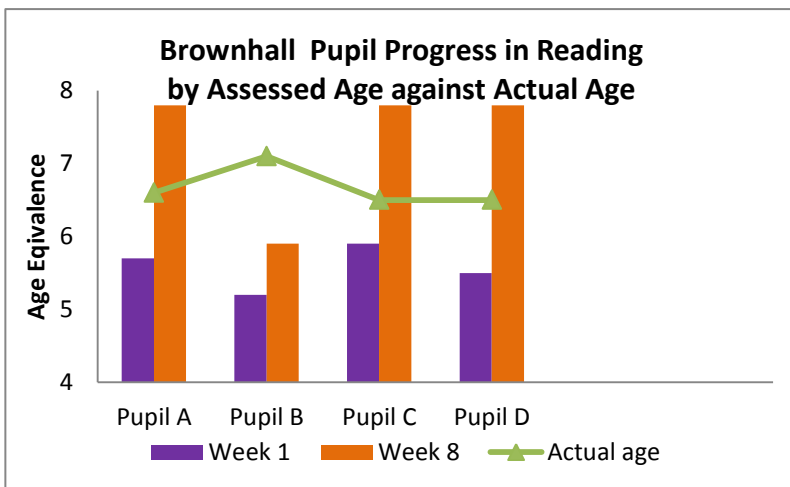


Average Gain: + 10 months
 Lowest Gain: + 6 months
 Highest Gain: + 13 months

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at BROWNHALL PRIMARY: April – June 2017

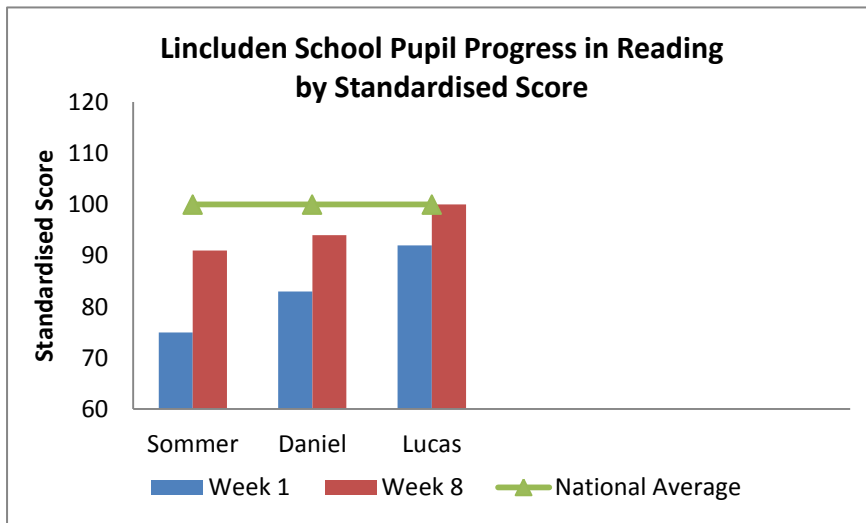


Average Gain: + 20 points
 Lowest Gain: + 11 points
 Highest Gain: + 28 points

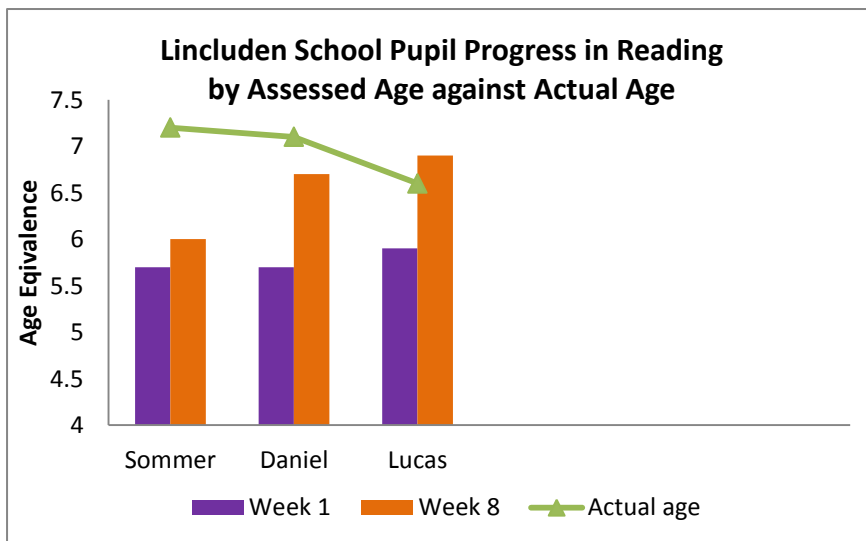


Average Gain: + 20 months
 Lowest Gain: + 7 months
 Highest Gain: + 23 months

CLOSING THE LITERACY GAP at LINCLUDEN PRIMARY PHASE 2: April – June 2017



Average Gain: + 11 points
 Lowest Gain: + 8 points
 Highest Gain: + 16 points



Average Gain: + 10 months
 Lowest Gain: + 4 months
 Highest Gain: + 13 months

APPENDIX 2:
Standardised Assessment Data

	Child	SIMD	Age (Week 8)	Standardised Scores			Percentile Rankings			Age Equivalent (months)			
				Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week8	Difference	
ST NINIAN'S Phase 1	INCAS READING	A	2	6.6.5	87	102	+13	20	55	+35	4.8	6.6	+22
		B	4	6.8	90	95	+5	26	37	+11	5.2	6.0	+10
		C	1	6.9	95	101	+6	37	52	+15	5.10	6.8	+10
		D	2	6.6	86	103	+17	18	58	+40	4.7	6.7	+24
		E	1	6.4	76	89	+13	6	24	+18	<4.0	5.0	> +12
LINCLUDEN Phase 1	YORK EARLY READING	A	2	6.5	91	99	+8	27	47	+20	5.8	6.7	+11
		B	1	6.7	103	115	+12	58	115	+57	7.2	>7.8	>6
		C	1	6.9	92	105	+13	30	63	+23	6.0	7.8	+20
		D	1	6.4	90	105	+15	25	63	+38	5.7	7.8	+13
		E	3	6.4	90	105	+15	25	63	+38	5.7	6.10	+15
		F	3	6.11	85	103	+18	16	58	+42	5.7	7.2	+19
LINCLUDEN CONTROL GROUP	YORK EARLY READING	G	3	6.5	99	100	+1	47	50	+3	6.2	6.10	+8
		H	2	6.3	114	120	+6	82	91	+9	>7.8	>7.8	-
		I	1	6.6	103	103	0	58	58	0	7.2	7.2	0
		J	3	6.8	78	82	+4	7	12	+3	5.6	5.7	+1
		K	1	6.8	83	80	-3	13	9	-4	5.7	5.6	-1
		L	1	6.10	83	75	-8	13	5	-8	5.7	5.7	0
St NINIAN'S Phase 2	YORK EARLY READING	A	1	6.2	89	105	+16	23			5.7	6.10	+15
		B	4	6.7	86	102	+16	18			5.6	6.5	+11
		C	1	6.6	89	94	+5	23			5.7	6.2	+7
		D	4	6.8	94	121	+27				6.00	>7.06	>+18
		E	1	6.7	94	104	+10				5.9	6.7	+10

	Child	SIMD	Age (Week 8)	Standardised Scores			Percentile Rankings			Age Equivalent (months)				
				Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week8	Difference		
NOBLE HILL	YORK EARLY READING	A	5	School Funded	6.3	95	107	+11	37	68	+31	5.10	7.2	+16
NOBLEHILL CONTROL		B	8		6.11	86	87	+1	18	19	+1	5.8	5.9	+1
		C	8		6.8	80	81	+1	9	10	+1	5.6	5.6	0
		D	7		6.9	74	81	+7	4	10	+6	5.5	5.6	+1
		E			7.0							5.1	5.8	+7
ST ANDREW'S	YORK EARLY READING	A	3	6.4	86	92	+8	18	30	+12	5.6	5.9	+3	
		B	4	6.7	102	105	+3	55	63	+8	6.5	7.8	+15	
		C	2	7.2	90	102	+12	25	55	+30	5.10	7.8	+22	
ST ANDREW'S CONTROL GROUP	YORK EARLY READING													
		D	1	6.0	85	98	+17	10	45	+35	5.5	6.0	+7	
		E	6	6.3	85	87	+2	16	19	+3	5.6	5.9	+3	
Shawhead	YORK EARLY READING	A	3	7.0	83	89	+6	13			5.07	6.02	+7	

	Child	SIMD	Age (Week 8)	Standardised Scores			Percentile Rankings			Age Equivalent (months)				
				Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week8	Difference		
LAURIEKNOWE	YORK EARLY READING	A	3	6.6	97	105	+8	42	63	+21	6.5	7.8	+15	
		B	3	6.7	82	91	+9	10	27	+17	5.7	5.11	+4	
		C	1	5.11	86	100	+14	18	50	+32	5.6	6.3	+9	
		D	3	6.4	86	100	+14	18	50	+32	5.6	6.10	+16	
		E	4	6.10	92	114	+22	30	82	+32	6.0	>7.8	>+20	
LAURIEKNOWE CONTROL GROUP	YORK EARLY READING	F	1	6.5	90	88	-2	25	21	-4	5.9	5.9	0	
		G	1	6.4	83	94	+11	13	34	+19	5.7	6.2	+7	
		H	6	6.9	92	92	0	30	30	0	5.9	6.0	+3	
		I	6	7.1	85	79	-6	16	8	-8	5.7	5.8	+1	
BROWN HALL	YORK EARLY READING	A	FME	6.6	89	109	+20	23	73	+50	5.7	>7.8	+>25	
		B	FME	7.1	<70	81	>+11	<2	10	+8	5.2	5.9	+7	
		C	FME	6.5	94	114	+20	34	82	+48	5.9	>7.8	+>23	
		D	FME	6.5	82	110	+28	12	75	+63	5.5	7.8	+27	
NOBLEHILL	YORK EARLY READING	A	6	6.11	87	94	+7	19	34	+15	5.9	6.10	+13	
		B	4	6.8	81	97	+16	10	42	+32	5.6	6.5	+11	
		C	6	6.9	81	92	+11	10	30	+20	5.6	6.5	11	
		D	2	6.0	91	99	+8	27	47	+20	5.8	6.02	+6	

	Child	SIMD	Age (Week 8)	Standardised Scores			Percentile Rankings			Age Equivalent (months)					
				Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week 8	Difference	Week 1	Week8	Difference			
COLLIN	Wiat-11-T	A	LAC	ASL	8.7	55	71	+16	0.1	3	+2.9	5.8	6.8	+12	
		B	LAC		5.4	82	107	+25	12	68	+56	<4.09	5.05	>8	
LINCLUDEN Phase 2	YORK EARLY READING	A	1	7.2	75	91	+16	5	27	+22	5.07	5.11	+4		
		B	1	7.1	83	94	+11	13	34	+21	5.07	6.07	+12		
		C	1	6.6	92	100	+8	30	50	+20	5.09	6.10	+13		
39 pupils															
								513/39 average 13.15							533/39 Average 13.66