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EVALUATION OF THE ACCELERATING IMPROVEMENT IN KNOWSLEY: PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT

Moira Hulme, Ben Haines, Steph Ainsworth & Karolina Kardas

OCTOBER 2019

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Glossary

AIG	Accelerated Improvement Group
AIP	Accelerated Improvement Plan
Attainment 8	An average grade for each school based on results in English and maths, 3 other English Baccalaureate subjects and 3 from a wider list of approved qualifications.
BME	Black and minority ethnic. Pupil characteristic from School Census data.
Adviser	An external Adviser appointed by the Commission with responsibility for challenging and monitoring PtS schools and providing support for their areas for improvement.
Collaborative	Local school cluster: North, Central and South
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Disadvantaged	Term used to describe pupils who are either FSM Ever 6 (i.e. they have received free school meals at some point in the preceding 6 years), adopted from care or Looked After Children.
EAL	Pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupil characteristic from School Census data.
EBACC	A combination of subjects that the government thinks is important for young people to study at GCSE. It includes: English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history, and a language.
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
FSM	Free School Meals. FSM Eligible describes pupils who were eligible for free school meals on the date of the school census.
HT	Headteacher
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
Progress 8	The progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It is a value-added measure: pupils' results are compared to the actual achievements of other pupils with the same prior attainment.
PtS	Pathways to Success
SEN	Special educational needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pathways to Success initiative aimed to raise standards, especially in literacy, across the primary and secondary phases in Knowsley, Merseyside. The project commenced in February 2018 and concluded in July 2019. It was funded through the Department for Education's Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) and coordinated by the Knowsley Education Commission, set up in November 2016. The project focused on 30 schools in an area with exceptionally high levels of disadvantage and a poor record of student achievement over a number of years, particularly for students at age sixteen. Participating schools were able to access support from a PtS Adviser, development sessions organised at school level and centrally, and modest additional funding to implement a locally-authored Accelerated Improvement Plan overseen by an Accelerated Improvement Group. Key approaches included intensive work in classrooms, capacity building and leadership development, and school-to-school support.

Evaluation questions

- How well was the programme implemented?
- What was the impact on participants and the Knowsley system?
- What are the implications for replication, scaling up and sustainability of the programme?

Evaluation activities

The evaluation draws on the following data sources:

- **Pathways Advisers** - Semi-structured interviews with the 12 Pathways Advisers assigned to support between one and five of the 30 PtS schools.
- **School case studies** – Semi-structured interviews with 17 school staff leading improvement activities in a sample of eight PtS schools – two high schools and six primary schools.
- **Online survey** – distributed to 56 staff across the 30 PtS schools identified as leading PtS activity in their school, with a response rate of 57% (32) with 28 respondents from primary schools and 4 respondents from secondary schools.
- **School testimonials** – a review of 41 school testimonial documents submitted by 24 Pathways to Success schools between June and December 2018.

Analysis of GCSE school performance data shows that 3 out of 4 of the PtS secondary schools demonstrated a yearly improvement in English outcomes from 2018/19. KS2 school performance data (year 2019) for the Key Stage 2 National Test shows that 24 out of 26 primary schools that participated in the PtS programme reached the expected standard in all three topics: reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS); and maths (based on the 'average scaled score'). It is important to note that all participants (Advisers and school staff) were cautious to avoid over-claiming impact during the PtS initiative. It is difficult to attribute causality in socially complex settings and many felt the assessment of impact was too soon to fully capture the diverse gains made by the initiative.

Summary of findings

How well was the programme implemented?

1. School testimonials describe communication between the Advisers, Improvement Group and schools as effective, frequent, useful, consistent and beneficial. All returns indicate that school staff felt supported throughout their engagement with the PtS initiative.
2. Advisers reported that not all schools appeared well informed in the early stages in regards to expectations and programme details. All Advisers indicated that early activity in the spring and summer of 2018 was invested in relationship building.
3. Advisers maintained regular contact with PtS schools largely through monthly face-to-face contact, supplemented with email or telephone communication. Contact was largely with the headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership Team, and less frequently with classteachers, pupils and support staff.
4. Advisers were responsive to context and adjusted strategies to address local and emergent needs. Advisers sought to align the AIP with the school development plan to avoid overloading participating schools.
5. Effective Advisers used a coaching model. School staff valued coaching and professional dialogue above prescriptive approaches. School staff need to perceive a high degree of ownership over agreed priorities and the direction of change.
6. Advisers drew on their professional networks to support curriculum change in Knowsley. It was acknowledged that curriculum development in the absence of teacher development would be counterproductive in the longer-term.
7. Flexibility is needed within multi-academy trusts (MATs) to advance bespoke local strategies for improvement, with Adviser support and monitoring.
8. The majority of survey respondents (96%, n=27 primary respondents and 3 (75%) secondary respondents) reported that the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) supported efforts to improve outcomes in literacy, and the quality of teaching and learning. The AIP was less successful in promoting school-to-school collaboration.
9. Participants rated the Pathways to Success development sessions positively. Twenty-six (26) out of the 32 respondents who attended the Pathways to Success development sessions found them to be useful (18) or very useful (8).
10. All schools set up an Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) by the spring term of 2019. The AIG principally focused on within-school improvement efforts rather than school-to-school collaboration.
11. The PtS programme required participants to provide regular monitoring reports. According to Advisers and school staff, the formal reporting process did not always serve a developmental purpose.

What was the impact on participants and the Knowsley system?

12. Survey respondents reported that the PtS initiative had a positive impact on teacher development and classroom practice.
13. Over 90% of primary survey respondents and 3 out of 4 of the secondary school respondents valued PtS Adviser input in all the following areas: professional development of staff; developing a culture of collaboration; suggesting resources for teaching and learning; observing classroom practice and reviewing assessment practice. Areas that were not supported by PtS Advisers or were not regarded as useful by a minority of respondents (>33% of primary respondents and either 1 or 2 of the secondary school respondents) were support with staffing issues, working with governors, and promoting practitioner enquiry.

14. Advisers and senior staff reported that the PtS initiative supported schools to move from a position of insularity. Input from an external Adviser promoted connectivity and an outward outlook.
15. School testimonials record that staff valued opportunities for collaborative professional learning. Such opportunities were frequently brokered by Advisers and included participation in training sessions delivered by other schools, and attendance at *Pathways to Success* events.
16. Senior staff within case study schools reported positive early assessments of impact in terms of classroom practice, pupil outcomes (including engagement and attendance) and teacher development.
17. Advisers interpreted their role as helping schools to order priorities for action. Advisory work is valued that sharpens the focus for improvement action and accelerates the pace of desired change.
18. A number of Advisers worked with schools to improve how performance data was used to support improvement action. While schools were data-rich, optimal use not always made of available data. A focus on data gathering for monitoring purposes was not consistently supported by a focus on data analysis for targeted development.
19. Staff within case study schools reported the following key challenges: supporting staff release time; coping with staff absence; equitable access to Adviser time and expertise; competing demands on staff time.
20. All participants (Advisers and school staff) were cautious to avoid over-claiming impact during the PtS initiative. It is difficult to attribute causality in socially complex settings and many felt the assessment of impact was too soon to fully capture the diverse gains made by the initiative.
21. Participants across all data sources noted the ambitious timescale within which to achieve the aims of the programme. While endorsing a commitment to raising standards and expectations, participants regarded the time-limited nature of the initiative, 18 months, as a significant challenge.

What are the implications for replication, scaling up and sustainability of the programme?

22. The quality of the Adviser and advisory support is central to this model of school support. In appraising their experience of support, most participants focused on the role of the *Pathways to Success* Adviser and the quality of the relationship with this person. Fifteen out of 24 schools offering testimonials described advisory support as positive, excellent and invaluable.
23. Bespoke school support through dedicated Adviser time is expensive in the short-term but may hold greater potential for impact in the longer-term by helping schools to articulate a Theory of Change.
24. Changes to the curriculum and the professional development of literacy leads were regarded as sustainable changes that would endure beyond the PtS initiative.
25. Only one respondent (school testimonial) suggested that emergent gains were wholly resource dependent. While additional funding was not core to the improvement effort it was regarded as helpful in gaining buy-in. Additional resource can be a catalyst if schools are receptive to change.
26. School staff responding to the survey reported that they plan to sustain the changes after the PtS initiative in the following ways: embedding curriculum change and changes in teaching practice into day-to-day activity, maintaining action plans, implementing an exit strategy devised with their PtS Adviser, re-structuring the leadership team, ensuring new systems, appointing a literacy coordinator, and practices are part of the school's monitoring cycle and school development plans.
27. Advisers identified three key features of support that were critical in creating conditions to support positive change: 1) strong central support and communication from the Board as the

coordinating body; 2) strong relationships between school leaders and Advisers that are regarded as independent of the local authority; and 3) the provision of active support by sharing practical strategies to effect change. In addition, senior staff within case study schools indicated that progress was dependent on the willingness of senior staff to engage with external scrutiny, and the receptiveness of the school community to change.

28. The most sustainable gains reported by school staff include fostering a different culture around teaching and learning and a stronger culture of collaboration within and between schools. School-to-school collaboration and the replenishment of resources were regarded as less sustainable. Turnover among core staff was commonly cited as a threat to sustainable progress.
29. School testimonials suggest that prospects for sustainability are strengthened by professional dialogue and school-to-school learning. Teacher development, especially the development of middle leadership capacity, was positively associated with schools' capacity to sustain change beyond the duration of the funded project.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Pathways to Success initiative aimed to raise standards in literacy across the primary and secondary phases in Knowsley. The project was funded through the DfE's Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF). It commenced in February 2018 and concluded in July 2019 (eighteen months). The programme involved 25 primary schools and four secondary schools, designated as the 'Pathways to Success' schools. Three key approaches were used to effect change: intensive work in classrooms to improve practice in teaching and its impact on learning in Years 5-9; leadership capacity building through professional development; and school-to-school support. Each school was supported by an external part-time PtS Adviser throughout the duration of the programme.

Following a process of competitive tendering, in September 2018 a team from Manchester Metropolitan University was commissioned to evaluate the *Accelerating Improvement in Knowsley, Pathways to Success* initiative. The evaluation addressed the following questions:

- How well was the programme implemented?
- What was the impact on participants and the Knowsley system?
- What are the implications for replication, scaling up and sustainability of the programme?

The evaluation design was informed by existing research and guidance on evaluating complex area-based initiatives (Ainscow, 2015) and school-to-school improvement efforts (Rudd et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2012; NfER, 2014). This includes evaluations of the City and London Challenge programme (Ainscow, 2015; Hutchings et al., 2010), Schools Challenge Cymru (Carr and Morris, 2016); and school improvement partnership programmes in Scotland (Menter et al., 2010; Chapman et al., 2015) and Wales (Hulme et al., 2018).

Table 1 Logic model of Knowsley Pathways to Success programme

CONTEXT	AIMS & OBJECTIVES	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Area with exceptionally high levels of disadvantage; Poor record of student achievement at 16 for a number of years	To improve literacy, leadership and collaboration between schools, making the transition from primary school to secondary school effective and efficient.	Funding and expertise to support 26 primary schools and four secondary schools in Knowsley; Pathways Advisers as coaches and critical friends.	Support from Pathways Advisers Improvement Hubs and outstanding practitioners; Introduction of initiatives shown to accelerate education attainment and outcomes for our children and young people.	Self-evaluation against bespoke Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP); Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG)	Increased teacher confidence and expertise; Improved performance in national tests and examinations, at both the primary and secondary levels.

The report is structured in four sections that align with the main data sources: interviews with PtS Advisers, school case studies, an online survey of school staff, and school testimonials. Throughout the report, and in keeping with ethical research practice, codes are used to refer to participants. Advisers and schools are de-identified and ascribed a numerical code. The report concludes by synthesising findings from each strand to address the three core evaluation questions.

2 ADVISER INTERVIEWS

Summary

- Effective collaboration entails strong communication from the inception meeting
- Early stages of collaboration entail deep attention to relationship building
- Context matters – effective Advisory work is responsive to local resources and capacity
- Governor engagement with the work of Accelerated Improvement Groups is a challenge
- Reliable data is needed to support improvement planning and targeted strategies
- School staff can be supported to make better use of data to promote learning
- Monitoring processes are valued when they serve a developmental purpose
- Sustainability is influenced by the development of local leadership capacity

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports analysis of transcripts from semi-structured interviews with each of the 12 PtS Advisers who were commissioned to support the schools (See Appendix 2 for the interview topic guide). The interviews were between 40 and 90 minutes duration. Eleven interviews were conducted by telephone and one face-to-face in Manchester. In advance of the interviews, where available, the research team reviewed the Accelerated Improvement Plans, monitoring reports and school data for the schools allocated to each Adviser. The interviews focused on improvement planning, taking action, establishing impact and prospects for sustainability.

2.2 APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT

Advisers adopted a number of strategies to support local improvement efforts. All Advisers recognised the importance of context, including how the level of experience and length of tenure of the headteacher can affect school support needs. At the start of the project several schools were in a period of transition - some headteachers were acting or seconded for a fixed period, some were retiring, some were recently appointed and others were longstanding. Ofsted had designated some schools as requiring improvement. During the Pathways to Success initiative, one school was in the process of joining a new multi-academy trust (MAT).

You need to listen an awful lot to where schools really feel they need your help and to target that help accurately. I've used my co-coaching skills in both schools but been more advisory in one and more coaching in the other. I think I'm quite good at getting under the skin of the school and understanding what that schools needs to go forward. The schools require different levels of support and you have to adapt the kind of support you offer. Adviser #3

They were very different schools, both with very different issues. One school recognised that they had significant issues, the other one was still in denial about the problems it had. They felt the inspections had been unfair. Having identified the barriers, the schools themselves didn't really know what to do about it. Leadership and management workshops weren't sharply focused on moving those things along. Literacy levels were symptom rather than the cause. Some of these heads have been in post for a long time, some of them are very new, they need different things. I'm a great believer in professional coaching. Adviser #9

Early activity in the spring and summer of 2018 was invested in relationship building. Most activity in relation to implementing the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) did not commence in the majority of schools until September 2018. Advisers varied in the extent to which they were directive with schools depending on the context in each case. In some schools progress was delayed as a result of turnover in senior staff (Adviser #3, 11).

A lack of permanent staff meant the headteacher has found it very difficult to focus on teaching and learning as opposed to safeguarding or attendance or various staffing difficulties. They have taken her away from the quality of teaching and learning. Adviser #11

Advisers varied in the support strategy deployed in the early stages of the initiative. Some Advisers approached their work with schools using an explicit coaching model; others started from a strong accountability stance with a review of school data.

I've had to break down some barriers because he was very wary of the program. He wondered what the purpose of it was and the involvement of the DfE as well. So there was an element of "what's this all about?" We've had to do a lot of work on building relationships and we've now got to the stage where we have that openness and honesty. I've used a coaching model during my visits to the school, both with the headteacher and senior leaders in the school. Adviser #4

The whole process between April and July was almost a tough process of getting in there, holding people to account, asking them lots of questions and saying, you know, Ofsted is going to be on your doorstep next term. You need to be ready. Let's start by having a look at your data and unpicking it. Adviser #12

Some Advisers were more directive in their initial encounters, taking a leading role in authoring the Accelerated Improvement Plan, AIP. In other cases, for example where a school was designated as requiring improvement and already had an adviser attached to it, PtS Advisers worked to support established priorities for improvement. Advisers spoke of the need to align PtS activity with school development plans and, in some cases, detailed two-year post-Ofsted action plans. Some schools with less positive inspection outcomes were receiving improvement support over and above the additional resource available through the PtS initiative. Advisers acknowledged the need not to overload participating schools with multiple competing targets and to align the AIP with the school development plan 'so that the priorities don't become too many' (Adviser #12).

I asked for all their data. I asked for their school development plans. I asked for some contextual information about their school and communities. Then I had a first stab at writing the action plan on their behalf. I wanted to give them something to build on. Before I gave them the plan I went back to each of the schools and talked them through what I thought and the rationale behind that. Adviser #12

In taking the AIP forward, Advisers focused on practical and pragmatic monitoring. For one Adviser this entailed providing additional milestones in between the six-week strategic monitoring calendar. Advisers were sensitive in respect of the degree of challenge to exert at particular junctures and were cognisant of workload pressures.

It's helped them be smarter about what they are doing. I've tried to get them to break it down into small, manageable chunks of monitoring with teaching. So using staff meeting time, "Let's have a look at teaching reflections. What's that looking

like? Can we see that expectations are high? Can we see progression? Are we repeating in Year 4 what we might be doing in Year 2?" It's much more organic now in both schools. They're finding balancing the workload easier because it's more manageable. Adviser #4.

Another strategy was to identify 'quick wins' to maintain momentum and build commitment among the school staff. From a foundation of small successes, or 'sprints', further work could be undertaken.

The focus to begin with was very much about giving each school the resources to teach well and saying this is how to use them - doing a lot of 'quick wins' so they can see the difference. Over time the focus is now about developing leadership capacity. In both schools I've supported the headteacher with restructuring pupil groups and the leadership team. So the focus now is more about identifying new leaders, so building capacity. Adviser #11

One Adviser reflected that initial targets may have been over ambitious and this became apparent as relationships were established and knowledge of the specific school context grew. Advisers and schools worked closely together to recalibrate plans where necessary.

When I look back at what we set out to do it is perhaps over ambitious. I suspect that I was pushing them in respect to some of that. It was perhaps over ambitious given their current contextual status. As I've got to know the schools better we have revised them and we're probably going to do less. Adviser #5

In other contexts, activity initiated to address literacy was also intended to address broader features required to deliver improvement, especially leadership, attendance and teaching quality. Advancing literacy was part of a wider multi-strand school improvement strategy.

The original school-to-school improvement program focused almost entirely on literacy development. In both schools that's not really the issue. As with most of these cases, it's about leadership management, organisation of curriculum, and the quality of teaching. Adviser #10

Good practice in literacy cannot be achieved unless there is strong leadership, a strong focus on teaching and learning. You need that firm basis for it to spread throughout the school. If you're going to improve reading, writing, and oracy within a school, you need for kids to be attending. There are lots of things you need to work out first. Adviser #2

As I've gotten to know the schools better I've focused work on learning intentions, how teaching assistants are being used. All of that's shaped the reiteration of that plan. Adviser #12

Both the plans have been adapted and amended as we've moved on and priorities have changed. Adviser #3

Other Advisers separated improvement action into that focused on leadership development and issues of pedagogy that could be devolved to external lead practitioners (#11). Most Advisers, bar two (#5, #9), stated that they were able to draw on their professional networks to broker external support for schools in areas of key concern (#2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12). For example, organising in-school work with an SEN expert, a literacy consultant, and maths and English curriculum support via SLEs from within an Adviser's own school network. The attention here was to ensure that teachers were supported in

working with new curriculum resources for optimal learning gains. It was accepted that curriculum development in the absence of teacher development would be counterproductive.

They've [SLEs in English and Maths] been coming in on a two to three week basis. We've used a coaching and modelling strategy. They've modelled lessons and then a teacher has been set gap tasks to work on, and they come back and check on those gap tasks. They have provided a report from that procedure. They keep me updated, as well as the heads, with the work they are doing. Adviser #4

In a minority of cases, brokering school-to-school support through the PtS project was problematic. Working across boundaries was sometimes challenging, particularly when aligning MAT and PtS priorities. One Adviser reported that a desire for uniformity of processes across schools within a MAT – in terms of CPD provision, reporting to governors, school improvement activity – could limit possibilities for learning from good practice elsewhere.

I've set up visits to outstanding schools to look at middle leadership but the school improvement Adviser for the multi academy trust cancelled it because she wanted it all to be within the Academy. The sad news is the Academy can't provide that level of support at that standard. So the head, new to that job, was very disappointed to be told that wouldn't go forward. The academy trust didn't realise the help that was needed and hadn't drilled down as far as I have during my time working with the school. Adviser #3.

Such experiences indicate a need to build consensus that common improvement aims can be achieved through different strategies. Uniformity of process might not deliver similar gains in divergent contexts.

2.3 USING DATA TO SUPPORT PLANNING

The Advisers were appreciative of the quality of the data profiles provided for each school by an external independent agency.

I'm not sure the schools would have been forthcoming with such comprehensive data unless they'd been forced to. Adviser #12

A number of Advisers challenged the accuracy of data records in some schools and the degree of confidence school leaders expressed in their data. Questions about the accuracy of data did not support the planning process.

Whatever I looked at I couldn't be sure that it was founded on data that was accurate. Even at the department self-evaluation, certainly at school level, middle leaders weren't sure of any of their data. Immediately the school had got to start looking at where it actually was, what its current position was. Adviser #2

Any issues which were identified prior to September have really gone by the wayside because it was a very glossy view of where the school was. Adviser #3

I started by doing a very in-depth two day learning walk with two Ofsted colleagues. I also interviewed senior leaders, staff, pupils, and the pupil pastoral support around attendance. I got an overview of where the school was at. I didn't just rely on data. I looked at the quality of teaching and learning. I invested quite a lot of time in that

because the data doesn't always tell you the full story. I looked at the full brief before establishing what the baseline would be for the actual plan. Adviser #3

A number of Advisers worked with schools to challenge how performance data was used to support improvement action. While schools were data-rich, Advisers reported that optimal use not always made of available data. A focus on data gathering for monitoring purposes was not consistently supported by a focus on data analysis for targeted development.

There was a lot of monitoring going on in those schools but nothing was being done with it. In fact, there was so much monitoring no one really knew what to do with all the data that they had. Adviser #10

I've done work with them on using work scrutiny to move away from only focusing on gathering assessment information so it is not just about the score on the door. It's actually that broader picture. What am I seeing in children's learning in that lesson and can I then see that in children's work? Can I see a sequence of teaching that's leading to a positive outcome for that child, and did that outcome match what the teacher is saying about where the child is at? Adviser #4

In other contexts, where an initial review of data recorded a strong pattern of consistent performance, Advisers worked with headteachers to identify areas to enhance teacher development, including less experienced teachers (Adviser #9).

2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF FUNDING

PtS Advisers reported that the additional resource available through the initiative was well spent. Advisers expressed sensitivity to a current school funding climate of contracting resource. The additional resource supported a range of school-level interventions: pupil premium interviews, accelerated reading projects, new school library stock, staff release for intensive teaching-learning walks, dyslexia screening, an attendance data analyst, SLE time for staff development activity, the services of an external literacy consultant. While additional funding was not core to the improvement effort it was regarded as helpful in gaining buy-in (#10). Funding supported creativity, especially in the context of schools in 'special measures' and facing a declining resource (#6). One Adviser (#6) felt that a greater share of the funding should go directly to the schools, but acknowledged that spending on a time-limited post in school, for example on a teaching assistant post, would not be sustainable when the initiative ended. Additional resource carried the risk of buying a 'fix' rather than spending time deliberating on what matters most (#10). Two advisers commented that bespoke school support through dedicated Adviser time is expensive in the short-term but may hold greater potential for impact in the longer-term by helping schools to articulate a Theory of Change (#4, 6).

It is a little bit like trading because you are turning up with gifts. Actually what the schools really need is better quality teaching and better quality leadership. It makes staff feel more valued and the school feels as though it's worth getting involved but it isn't the thing that solves the problem. It just adds value to the overall improvement process. It won't improve the quality of your teaching, your vision or values. It won't improve culture. Too often schools rush to buy a tool but they don't analyse its impact or reflect deeply on what they actually want to solve. Adviser #10

When you're in special measures your numbers drop therefore your finances get tighter. It becomes a vicious circle. There's no additional funding out there to help you get out of special measures unless it comes from the Multi Academy Trust.

Unless you're a particular size of MAT, you're not able to pump a lot more money in. So it's a small amount of money with a fairly significant impact. It enables us to be more creative. Adviser #6

2.5 OPERATION OF THE ACCELERATED IMPROVEMENT GROUP

All the PtS schools were advised to establish an Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) to review the implementation of the Accelerated Improvement Plan. By the spring term of 2019 all participating schools had a Group in place, chaired by the headteacher. Only one Adviser reported difficulty in setting up an AIG, where this was viewed locally as an additional reporting body to the existing improvement board of a school in challenging circumstances (Adviser #5). There was some variability in the composition of the AIG between schools. Most groups typically involved the headteacher, Adviser, and one or two members of the Senior Leadership Team. Obtaining strong engagement from governing bodies had proven a challenge, particularly when AIG meetings were scheduled for midday (Adviser #9). In two cases, Advisers reported no engagement from the Governing body; in others the Advisers had, 'struggled to get governor engagement and governor interest' (Adviser #10); or the Chair of Governors had moved on and the AIG comprised the Academy improvement adviser, the headteacher and the PtS Adviser (Adviser #3). The AIG principally focused on within-school improvement efforts rather than school-to-school collaboration. However, in one case a cross-school AIG was formed including the chair of governors, the headteachers of two schools, a senior teacher, and a key person from each of the schools involved in the plan: the English lead and the deputy headteacher (Adviser #12).

2.6 REPORTING PROGRESS

The PtS programme required participants to provide regular monitoring reports. While all participants appreciated that progress monitoring followed receipt of additional resource, the reporting process did not appear to always serve a developmental purpose. The format of the monitoring reports was regarded by some to reduce the inherent complexity of school improvement efforts.

It's instrumental. It's something that needs to be done. The schools' problems are so complex that having a simple matrix is not going to be something of great value in terms of organising your time or focusing on what you need to do. You don't want to be too invasive. It's a useful matrix for the DfE. It's something the schools are comfortable with and something that we do, but it's not something I find a useful tool for school improvement. Adviser #10

One Adviser reported focusing on targets regularly reviewed in the action plan rather than the summative monitoring form (#11).

When you're working with schools that are very, very fragile but are still making improvements it's really hard to show that on those forms. I've updated them recently and a headteacher phoned me in tears and said, "Am I still a red school?" And I had to say "I can see there have been some improvement but not enough for me to tick off this objective." I know forms are difficult, but it's harder to measure the smaller successes on those forms. Adviser #11

2.7 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Advisers were cautious to avoid over-claiming impact during the PtS initiative and on conclusion of their support. Concern was expressed about the risk of premature judgement on outcomes in socially complex settings.

The time scale isn't long enough. We are talking about significant cultural shift in attitudes and practice. I don't think you will see the best outcomes for these schools for another two to three years. But if you don't sustain that it won't happen. That's my concern. Adviser #10

The DfE focus on the end of Key Stage 2 outcomes. I think this project is more long-term than that. I think the Challenge Advisers are actually changing cultures in schools and that doesn't happen overnight. That might not be seen in the Year 6 results this year. Adviser #4

The weakness of the project is that it's too short-term. We need more time. We are working hard to develop collaborative activity and networks but before we know it, it's going to be the end of the project. It's difficult to inspire people when they think it's coming to an end. It's never been long enough to be sustainable, but I do think there are some good things that will be part of the legacy. Adviser #5

One Adviser cautioned against crude comparison or over-interpretation of year-on-year performance data. Another noted the powerful impact of leadership development, which is less immediately visible in conventional metrics.

You've got a different Year 6 cohort here who in my view are likely to perform less well than last year. That does not mean the impact hasn't been good, but if you're just using that as a measure it doesn't look as though the impact's there. It's a very different cohort of pupils with more special needs pupils, a higher proportion of boys, and it does impact on some of those outcomes. That doesn't mean to say that things aren't better, but it might not look that way in those key stage data for a couple of the schools. Adviser #9

Both schools are braver. There's definitely braver leadership there than there was before. Adviser #11

2.8 SUSTAINABILITY

While optimistic, the PtS Advisers expressed some caution in regard to the sustainability of advances achieved during the lifespan of the initiative. On withdrawal of Adviser support and scrutiny some schools might revert to previous ways of working. In particular, the benefits of connectivity were perceived as at risk.

My concern going forward would be that, with any education improvement strategy, there's always a rush to action and a rush to measure. Both of these leadership teams need continual challenge intellectually. I just worry that if that turns off the leadership team goes back into activity that's not making impact but just lots of activity. Adviser #10

The relationship of support with my network and me is very tied. My worry for the future is that when I step away the schools will be much stronger, but will they be any more connected to a network locally? Adviser #11

Some Advisers questioned whether the leadership capacity was sufficiently established in schools to continue the improvement work initiated during the project (#2, 9, 12). Others expressed concern about likely impact of staff turnover in the future, and the capacity of the local authority to provide continuing comparable support when most Advisers leave Knowsley and where a school is not within a MAT receiving additional support (#5, 6).

I think the sustainable features are the different ways of monitoring and developing teaching. What is sustainable is getting teachers to come off the fence and reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching. My concern is that the balance can be tipped overnight when the head or a key member of staff leaves, or you have some turbulence in staffing through sick leave. Adviser #4.

I know from my experience in school to school support that you see the outcomes in terms of student outcomes, the change in leadership, the development of teaching and learning but then it just gets taken away. If the headteacher or Head of Faculty hasn't fully bought in, then it won't be sustainable. They've only done it because they've got the external support and external scrutiny. That would be my concern with this project. How sustainable is it if ultimately the headteacher hasn't bought into the process? Adviser #6

The weakness is what the Authority will do beyond the end-point in terms of transition from the project to keep momentum going. I do think there's a danger there that progress will be lost. Adviser #5

I think you'll see a one year impact because of the involvement of myself and others, but I'm not sure if it's going to have a long-term impact without structural change in Knowsley. I still think we need to see structural change with partnerships, executive leaderships, and also a greater degree of accountability. Adviser #12

Some changes were regarded as more secure than others. Changes to the curriculum and the development of literacy leads were regarded as sustainable changes that would endure beyond the time limited duration of PtS project.

Teachers are seeing practice in different schools. They've started working together more. They've been to each other's school and you're seeing that translate into what teachers are doing in their own classrooms. In terms of the leadership impact and sustainability, it's too early to tell. I worry that the two heads have not got the leadership capacity to continue driving this. Adviser #12.

What we've done is change the curriculum. There's a set of tools that are very clear in both schools. Because we've worked with teachers as well as teaching assistants and the leadership team, the drive isn't sitting only with the head teacher. So from that perspective, it's sustainable. Adviser #11

2.9 DRIVERS

Advisers identified three key features of support that were critical in creating conditions to support positive change: 1) strong central support and communication from the Board; 2) strong relationships with school staff by Advisers perceived as independent of the LA; and 3) the provision of active support by sharing practical strategies to effect change. One adviser valued the transparency of the shared

digital workspace, which was regarded as an effective mechanism for sharing and reviewing practice across the network of participating schools (Adviser #11).

First of all, building relationships to create a climate for that work to take place that has been important. Secondly, coming with solutions so that it's not that they're being told what they're doing isn't good enough. The schools were resistant to begin with but now are really engaged. They want to make a difference and they value the support. There needs to be a layer of accountability to make sure that that's sustained. Adviser #12.

Coaching and modelling. Showing people what effective can look like and then letting them have a go. Putting the ball back in the teacher's court by getting the teacher to reflect on their teaching and the impact it has on the learning. Adviser #4

I'm not working for the Authority. I'm evaluating that school's provision on what happens there and leadership. I've got no other agenda going on. I'll just be honest and say what I see, and what I think they should do. Adviser #9

2.10 INHIBITORS

The early stages of the PtS initiative were a little uncertain for some participants. Communication between participants might have been improved with greater opportunities for all parties to meet collectively at the outset. Advisers reported that not all schools appeared well informed in the early stages.

When I spoke with the two leaders of the schools they didn't understand the Pathways to Success project at all. As far as they understood there was some funding and I was arriving as an external school improvement professional. They knew there were a number of days but didn't know how many. They knew they had some funding but they didn't know what it was for. I felt it wasn't so much miss sold, but it was undersold. Adviser #10

I would have loved to have met all the Advisers and the people on the program together, so we all heard the same thing. My two schools weren't in the same room as me when I heard about the focus of the work. Adviser #12

One Adviser described the allocated schools as 'being quite isolated and not working together' (Adviser #11). Another noted that the project was supporting schools to move from a position of insularity: 'They are very willing now to look outward and to learn from good practice around them; the next step is without me facilitating it' (Adviser #2). This sentiment was repeated elsewhere: 'it's still quite fragile and because lots of what we're now putting in place is still pretty new to them it took a while to get things off the ground.' (Adviser #11)

A lack of connectedness. Both schools were very anxious when I arrived. Worried that if they shared anything less than good there would be repercussions. So there was a climate of fear really. We had to overcome that by building relationships, building collaborations - giving headteachers back a network of peers and trusted advisers. There's a real lack of trust there generally. Adviser #11

For me, I think the most difficult thing is managing a headteacher who doesn't want anybody to go in and look at anything. Adviser #9

One Adviser expressed frustration at a tone of resignation or self-imposed limits expressed at an initial meeting in one school.

There hasn't been enough accountability. There is help outside and there is excellence just down the road. There was a whole culture of blame for things that had happened in the past, reorganisational moves, new pupils from another school. That was years ago. Stop talking like that. Adviser #2

Initiative overload left some schools uncertain about which action should be prioritised. Advisers interpreted their role as helping schools to order priorities for action.

Part of the problem is when a school is in difficulty, so many initiatives are thrown at it over such long periods of time. There's no clarity around what an individual school needs to do. The pull is tremendous. You are potentially looking at 5 or 6 people with their own agendas and what we actually needed to do was allow the leadership of the school to evolve. To focus on the children and not the bureaucracy around it. Adviser #6

One limitation cited was having to produce predictive data for reporting purposes for the DfE at a premature stage when some schools were grappling with the accuracy of baseline data (Adviser #3). Advisers reported that some schools were reluctant to share data on projected attainment. Another described the challenge of working within a project regarded to have an explicit literacy focus within a school with comparably strong patterns of attainment in this curriculum area.

Some of the primary schools are doing quite well in literacy. It's been a challenge for me to make them understand that no matter how well they're doing, they're not maximising the potential of all children, particularly for the more able children. Adviser #5.

All Advisers emphasised the imperative of relationship building, gaining trust and crafting bespoke strategies fitted to local conditions. Advisers drew credibility from their professional experience including, for many, former inspectors, while also building trust through their position as independent and external advisers.

I think there's a lack of accountability. If I wasn't very good at working the relationships with the two of them, they could pull out of this. Adviser #12

Schools need that external relationship. They need somebody coming in to make those checks like Ofsted. With the demise of the local authority, we've lost that. It's not about telling people whether they are getting it right or wrong. You've got to leave them something when you go that they can build upon. That's where it can be powerful to have an external person coming with fresh eyes, who's not emotionally involved. It's somebody coming in to objectively raise those questions. I don't think governors have the capacity to do that. Adviser #4

I believe that I have been allowed the freedom to make what I do bespoke to the school rather than trying to put in a package, put a project into the school when it wasn't ready to do it. Adviser #5

In addition, one Adviser commented positively on the professional learning Advisers gained through their involvement in the PtS initiative, particularly through participation in the Adviser 'training' workshops (Adviser #4).

3 CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

Summary

- The credibility of the Improvement Board and team of Advisers is critical in encouraging take up and continuing engagement
- Advisory work is valued that sharpens the focus for improvement action and accelerates the pace of desired change
- School staff value coaching and professional dialogue above prescriptive approaches. School staff need to perceive a high degree of ownership over agreed priorities and the direction of change
- Engagement of school staff is sustained when improvement plans are live documents that are responsive to emergent needs.
- Effective Advisory work entails: analysing; brokering external support and resources; leading; monitoring; providing expertise (including research literacy); and providing support and challenge.
- Effective Advisers are responsive to local contextual conditions, evaluate not just performance data and teaching practice but also school ethos and the learning environment
- Input from an external Adviser can promote connectivity and a more outward outlook
- Accelerants to change include: Adviser input in collaborative action planning and target setting; regular monitoring; support for teacher development; and flexibility over the use of PtS funds at school-level.
- Key challenges include: openness to external scrutiny; clear communication between parties; supporting staff release time; coping with staff absence; equitable access to Adviser time and expertise; competing demands on staff time and commitment, and premature evaluation of hard outcomes.
- Positive early assessments of impact are recorded in terms of classroom practice (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment), pupil outcomes (including engagement and attendance) and teacher development.
- The most sustainable reported gains are the development of a different and more collaborative culture around teaching and learning within schools.
- Less sustainable features include collaboration with other schools and replenishment of resources.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation design included a small number of school case studies to provide a deeper insight into the experience of participation in the PtS initiative. Eight visits to schools - two high schools and six primary schools - were conducted by the research team between January and February 2019. The method of selecting the schools is detailed in Appendix 1. One school declined to be involved in the case study aspect of the evaluation and was substituted by a similar school according to a range of characteristics (see Appendix 1). In advance of the visit researchers reviewed the project documentation for each school. Interviews were requested with key personnel with direct experience of the PtS activity in their school. (The interview topic guide can be found in Appendix 3). In total, 17 interviews were conducted, including 7 headteachers, 3 deputy headteachers, 5 staff leading strands of PtS activity, a class teacher and an inclusion manager.

3.2 RECRUITMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Some of the schools interviewed were invited to join the initiative because of concerns over levels of attainment (#501). Others elected to join but had not been specifically targeted by the local authority (#201, #401). The main reason for wanting to join the initiative was the opportunity to gain additional funding to support school improvement. The schools noted a need for this additional funding given that 'the local authority's capacity to support schools improvement has diminished significantly over time' (#201), and for 'most schools, and especially disadvantaged schools, funding is just crucial for us in the quest to improve' (#401). For example, the headteacher of one school stated that, 'we knew we needed something: we needed support and change and that's why I initially put myself forward for the project' (#101).

One headteacher (#601) pointed out that schools' willingness to be part of the initiative is likely to depend on their current circumstances. While this particular school valued the support because of its current 'vulnerable' position, they stated that 'if this project had come about the year before last, [...] [they] would have felt like it was another task that [they] had to do' (#601). The same headteacher then went on to mention that another headteacher he had spoken to, who was working within a 'good' school, had been less receptive to the initiative, finding the support 'too intense'.

Two of the schools (#401, #501) highlighted the role of the Improvement Board in the recruitment process, speaking positively about the 'very hands-on' approach 'actually coming and speaking' to senior members of staff (#401). The credibility of members who have 'earned their stripes' (#501) was emphasised as a key selling point for the initiative. One school explained: 'If they are putting their name to something, I'm thinking, "Yes, it's worth it."' (#501).

Interviewees in all eight schools reported that they generated the plan in collaboration with their Adviser. Most school staff interviewed emphasised the importance of the school having ownership of the plan, and despite initial concerns in some schools to the contrary (#201, #601, #701), they were relieved to find that Advisers supported them in aligning the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) with the school's existing aims. One headteacher (#201) described her initial feelings before beginning to work with their Adviser as follows, 'She didn't know us, we didn't know her [...] It was like, "What have I got into? What have I got into here?" However, it soon became clear that the Adviser was there to support the school with a plan 'aligned to [their] own school's priorities', allowing them to be 'sharper' with their existing focus and providing support and reassurance rather than additional pressure:

It doesn't feel like a pressure now. It feels like you're being guided towards something [...] And you've got that support there, and you know, "Well I'm doing it right," because [the Adviser has] given you that acknowledgment (#201).

The general sense across the sample was that school staff felt that they had a lot of ownership in the project, working together as a team with the support of the PtS adviser to 'lift the actual plan and really push things forward' (#801). Two of the schools (#201, #601) commented that involvement spanned the whole school, with changes to practice being 'disseminated across to all staff' (#201). Some staff focussed on specific aspects of their school's AIP. For example, in one school (#401) the deputy head teacher supported the overall planning and implementation of the program, while the assistant head (school #401) focussed primarily on the teacher development pathway and the literacy lead focussed on improving reading and writing across the school. In one school (#801), the headteacher described their role as 'having the passion and the drive' to get the rest of the school on board and to support them in understanding why the changes were being made.

The importance of context was deemed to be especially important to the schools within the case study sample. The schools' Accelerated Improvement Plans were shaped by various aspects of their

contextual history such as: Ofsted grades (#401, #501, #601) and priorities (#201, #401, #501, #601); recent changes in staffing/staff profiles (#301, #401, #601); existing (or lack) of school to school support networks (#301, #601); current approaches to the curriculum (#301); timetabling issues (#301); demographics of the pupil population (#301, #401, #501, #701 #801; language and special educational needs of pupils (#801); staff confidence (#401); and issues around workload (#301). For example, one school's AIP (#801) had a strong focus on literacy, centering on the introduction of a literature-based curriculum. The choice of curriculum was made in an attempt to provide children with vicarious experiences as well as develop their language skills, in response to needs associated with the socio-demographic context:

We found that geographically the area we are in is quite deprived economically and experience-wise, so a lot of our children haven't really left the area very much. So what we're trying to do is fill that deficit with lovely texts (#801).

Although school staff reported that they were heavily involved in writing the plan, the input of the Adviser was widely valued. When discussing the planning stage, one school described 'having him/her and his/her knowledge and expertise [as] tremendous' (#701). Many interviewees talked about the value the Adviser brought to the planning stage in terms of helping the schools to focus more tightly on their existing aims (#301, #701, #801) and suggesting resources and strategies (#101, #201, #301, #701, #801). For example, one school talked about how they had already decided that they wanted to improve attainment in writing, but they felt they were 'going round in circles' (#301). As a result of the initiative the school developed links with another school, allowing them to see a similar approach 'in action' and supporting them in developing their confidence and identifying ways to move forward. Another school described the value of the Adviser in the planning stage as follows:

It's really helped. It's helped me do what I wanted to do and I think that's the biggest plus for me [...] I kind of knew what I wanted to do, I've been helped to make that clearer and I have that support to do that faster (#101).

Data played a key role in the planning stage (#101, #201, #301, #701), allowing the schools to direct support towards particular areas of need. For example, one school stated:

Our Adviser, after her first visit, felt that the teacher in Year 6 was strong. The results bear that out, but the attendance of those pupils in Year 6 was particularly poor, so there was a very narrow focus on the current Year 6 towards improving attendance (#201).

While most schools felt very clear about the areas of development prior to the initiative, one secondary school (#401) used some of the money to buy reading tests which 'threw up shocking results' and provided a driver for targeted intervention for individual pupils.

Almost all of the case study schools (#101, #201, #301, #501, #601, #701, #801) reported that AIPs evolved over time. While the core aims remained the same, the plans were tweaked in response to: monitoring successes and areas of need (#201, #501, #701, #801); prioritising the most important areas (#101, #501); coaching from the Adviser (#201); observations made in other schools (#301); and pragmatic constraints, e.g. changes at a link school (#701). In one school, the changes to the plan were credited in part to the passion of the Adviser and the subsequent impact this had on the development of school staff as leaders (#801).

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE ADVISER

Interviewees in all eight case study schools were pleased with the regular communication between themselves and their Advisers. All schools appeared to be happy with the frequency of adviser visits, which happened every three or four weeks for most of the schools. While the level of support was described as 'intense' (#601), schools felt that the regularity and frequency of visits helped to maintain momentum and accelerate progress (#201, #401, #601, #801). Many of the schools (#201, #301, #501, #801) also benefitted from additional support outside of these visits. For example, one school stated:

I think s/he's been here six times already since we started. At least six. And s/he'll send us emails during the time [...] to say, "I've just read this fantastic thing, have a look at this," or "Have you seen this tweet? This would really apply to what we talked about two weeks ago." So I feel we're constantly on their radar (#801).

Schools described a wide range of characteristics which they believed a successful adviser should have: being approachable (#301) and available (#501, #601); clear (#301) and focussed (#601, #701); having credibility and expertise (#201, #601, #701, #801); being able to bring a different perspective (#201, #601); coaching rather than directing (#201, #301, #701, #801); understanding the context (#501, #701), genuine (#801), adopting a holistic approach (#101, #801); challenging ((#101, #201, #301, #401, #601, #701, #801) but not judging (#101); passionate (#701, #801); positive and reassuring (#201, #601, #701); warm (#201) and supportive ((#101, #201, #301). Credibility and expertise emerged as the most frequently mentioned characteristics. One school explained the importance of credibility as follows: 'We trust him/her and s/he has got the knowledge [...] s/he has got the skills to actually come in and do that role' (#701).

When asked what they perceived the role of the Adviser to be, schools listed a wide range of facets. These can be grouped roughly into six categories: analysing; brokering external support and resources; leading; monitoring; providing expertise; and providing support and challenge.

3.3.1 Analysing

Advisers were described as playing an important analytical role, supporting the school in identifying their strengths and areas of need (#101, #201, #301, #701). One school (#201) talked about how an external eye is sometimes needed to help you to see things differently. Another described the Adviser's role as 'digging down for us and knowing what our schools needs' (#701). This process of analysis often involved a 'holistic' approach (#101, #201, #801), where the Adviser evaluated not just the data (#101) and teaching practice (#101, #201, #701), but also the school ethos (#501, #801) and the learning environment (#401, #601, #701, #801) through observation (#101, #201, #701), learning walks (#701), pupil interviews (#201) and book scrutiny (#201, #301, #701).

3.3.2 Brokering external support and resources

The second category of 'brokering external support and resources' involved three key activities: brokering support from other schools (this happened for all eight schools in our sample), introducing new curriculum approaches/schemes (e.g. Essential English; The Literacy Tree, the Power of Reading) and arranging for staff training to be delivered (#101, #201, #301, #401, #501, #701, #801). Collaboration between other schools was particularly valued by school staff, who in some cases had felt quite isolated prior to the initiative:

It hadn't happened before in that way. Obviously we collaborated and the heads do have meetings and things but for us to sit down with staff in another school, you know, being a one form entry, that collaboration has been really helpful (#701).

In relation to the introduction of new schemes, it was noted by one school that the support from external staff is essential to enable successful implementation of a new approach:

You couldn't take The Literacy Tree and pop it into the school and get success. There's a lot of underlying work and effort and culture that needs to come about with that as well, and support, and being held account, time constraints and being pushed (#801).

While staff spoke frequently about how they benefitted from direct input from the Adviser, some schools also valued the development work that the Adviser facilitated, led by other consultants and staff from other schools (#301, #401, #701, #801). For example, one school benefited from development work conducted in collaboration with some of the Adviser's colleagues, including joint planning and whole school training, as well as training on the Power of Reading approach: 'He's been great in using his other staff [...] to provide support in an area where he knows where the expertise is' (#701).

3.3.3 Leading

One important aspect of the Adviser's role was their ability to lead and support the school in taking strategic actions towards their aims. The schools articulated this aspect of the Adviser's role in terms and providing a 'sharper' (#201) focus (#101, #201, #501, #801). Schools also commented how the Adviser supported them in prioritising their aims to facilitate accelerated progress (#501, #801):

A lot of changes needed to happen and a number of them needed to happen fast and it was around focusing and prioritising [...] What's going to make the biggest impact, and also quite quickly, but being child centered? (#801).

Many schools described an important part of the Adviser's role as initiating professional dialogue with staff (#101, #201, #701, #801). All eight schools in our sample reported a collaborative approach where the Adviser's role was to stimulate thinking rather than be directive, as illustrated by the following quote:

It's collaborative the way she highlights something and then we discuss it as professionals – how we want to move it forward. Because it is our school and our children and we've got their best interests at heart. So she'll put our ideas in the pot and we'll all talk about it holistically and then we move forward (#801).

3.3.4 Generating pace

Four of the schools talked about the benefits of having someone external coming in to review progress every few weeks (#201, #401, #601, #801) 'holding the school to account' (#401, #801) and 'preventing slippage' (#201, #601). One school described the review process as 'that lovely gentle pressure that we all need to keep going forward' (#401), while another described how they respected the fact that the Adviser 'wouldn't take their word for it' and would expect to see concrete evidence of the progress made (#801).

3.3.5 Providing expertise

Schools frequently talked about the role of the Adviser in sharing their expertise and experience with schools (#201, #401, #501, #601, #701, #801). Schools valued the way that Advisers used their 'resources and [...] expertise to support, challenge and coach' them (#701), while noting that the sharing of expertise was two-way: 'there are certain things that we've done that she's asked me for information for, that she's now providing to other schools' (#201). Schools valued the experience that the Advisers brought with them, allowing them to wear different 'hats' when providing support and guidance (HMI, family learning, etc).

An important aspect of the Adviser's expertise noted by two schools (#201, #801) was their knowledge of relevant research. One school discussed how their Adviser shared research documents with staff to support their professional development (#201); another emphasised the importance of the Adviser sharing 'tried and tested research methods' that had been found to be successful elsewhere – 'not just another gimmick' (#801).

3.3.6 Support and challenge

The most frequently cited aspect of the Adviser's role was as a provider of challenge (#101, #201, #301, #401, #601, #701, #801). Schools welcomed the significant challenge provided by their Advisers: 'I really quite like it. I like the challenge. I like the pressure and the expectation' (#201). One school talked about how the PtS initiative provided 'real challenge' for both the children and the teachers, helping them to realise that they 'should be expecting more of them' (#301). Similarly, another school talked about how the Adviser had challenged them to increase their expectations, 'raising the bar in terms of environment and displays' (#701). The challenge was described as continuous, driving schools to advance their development:

She would observe lessons, she would then do book scrutiny, pupil voice; she would then look at the classroom environment. Then she would come back to us and say, "Yes, you're right." Or even, "Yes, but let's go there next." [...] There was never a finish line. Or, "I've noticed such and such, we need to do something about that," so that the plan expands (#801).

One interviewee described how they felt their work with the PtS Adviser struck a more productive balance between support and challenge than previous interventions from the Authority: 'it feels a softer experience, I would say. Still very challenging, you know, [it] has to be every 3 weeks but [...] It feels more supportive' [...] (#201).

As well as providing challenge, Advisers also provided support in the form of motivation (#301, #401, #801), reassurance (#201, #801) and honest appraisal (#201, #301). One school described their Adviser's positivity as having a key motivating influence:

When you're in that day-to-day with so many priorities, it's good for somebody to come out and say, "Do you know what? This is looking really good. It's really positive. Obviously there is still lots to do but we can see the progress that's happening." And actually that gives you the impetus to keep pushing and move forward as well (#801).

Interviewees leading PtS activity talked about the importance of having a 'pat on the back' (#201):

It's the reassurance. We have ideas but I think somebody there saying, "Yes I think this is what we should do," and then having that reassurance that what we've done is right and working and has got impact (#201).

The same school emphasised the value of being told it 'as it is':

'If something's not acceptable or not to the standard, she'll tell you but equally [...] she won't celebrate something good if it isn't good' (#201).

There was also a cross-cutting category of teacher development. Schools described how the Adviser used all the aspects of their role (outlined above) to develop the expertise and confidence of teachers and leaders. One school talked about how their Adviser brought coherence to their existing teacher development strategy:

It just gives someone a vision basically [...] It's funny because you think you were good before and you think, "We're alright with professional development, we value it, we value the training. We give time to training," but actually it's too unstructured and it didn't really fit together' (#301).

Schools valued the fact that Advisers were committed to working with all staff across the school and provided flexible, bespoke training (#701, #801).

3.4 DRIVERS

The discussions which staff engaged in with their Advisers were often cited as a key accelerant of change (#101, #201, #701):

I think the discussions with [the Adviser] helped me to clarify what that was and how to move forward. So in that way it's been really useful to have that person to come in and have that professional dialogue. I wouldn't have got that necessarily with a friend or another headteacher colleague. It's different because it does bring in a lot of experience, so I think in that way it's possible to move faster (#101).

Interviewees in four of the schools spoke of the benefits of Advisers adopting a coaching model for these discussions (#201, #301, #601, #701). As explained by one school:

He doesn't give us the answers. It's a conversation and he will tease the answers out of us. He'll set us a question and often we're getting to the answer between us rather than him telling us what to do (#701).

As well as discussions with the Advisers, the funding was also noted as helping to accelerate change (#201, #301, #401, #601)

I think the funding element of it really helped because I wouldn't have been able to [do it] as fast [...] we couldn't have funded SLEs, because we didn't have that so that has enabled us. So we would have had to go about it a different way, CPD support in school, working with other schools, a much longer process. What we've actually done with the finances is just really focused, it's immediate (#201).

Progress was accelerated through spending PtS funding on training, Specialist Leaders of Education, resources, schemes, staff cover and the learning environment.

The regular monitoring processes conducted by the Adviser and the associated sense of being held to account were frequently reported as key catalysts for change, 'Sometimes you do think, "She's coming in a week's time, we'll make sure..." – but the positive of that is you make sure that everything that she's coming to see is done' (#201).

Half of the schools talked about the timesaving benefits of working with an existing partner (#301, #401, #501, #601). One interviewee explained the benefits of working with a local Adviser:

I didn't have to spend time establishing a professional relationship as that was already in place. I didn't have to spend time educating the Adviser on the school and the details of the school and the nuances of the school because they were completely aware of all of that (#401).

One school, however, explained that they found working with someone outside Knowsley beneficial in terms of adopting a more 'outward' perspective to the contextual history of Knowsley schools:

I think it's allowed Knowsley to look a bit more outward. I think a lot of the time it can be very inward looking and in Knowsley we've got all these problems. We've got this and we've got that but so do other schools and so do other areas. We have the highest percentage of pupil premium children in the Borough but that doesn't change anything. The children are the children (#201).

Schools also talked about the value of working with someone new, who was able to 'draw out lines of inquiry' (#201) and bring 'validation from somebody who is external' (#601).

Visits to and collaborations with other schools were another key driver of change, 'Working together with different schools has been such a bonus for us and that accelerated plan has moved forward more quickly because of working with schools, so it's not only with [the Adviser]' (#801). School staff reported returning from other schools feeling inspired and excited. One interviewee felt motivated to completely change the learning environment on return (#701); another made changes to the timetable which reportedly had a major impact on learning (#301). Schools also benefitted from seeing particular schemes 'in action' (#301), cross-school standardisation (#501) and strengthening transitions between key stages (#401).

Training for teachers was noted as being another important accelerant (#701, #801), especially when it was personalised to the needs of individual teachers. One school noted that the 'time for staff to have one-to-one CPD with a focus on your class and the needs of those children [was] a huge catalyst' (#801). The same school also noted that having a 'very clear launch' was important:

Everyone's involved so if you're coming about a big change, you need to make sure you've got that launch, great communication between everybody, create a culture where everyone can talk about it and share what they are doing, and share their triumphs, share their difficult times but have a point within when it's going to happen, when it's going to change, everyone is informed (#801).

Similarly, another school (#301) talked about the fact that PtS was 'high profile coming in' helped to provide a drive behind the changes.

All eight schools spoke enthusiastically about various aspects of the PtS initiative. The overall impression of how schools' perceive the initiative was very positive. Interviewees in two schools were unable to think of anything negative about their experience of the initiative (#101, #701). A third school summed up their experience as follows, 'I think the model is a good one. I think if you want rapid and sustained improvement, it's a perfect model because the regularity is why you improve' (#201). One school pointed out, however, that it is very difficult to attribute outcomes specifically to the PtS initiative:

You can't just say, "Oh that school's really improved, well then Pathways is the answer". No, it isn't about that. It's about everything else that's going on and how the leadership team and governors have said, "We'll use that in a really productive way to be able to move our school forward" (#601).

While another highlighted the role that teachers themselves played in the success of the initiative:

'Teachers have been brilliant, I have to say. They have been very much on board: "Right, just tell us what we need to do" approach. We've all come together and made it happen (#301)'.

3.5 INHIBITORS

While staff interviewed in the eight case study schools were broadly positive about the initiative, a number of barriers and challenges were identified, which might usefully be grouped under Fullan's

four phases of change (1982, 1991): *initiation, implementation, continuation, outcome*. While challenges faced within the initiation, implementation and outcome phases are discussed in this section, issues around continuation are discussed in the section on sustainability. In many cases, the barriers were potential rather than actual: schools identified aspects of the initiative that might have been ineffective had certain factors not been in place.

3.5.1 Initiation

Some schools identified school staff's initial perceptions of the initiative as being a potential barrier. Two schools (#201, #301) talked about how they felt 'daunted' (#301) by the initiative at the very beginning. The initial reluctance to take part in the initiative was attributed by one school to professional pride (#301):

Somebody wants to come in or somebody should come in, instantly you do want to go "uh oh, we're alright, thank you very much." And you have to get over yourself a little bit and think this is here to support us" (#301)

There were also some initial concerns around transferability. One school was initially concerned when they heard that their Adviser was from a different region:

You kind of think, "This school in [location of school], how can he come in?" The school is very different to ours in terms of population and the children they have – we've almost 90 percent white British so it's very different (#701).

This school, however, soon realised that their initial concerns were unfounded, admitting that the school is 'probably one of the only schools we have ever been to and thought we could learn things from the experience' (#701).

One school expressed initial concerns around making themselves vulnerable to their Adviser who 'no matter what you say' is a former school inspector (#201): 'You're opening yourself up to a stranger, you've shown all your vulnerabilities and I think for the first couple of months it was quite hard to get into that.' This issue seems to have been overcome by a shift in the Adviser's approach following a meeting with a member of the Improvement Board where feedback from the schools was shared with Advisers: 'There was a shift but a shift in our school for the better for us, because actually it just made it feel a little more open' (#201).

The barrier relating to the initiation stage, identified by one school, was misdiagnosis of need. One headteacher spoke passionately about what they saw as a key limitation of the PtS initiative – the fact that it does not tackle issues of teacher recruitment and retention:

The bumps in the road have to do with recruitment and retention. [...] Give me a strategy for recruiting the best in a challenging area. Why would somebody potentially commit career suicide by choosing a special measures school in [location of school]? So those bumps in the road are always going to be bumps in the road. I'm not sure if the Pathways to Success are actually focused on how we avoid those bumps or make those bumps a little more smooth (#501).

One school felt that the initial communication between the local authority and schools regarding the initiative could have been clearer: 'I think the way it's communicated wasn't great, but I understand that it was quite rushed' (#101). It was suggested that a 'cleaner package' could have been presented which made it clear what the initiative would look like and how schools would be selected/or could elect to be part of the initiative.

3.5.2 Implementation

Within the implementation stage of the initiative, 'time and energy' (#801) emerged as potential barriers. Schools (#201, #301, #401, #501, #601) discussed how the initiative placed significant demands on leaders' and teachers' time:

We have had to look at CPD time, obviously time out of class and support from a different school with all the teachers and we've also had development days for literacy and language. Our literacy and language contact has come in and worked with [name of teacher] as well so [name of teacher] has given up a lot of her time (#301).

As well as release time having implications in terms of funding to provide staff cover, there were also implications in terms of ensuring that the pupil experience was not disrupted:

Releasing teachers out of class time: you've got to make sure — [...] you've got quality teachers that are coming out – that the provision you've got for the children is managed then [...] you do have to be careful on that because it can impact on quality for the children. Children don't like change. And the staff, to be honest. Some staff don't like coming out of the class because they're all about the outcomes for the children all the time (#601).

This same school also talked about time constraints as limiting attendance at the PtS development sessions for headteachers. The headteacher speculated that numbers were low because 'it's so intensive being in school and if you've got something on and that's not prevalent to your priorities' (#601), it might be difficult to make time for these events. This headteacher did, however, emphasise the value of these sessions, stating that 'it was really useful staying, because it just gives you another perspective'. Another school echoed these concerns over schools having to juggle multiple competing demands with the statement: "I think at the start it was, we're really happy to be on this journey but it's not the only thing that we're doing" (#201).

One school experienced challenges in terms of staff absence (#801). Within this school there were a number of long-term absences and some of the staff who were receiving training as part of the initiative were on long-term supply contracts. While the school were pleased that other schools would benefit from this expertise once the supply staff moved on, they were also concerned about having the funds to train up their own staff upon their return in order to achieve consistency across the team.

The schools within our sample were pleased with the efficient way that the Advisers managed their time, maximising the impact that they could have on the school within the time available; however, one school reported that in other schools (outside our case study sample) there was a lack of structure in terms of the support they received, with one Adviser arriving at school without a specific plan for the day (#201). Similarly, another school mentioned that while they had been very impressed with their Adviser, they had heard from other schools that there had been some inconsistencies in relation to the amount of support received from other schools, stating that 'some [schools] have been really happy, some haven't' (#101).

3.5.3 Outcome

In relation to the measurement of outcomes associated with the initiative, one school pointed out the 'over-analysing the data doesn't give you the full picture' (#201) and that the full impact of the initiative will not be observable until later in the future:

Some of the things that we're implementing, I don't think we'll see gains, significant gains, until the end of this academic year and probably the end of the next [...] This isn't a quick fix (#201).

The same school also explained that, because of the multiple competing demands on schools (see implementation), it was sometimes unrealistic for schools to be able to demonstrate tangible progress over a three-week period when there are ‘a million other pressures’ (#201) for schools to contend with. Another school reported having similar difficulties trying to meet tight deadlines in terms of showing progress:

You've got to have that pace of change but it's tight. It's tight because working at a primary school, there's 101 things that you have to do and you also never know what's going to come through your door because children are unpredictable. Their families are unpredictable [...] and sometimes they must take priority, so it's managing and balancing that (#801).

3.6 FUNDING

When asked what additional support would accelerate improvement efforts, unsurprisingly schools stated that they could always use additional funding. While one interviewee said that further funding was needed for the attendance strand, e.g. to support collection of children, etc. (#201), another talked about a need for further funding to develop teaching assistant ‘quality and provision’ (#701). Schools were, however, generally happy with the financial support they received – but expressed concerns about how to sustain progress once the funding was gone (see sustainability section).

Interviewees in all eight schools spoke positively about the decision making process in relation to the deployment of staff and resources. Headteachers explained that they felt that they were able to influence how PtS funds were spent but with support and guidance from the Adviser (#101, #301, #401, #501, #601, #701):

I would assume if he (the Adviser) thought that if I was going down a wrong path he would pull back and suggest something else, but I did feel that I had autonomy in saying I think this is the best thing for our school (#101).

One headteacher (#301) expressed how she valued having flexibility in terms of how to spend the money, allowing her to use the funding for a range of purposes: staff development, staff cover to allow staff visits to other schools, assessments, resources, etc. The funding allowed schools to buy concrete resources such as curriculum schemes (#301), tests (#301), a story shed and refurbishments to the library (#601). One school found that the funding was flexible enough for them to cover a significant number of staff for visits and other development activities (#201), whereas another mentioned that staff cover was still an issue (#601). It was also acknowledged that perhaps the most valued resource provided by the initiative was the Adviser’s time (#601) and one school (#401) suggested that the Advisers were instrumental in ensuring that the school’s received value for money:

I think the good thing about Pathways to Success is the time to sit down, talk to [name of Adviser], talk to [members of the Improvement Board], and really focus on what do we need, look at every single penny and how we can spend it. Some may say it's only a measly sum but actually if you use it cleverly it can have a great impact and I think that we can see that here (#401).

Another school (#801) suggested that the school-to-school collaboration strand of the initiative made the financial constraints more feasible, explaining how they were able to share resources and training with their school partners.

There were, however, concerns over the funding being insufficient to drive wider sustainable impact in some areas (#201, #801). One headteacher states:

As we've broadened it outward, I would have liked to have brought additional leaders to work with additional year groups [...] We could have done with more, absolutely, but for the initial focus and the initial plan, we basically worked to budget (#201).

Another school, explained that they 'would like to see a bigger slice for schools – direct for schools, direct for children (#401).

Overall, the consensus seemed to be that while the schools could always put additional funds to good use, the funding for the PtS initiative was sufficient to meet its aims. There was just one school, however, who felt that they had had 'limited' capacity to make changes. They stated that it was 'an absolute shock when the figure was shared' and that 'there were lots of heads doing calculations around the percentage spent on consortiums' (#501).

3.7 REPORTING PROGRESS

One school noted that the reporting process was 'not massively useful' but 'helpful in some ways' in terms of encouraging them to reflect on progress: 'It does make you kind of stop and think "So what has worked and what is useful?"' (#101).

Views around the level of commitment required to complete the formal Success Monitoring forms were mixed. While some schools stated that they did not find the reporting process onerous (#501, #601), others found it time consuming (#801) and described it as 'paper exercise' (#701), which was of little benefit to the school (#501, #701).

One school avoided the reporting process becoming burdensome by 'kill[ing] two birds with one stone' (#401), completing the forms at the same time as having a conversation with the Adviser about their progress. A suggestion was made by another school as to how the process might be made efficient. Rather than having a separate Success Monitoring form, it was suggested that it would be more streamlined if schools could just comment within an additional success or progress column on the AIP, which is 'looked at very regularly' (#801).

3.8 OPERATION OF THE ACCELERATED IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Schools spoke positively about the role of the Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) (#101, #201, #401, #501, #601), which met every four to six weeks. The AIG was viewed as an opportunity for school staff to meet with the Adviser and, in many cases a representative of the governing body, to reflect on successes and plan next steps (#201), and to provide senior leaders with the 'bigger picture' beyond their specific subject areas (#101). Some schools seemed to particularly value the presence of governors within the group (#201, #401, #601), reporting that they benefitted from the governor's role in asking questions (#201, #601), providing support and expertise (#601). One school explained how the AIG was also of benefit to the governors themselves:

He's fully on board. He feels like he it's actually helping him to get a more holistic view of the ins and outs of [our] school, because as a governor you are quite remote (#201).

One school talked about how the AIG served as a time saving device: 'I often had to repeat the same presentation to three or four different audiences. I don't do that anymore' (#501). Rather than having to report progress to numerous boards and committees, as had been the case previously, reporting was streamlined to just the one forum.

3.9 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

This section provides a summary of interviewees' assessment of the impact of the PtS initiative in terms of classroom practice, pupil outcomes and teacher development. These accounts were generated in January-February 2019, six months after most schools fully engaged with the AIP.

3.9.1 Impact on classroom practice

All eight schools within our sample reported that the initiative had a significant impact upon classroom practice. In some schools, changes in practice were driven, at least in part, by the adoption of a new scheme or curriculum (#201, #301, #801), e.g. Accelerated Reading, The Literary Curriculum and the Power of Reading scheme. In one school, the use of IRIS – a digital video professional development tool – was used to support teachers in reflecting upon and developing their practice. Training, coaching and bespoke advice from the Adviser also played a key role, alongside inspiration from visits to other schools. Interviewees reported that these activities led to transformations in practice across all parts of the teaching cycle: planning, teaching and assessment.

In relation to planning, schools reported that the initiative had supported them in using clear lesson objectives (#301); planning for clear and consistent progression (#801); and helping them to achieve coverage (#301) and consistency (#301, #801) across the school. Schools also described how they now applied more rigour and structure to their planning (#301), while adopting a more cross-curricular approach (#301, #701, #801) and making closer links with texts (#701, #801).

Changes to the way that lessons were taught included: more effective use of technology (#301, #801), more closely targeted interventions (#301, #401), more writing opportunities (#701), and changes to the way that children with special educational needs are supported (#201). Interviewees also talked about how the initiative had supported them in ensuring a smoother transition between key stages (#301, #401, #501).

School leaders reported making significant changes to assessment practice as a result of the initiative (#201, #301, #401), including improvements to marking and feedback practices (#201) and additional testing to inform tailored interventions (#301, #401). One school noted that the quizzes which are integral to the Accelerated Reading programme allowed for differentiated assessment practice responsive to the individual learner. They reported that this change in assessment practices increased the motivation of readers and also reduced workload for teachers (#301).

Interviewees claimed the PtS initiative led to enhancements to the learning environment (#201, #401, #701), the way that the environment was harnessed as a learning tool within lessons (#201, #401, #701) and the resources that teachers used as a stimulus for learning (#601, #801). For example, a number of schools focussed on the use of working walls as a tool for moving learning forward, drawing inspiration from other schools (#201, #401, #701). One school invested in a story shed to raise the profile of reading across the school; another school purchased a wide range of quality texts to support their new Literary Curriculum.

3.9.2 Impact on pupil outcomes

The initiative was reported to have benefitted pupils in many ways. While some schools (#101, #701) noted that it was too soon for outcomes to be reflected in the data, one school excitedly reported that 'the numbers speak for themselves even after 6 months' (#801). All schools agreed that their day-to-day observations and reflections indicated that the initiative had had a significant impact on pupil outcomes.

Attendance was one area where improvements had already been observed (#201, #701). In one school some of the money had been used for a minibus, which 'empowered [the school] to get the children in' [#201]. In another school [#701], improvements in attendance were believed to be the result of a commitment to make class work exciting and engaging.

Pupil engagement was reported to have improved across many of the schools in our sample (#601, #101, #301, #701, #801). For example one school stated:

We haven't gotten the evidence base in terms of statistical outcomes and SATs, but we have got that analysis from pupils who've said they love coming to school because they get to spend time in the story shed (#601).

Similarly, another school explained that an increase in pupil engagement was their most observable outcome at this stage, which they attributed to staff making lessons more interesting for the children:

The difference that I'm seeing that's not in data outcomes is much more engagement with the children and staff in the curriculum. The staff have got more enthusiasm to write and make it interesting and make it engaging for the children and we can see a difference in the children as well [...] They love this new approach, so we're just trying to cultivate that as much as possible (#101).

Some schools reported the initiative led to a raising of expectations among pupils and staff (#301, #701), driven, at least in part, by an awareness of what was happening in other schools:

I think the children are aware of the expectations. I think we're expecting more of them because we've been outside of Knowsley and we've seen what other schools are doing and other schools that have various barriers to learning in terms of different languages spoken (#301).

One school described how adopting The Literacy Curriculum had dramatically transformed children's identities as readers and writers, as well as their technical skills and knowledge (#801):

When you speak to the children about their learning, their knowledge of different authors, different styles, different themes has increased. They can talk about what they like and dislike in an author's technique and be confident in that. They talk with passion [...] Their writing has improved, their terminology and expression has improved. So it's the children that have got so much out of it because the staff have had that pedagogical change that was one-to-one and really bespoke to our school and our children (#801).

The same school leader commented on how the initiative had yielded gains in terms of developing reading for pleasure:

*Children's engagement has rocketed really high – they are talking about reading. I've got a child who didn't want to read at home, who wasn't interested in books at all, who comes to my little library three times a week to borrow books now [...] And that's just one child. I went into year 6 yesterday [...] to get some feedback on *The Tempest* because it's the first time that year 6 have done Shakespeare. [I said] "How did you feel about Shakespeare?" One of the boys said, "I'm devastated." "Why are you devastated?" "Because we've finished." and I was like "What would you like to read next?" and he's like, "Other Shakespeare? There's more?" And I said, "yes there's more." And then we ended up having a discussion about the different themes and different Shakespeare plays and the children were going, "What? Macbeth? Yes, I like the sound of that" (#801).*

These curriculum changes were also seen to have had a positive impact on language development, retention and understanding (#801). This school staff reported that the implementation of a text-based curriculum was having a positive impact on the children's wellbeing with books providing a vehicle for discussion of issues such as anxiety and depression.

Other specific pupil outcomes related to smoother transitions between key stages (#301, #501, #701). One school described how, as result of the initiative, they introduced bridging units into Year two literacy teaching, which they feel have helped close the gap between Years two and three (#301). Two

secondary schools (#401, #501) focussed on the transition from key stage two to three, working closely with primary colleagues. One school reported 'immediate gains' from exploring entry profiles and running 'a catch up curriculum class' to ensure that children are 'high school ready' (#501).

3.9.3 Impact on teacher development

All schools within our sample described teacher development as being an important aspect of the outcomes achieved through the PtS initiative. All schools were involved in a range of development activities, including training from the Adviser and/or an external consultant, collaborative work with other schools, work with SLEs, work with link teachers from other key stages and coaching activities with the Adviser or other school staff. These development activities pedagogical changes (see impact on classroom practice) which were associated by staff with the positive pupil outcomes described above.

As well producing pedagogical change, the teacher development strand of the initiative also led to staff developing their subject knowledge, e.g. in by improving their use of standard English (#401) and expanding their repertoire of children's literature (#801). One school also noted that development work was designed to support staff in 'working better, not harder' (#301).

The outcomes in terms of teacher development were described as reaching beyond skills and knowledge. Many schools noted that the initiative had helped support teachers in developing their confidence (#201, #401, #601, #801); schools also reported a positive impact on teacher enjoyment (#701, #801), pride (#801) and passion (#801).

One strength of the initiative noted by some of the schools was that the teacher development activities had an impact across the school rather than just being targeted at a few teachers (#201, #301, #701). At one school, the need to begin with an audit of current expertise was also emphasised (#301). This school explained that finding out more about their staff's 'amazing spectrum of skills' had 'a massive impact', allowing staff greater choice over their personal professional development (#301).

An important aspect of teacher development discussed by some schools was the capacity for leadership (#601, #801). Schools stated that the initiative supported leaders at different levels across a number of areas (#601). The Advisers were helpful in in preparing leaders for inspection (#201), providing reassurance (#201, #301) and developing teachers' leadership skills (#201). One head teacher commented that two of the teachers in her school had 'actually grown with the project and changed their role and their viewpoint into a more managerial focused approach and are holding staff to account in a different way' (#201).

3.10 SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSFERABILITY

When asked how sustainable interviewees felt the changes made during the initiative were, two key areas were identified as being embedded within the school and likely to endure beyond the funding: a different culture around teaching and learning (#101, #201, #401, #501, #701); and a strong culture of collaboration both within the school (#301) and between the school and other professionals (#201, #401, #501, #701). Schools talked about a 'shift in the way [they] view teaching and learning' (#101) – 'shifting cultures' which they hope are 'robust and longer term' rather than 'a quick fix' (#201). These 'embedded' (701) pedagogical shifts were achieved through quality continuing professional development, 'building capacity' (#201, #601) and providing the skills needed in school 'to replicate' good practice in the coming years (#201). Schools also talked about their intentions to hold onto the attendance strategies they had used (#201) and successful curriculum changes that they had made (#101, #201), including new assessment practices (#201, #401). One school was keen to maintain the benefits of regular monitoring by internally adopting a system of regular monitoring.

In relation to the collaborative aspects of the initiative, most of the schools talked about their desire to continue working with their Adviser (#201, #401, #501, #701), but with less intensity in terms of

the number of visits (#201, #301, #601). Schools were keen to continue benefitting from the adviser's expertise as well as the 'lovely gentle pressure' (#401) and the high expectations (#201) that come with the relationship.

One school also expressed an interest in continuing the collaborations initiated with other schools as part of the initiative (#701); another school talked about how a key sustainable outcome for them was the ability to collaborate with one another more effectively within school:

On the collaboration side [...] I think what we've gained as a school at the end of that is coaching each other [...] We feel a lot more comfortable to go and say, "Well actually, what is it that you want from us?" or "Can you just help me with this?" or "How do you do that?", rather than keeping the classroom closed and thinking you're on your own. So that will stay, that will absolutely stay (#301).

As well as highlighting gains from the initiative they hoped to hold on to, schools also identified areas of impact that they felt would be at risk once the funding ended (#201, #301, #801):

It's been a fantastic experience and it's been effective and the school has moved quite a large distance in a short space of time, but where do we go after this? That's the concern. What is the local authority going to put in place? [...] Likely nothing. They don't have the funding capacity to do so (#201).

Specific areas which schools felt were likely to slip at the continuation stage included: contact with other schools (#301), replenishment of resources (e.g. books, refurbishment of library) (#301, #801) and updating the learning environment (#401).

In terms of transferability, school leaders in the case study schools suggested that certain features need to be in place for the initiative to be successful in other schools. As previously mentioned, working with an existing partner (#401) or an Adviser who is familiar with (#501), or at least able to take into account, the school context (#601, #701) was seen as particularly important. Schools also emphasised the need for the initiative to align with the school's existing priorities rather than the other way round (#101, #201, #301, #601). As described above, schools emphasised the importance of the initiative working to support them in what they were already doing, rather than generating additional pressures.

The need for a collaborative approach, where the Adviser listens and supports the school in generating their own answers, was also seen as crucial (#201, #301, #601, #701). For example, one school stated, 'We cannot have someone else coming into the mix in our school and telling us what we need to do. It cannot work that way' (#601). Trust (#201, #501, #701) and credibility (#201, #601, #701, #801) were also seen as especially important characteristics for the advisers.

Finally, it was noted that in order for the initiative to be successful, school staff need to be receptive to change (#101, #701). Schools partly attributed the successes that they had observed in school to the enthusiasm (#801), commitment (#301, #701) and openness of their staff (#201, #501, #701). One school stated, 'I'm sure [name of adviser] would do well in any school providing that they wanted to have him/her there and wanted to develop' (#701).

4 SCHOOL STAFF SURVEY

Summary

- Survey respondents reported that the Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) supported efforts to improve outcomes in literacy and the quality of teaching and learning.
- The Pathways to Success development sessions were rated as useful by participants.
- The most valued aspects of Adviser support are advising on professional development of staff, developing a culture of sharing practice, suggesting resources for teaching and learning, observing classroom practice and reviewing assessment practice.
- The most useful strategies to promote change are access to an independent review of current practice, investment in teacher development, and building leadership capacity in the wider school.
- Key challenges are making time in the school day for professional development and the timescale to achieve aims.
- The PtS initiative has the most positive impact on teaching and learning, and teacher development.
- Other outcomes include sharing of good practice with other schools, improvements in staff confidence and enthusiasm to teach English, the development of leadership capacity and increased engagement in reading.
- The three changes regarded by survey respondents as most sustainable are: changes to classroom practice, impact on pupil outcomes, and teacher development.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In addition to eight school case studies, an online survey was designed for completion by all school staff involved in PtS activity across the 30 participating schools. The survey questions, with frequency counts for each question, can be found in Appendix 4. The survey was administered in May 2019.

The survey was open to 56 school staff identified through scrutiny of school documents as having a lead role in the PtS initiative in their school. Twenty-eight (28) primary staff responded to the survey. The majority of primary respondents were headteachers (20). In addition, responses were received from deputy headteachers (2), other members of the Senior Leadership Team (3), Literacy Coordinators (4) and an Inclusion Manager (1). Twenty-seven of the 28 respondents were involved in writing the school's Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) or leading an initiative within the school's AIP.

The survey was sent out a second time in September 2019 solely to secondary schools and staff from all 4 PtS initiative secondary schools responded. The majority of responses were from head teachers (3), in addition one (1) respondent was from the senior leadership team. All 4 respondents were involved in writing the school's AIP.

4.2 THE ACCELERATED IMPROVEMENT PLAN (AIP)

Table 2 details how useful school respondents found the AIP against a range of school improvement objectives. The most positive responses in terms of AIP usefulness are in relation to improving outcomes in literacy, and the quality of teaching and learning.

Table 2 How useful was the AIP for addressing school improvement objectives (primary school respondents)?

Improvement Objective	% positive response		% unsure or negative responses	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Improving the quality of teaching and learning	96% (27)	75% (3)	4% (1)	25% (1)
Improving pupil outcomes in literacy, especially reading and writing	96% (27)	75% (3)	4% (1)	25% (1)
Improving literacy teaching across the curriculum	93% (26)	75% (3)	7% (2)	25% (1)
Targeting professional development	93% (26)	75% (3)	7% (2)	25% (1)
Evaluating pupil progress	89% (25)	50% (2)	11% (3)	50% (2)
Support school-to-school collaboration	68% (19)	50% (2)	32% (9)	50% (2)

Respondents were asked to provide further detail regarding how useful the plans had been in addressing school priorities for action. Common responses included:

- *It has initiated change other than literacy to improve teaching and learning across the school*
- *The plan provides a specific focus on cohorts and areas for improvement with targets set for delivery throughout the year*
- *Critical in addressing improvement following a disappointing Ofsted inspection*
- *The plan supported the development of staff leadership skills*
- *Supported us to work with another school on planning and standardisation*
- *Facilitating conversation around school improvement*

4.3 DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Twenty-six (26) of the 32 respondents attended the Pathways to Success development sessions. Of those staff who attended the development sessions, 18 found the sessions useful and 8 found the sessions to be very useful. No survey respondents found the development sessions to be of limited or no use.

Respondents were asked to provide further details regarding what, if anything, they would change about the development sessions. Recommendations included:

- *Keep the sessions focussed on plans for each school*
- *External / national presence at schools is very useful*
- *Provide more time for sharing good practice*
- *More opportunities to visit different schools involved in the initiative*

- *More clarity at the outset on how schools would be involved in the initiative and expectations of support from their PtS Advisers.*
- *More notice of content and dates so schools could prioritise who to send*
- *Include more of a focus on secondary as well as primary provision*

4.4 THE ROLE OF THE ADVISER

All 32 survey respondents reported that they had been involved in working with the PtS Adviser assigned to their school. School staff working with PtS Advisers kept in contact by telephone, email and face-to-face meetings in school. The frequency in which school staff contacted Advisers is outlined in Table 3 below. The most common type of contact between school staff and Advisers was face-to-face meetings in school.

Table 3 Frequency & mode of contact with PtS Adviser

	Frequency of Contact – reported as number of respondents per frequency type (n=32)				
Type of Contact	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Once a term	Less than termly
Face to face meetings in school	1	1	22	6	2
Emails	5	3	16	2	2
Telephone	2	2	9	4	8
Other	0	0	1	1	5

When PtS Advisers visited schools, they met with the head teacher, members of the Senior Leadership Team, class teachers, support staff and pupils. The frequency of PtS Adviser meetings with school staff and pupils is detailed in Table 4. Head teachers are the only school staff members that the PtS Adviser met with each time they visited a primary school. In secondary schools there was one school where the PtS Adviser was reported as meeting the head teacher sometimes, in all other secondary schools the advisor always met with the head teacher.

Table 4 PtS Adviser contact points

	Frequency of Contact (respondents n=32)			
Type of Contact	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Headteacher	31	1	0	0
Senior Leadership Team	20	11	1	0
Class Teachers	3	27	2	0
Support Staff	0	10	11	9
Pupil	1	21	5	3

Over 90% of survey respondents outline the following as the most useful issues addressed by their PtS Advisers:

- Advising on professional development of staff (reported as very or moderately useful by 100% (28) of primary respondents and 3 (75%) of secondary respondents)

- Developing a culture of sharing practice (reported as very or moderately useful by 96% (27) of primary respondents and 4 (100%) of secondary respondents)
- Suggesting resources for teaching and learning, observing classroom practice, and reviewing assessment practice (reported as very or moderately useful by 93% (26) of primary respondents and 3 (75%) of secondary respondents)

The type of PtS support that was most commonly reported as *not* useful or not a focus of the PtS Adviser.

- Support with staffing issues (reported as not useful or not a focus by 36% (10) of primary respondents and 2 (50%) of secondary respondents)
- Working with governors (reported as not useful or not a focus by 25%(7) of primary respondents and 1 (25%) of secondary respondents)
- Promoting practitioner enquiry approach among staff (reported as not useful or not a focus by 21% (6) of primary respondents 1 (25%) of secondary respondents)

See Table 5 for a detailed breakdown of responses in relation to how useful the support provided by PtS Advisers.

Table 5 How useful have you found the support of your PtS Adviser?

		Frequency of Contact (primary n=28, secondary n=4)				
How useful has PtS Adviser support been in:	School Type	Very Useful	Useful	Not useful	Not a focus	Don't Know
Making Links with other schools	Primary	15	7	2	3	1
	Secondary	2	1	1	0	0
Suggesting resources for teaching and learning	Primary	21	5	2	0	0
	Secondary	2	1	1	0	0
Advising on professional development for staff	Primary	22	6	0	0	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Reviewing school data	Primary	18	7	2	1	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Observing classroom practice	Primary	18	8	0	2	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Reviewing assessment practice	Primary	16	10	0	2	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Support in regard to inspection process	Primary	19	4	1	4	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Promoting Practitioner enquiry approach among staff	Primary	10	12	3	3	0
	Secondary	2	1	1	0	0
Developing a culture of sharing practice	Primary	17	10	1	0	0
	Secondary	2	2	0	0	0
Building a capacity for school self-evaluation	Primary	20	5	2	1	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Support with staffing issues	Primary	11	7	2	8	0
	Secondary	2	0	1	1	0
Developing senior and middle leaders	Primary	19	6	2	1	0
	Secondary	3	0	1	0	0
Working with governors	Primary	11	8	1	6	1
	Secondary	2	1	1	0	0

When asked to describe the attribute of a successful PtS Adviser, common responses included:

- *Experience, knowledge and passion about teaching and learning*
- *Good communicator and listen – skilled in coaching and directing staff*
- *Flexible in approach to meeting school needs*
- *Supportive yet challenging – being a critical friend*
- *Keep the school focussed and be a critical friend*
- *Being organised and focussed on priorities*
- *Good links to other schools*
- *Understanding of the school pressure and issues*
- *Someone with experience of teaching and learning*
- *Understanding of data*

Respondents provided the following feedback about what they would change about the support available from their PtS Adviser:

- *Don't change anything about the support PtS Advisers provided*
- *More collaboration with class teachers*
- *Advisers should be current Heads/CEOs who can share good practice from their schools.*
- *They would have preferred someone with secondary school teaching and leadership experience*

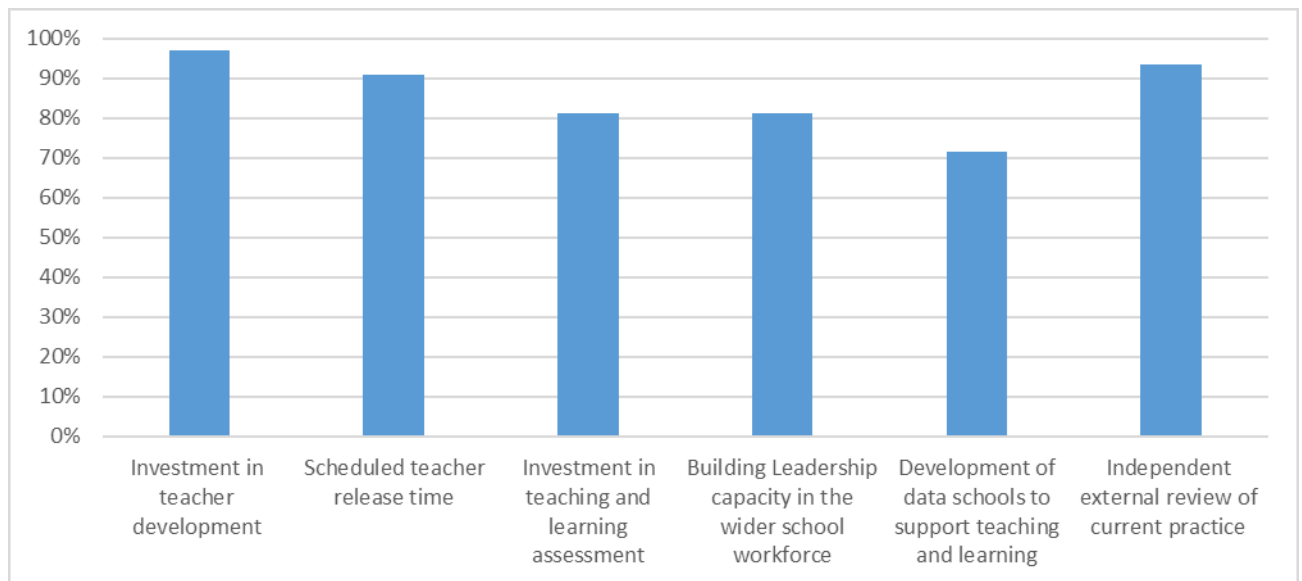
4.5 SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

Respondents found the following strategies very useful in producing change in their school during the PtS initiative:

- Independent review of current practice (reported as very useful by 64% (18) of primary respondents, and 1 (25%) of secondary respondents)
- Investment in teacher development (reported as very useful by 61% (17) of primary respondents and 1 (25%) of secondary respondents)
- Building leadership capacity in the wider school (reported as very useful by 54% (15) of primary respondents and 2 (50%) of secondary respondents)

As detailed in Figure 1 over the page, 70% of respondents found each of the strategies identified during the PtS initiative as useful or very useful in producing change in their schools.

Figure 1 Most useful strategies to produce change during the PtS initiative (n=32, 28 primary, 4 secondary)



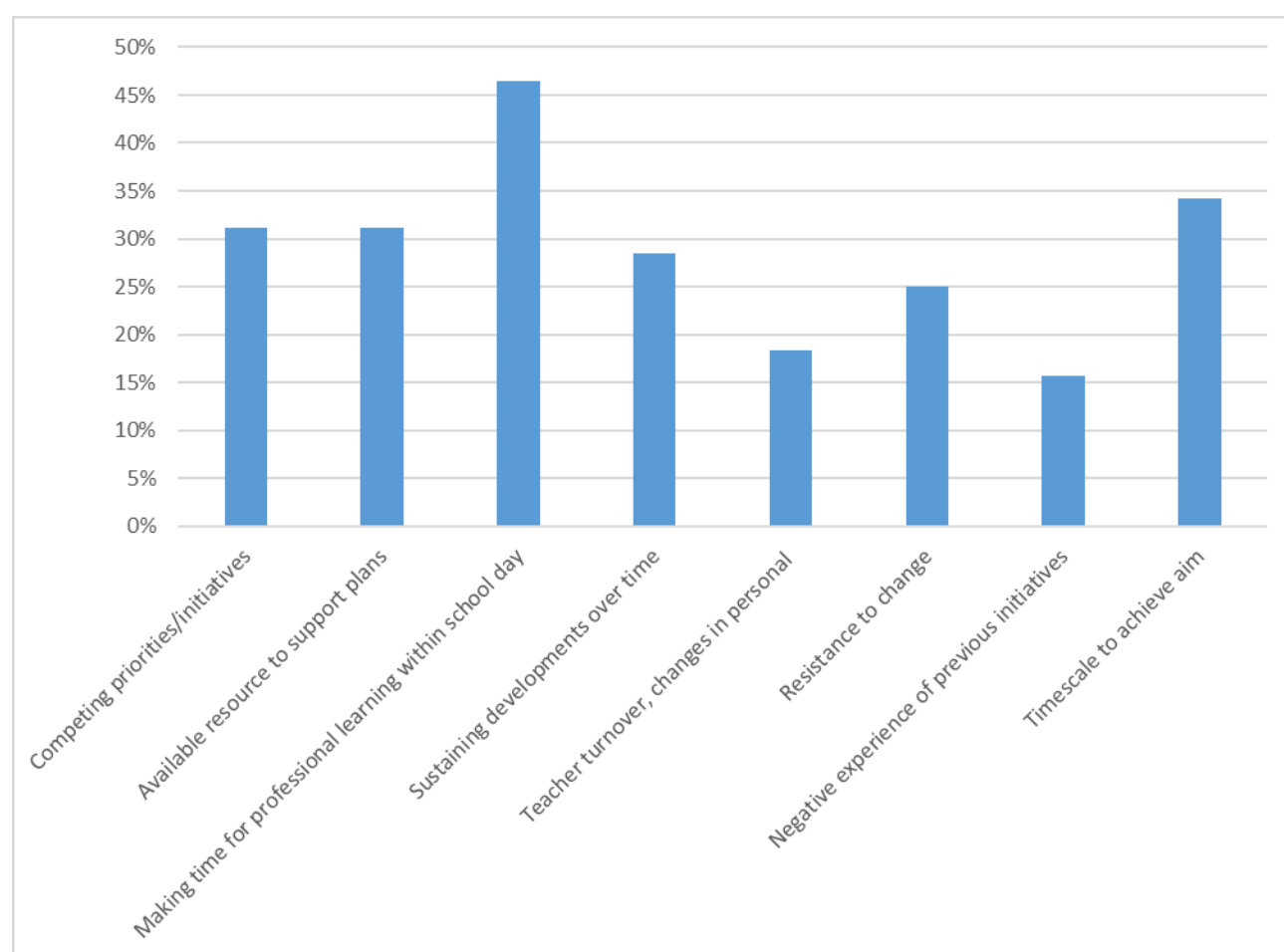
4.6 CHALLENGES

The most commonly reported challenges in relation to making progress during the PtS initiative, were:

- Making time for professional learning during the school day (46% (13) primary respondents and 2 (50%) of secondary respondents) reported this as a challenge during the initiative)
- Time scale to achieve aims, available resources to support plans, and competing priorities/initiative (32% (9) primary respondents and 1 (25%) of secondary respondents) reported these factors as a challenge during the initiative)

Figure 2 overleaf details the percentage of respondents who identified factors as a challenge to delivering change during the PtS initiative

Figure 2 Factors presenting a challenge to change during the PtS initiative (n=32, 28 primary, 4 secondary)



4.7 IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

School staff involved in the PtS initiative reported using the following quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the impact of the programme: assessment data and progress measures, book moderation and lesson observations, NFER tests, Ofsted judgements, staff and pupil feedback, and pupil attendance data.

Survey respondents reported that the PtS initiative has had a positive impact on:

- Teacher Development (Primary Respondents Reported: 82% (23) reported large positive impact 18% (5) reported a moderate positive impact. Secondary Respondents Reported: 3 (75%) reported a large positive impact, 1 (25%) reported no impact.)
- Classroom practice (Primary Respondents Reported: 75% (21) reported large positive impact 25% (7) reported a moderate positive impact. Secondary Respondents Reported: 3 (75%) reported a large positive impact, 1 (25%) reported no impact.)
- Pupil outcomes (Primary Respondents Reported: 39% (11) reported large positive impact 46% (13) reported a moderate positive impact. Secondary Respondents Reported: 31 (25%) reported a large positive impact, 2 (50%) reported a moderate impact, 1 (25%) reported no impact.)

In addition, schools also reported the following impacts from participating in the initiative: sharing of good practice with other schools, improvements in staff confidence and enthusiasm to teach English, development of school leadership capacity, children more engaged in reading and improvements in GCSE English results.

Overall survey respondents reported that the PtS initiative was likely to lead to sustainable changes relating to:

- Classroom practice (Primary Respondents Reported: 79% (22) reported these changes were definitely sustainable, 18% (5) report these changes were probably sustainable. Secondary Respondents Reported: 1 (25%) reported these changes were definitely sustainable, 2 (50%) reported these changes were probably sustainable, 1 (25%) reported these changes were not sustainable)
- Pupil outcomes (Primary Respondents Reported: 64% (18) reported these changes were definitely sustainable, 25% (7) report these changes were probably sustainable. Secondary Respondents Reported: 3 (75%) reported these changes were probably sustainable, 1 (25%) reported these changes were not sustainable)
- Teacher Development (Primary Respondents Reported: 57% (16) reported these changes were definitely sustainable, 32% (9) report these changes were probably sustainable. Secondary Respondents Reported: 1 (25%) reported these changes were definitely sustainable, 2 (50%) reported these changes were probably sustainable, 1 (25%) reported these changes were not sustainable)

Primary school staff reported that they plan to sustain the changes after the PtS initiative by continuing to: embed the changes in teaching practice into every day approach, maintain action plans, implement the exit strategy devised with the PtS Adviser, restructure the leadership team, develop the curriculum, ensure new systems and practices are part of the school's monitoring cycle. In addition, staff from two primary schools confirmed that they planned to continue to work with PtS Adviser and were planning on-going half-termly visits.

Secondary school staff reported that they plan to sustain the changes after the PtS initiative by:

- Putting new systems and process in place to ensure sustainability of change
- Appoint a literacy coordinator
- Keep the objectives of the PtS initiative alive within the school development plan

5 SCHOOL TESTIMONIALS

Summary

- School testimonials indicate that PtS activities were delivered on time as planned.
- Communication between Advisers, the Board and schools is described as effective, frequent, useful, consistent and beneficial.
- All schools offered positive reflections and reported that they felt supported throughout their engagement with the PtS initiative.
- A small minority of participants reported a problematic relationship with an Adviser in the start-up stage, some issues with communication, and adjusted timelines for the delivery of planned activity.
- The PtS initiative was reported to have an impact on the confidence and capability of school staff; increased pupil engagement and attitudes towards reading; and enhanced teaching of literacy.
- The PtS initiative was linked with the development of leadership capacity specifically in terms of developing middle leader capacity, improved monitoring of teaching and learning, and support for curriculum innovation.
- The PtS initiative impacted on the wider Knowsley system by: raising quality and standards in teaching; facilitating peer learning and knowledge exchange; and creating networking opportunities.
- Prospects for sustainability were strengthened by inter-professional dialogue and school-to-school collaboration.
- Teacher development, especially development of middle leadership capacity, is positively associated with sustaining change beyond the duration of the funded project.
- Only one respondent suggested that emergent gains were wholly resource dependent.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents an analysis 41 school testimonial documents submitted by 24 Pathways to Success schools between June and December 2018. Testimonials contained the following:

- basic information about the school: name of the school, programme adviser and application reference number
- set of open qualitative questions: full list of questions can be found in the Appendix xxx.

Each school participating in the programme was asked to complete a testimonial twice: the first time in June or July 2018, and the second time in November or December 2018. Each of the testimonials gathered the same basic information about the school however, the set of open qualitative questions differed slightly (to see the full list of questions please go to Appendix xxx).

In total, 24 schools participating in the *Pathways to Success* programme returned school testimonials. This includes 21 primary schools and three high schools. Ten of the 21 primary schools, and two of the three high schools are Catholic denominational schools.

One of the schools completed a testimonial three times: in June, July and November 2018. Eight out of 24 schools filled in the testimonial only once: two schools in July 2018 and six schools in December 2018. Two schools completed the testimonial only once in July 2018 and therefore were not able to fully answer questions regarding implementation of the programme (at this point in time the majority of the activities were ongoing or were still due to be implemented), its impact (too early to identify the outcomes) and sustainability.

The analysis is reported in relation to the core evaluation questions:

- How well was the programme implemented?
- What was the impact on participants and the Knowsley system?
- What are the implications for replication, scaling up and sustainability of the programme?

5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

Whilst answering this question diverse indicators related to the successful implementation of the programme have to be considered. In order to be able to answer this question fully and in depth all of the programme participants needed to consider the following indicators:

- the quality of support offered by the PtS Adviser
- the effectiveness of communication between the Adviser and school representatives
- achievement of the termly milestones
- timeliness of the delivery of activities.

Majority of the participants (15 out of 24) perceived implementation of the programme as successful and had only positive comments with regards to the diverse aspects of the implementation listed above. These participants stated that the projects' *activities* had been delivered on time, *communication* had been described by them as effective, frequent, useful, consistent and beneficial and they felt *supported* throughout the whole process of the programme delivery.

When it comes to evaluation of support it is important to note that most of the participants focused on the role of the *Pathways to Success* Adviser and the quality of the relationship with this person. The participants who perceived implementation of the programme as successful described the Adviser as positive, excellent and invaluable. The Advisers were described in the following words:

"very supportive to school acting as a critical friend" (Primary School)

"supported us very well (...) has guided us with new ideas and used his vast wealth of experience" (Primary School)

"ensured that the project led directly to improvements in school and were part of the wider school development plan" (High School)

The remaining participants (9 schools) deemed the implementation of the programme as generally successful. However, in their answers they mentioned some issues with programme delivery. These issues can be divided into the following three categories:

- problematic relationship with the Adviser
- imperfections regarding communication
- modifications regarding delivery of activities.

Thus, two participants mentioned problems encountered in their relationship with the Adviser:

"The initial visit felt anything but supportive. (...) The conduct of the Adviser made me question the long term viability of our participation" (Primary School)

"Support has improved recently from our PtS Adviser and s/he has been able to get into our school more regularly" (Primary School)

In both instances, the problems were encountered at the beginning of the programme and overcome in the further stages of the programme delivery.

Three participants stated the difficulties falling into the ‘imperfections regarding communication’ category. One participant felt that the information regarding the meetings could have been communicated more clearly, because the school had been confused about the titles of the meetings and was uncertain who should attend them.

Another participant suggested that the dates regarding the project activities should be communicated earlier:

“I would like to have all dates at the end of the previous term so that they can be planned into the calendar” (High School)

In addition, another participant stated that some of the ideas should be better signposted which would help school utilise other opportunities:

“I do think some of the ideas mentioned when we met with (...) could have been better signposted – for example the challenge Partners sounds great but it is too late for some of us as we could have used the funding for that” (Primary School)

The difficulties in regards to the ‘modifications regarding delivery of activities’ was mentioned by five participants. These participants reported that some work still needed to be established or has been modified, not fully delivered or postponed:

“We are still continuing to modify some of projects (...), depending on time implications and availability of resources” (Primary School)

“(...) I feel all school improvement activity this academic year is a full half term behind where I would like it to be (...). The PtS project is further behind again as there has been no substantive headteacher for three years to drive classroom level change for improvement” (High School)

The majority of the participants who returned testimonials (15 out of 24) offered no critical remarks in regards to the delivery process and its diverse elements: communication, support offered, achievement of milestones and timeliness of the activities delivery. Even though some of the participants (9) mentioned difficulties regarding the elements previously listed they still assessed the initiative as beneficial.

5.3 IMPACT

In order to answer this question it is important to clarify first how impact is understood and measured in the context of the PtS initiative.

In the first testimonial (June/July 2018) participants were asked whether they could identify any short-term anecdotal outcomes and also what changes within the classroom have they observed as a result of the programme. In the second testimonial (November/December 2018) all participants were asked once again about observed changes within the classroom and prompted to state what is different about teaching and learning from before. In addition, participants were asked to say what other improvements the programme has produced across the school.

All participants bar one (including those who sent only the first testimonial) provided detailed information and statements regarding the observed impact of the programme. One participant who filled in both of the testimonials stated that it is: *“still too early to manage full impact”* (High School)

The impact of the programme can be observed on various levels, namely:

- individual: both staff and pupils
- classroom environment: improvements in teaching and learning

- school level
- local level: the Knowsley system.

5.3.1 Impact on individuals: staff and pupils

Eight out of 24 participants in their testimonials included an accounts of the impact of the programme on staff. Three participants noted that school staff become more skilled in the performance of their role:

"(...) has become more skilled in her role" (Primary School)

"empowered (...) with increased confidence/knowledge and as a champion for the new approach and English curriculum" (Primary School)

Six participants in their testimonials referred to personal development which reflected itself in change of attitudes and behaviours displayed by staff. Increased teacher confidence and sense of excitement had been observed by five participants:

"Reignited an enthusiasm and confidence in all staff (...) " (Primary School)

"Teacher confidence increased (...) " (Primary School)

Nine out of 24 participants included accounts of the impact of the programme on pupils. Three participants observed changes in attitudes and noted that pupils felt more involved and the feeling of ownership of their learning increased:

"(...) children have felt more involved after being in discussion" (Primary School)

"Independent learning and assessment is also increasing, giving children more ownership of their own learning" (St John Fisher Catholic Primary School)

The same number of participants (3) also observed changes in attitudes of pupils and reported that children became excited about reading and writing:

"Staff use Power of Reading materials across the school which has developed a love of reading particularly within some of the boys. The children are excited about the texts they are discovering and actually asking parents to go out and buy these" (Primary School)

One participant noted that pupils are enjoying more extra-curricular experiences outside of the classroom.

In addition to the positive changes in the attitudes of the pupils, benefits to the children's learning had been observed by 3 participants:

"Reading ages show improvement (...) average 10% in yrs 7-9" (High School)

"Children are having access to texts that are engaging and challenging and pupil writing outcomes are improving" (Primary School)

Thus, the participants were indicating that their involvement in the programme resulted in positive outcomes in relation to staff and pupils. Participants observed changes in skills and attitudes, which had a positive impact on the wider school.

5.3.2 Impact on classroom environment: improvements in teaching and learning

Eleven out of 24 participants reported that they have observed improvements in teaching and learning. Almost all (10) participants in their answers to the question regarding impact on the classroom environment focused on the enhanced teaching of literacy:

"The SLEs are having a direct impact on shaping the teaching of English (...)" (Primary School)

"We have changed how we are teaching reading and have also been involved in seeing how 'The Power of Reading' approach can affect our learning culture" (Primary School)

"The project has changed classroom practise by providing staff with more consistent approach to reading" (Primary School)

Two participants noted positive practice within the classroom, for example: support staff being used more effectively to support learners and feedback within classroom being more focused.

Furthermore, not only improvements regarding practice had been observed but also changes in attitudes; two participants stated that expectations in the classroom (regarding behaviour, punctuality, attendance) had been raised. In addition, one participant noted that attendance rates had improved.

"Expectations of behaviour, environment, approach to attendance and punctuality [had improved]" (Primary School)

5.3.3 Impact on school

Ten out of 24 participants reported that the programme led to improvements across the school. Half of these participants observed positive changes in regards to the leadership team. Positive changes could be classed in the following three categories:

- feeling empowered to take on new approaches and ways of thinking
- developing middle leader capacity
- improved monitoring of teaching and learning.

"(...) we are beginning to develop middle leadership capacity in school, an area that is currently an area of priority" (High School)

"initial conversations and plans have empowered the leadership team to take new approaches and thinking into consideration (...)" (Primary School)

"the project has enabled middle leaders to better monitor teaching and learning in their departments" (High School)

Two participants introduced various changes in their schools e.g. introduction of a new Maths scheme, outdoor EYFS and provision of a focus room, alterations to the morning timetable, and same day interventions running in every year group.

Four participants noted that participation in the programme resulted in the positive outcomes for their school related to the improvement of the monitoring processes and the frameworks of teaching and CPD programmes being more coherent and consistent.

For two participants the work on the programme led to significant curriculum development.

"We have been able to work with our PtS Adviser and members of her team to develop our wider curriculum provision and SEN provision" (Primary Academy)

“We are looking at the wider curriculum as a result of our involvement in the Pathways project and developing an inquiry led approach to learning (...). The aim is to engage the children in global issues leading to investment and commitment from them. This will result in deeper learning and understanding” (Primary School)

The above extracts and examples demonstrate a belief that participation in the *Pathways to Success* programme benefitted not only individuals within the school but also the whole school as a teaching and learning environment where diverse individuals and groups interact.

5.3.4 Impact on the Knowsley system

Early feedback from participants suggests that the model of support offered through the *Pathways to Success* programme may have the potential to impact on the wider Knowsley system by:

- raising quality and standards in teaching
- encouraging and facilitating peer learning and knowledge exchange between professionals
- creating networking opportunities within educational sector
- initiating cooperation between schools.

Twelve out of 24 participants in their testimonials noted that the quality and standards of teaching in their school had been raised as a consequence of participation in PtS:

“(...) teachers have increased confidence and knowledge of how to teach (...)” (High School)

“The project allows school to have a deeper, more responsive approach to school improvement” (Primary School)

“The things that we are embedding are long term objectives and we are also attempting to change teaching and learning cultures after a lot of staff comings and goings” (Primary School)

The same number of participants (12) highlighted opportunities of peer learning and knowledge exchange between professionals gained through the programme. Opportunities for collaborative professional learning had been created by working with the Adviser, visits to other schools, participation in the training sessions delivered by other schools and attendance at *Pathways to Success* meetings and conferences. All these opportunities were highly regarded by participants:

“I have also attended both pathways conferences this term and used some of the good practice shared around attendance and maths (...) Also staff have had the opportunity to see other schools and classrooms. Staff more open to sharing pupil work, planning and ideas” (Primary School)

“(...) all staff embraced the training and are delivering this across the school” (Primary School)

“The pathways meetings have been helpful in sharing ideas and understanding how these opportunities and relationships are best used” (Primary School)

Seven participants noted that their involvement in the programme resulted in productive cooperation with other schools. Such cooperation was deemed mutually beneficial and described as successful:

“Positive visit to (...) – support and open dialogue with staff developing collaborative working relationships and mutual benefits/CPD” (Primary School)

“As a one form entry school the impact of joint planning has been evident, staff have enjoyed working with other teachers (...) resulted in a finished unit of work which will be used next term” (Primary School)

School leaders completing testimonials reported positive changes in the working culture of PtS schools and these changes, if sustainable in the longer-term, may produce shifts in culture and practice in the local educational system.

5.4 SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSFERABILITY

In order to explore implications for replication, scaling up and sustainability of the *Pathways to Success* programme the following question was included in the second testimonial:

What has happened over the last term to increase your confidence that the impact of the project will be sustainable into the future once the project ends?

As previously stated, two primary schools only filled in the first testimonial in July 2018 and this testimonial did not contain the question on sustainability of the programme. Thus, the number of participants included in the analysis of the final evaluation question is 22.

All participants apart from one (who did not feel confident to comment on this) answered the question on sustainability of the programme.

Sixteen out of 22 participants associated sustainability with a perceived positive impact of the initiative on participating professionals. Three participants felt that evident early improvements in pupil learning outcomes would strengthen the commitment of school staff to sustain changes. The majority of participants (11) associated prospects for sustaining change with the attitudes and attributes of staff working at the school. Seven participants observed that the leadership at school had been strengthened and staff upskilled; in their opinion, this would provide a good basis for continuity of progress initiated during the programme:

“All staff, led by English Lead, are now confident and competent to teach our bespoke standardised way of delivering Reading and Writing (...)” (Primary School)

“Leadership capacity has improved across school” (Primary School)

Six participants noted that staff felt inspired, excited, enthusiastic and confident and this made them believe that the programme will be sustained. This positive change in staff attitudes had been linked with the sense of ownership of developments.

“Staff are on board and they are excited about the journey we are on (...). They are taking ownership of the new initiatives brought in and are planning how to better develop these in the future. This is a positive step forward for us (...)” (Primary School)

Four participants regarded the opportunity for inter-professional dialogue and school-to-school collaboration as important factors in sustaining positive change.

“Staff are being skilled up and the joint work with a local school and the collaborative will help sustain changes made” (Primary School)

“I would consider working with our Pathways Adviser beyond the project as it is more effective than our current SIP model” (Primary School)

“The steps we have taken are not short term fixes. They will result in a culture shift in school which will be sustained through leadership and teacher investment in the changes made” (Primary School)

“The things that we are embedding are long term objectives and we are also attempting to change teaching and learning cultures (...)” (Primary School)

Three out of 22 participants linked sustainability of the programme with resource planning:

“The project will be sustainable as resources are in place to continue teaching and will be planned into the school budget” (Primary School)

“The purchase of resources (iPads) means that the children will be able to continue using the Reading Plus programme once the project ends” (Primary School)

Only one participant presented a view that it may be impossible for their school to sustain the programme because:

“(...) some of the things we are using in school will require funding and we won’t have the funds to do it” (Primary School)

5.5 REVIEW OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DATA

5.5.1 GCSE Performance data

School performance data (year 2018 and 2019) for GCSE English Language shows an increase in Grade 4+ and Grade 5+ category across all high schools within the LA (6) apart from one school, which records a 1.5% and 5.1% decrease respectively. Out of the 4 secondary schools that participated in the PtS initiative 3 schools demonstrated an improvement from 2018 to 2019 in both English language measures (G4+ and G5+). The highest percentage rise in both categories (grade 4+ in English Language, grade 5+ in English Language), by any of the 4 secondary schools in the PtS initiative was an increase of 14.8% and 7.8% respectively.

In comparison with the LA scores, three out of four participating high schools had a higher proportion of grades awarded at a grade 4 or above in 2019, and two PtS high schools had a higher proportion of grades awarded at a grade 5 or above. Moreover, in comparison with the national scores (state funded high schools, data for the year 2018), three out of four PtS high schools had a higher proportion of grades awarded at a grade 4 or above this year, and two PtS high schools in the past year. In addition, one of the PtS secondary schools had a higher proportion of grades awarded at a grade 5 or above (year 2018 & 2019) when compared to the national scores (state funded high schools, data for the year 2018).

5.5.2 KS2 Performance Data

School performance data (year 2019) for the Key Stage 2 National Test shows that 24 out of 26 primary schools that participated in the PtS programme reached the expected standard in all three topics: reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS); and maths (based on the 'average scaled score'). Only one of the PtS primary schools had an average scaled score just below 100 in all three topics: 99.7 in reading, 99.4 in GPS and 99.2 in maths. In addition, in one of the schools the average scaled score in reading has been just below 100 at 99.9. In case of three schools, according to the average scaled scores, the expected standard has just been met because these schools' average scaled scores in one or two of the topics had been on the threshold of 100. Based on the comparison of the average scaled scores in reading, half of the primary schools (13) that participated in the PtS initiative, performed better than the cohort of LA schools. Similarly, based on the comparison of the average scaled scores, 12 and 10 schools performed better than cohort of LA schools in GPS and maths respectively. Furthermore, when it comes to comparison of the average scaled scores in all three topics, seven out of 26 primary schools taking part in the PtS programme received higher mean scaled score than the mean scaled score for the LA schools. In addition, four schools received higher mean scaled score than the mean scaled score for the LA schools in reading and either GPS or maths.

Looking at the proportion of pupils who achieved scaled score at or above higher threshold in reading, ten primary schools participating in the PtS programme had a higher proportion of these pupils than the LA schools (24% for the LA). In one PtS primary school, the proportion of pupils who achieved scaled score at or above higher threshold in reading was double the proportion for LA schools: 48.3% compared with 24%. In nine PtS primary schools the proportion of pupils that achieved GDS performance category (working at greater depth within the expected standard) was higher than for the LA schools. Similarly, looking at the proportion of pupils who achieved scaled score at or above higher threshold in GPS, it can be observed that 11 primary schools participating in the PtS programme had a higher proportion of these pupils than the LA schools (30.9% for the LA). Notably, in one of the schools almost half of all pupils (49.1%) achieved scaled score at or above higher threshold in GPS. Comparison of the scores in maths shows the proportion of pupils who achieved scaled score at or above higher threshold was higher in nine primary schools taking part in the PtS initiative than across the LA schools (22.3% for the LA).

6 CONCLUSION

This evaluation was commissioned to assess how well the Pathways to Success initiative was implemented, the impact it had on participants, and prospects for sustainability. The evaluation findings are based on a range of primary and secondary data sources gathered across the academic session 2018/19 (Appendix 1). The findings do not rely on a single method of data collection or a single point of data capture. It should be acknowledged that findings based on analysis of school participants' accounts (generated through interviews, survey responses and returned school testimonials) may be open to response bias i.e. differences between respondents and non-respondents. For example, the survey did not elicit a response from the four secondary schools within the Pathways to Success initiative. The overall warrant of the findings presented in this report is based on the transparency of the evaluation process, sustained engagement with participants, and the range of opportunities extended for participation over one academic year. The analysis includes accounts offered by all twelve PtS Advisers (Chapter 2), seventeen teachers and senior staff in eight selected school case studies (Chapter 3), responses from 28 primary school staff and 4 secondary school staff via an online survey to all PtS schools (Chapter 4), and a review of school documents including 29 Accelerated Improvement Plans and 41 school testimonials (Chapter 5).

Overall, the evaluation provides strong evidence that the Pathways to Success initiative was positively received by participants, who attest that the initiative had demonstrable impact in terms of its stated objectives. Participant accounts suggest that the PtS initiative has made considerable progress in some settings. The initiative has injected new ideas and processes into the system. It has supported local capacity building and encouraged school ownership of improvement strategies.

A key feature of the model of support is the provision of bespoke support by experienced external Advisers. Participants commented favourably on the frequency of contact and the high quality of support offered. Most school testimonials described the experience of working with an Adviser as 'positive', 'excellent' and 'invaluable'. While the level of challenge was described as 'intense', school leaders valued the bespoke and responsive involvement of a credible and trusted colleague. At its most effective, advisory work used a coaching approach to support staff in the assessment of each school's needs and the collaborative design, review and implementation of a manageable action plan. The Accelerated Improvement Plans were largely regarded as helpful in progressively sharpening the focus for improvement and increasing the pace of change. AIPs helped school staff to articulate issues, and to jointly formulate and review the effectiveness of local improvement strategies, consolidated by the accountability of close monitoring.

The most apparent progress has been in terms of fostering a more collaborative professional learning culture in participating schools. The PtS initiative has supported and valorised teacher development, especially the development of middle leaders and literacy leads. The impact on learner outcomes is less evident at this stage, although a secondary school reported an improvement in GCSE English results. Analysis of GCSE performance data shows that 3 out of 4 of the PtS secondary schools demonstrated a yearly improvement in English outcomes from 2018/19. As previously discussed in this report all participants (Advisers and school staff) were cautious to avoid over-claiming impact during the PtS initiative. It is difficult to attribute causality in socially complex settings and many felt the assessment of impact was too soon to fully capture the diverse gains made by the initiative.

School staff indicated positive outcomes in terms of pupil attendance and engagement, increases in reading for pleasure and teacher expectations. Primary performance data shows that 24 out of 26 primary schools that participated in the PtS programme reached the expected standard in all three topics: reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS); and maths (based on the 'average scaled score'). Sustaining the rate of progress upon conclusion of the initiative will be influenced by the leadership capacity in schools, and the capacity of the local authority to provide strong area-level support, particularly opportunities for professional learning through school-to-school working.

Figure 3. Summary of impact

<p>Perceived impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher development, especially the development of middle leadership capacity ➤ Reported improvement in pupil attendance and engagement, increases in reading for pleasure in some contexts ➤ Curriculum adaptation to meet locally identified need ➤ Improved monitoring and action planning, including use of data <p>Accelerants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Calibre and credibility of Advisers and Accelerated Improvement Group ➤ Frequency and quality of advisory support ➤ Responsiveness of support to local contextual conditions ➤ Coaching model that promotes local ownership ➤ Support for teacher development, particularly middle leaders <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ supporting staff release time for professional development & collaboration ➤ coping with staff absence and staff turnover ➤ competing demands on staff time and commitment ➤ timescale within which to achieve aims <p>Sustainability</p> <p><i>More secure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ shifts in school culture, stronger culture of collaboration within schools ➤ curriculum change supported by professional learning <p><i>Less secure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ school-to-school working ➤ replenishment of resources
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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH DESIGN

To evaluate the progress of targeted improvement strategies, the team analysed data from a range of sources (Table 1) in three stages. The design was intended to afford breadth (online survey to all PtS schools) and depth (detailed case studies of a small sample of schools and interviews with PtS Advisers). The three stages of the evaluation provided opportunities for participation for all the Advisers and identified key informants in all 30 PtS schools.

Table 6. Evaluation activities

Stage	Evaluation Activities	Description
1	Documentary review	Review of school documentation associated with PtS including the Accelerated Improvement Plans & (41) school testimonials accessed securely via Egress. The review informed the development of the interview topic guide(s) for stakeholders.
	Review of contextual secondary quantitative data	Review of a range of data to generate school profiles. This review supported sample selection for illustrative case studies.
2	Interviews with Pathways Advisers	Semi-structured interviews with 12 Pathways Advisers working with schools and school staff on specific interventions and brokering further support through Improvement hubs and outstanding practitioners.
	School case studies	School visits to 2 secondary and 6 primary schools. Interviews with 17 staff leading improvement efforts.
3	Online survey to PtS schools	School survey to all 30 PtS schools to be completed by school staff directly involved in PtS activity.

Stage one: contextual analysis and sample selection

In advance of data gathering, it was important that the evaluation team understood the rationale for the changes i.e. why the planned actions will be a good change, the details of the interventions to be undertaken (e.g. professional development activities, pupil interventions), and the anticipated outcomes. Stage one involved a review of school documents and data profiles to construct snapshots to select a sample of schools for illustrative case studies. The team has been granted secure access to the following digital files:

- School Data Profiles for 2017 and 2018
- Accelerated Improvement Plans (AIP)
- Success Monitoring Forms
- List of 12 Advisers matched with between 1-5 PtS schools
- Grant expenditure agreements

School-level characteristics were used to generate a modest sample that is broadly representative of the range of contexts among the target population. Pupil characteristics, performance data, locality, governance and Adviser designation were used to select eight schools (supported by six Advisers) for illustrative case studies. Given the focus on literacy development from Years 5-9, care was taken to

include both primary (n=6) and secondary schools (n=2). Given the likely variability in school support needs, two Advisers working with more than one school were included in the sample.

Primary School Case Study Selection

The table below details how each of the primary case study schools differed in terms of pupil attainment

Table 7 Comparison of attainment data for primary case study schools

	EYFS GLD 2018		KS1 RWM EXP 2018		KS2 Reading Exp 2018		KS2 Exp Writing		KS2 GPS Exp 2018	
	School Result	Schools ranked by result	School Result	Schools ranked by result	School Result	Schools ranked by result	School Result	Schools ranked by result	School Result	Schools ranked by result
Case Study School 2	62%	45	61.82%	26	68%	38	66%	44	71%	36
Case Study School 4	70%	22	63.33%	24	69%	36	74%	28	74%	30
Case Study School 5	66%	36	55.17%	41	77%	22	68%	38	95%	4
Case Study School 6	78%	2	67.74%	15	91%	4	83%	14	83%	15
Case Study School 7	63%	42	48.28%	45	66%	40	67%	42	78%	23
Case Study School 8	68%	28	48.48%	44	30%	49	27%	49	27%	49

The table below details how each of the primary case study schools differed in terms of pupil characteristics.

Table 8 Pupil characteristic data for primary case study schools

	% Pupil FSM		% Pupil EAL		% Pupil BME		% Pupil SEN or EHCP	
	School FSM %	Schools ranked by FSM	School EAL %	Schools ranked by EAL	School BME %	Schools ranked by BME	School SEN or EHCP %	Schools ranked by SEN or EHCP
Case Study School 2	47.40%	3	12.70%	2	9.90%	5	24.80%	7
Case Study School 4	18.10%	35	7.60%	8	9.30%	7	14.10%	34
Case Study School 5	25.20%	25	7.00%	9	6.50%	15	15.50%	25
Case Study School 6	8.20%	45	0.00%	48	1%	49	11.90%	38
Case Study School 7	28.90%	22	2.50%	26	5.00%	24	19.40%	16
Case Study School 8	34.10%	16	4.40%	16	11.90%	4	44.80%	1

Secondary School Case Study Selection

The table below details how each of the secondary case study schools differed in terms of pupil attainment.

Table 9 Comparison of attainment data for secondary case study schools.

	Attainment 8 - Overall 2018	Attainment 8 - English 2018	Progress 8 - Overall	Progress 8 - English	(9-4) achievement Eng & Math GCSE
Case Study School 1	4.1	4.4	-0.55	-0.6	50%
Case Study School 3	3.5	3.8	-0.8	-0.84	42%
Range for all schools	3.3 – 4.1	3.7 – 4.1	-0.55 to -0.8	-0.6 to -0.14	38% - 50%

The table below details how each of the secondary case study schools differed in terms of pupil characteristics.

Table 10 Comparison of pupil characteristic data for secondary case study schools.

	% FSM	% SEN	% BME	%EAL	Overall Absence / Unauthorised Absence
Case Study School 1	40%	21.20%	2.60%	1.00%	6.6% / 2.1%
Case Study School 3	39%	8.30%	2.10%	2.40%	8.4%/ 3.8%%
Range for all schools	23% - 40%	8.3% - 21.2%	2.1% - 2.8%	1% - 2.4%	6.6% - 9.3% / 2.1%-5.3%



APPENDIX 2: ADVISER INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Date:	Duration:	Interviewer:
Mode: f2f/ telephone/ Skype (delete as appropriate)		Interviewee ID code:

Recruitment to PtS Advisery role

How did you come to be involved in the Pathways to Success initiative?

How were Advisers matched with PtS schools?

- Who was involved in this process?
- What criteria were used in the matching process? (e.g. knowledge of context, school support needs)

Planning: the focus for improvement

How have you supported schools in the development of their Improvement Plan(s)?

- Setting objectives, proposing interventions, progress indicators

What were the schools main support needs at this time? (Planning stage)

What contextual history shaped the plan(s)? (Schools at different stages)

How was data used to support decision-making? (i.e. identifying focus for improvement)

Was the original (AIP) plan revised? If so, in what ways?

- Specific aims, personnel, timescale

How have you brokered external support for the schools? What support is provided?

- Lead practitioners, targeted CPD (examples)

In your opinion, is the PtS plan(s) appropriately resourced?

Taking action: implementing the improvement strategy

How often do you visit the school(s) you are working with?

What is the focus of these visits? (Specific examples)

- Has the focus changed over the course of the initiative? If so, how?

What factors/conditions have you found accelerate the pace of change?

What factors inhibit the pace and direction of change?

- Key challenges/ barriers to improvement

How have you approached these challenges?

- Has your approach changed during your involvement with the school(s)?

What additional support would accelerate improvement efforts?

Project management

How have you supported the use of evidence in self-evaluation?

Is there a culture of evidence use in the school(s) you are supporting?

How efficient are the monitoring processes?

- Success Monitoring Forms

Does the reporting process support improvement action? If so, in what ways? (Examples)

- Formative/developmental

What is the role of the Accelerated Improvement Group? (AIG)

- Membership, objectives, activity

How often does the AIG meet in the school(s) that you are supporting?

How are decisions reached in the AIG?

How would you describe communication between the parties involved the PtS initiative?

- School staff, Advisers, local authority/MAT, PtS Improvement Board

What have been the key challenges in fulfilling your role as an Adviser?

Outcomes, impact & sustainability

At this stage, what is your assessment of the impact of the initiative in relation to its aims?

- On classroom practice
- On pupil outcomes (years 5-9)
- On teacher development (including building leadership capacity)

In your opinion, how *sustainable* are the positive changes achieved through the PtS initiative?

In your opinion, how *transferable* are successful approaches to other schools facing similar challenges?

What key lessons you have drawn from your involvement to date in the PtS initiative?

- For schools
- For the local authority
- For the PtS Improvement Board

Is there anything that you would like to add that you have not had the opportunity to say?

Thank you for your participation.

[End of interview]



APPENDIX 3: SCHOOL CASE STUDY INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Date:	Duration:	Interviewer:
Mode: f2f/ telephone/ Skype (delete as appropriate)		Interviewee ID code:

About you

What is current role? How long have you held this position?

Can you tell me a little about your background in teaching?

Your role in the PtS initiative

What is your specific role in the PtS initiative?

- Responsibilities, line management, reporting

How did you come to be involved in the Pathways to Success initiative in your school?

- How were you approached? When?
- How is your role supported in school? (e.g. timetable remission, workload)

Planning: the focus for improvement

How was the Accelerated Improvement Plan developed? How were priorities decided?

- Setting objectives, proposing interventions, progress indicators

How were decisions made about the deployment of staff and resources?

What were the schools main support needs during the planning stage?

What contextual history shaped the plan?

How was data used to support decision-making? (i.e. identifying focus for improvement)

Has the original plan changed? If so, in what ways?

- Specific aims, personnel, timescale

In your opinion, is the PtS plan in your school appropriately resourced to meet its aims?

Working with others

What is your understanding of the role of the PtS Adviser?

How is the PtS Adviser supporting the school in its improvement efforts?

- What specific activities does the Adviser support?

How often has the PtS adviser visited the school? What is the focus of these visits?

In your opinion, how effective is the input from the PtS Adviser in supporting the school achieve the aims set down in the AIP?

Based on your experience to date, what are the attributes of a successful Adviser?

Have you drawn on external support for aspects of your plan? If so, what support is provided? How is it evaluated?

- Lead practitioners from other schools, external CPD providers (examples)

Taking action: implementing the improvement strategy

What strategies have been most effective in producing change?

- key drivers/enablers

What factors/conditions have accelerated the pace of change?

What factors have inhibited the pace and direction of change?

- Key challenges/ barriers to improvement

How have you approached these challenges?

- Has your approach changed during the course of the initiative?

In your opinion, what additional support is needed to accelerate improvement efforts at your school?

Project management

How efficient are the PtS monitoring processes?

- Success Monitoring Forms

Does the reporting process support improvement action? If so, in what ways? (Examples)

- Formative/developmental

Is there a culture of evidence use in your school?

What is the role of the Accelerated Improvement Group? (AIG)

- Membership, objectives, activity

How often does the AIG meet in your school?

How are decisions reached in the AIG? (e.g. who sets and leads the agenda?)

How would you describe your role within the AIG? (If relevant)

How would you describe communication between the parties involved the PtS initiative?

- School staff, Advisers, local authority, PtS Improvement Board

What have been the key challenges in fulfilling your role in the Pts improvement strategy in your school?

- What, if anything, would you do differently?

Outcomes, impact & sustainability

At this stage, what is your assessment of the impact of the initiative in relation to its aims?

- On classroom practice
- On pupil outcomes (years 5-9)
- On teacher development (including building leadership capacity)

Have other factors – beyond the PtS activity - contributed to improvement?

Are there other significant impacts (+/-) beyond direct school improvement?

In your opinion, how *sustainable* are the positive changes achieved through the PtS initiative?

In your opinion, how *transferable* are successful approaches to other schools facing similar challenges?

What key lessons you have drawn from your involvement to date in the PtS initiative?

- For schools (within and beyond the PtS network)
- For the local authority
- For the PtS Improvement Board

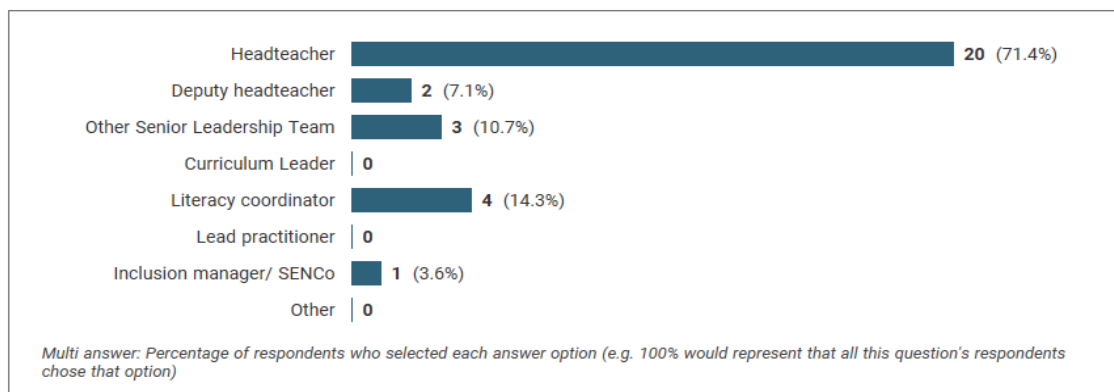
Is there anything that you would like to add that you have not had the opportunity to say?

Thank you for your participation.

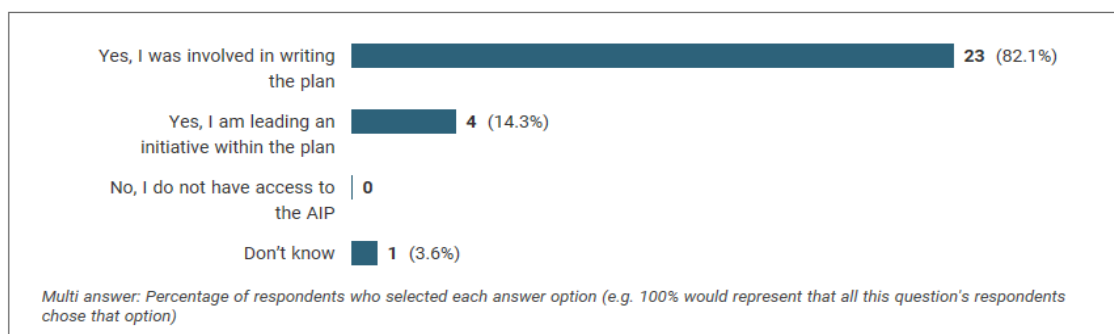
[End of interview]

APPENDIX 4: SCHOOL STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE – PRIMARY RESPONDENTS

1 What is your current role in school?

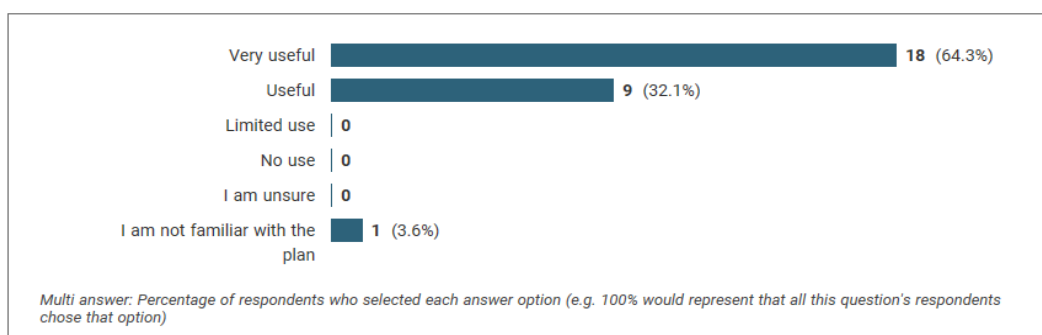


3 Are you familiar with your school's Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP)?

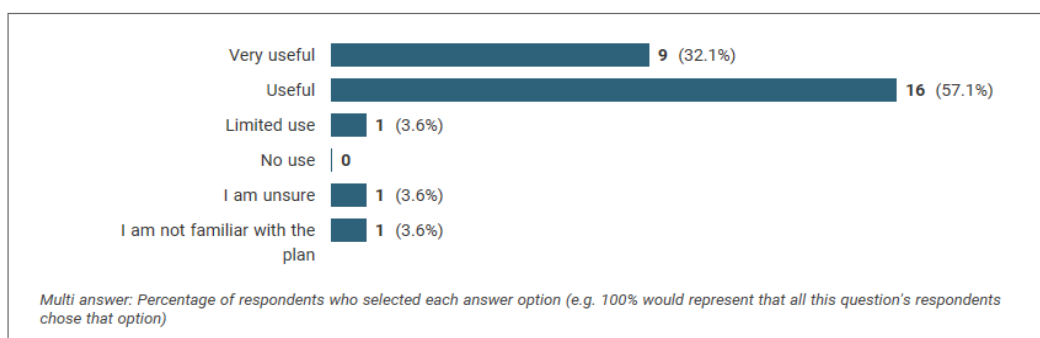


4 How useful was the Plan in addressing the school priorities for action?

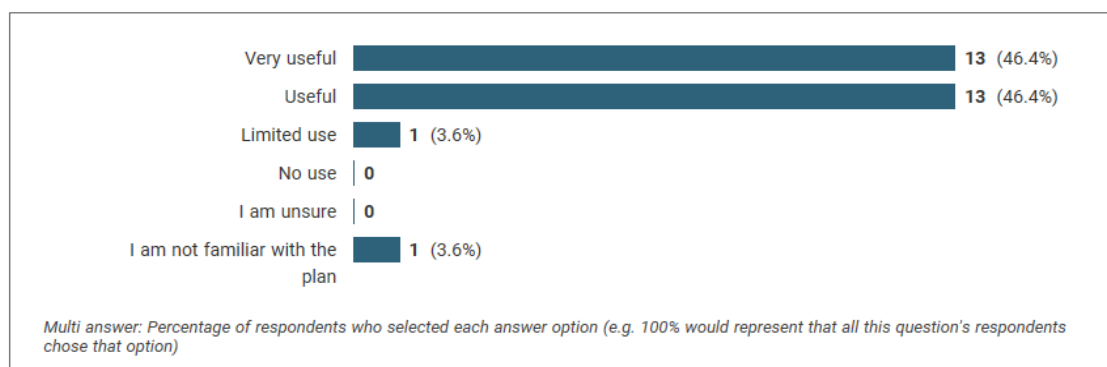
4.1 Improving the quality of teaching and learning



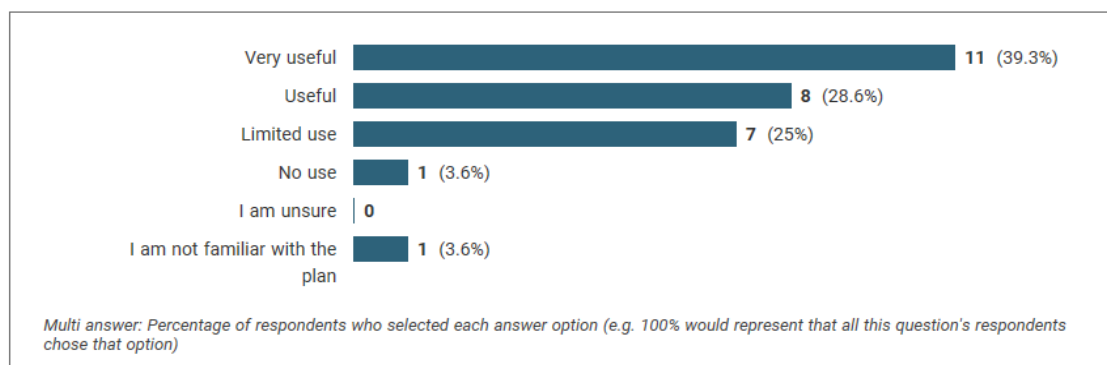
4.2 Evaluating pupil progress



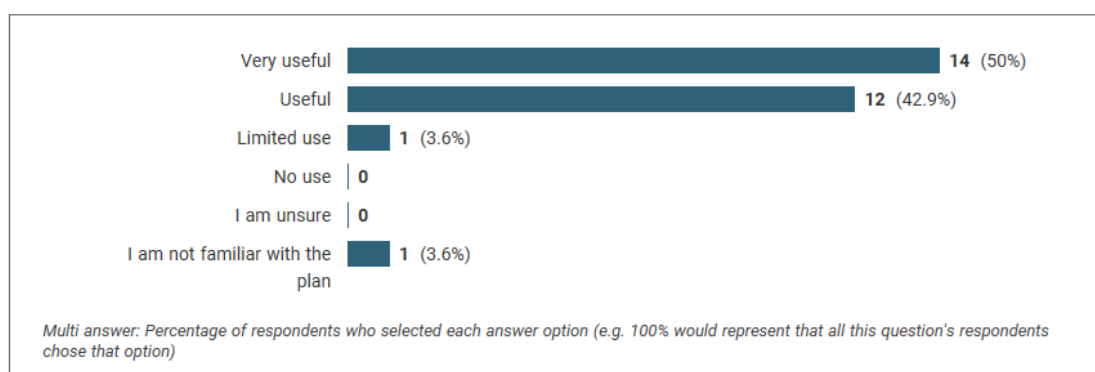
4.3 Improving literacy teaching across the curriculum



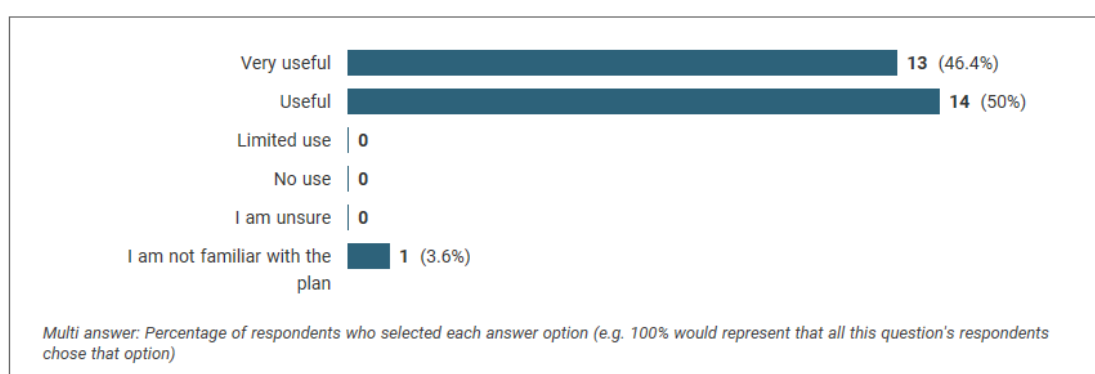
4.4 Supporting school-to-school collaboration



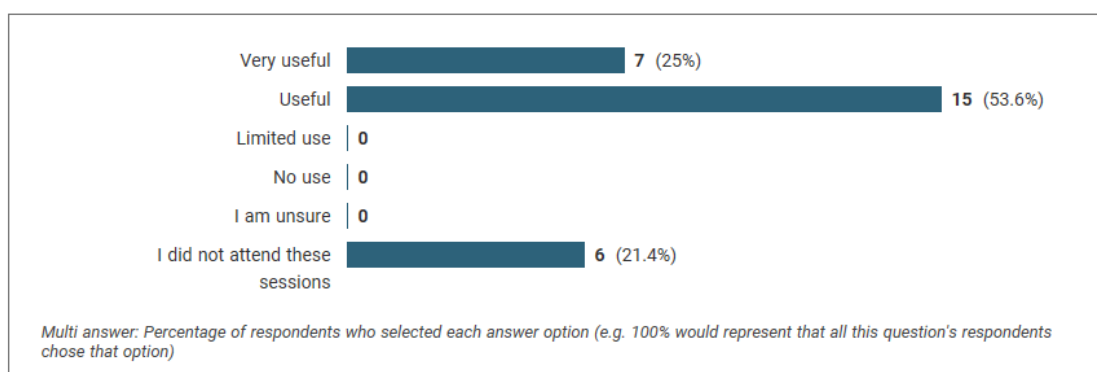
4.5 Targeted professional development



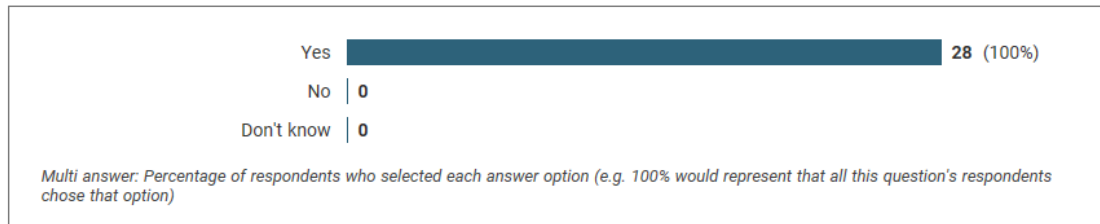
4.6 Improved pupil outcomes in literacy, especially reading and writing



5 If you attended the Pathways to Success development sessions, how useful were these?

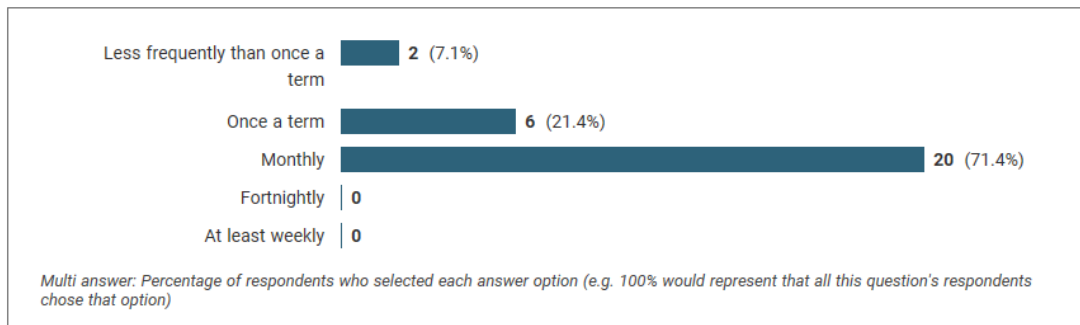


7 Have you been involved in working with the PtS advisor assigned to your school?

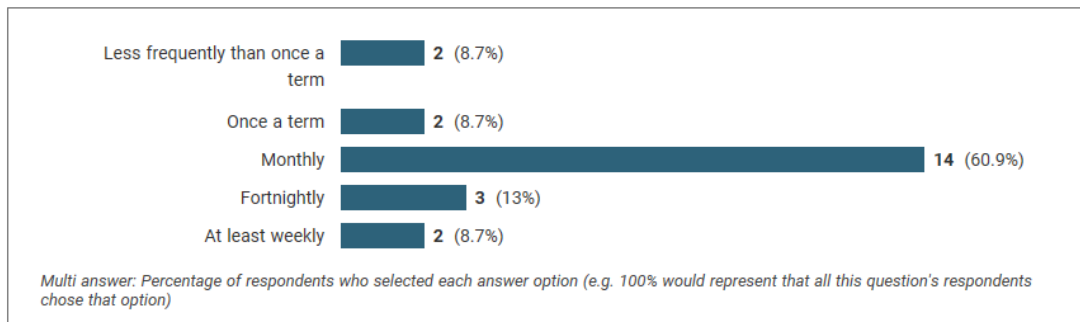


8 Since September 2018, how have you had contact with the PtS advisor supporting your school?

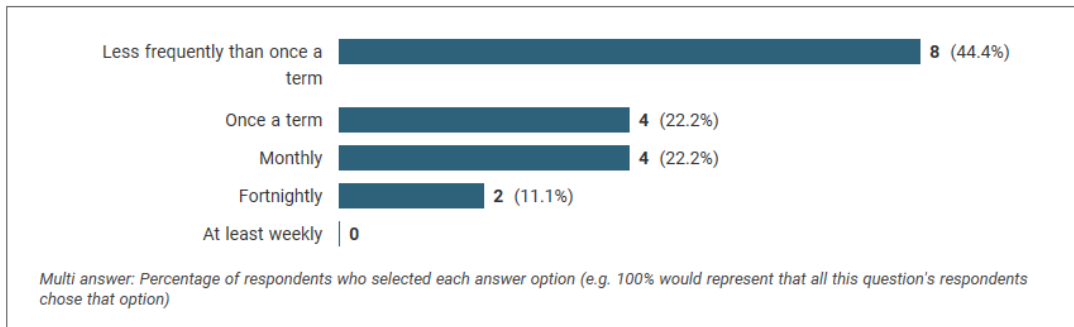
8.1 Face to face in school



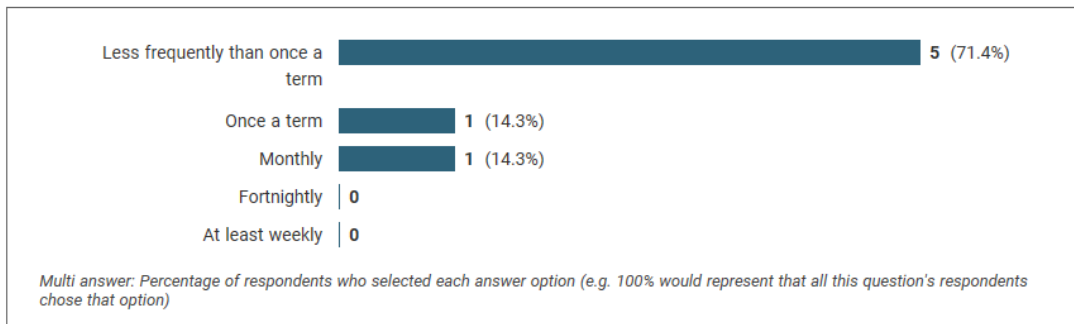
8.2 Email



8.3 Telephone

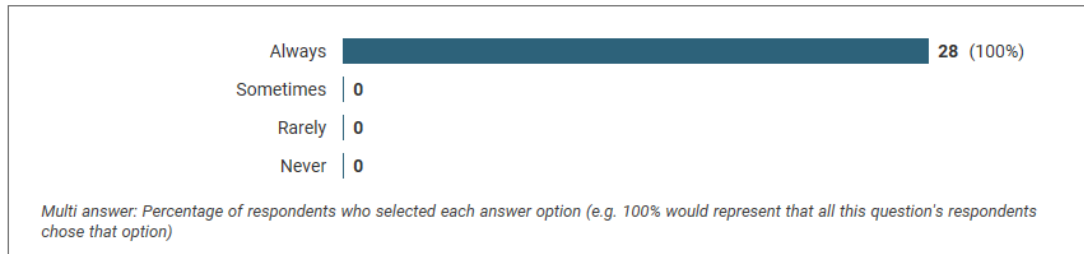


8.4 Other

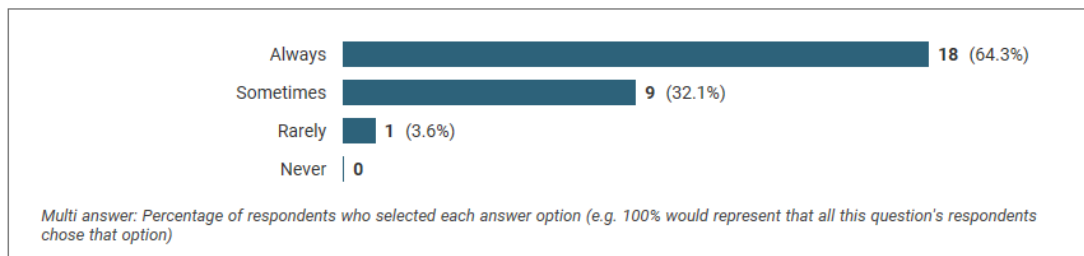


9 When visiting schools, who does the PtS adviser usually meet with?

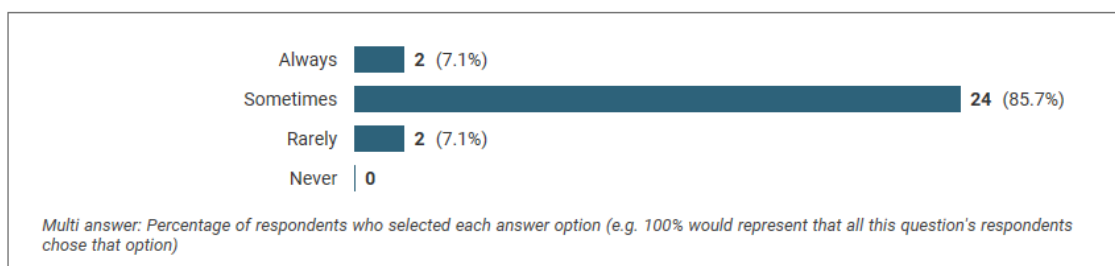
9.1 Headteacher



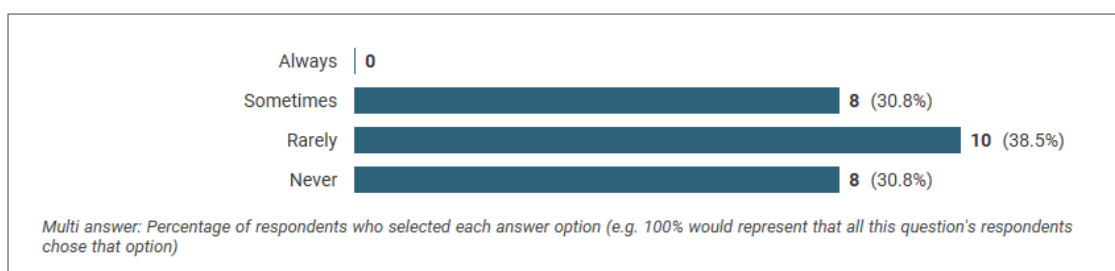
9.2 Senior Leadership Team



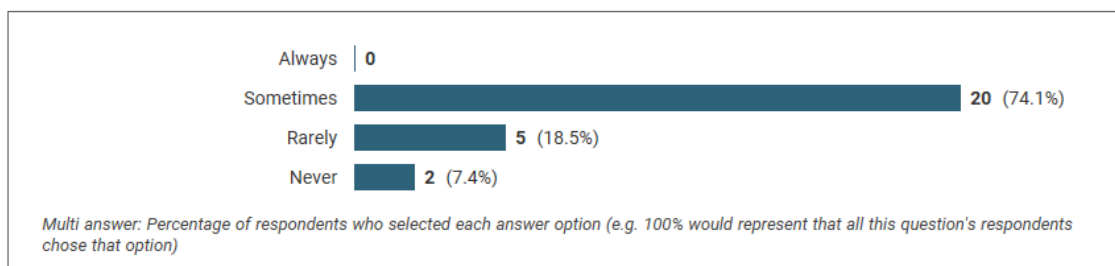
9.3 Class teachers



9.4 Support staff

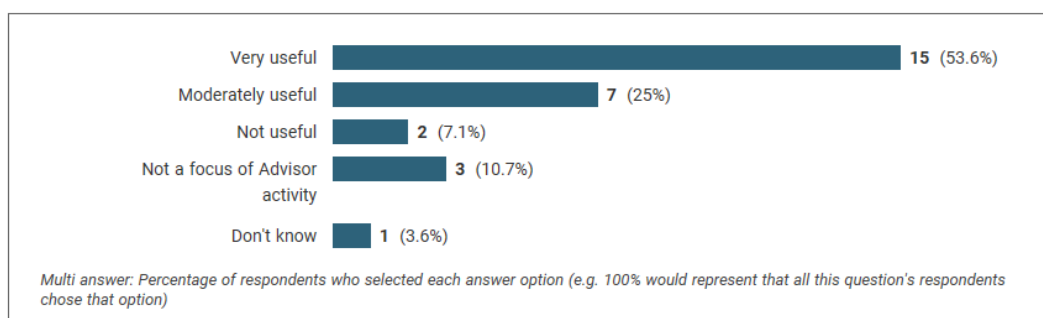


9.5 Pupils

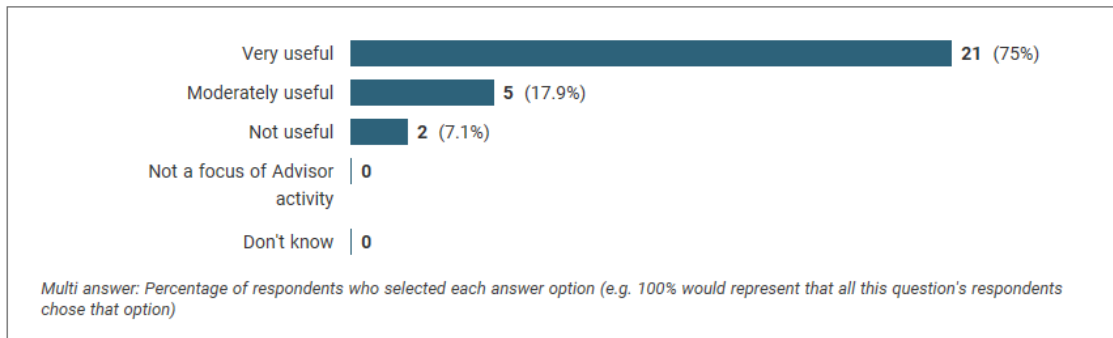


10 How useful have you found the support of the Advisor in the following areas?

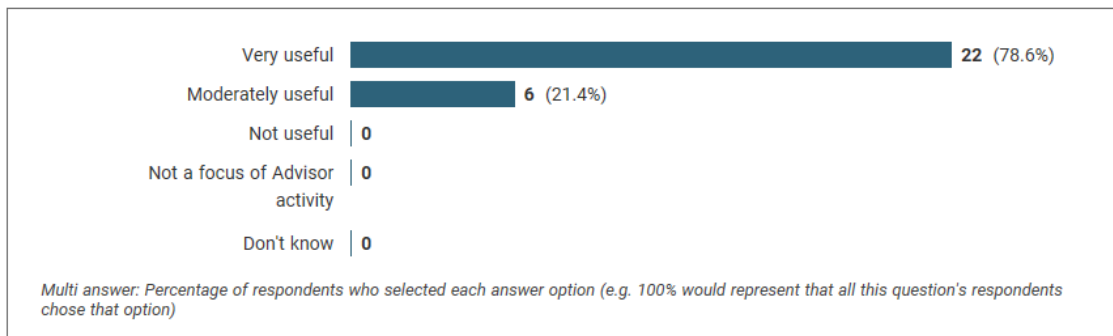
10.1 Making links with other schools



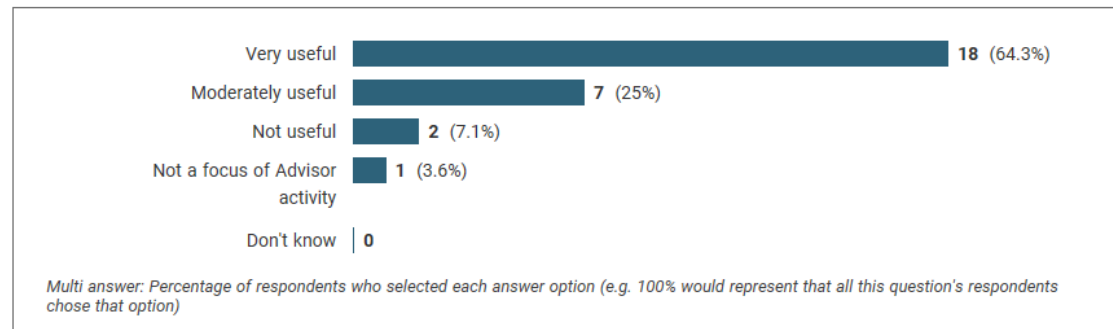
10.2 Suggesting resources for teaching and learning



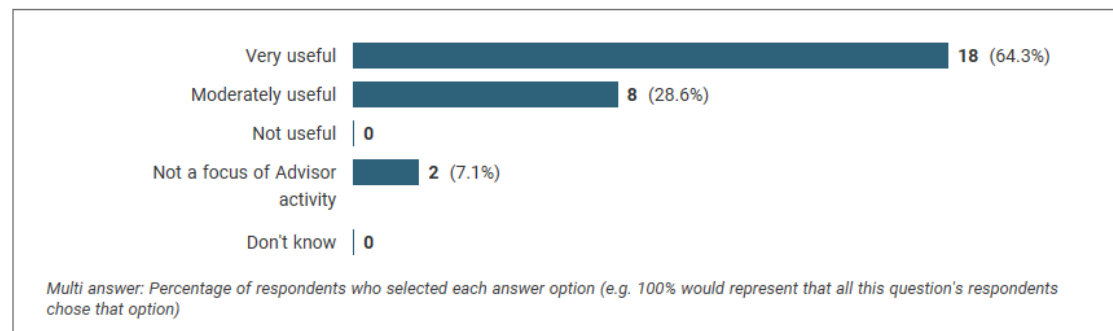
10.3 Advising on professional development for staff



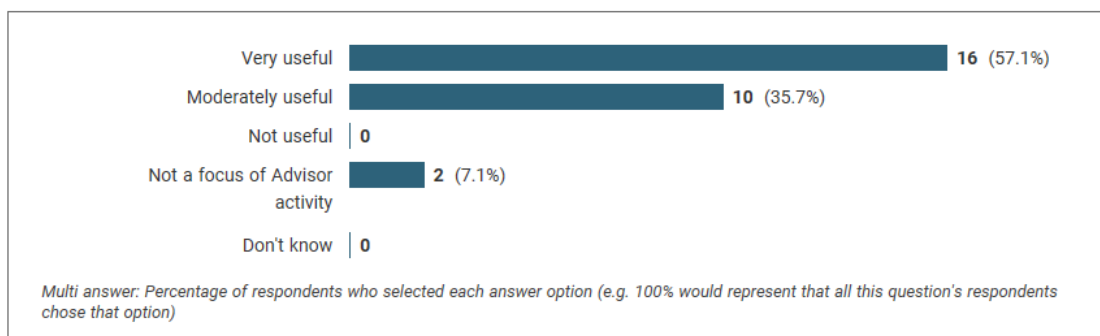
10.4 Reviewing school data



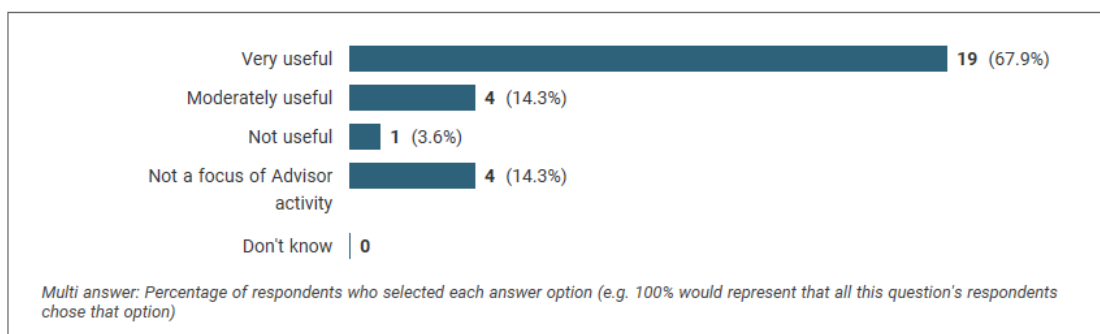
10.5 Observing classroom practice



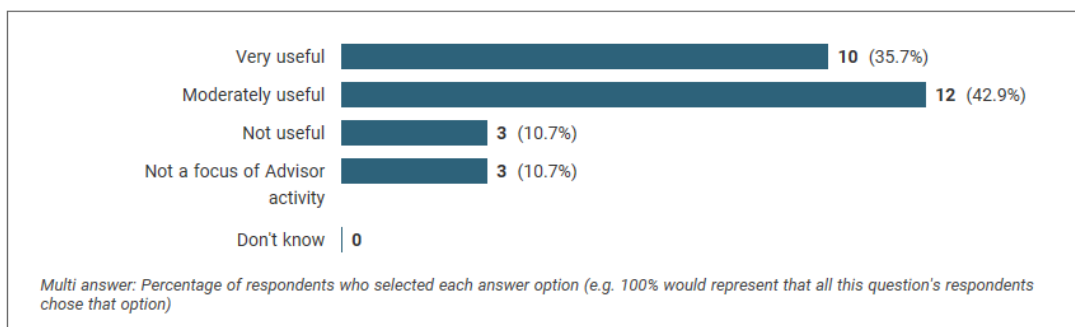
10.6 Reviewing assessment practice e.g. samples of pupils' work



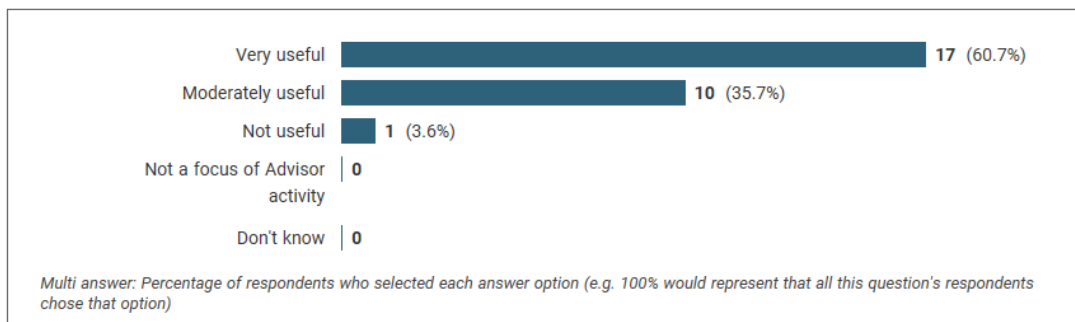
10.7 Support in regard to inspection process



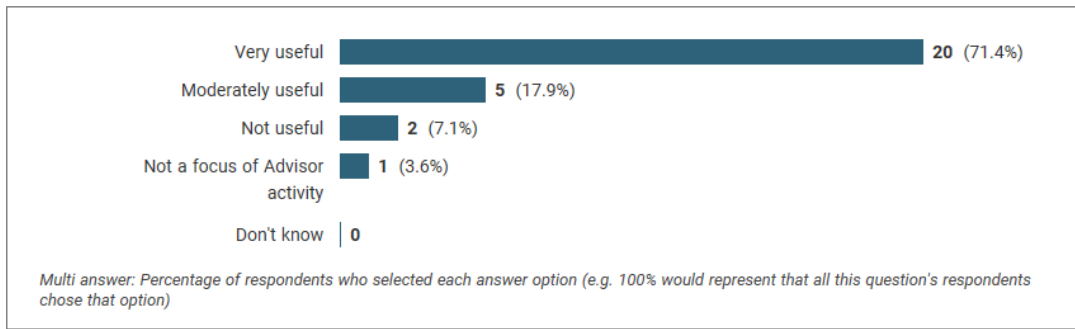
10.8 Promoting practitioner enquiry approach among staff



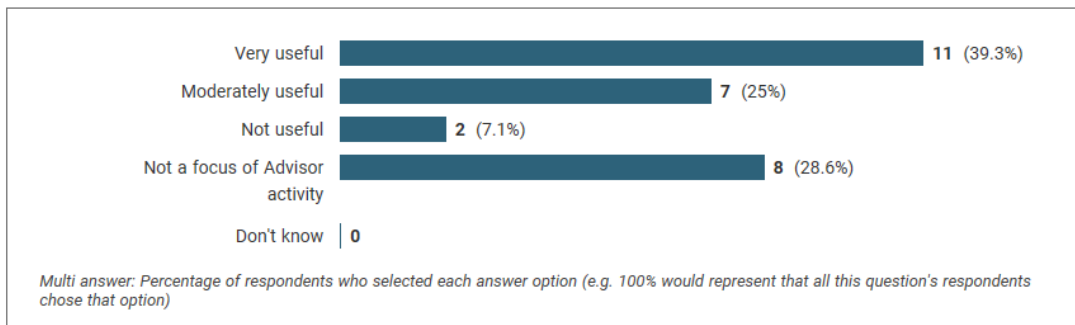
10.9 Developing a culture of sharing practice



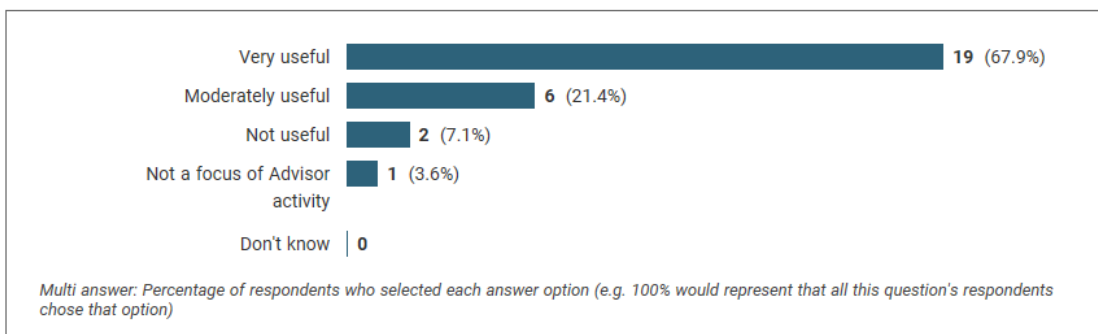
10.10 Building capacity for school self-evaluation



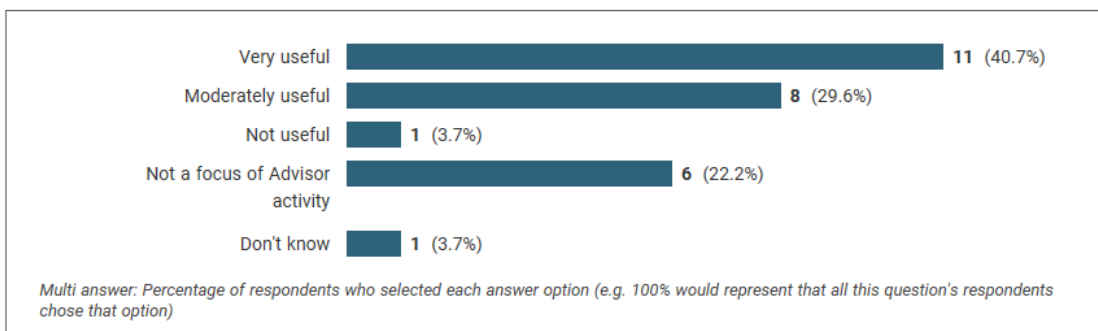
10.11 Support with staffing issues



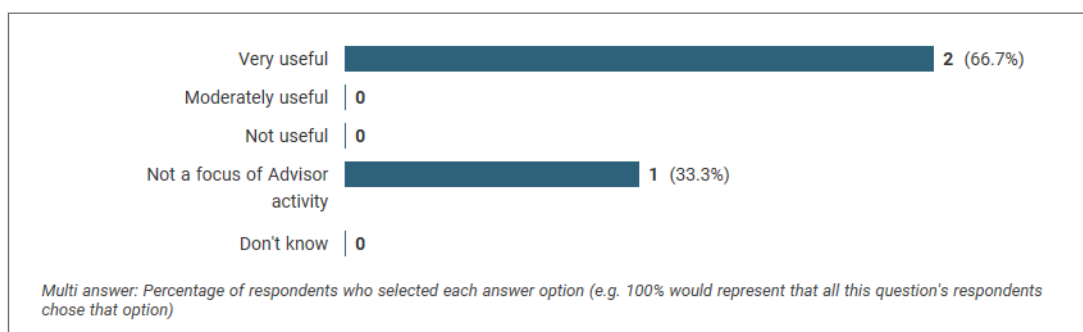
10.12 Developing senior and middle leaders



10.13 Working with Governors (AIG)

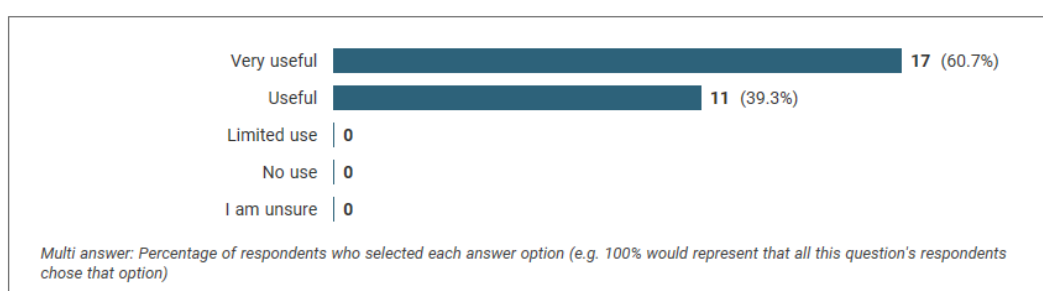


10.14 Other (specify)

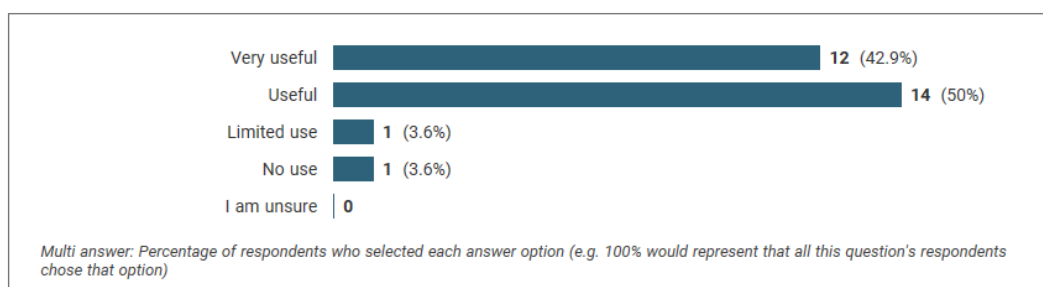


14 How useful have you found the following strategies in producing change in your school during the PtS initiative?

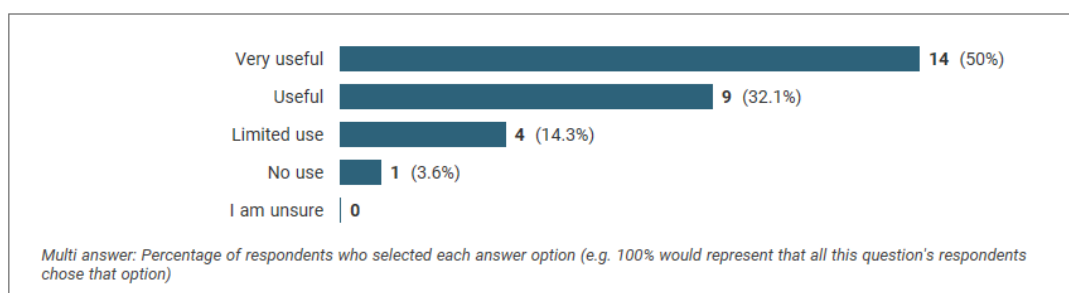
14.1 Investment in teacher development (CPD)



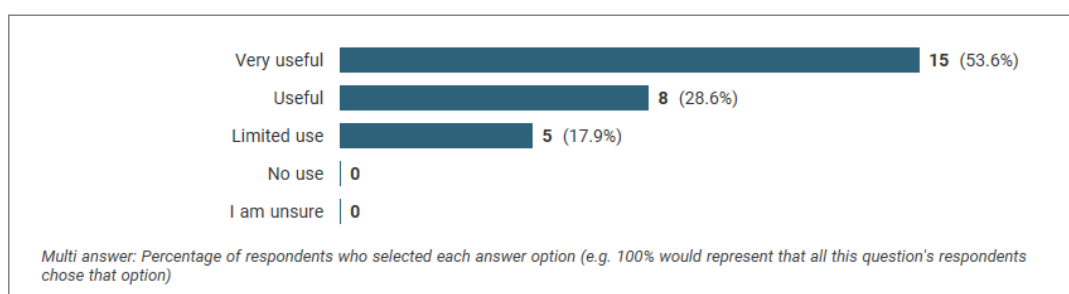
14.2 Scheduled teacher release time for collaboration



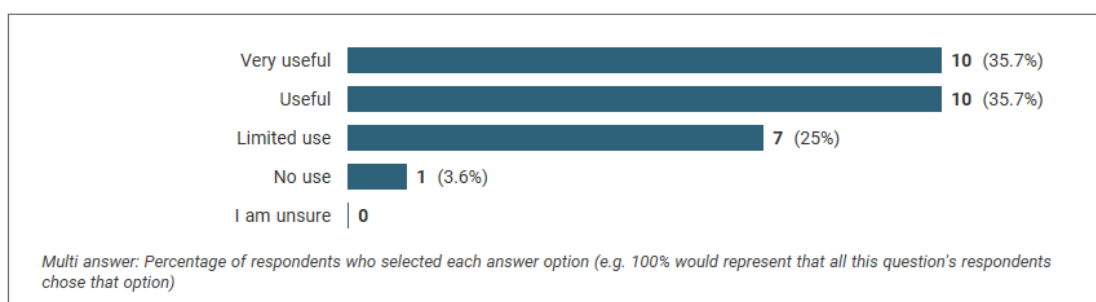
14.3 Investment in teaching and learning resources



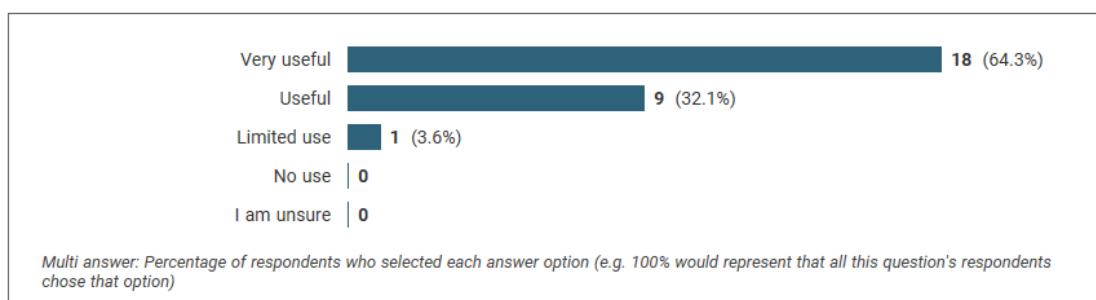
14.4 Building leadership capacity in the wider school workforce



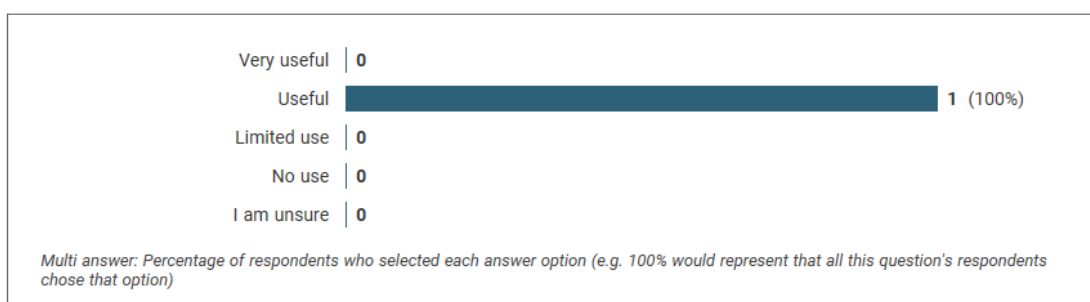
14.5 Development of data skills to support teaching and learning



14.6 Independent external review of current practice

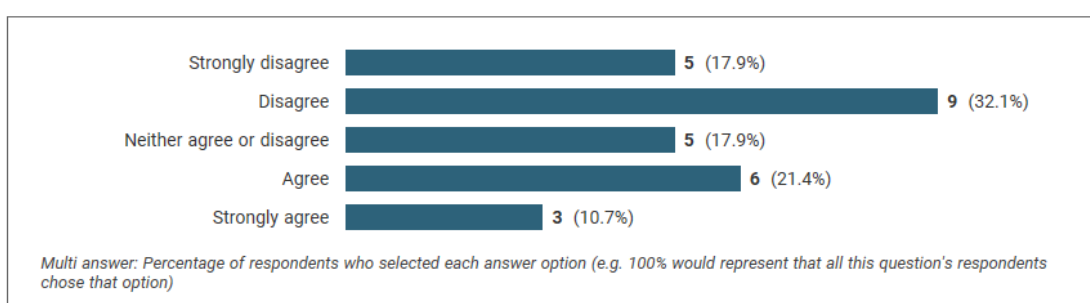


14.7 Other (specify)

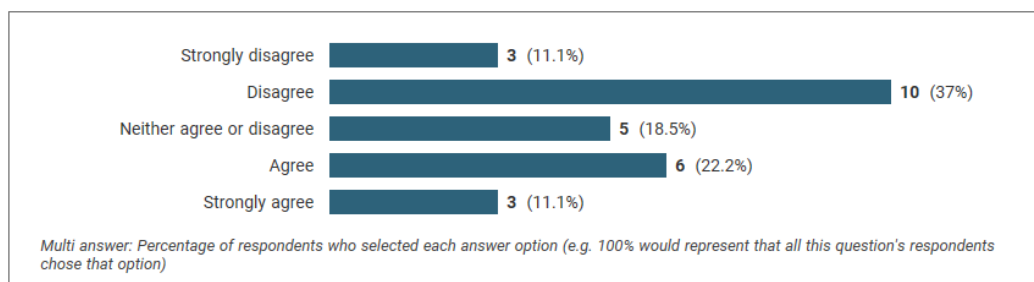


15 To what extent do you agree that the following factors have been a challenge in making progress in the PtS initiative?

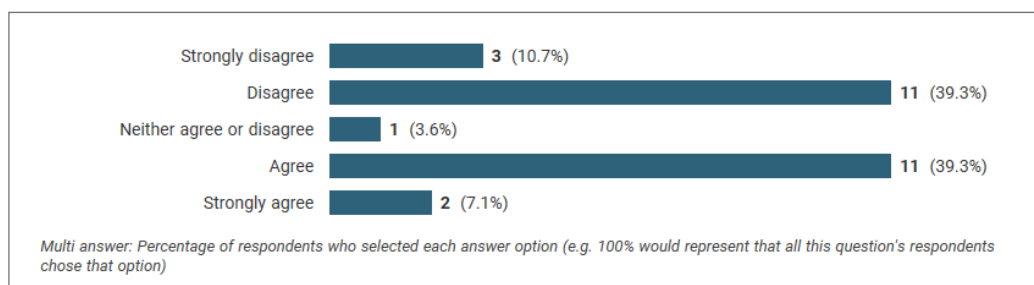
15.1 Competing priorities/initiatives



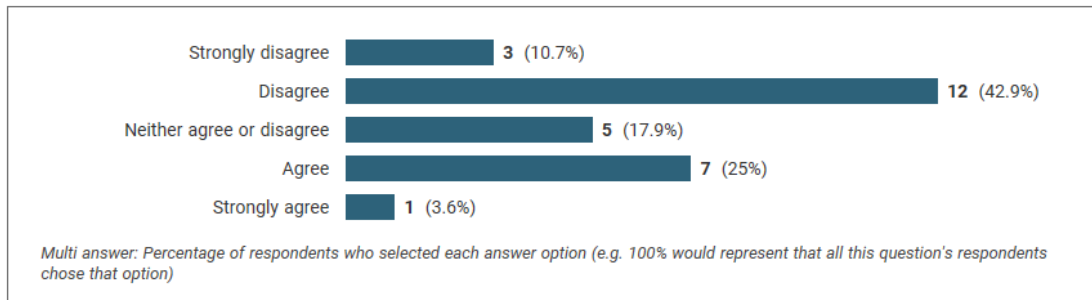
15.2 Available resource to support plans



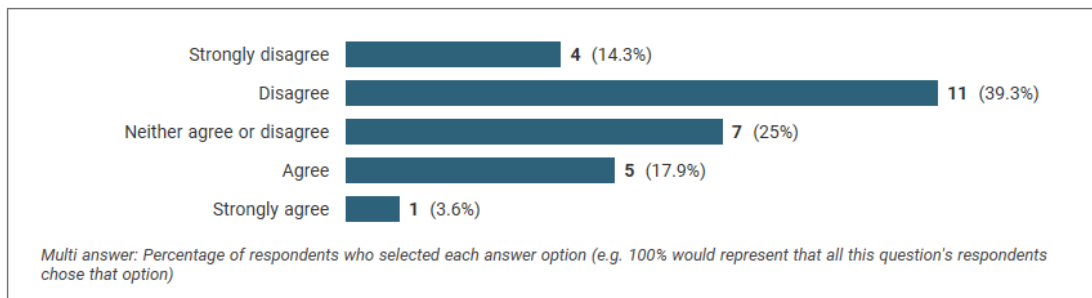
15.3 Making time for professional learning within school day



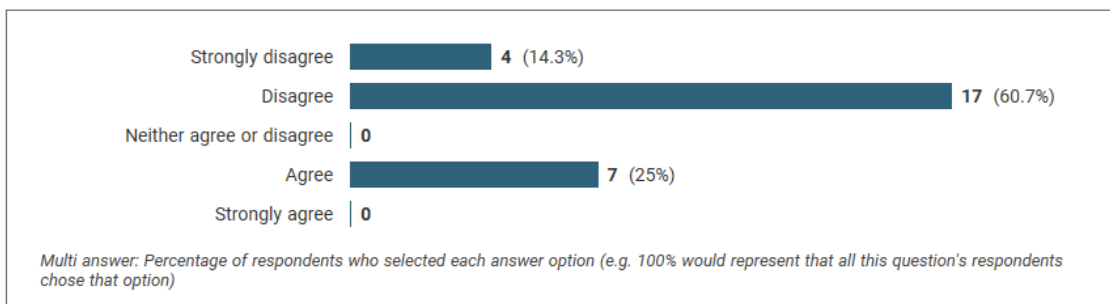
15.4 Sustaining developments over time



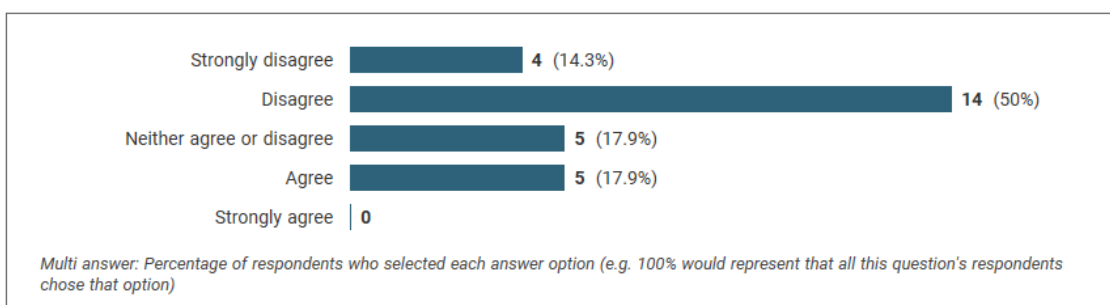
15.5 Teacher turnover, changes in personnel



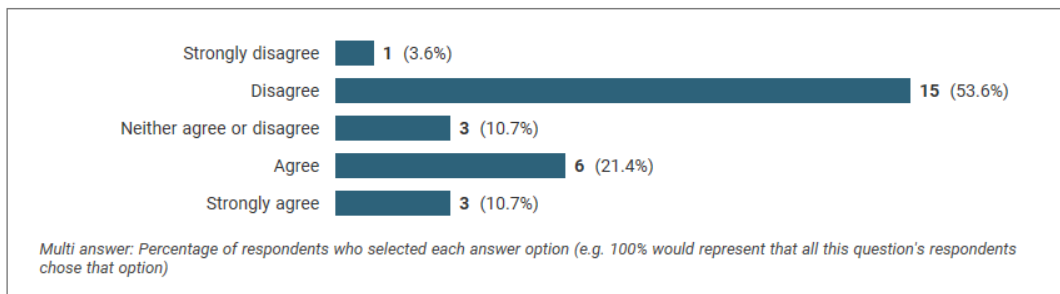
15.6 Resistance to change



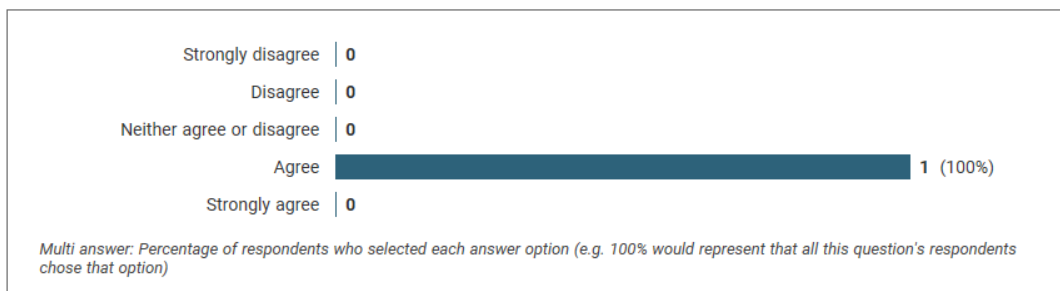
15.7 Negative experience of previous initiatives



15.8 Timescale to achieve aims (duration of the PtS initiative)

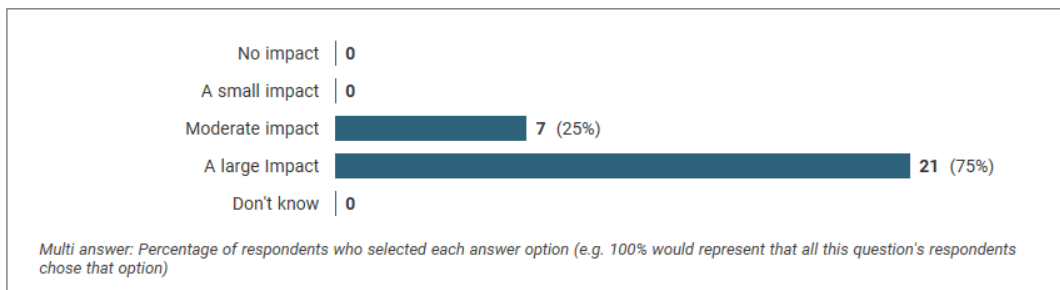


15.9 Other (specify)

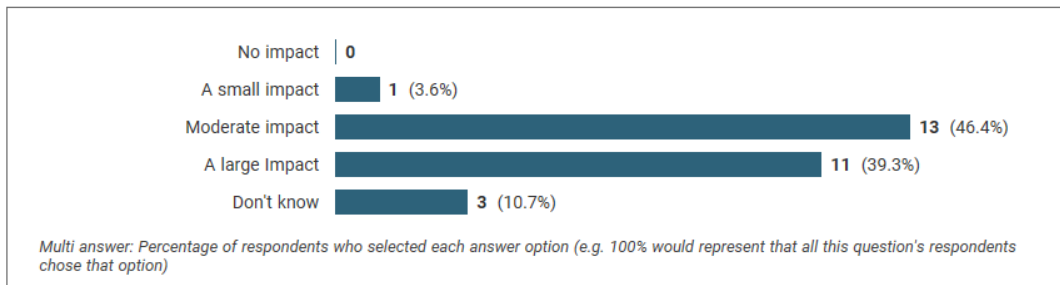


17 What positive impact do you feel the initiative has had so far on:

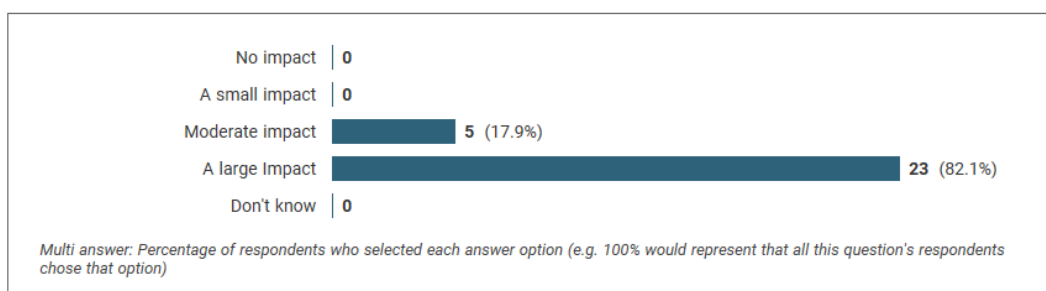
17.1 Classroom Practice



17.2 Pupil Outcomes

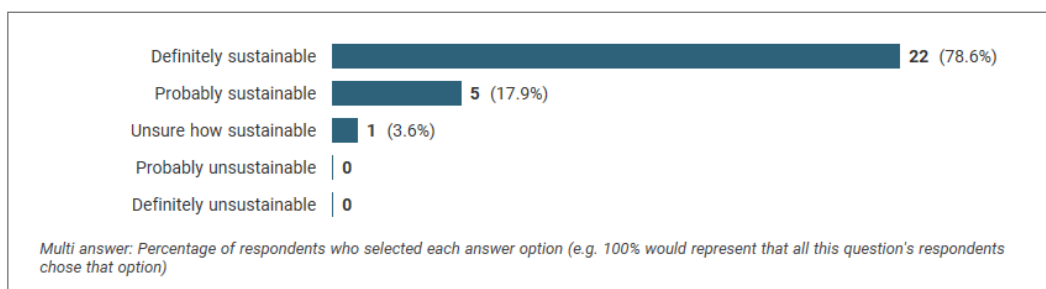


17.3 Teacher Development

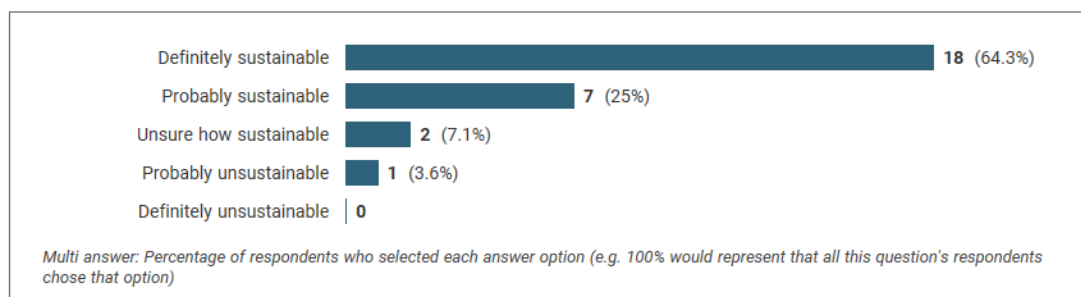


18 In your opinion, how sustainable are the changes after the PtS initiative has ended?

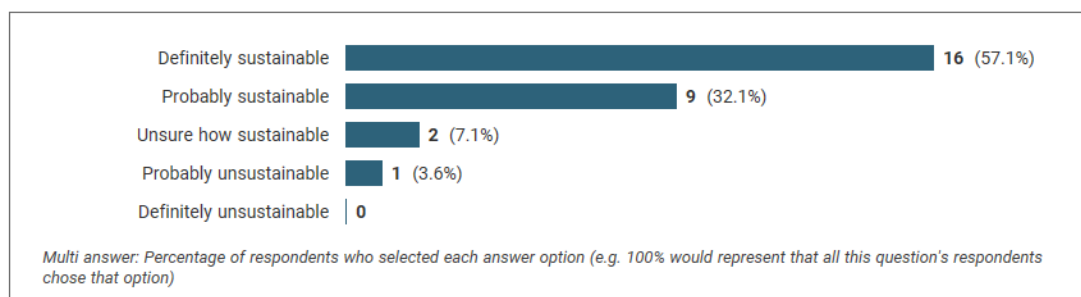
18.1 Classroom Practice



18.2 Pupil Outcomes

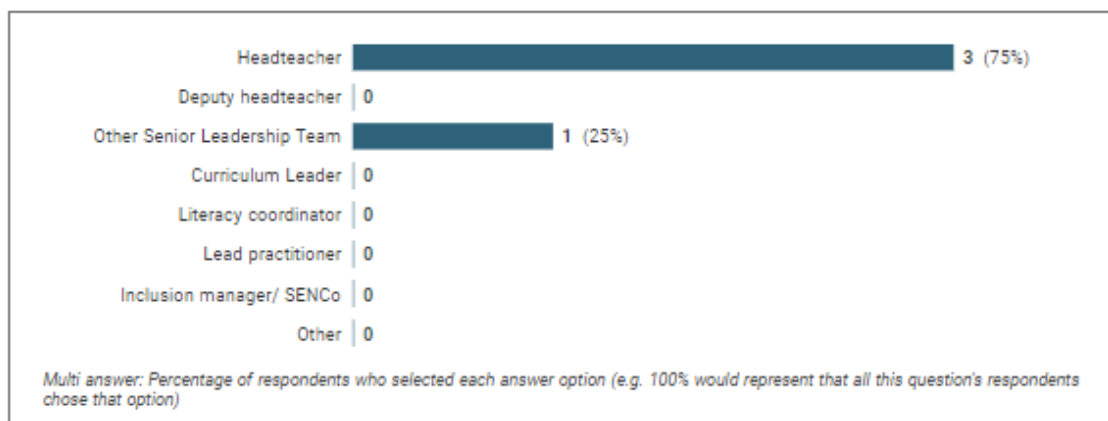


18.3 Teacher Development

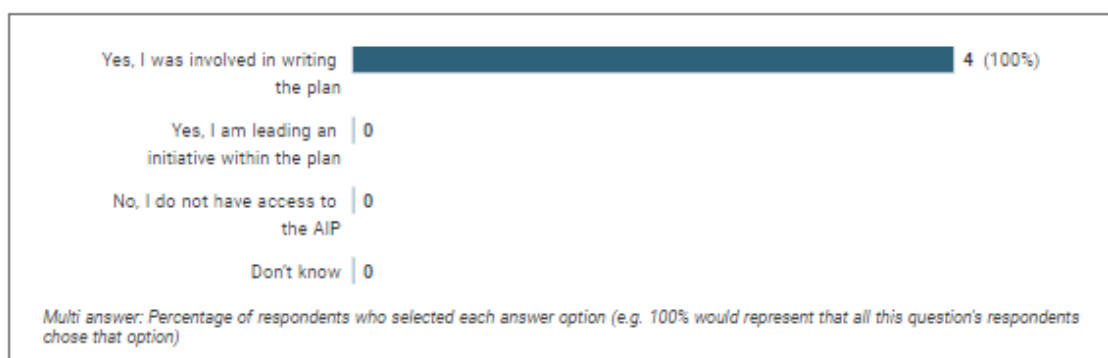


APPENDIX 5: SCHOOL STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE – SECONDARY RESPONDENTS

1 What is your current role in school?

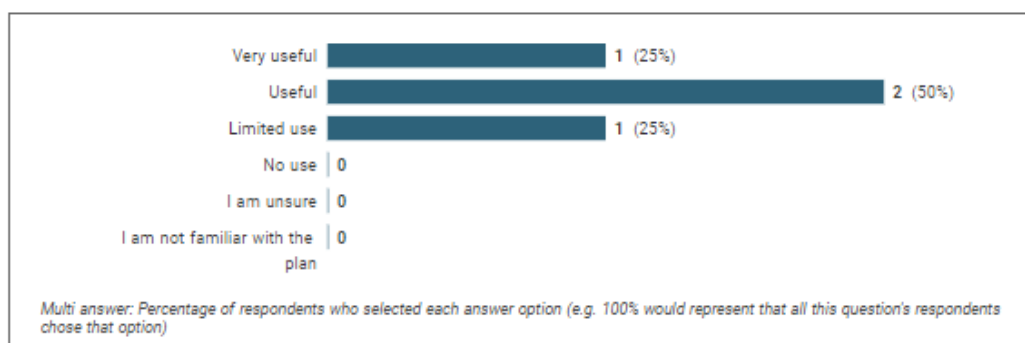


3 Are you familiar with your school's Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP)?

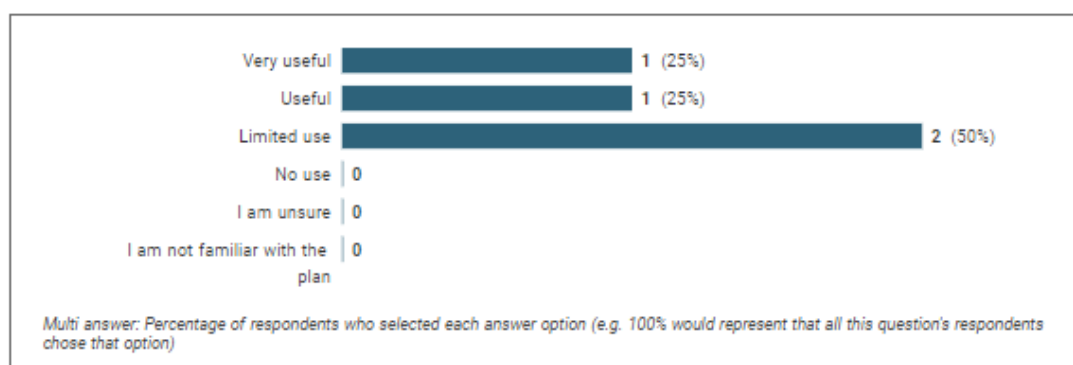


4 How useful was the Plan in addressing the school priorities for action?

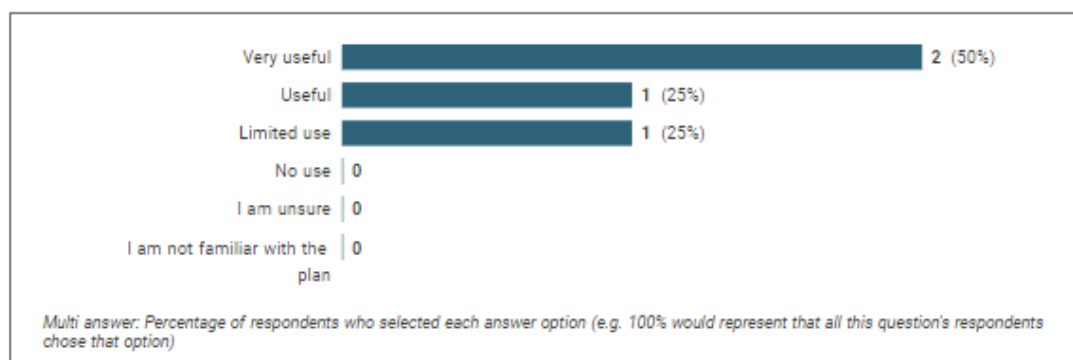
4.1 Improving the quality of teaching and learning



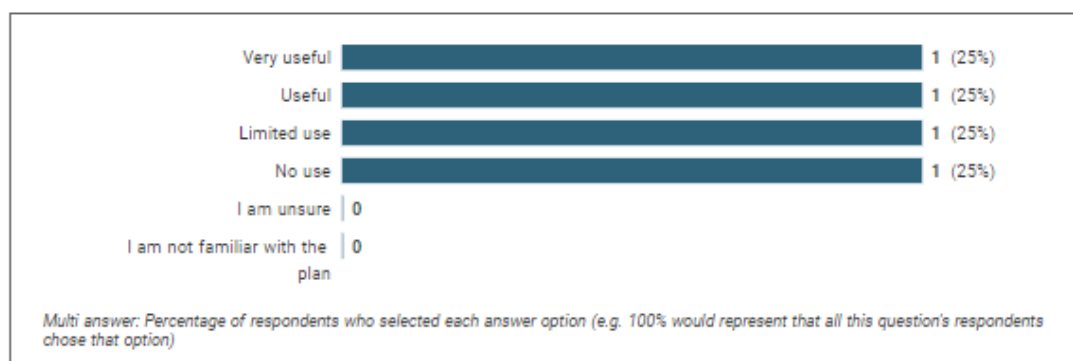
4.2 Evaluating pupil progress



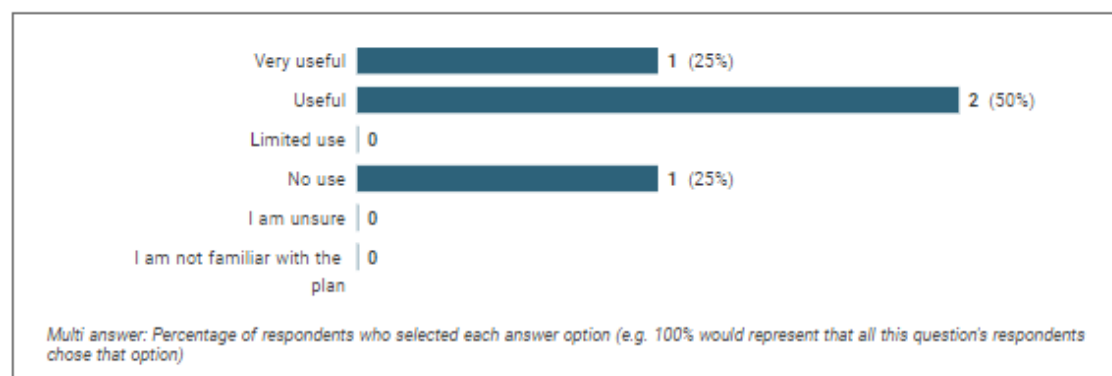
4.3 Improving literacy teaching across the curriculum



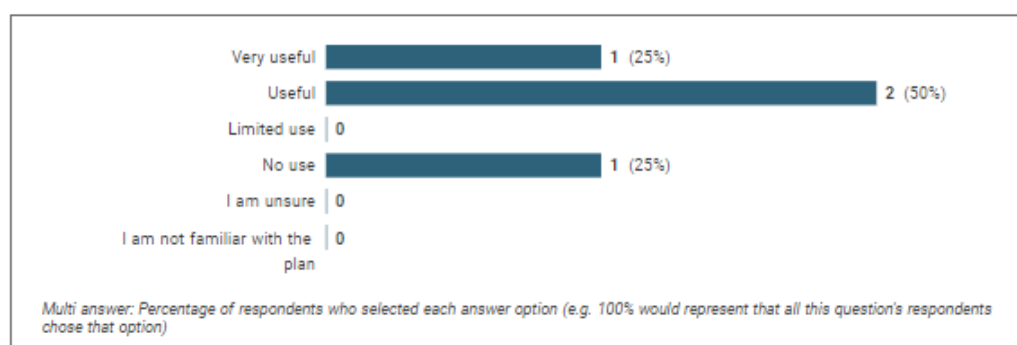
4.4 Supporting school-to-school collaboration



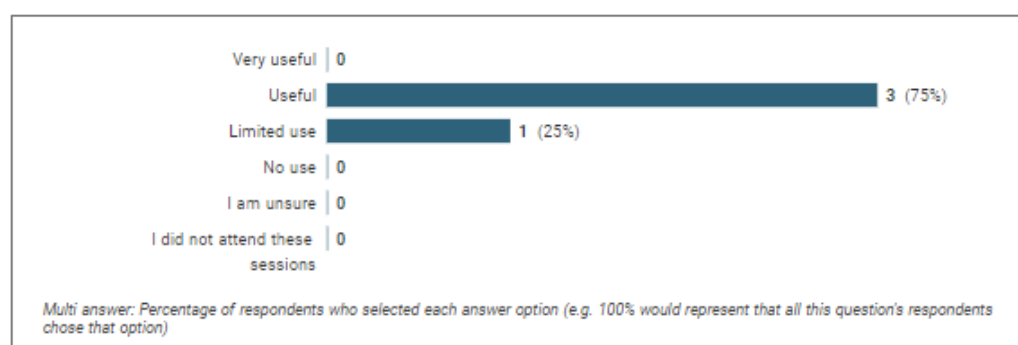
4.5 Targeted professional development



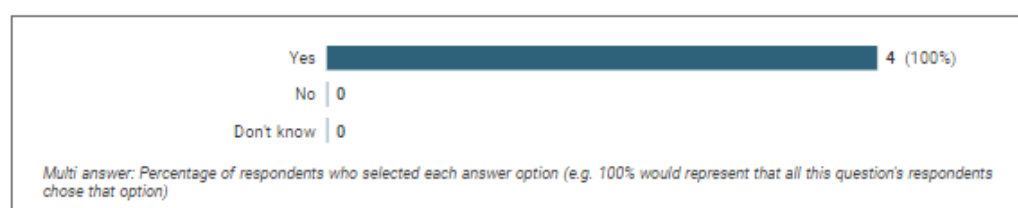
4.6 Improved pupil outcomes in literacy, especially reading and writing



5 If you attended the Pathways to Success development sessions, how useful were these?

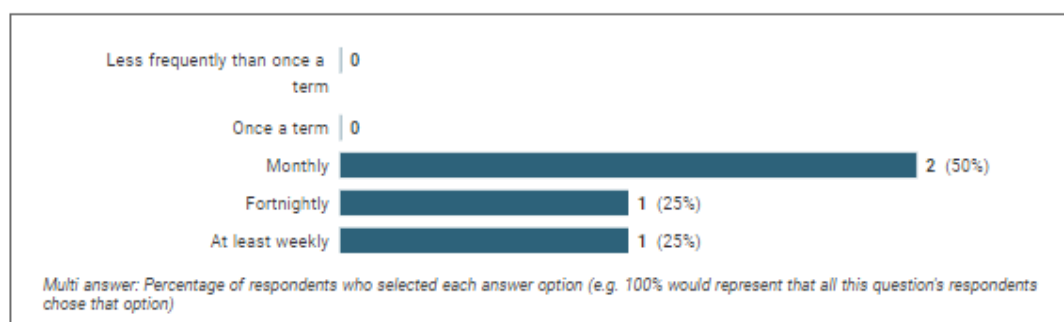


7 Have you been involved in working with the PtS advisor assigned to your school?

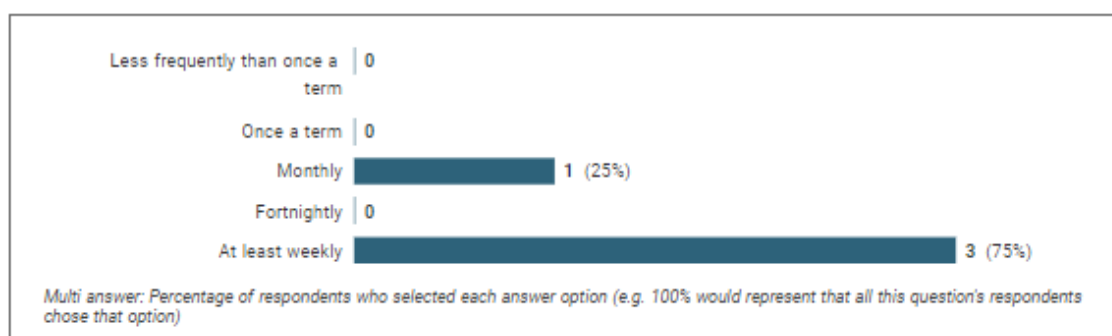


8 Since September 2018, how have you had contact with the PtS advisor supporting your school?

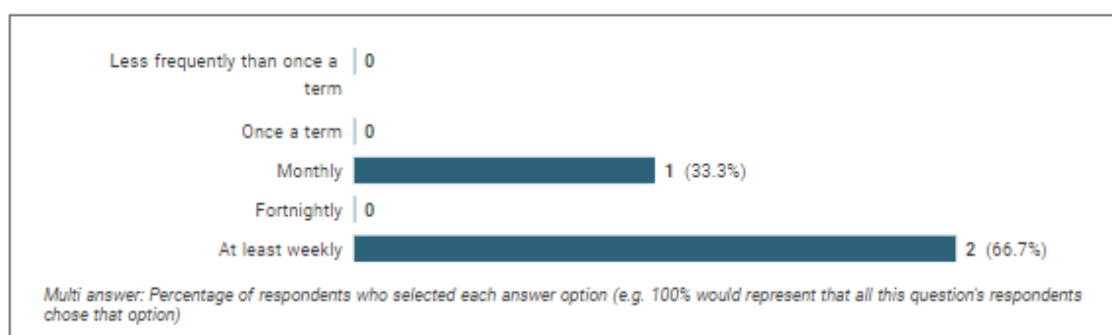
8.1 Face to face in school



8.2 Email

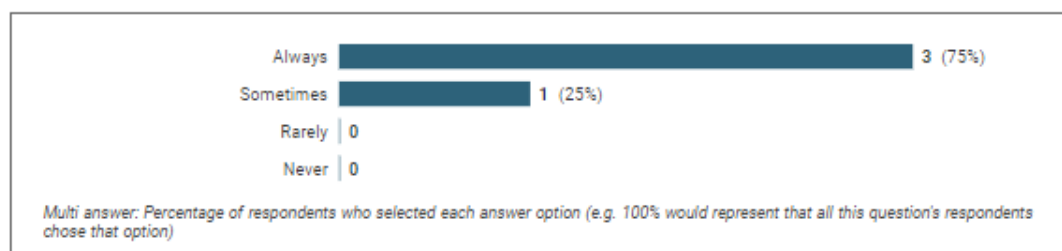


8.3 Telephone

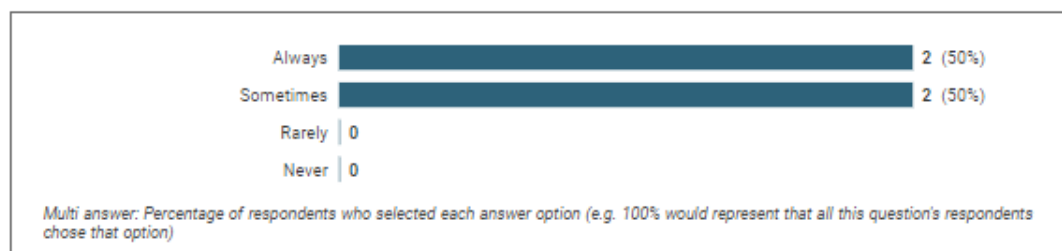


9 When visiting schools, who does the PtS adviser usually meet with?

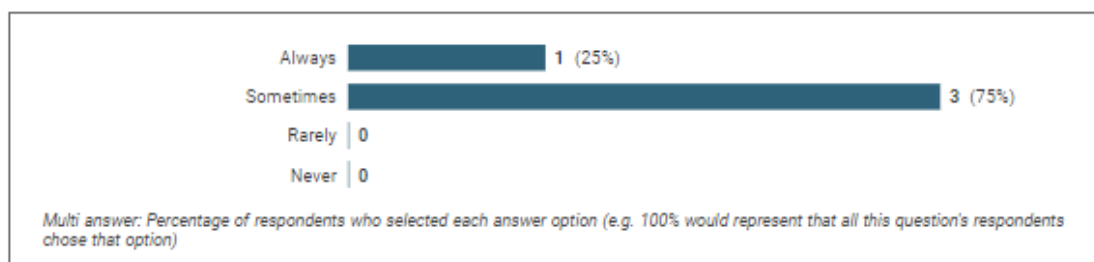
9.1 Headteacher



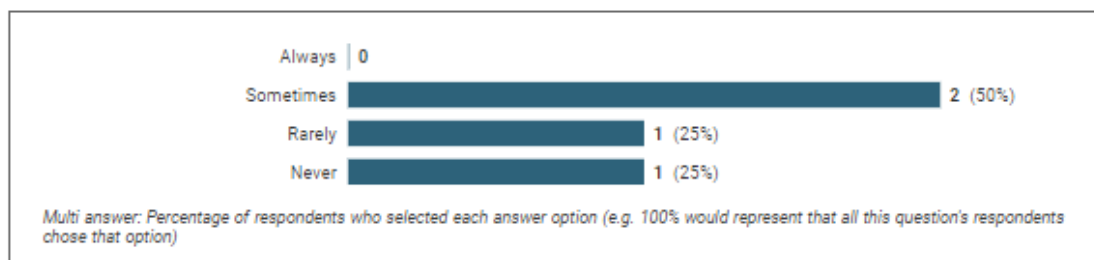
9.2 Senior Leadership Team



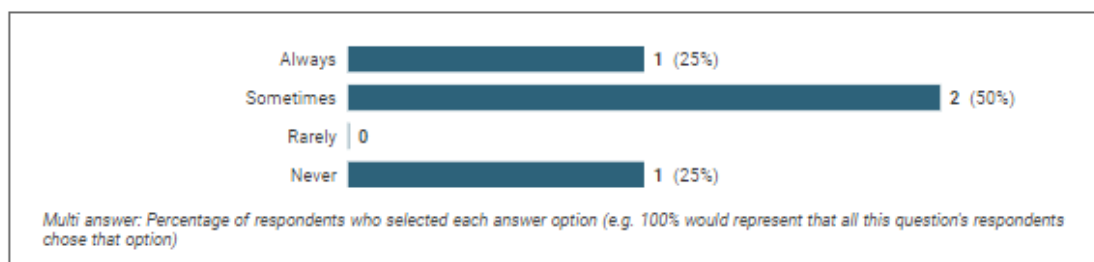
9.3 Class teachers



9.4 Support staff

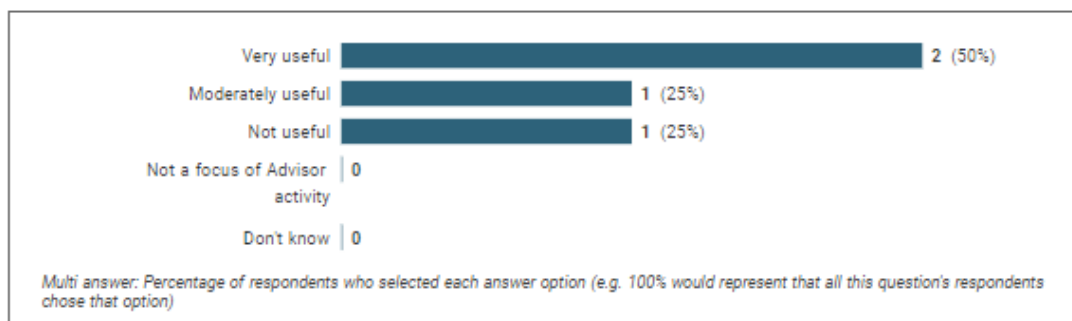


9.5 Pupils

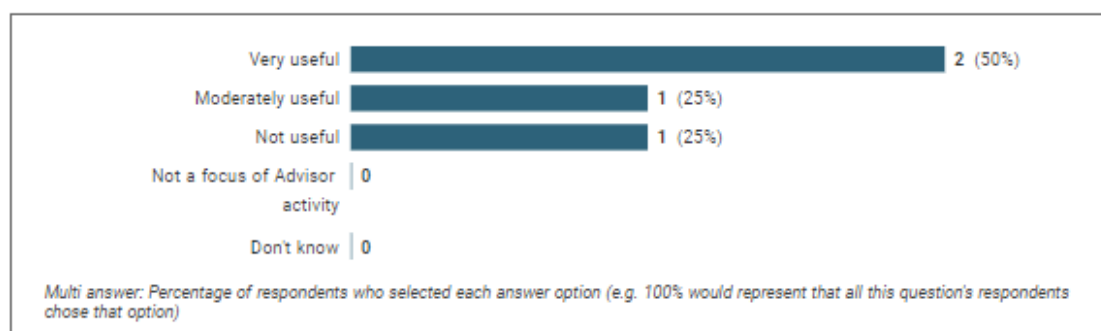


10 How useful have you found the support of the Advisor in the following areas?

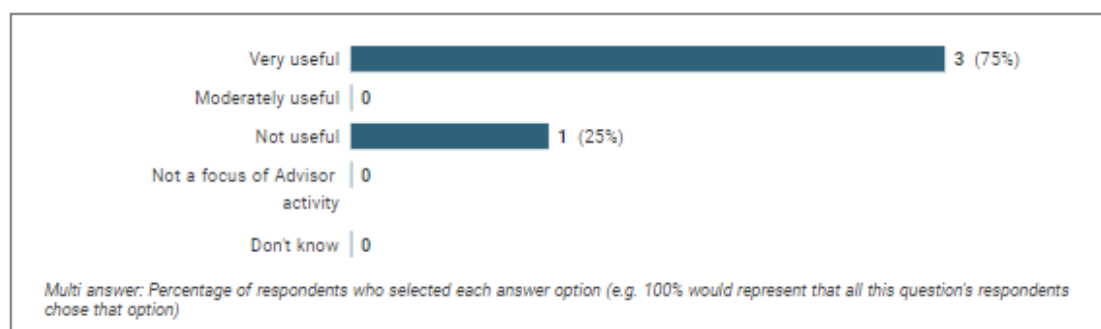
10.1 Making links with other schools



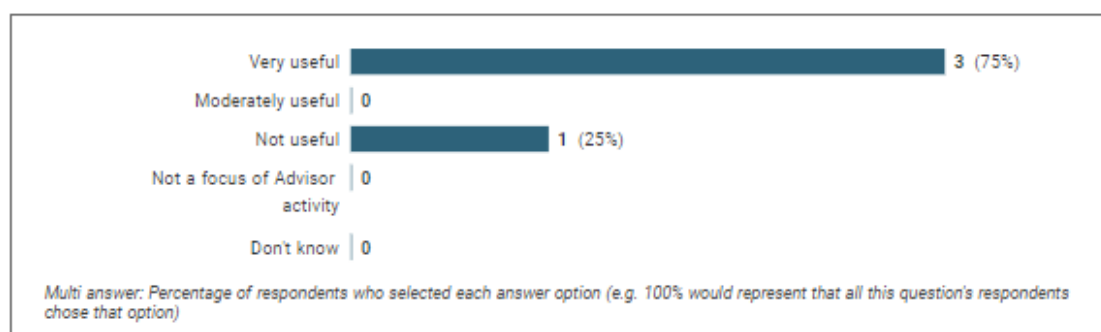
10.2 Suggesting resources for teaching and learning



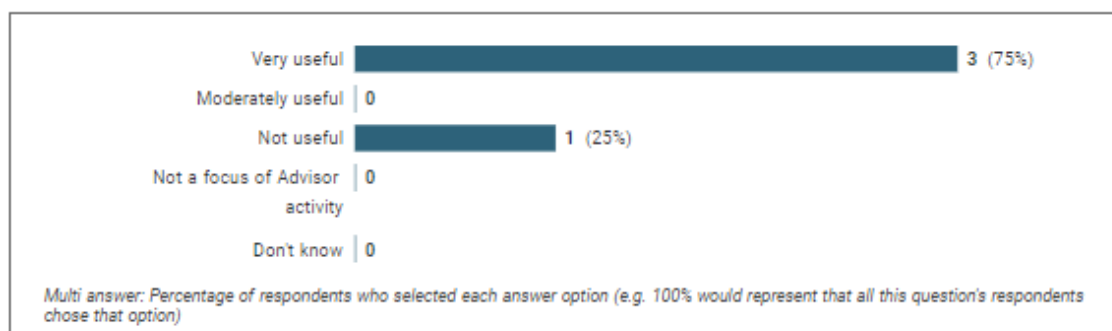
10.3 Advising on professional development for staff



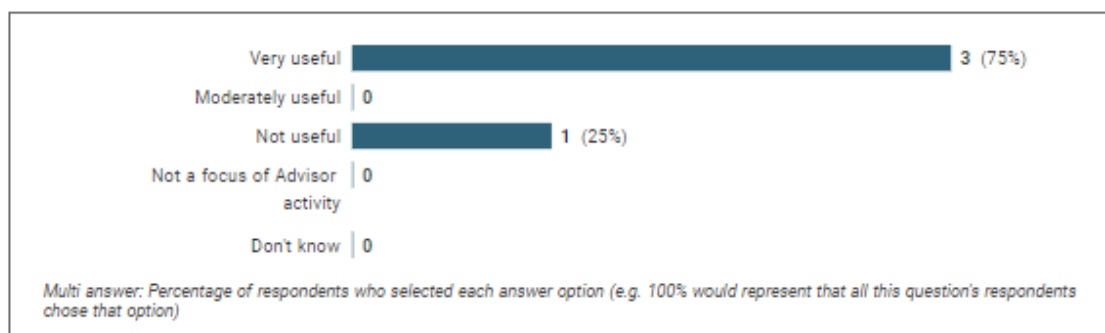
10.4 Reviewing school data



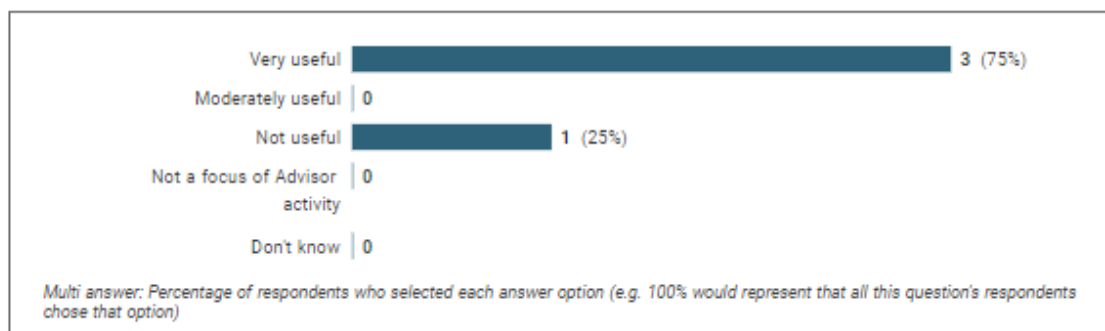
10.5 Observing classroom practice



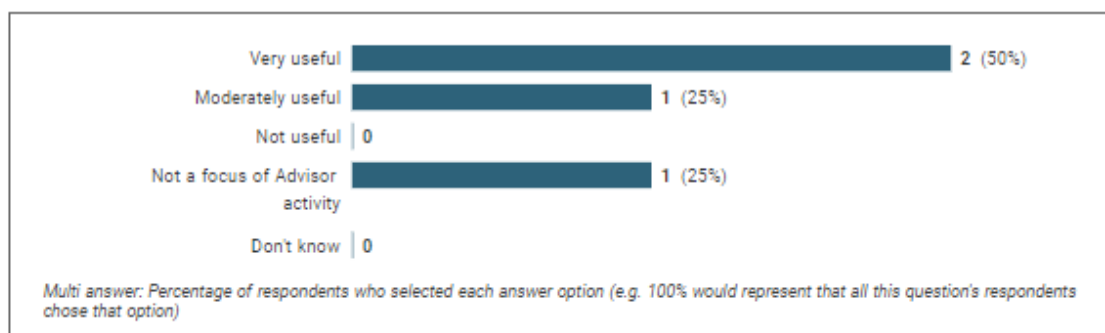
10.6 Reviewing assessment practice e.g. samples of pupils' work



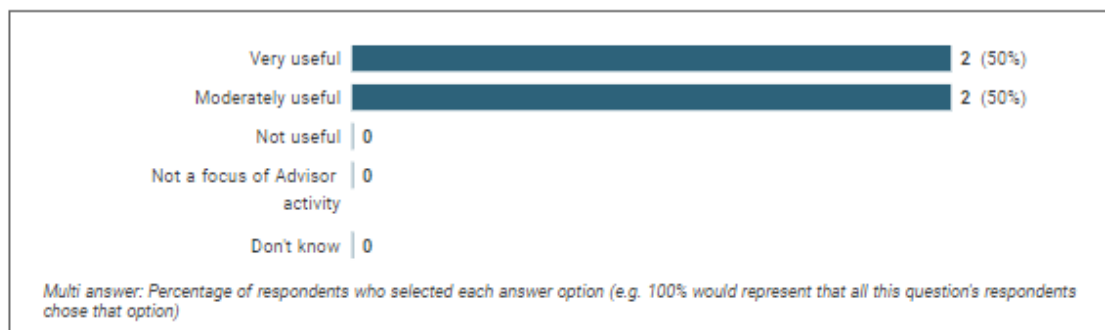
10.7 Support in regard to inspection process



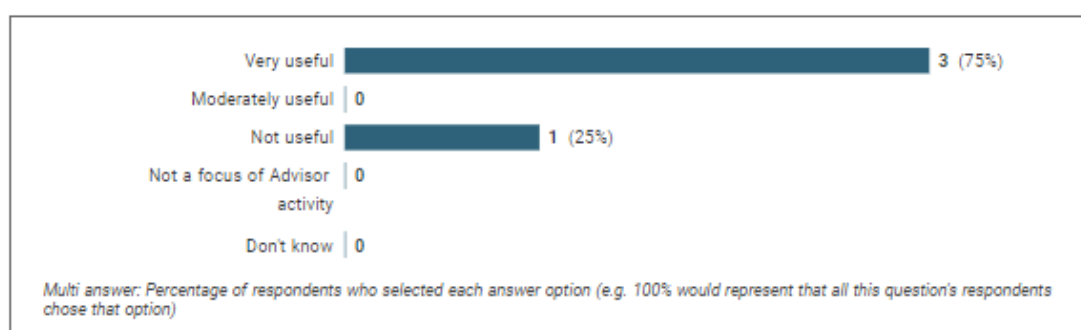
10.8 Promoting practitioner enquiry approach among staff



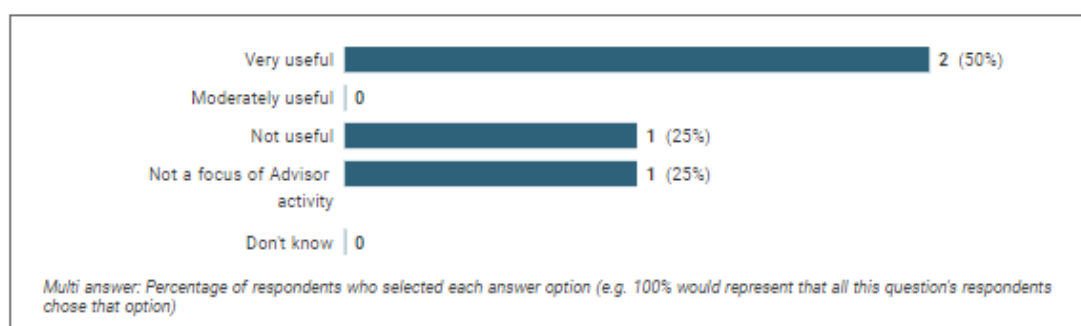
10.9 Developing a culture of sharing practice



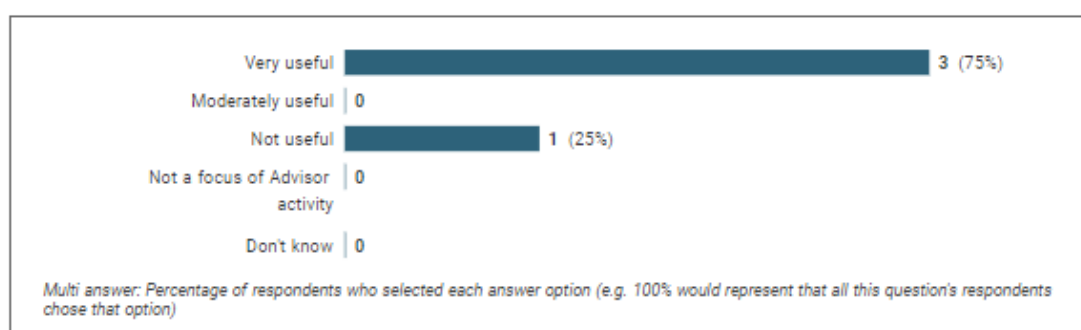
10.10 Building capacity for school self-evaluation



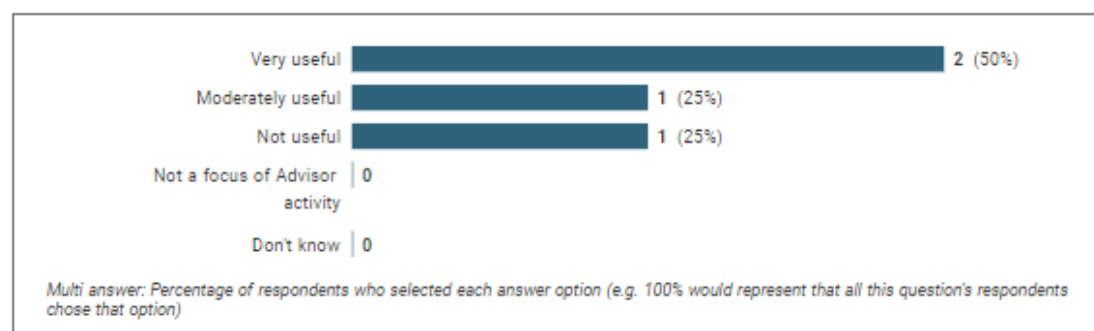
10.11 Support with staffing issues



10.12 Developing senior and middle leaders

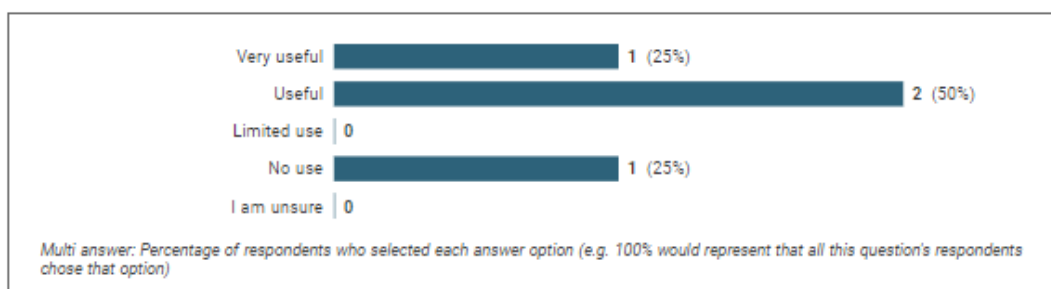


10.13 Working with Governors (AIG)

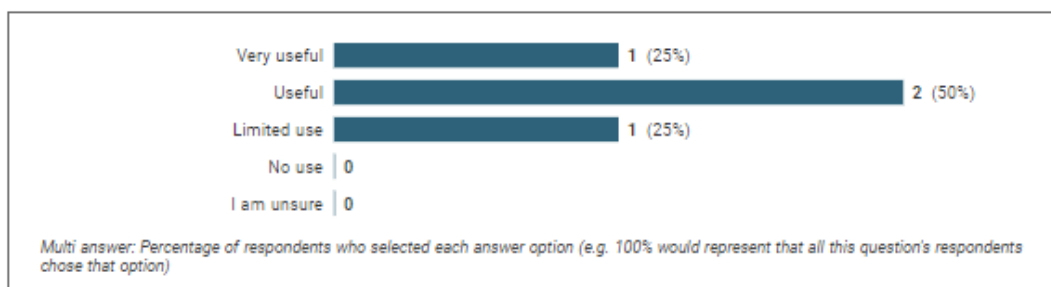


14 How useful have you found the following strategies in producing change in your school during the PtS initiative?

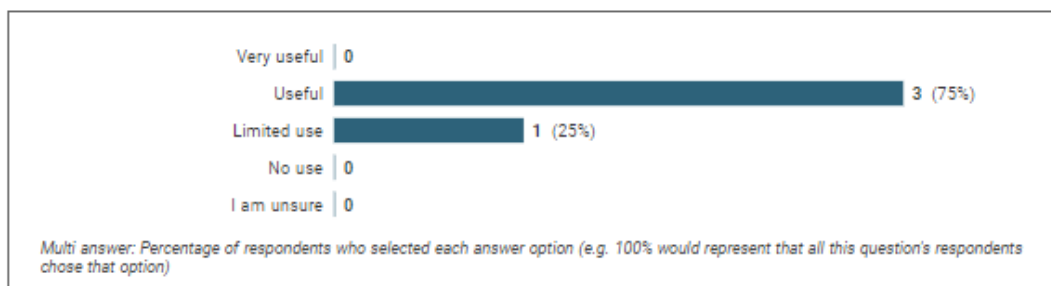
14.1 Investment in teacher development (CPD)



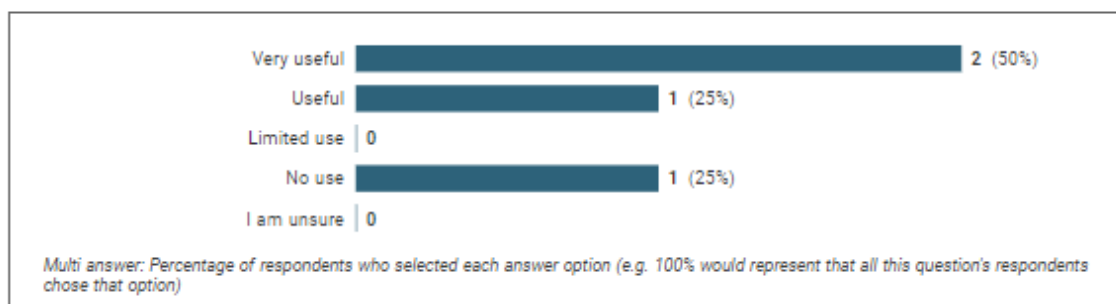
14.2 Scheduled teacher release time for collaboration



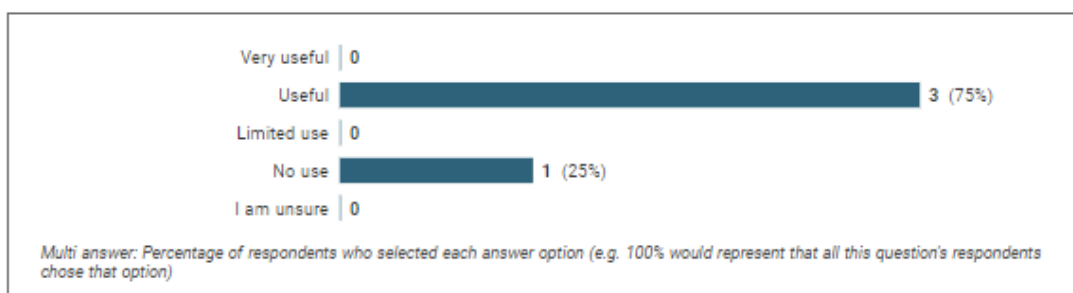
14.3 Investment in teaching and learning resources



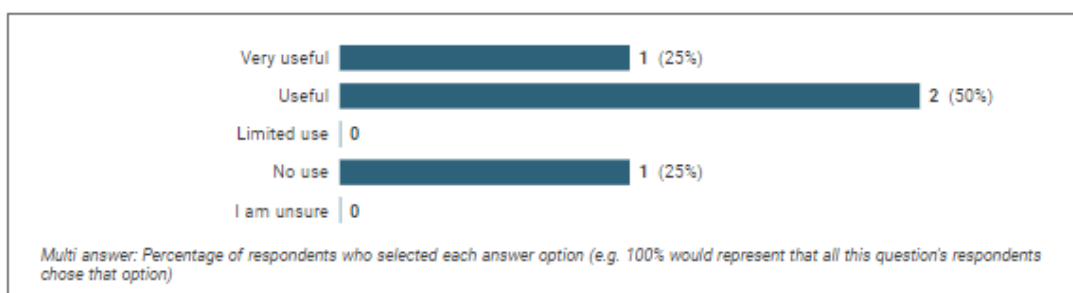
14.4 Building leadership capacity in the wider school workforce



14.5 Development of data skills to support teaching and learning

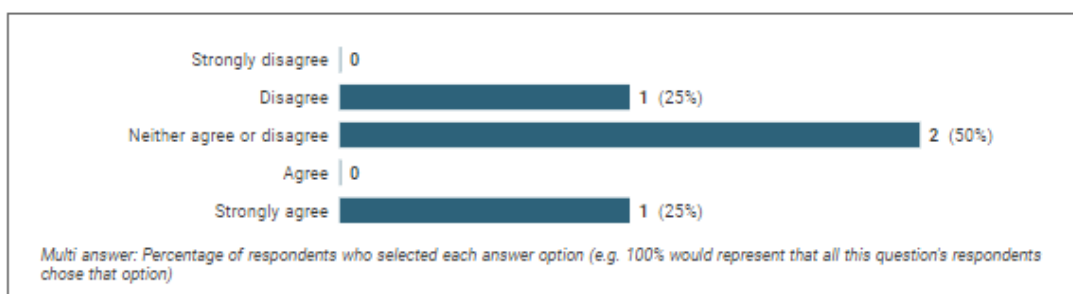


14.6 Independent external review of current practice

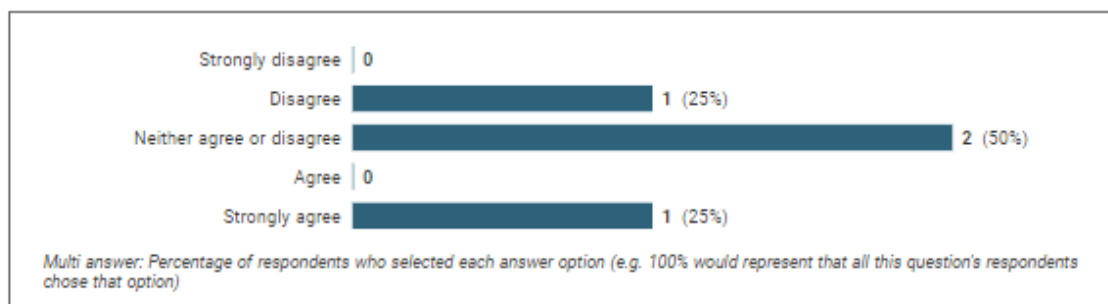


15 To what extent do you agree that the following factors have been a challenge in making progress in the PtS initiative?

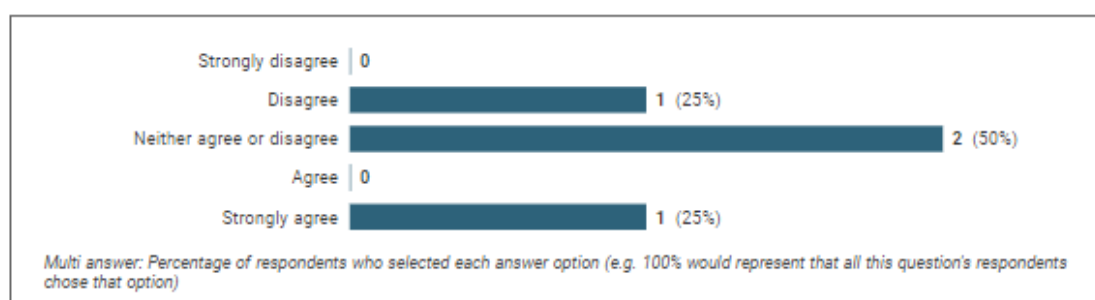
15.1 Competing priorities/initiatives



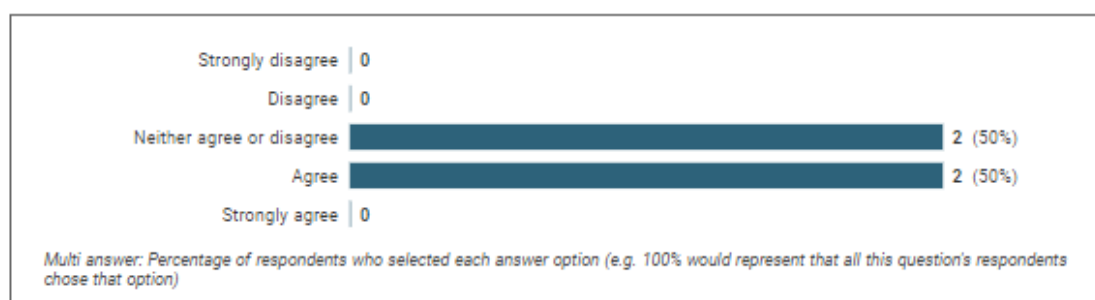
15.1 Competing priorities/initiatives



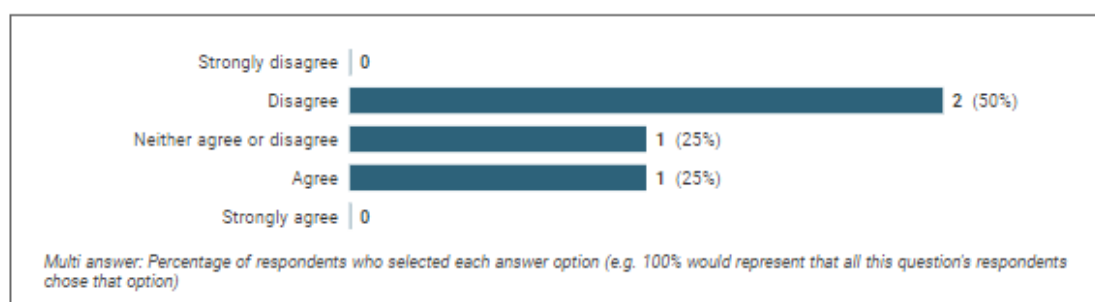
15.2 Available resource to support plans



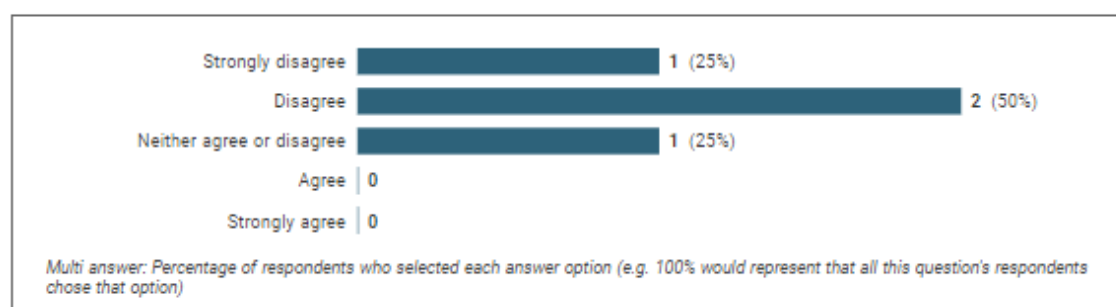
15.3 Making time for professional learning within school day



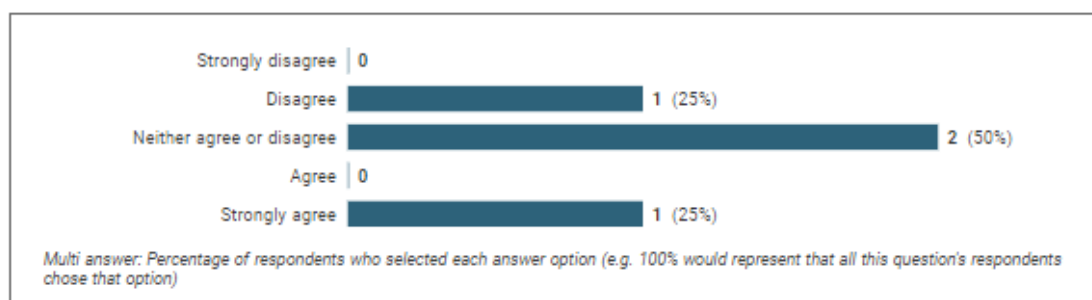
15.4 Sustaining developments over time



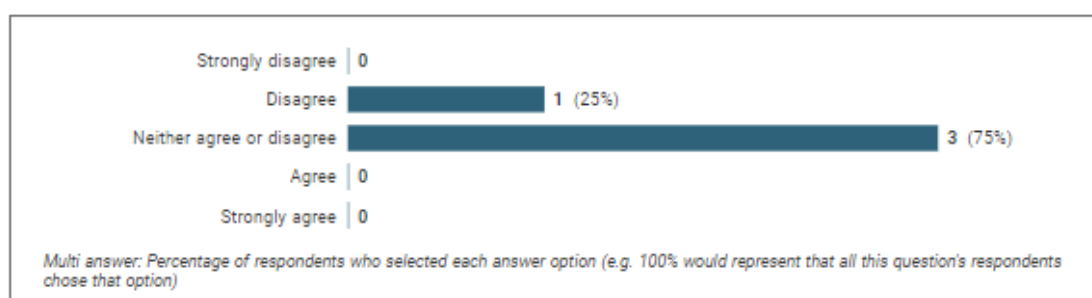
15.5 Teacher turnover, changes in personnel



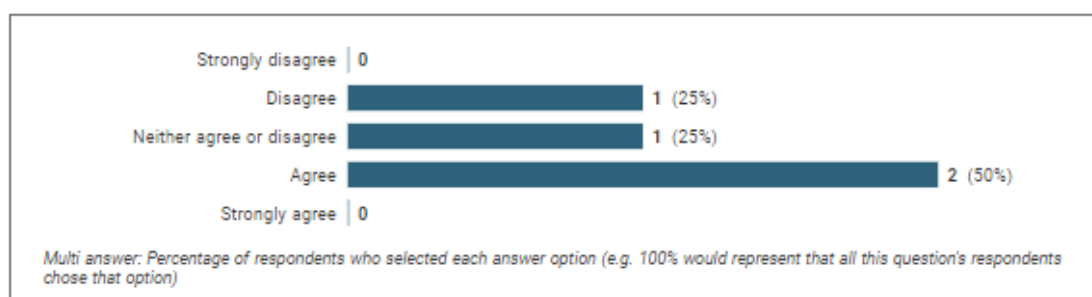
15.6 Resistance to change



15.7 Negative experience of previous initiatives

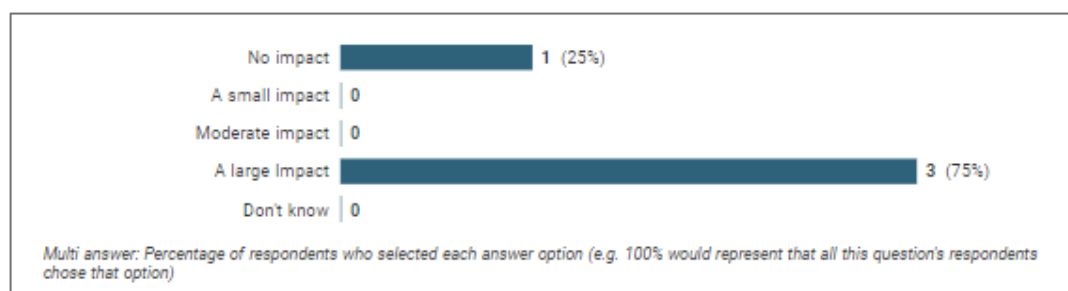


15.8 Timescale to achieve aims (duration of the PtS initiative)

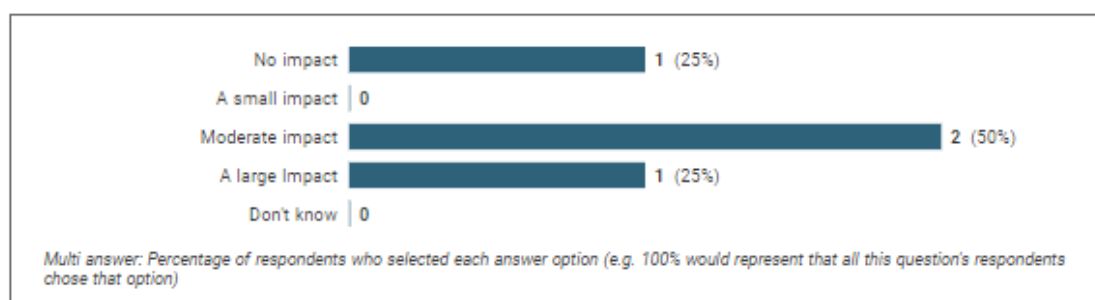


17 What positive impact do you feel the initiative has had so far on:

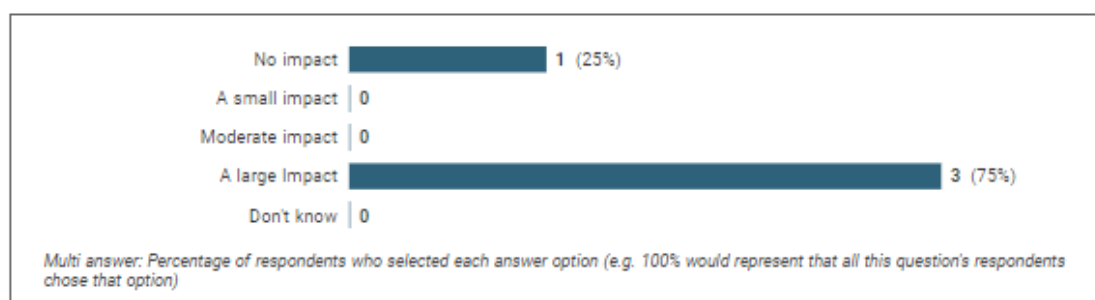
17.1 Classroom Practice



17.2 Pupil Outcomes

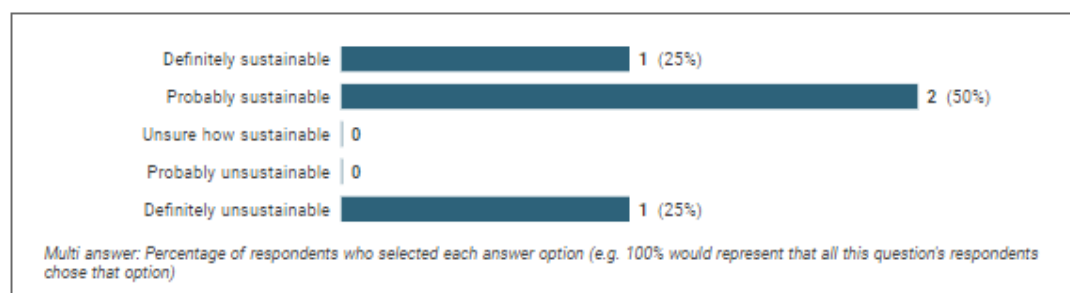


17.3 Teacher Development

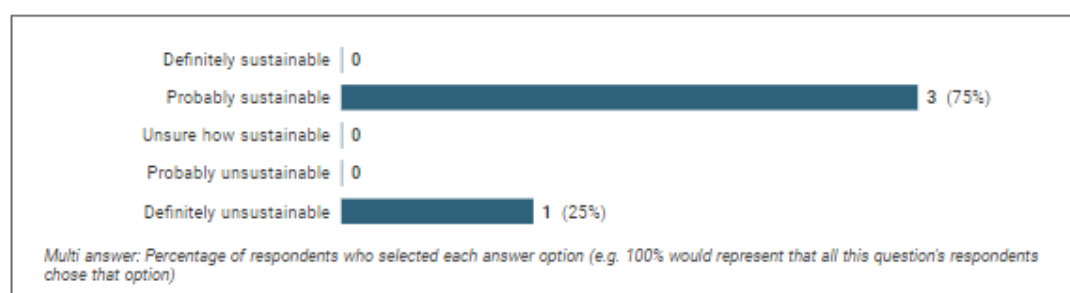


18 In your opinion, how sustainable are the changes after the PtS initiative has ended?

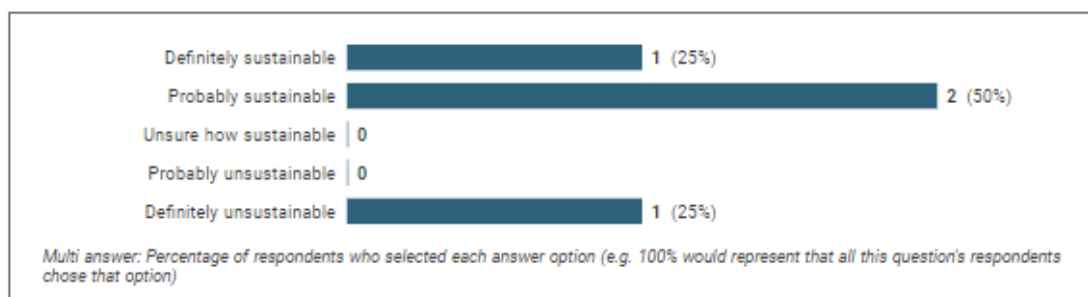
18.1 Classroom Practice



18.2 Pupil Outcomes



18.3 Teacher Development



APPENDIX 6: SCHOOL TESTIMONIAL FORM

SSIF application reference	
Provider/s of support	
Name of your school	
How well have you been supported by the project this term?	
How effective have we been in communicating project activities for the term?	
Have the project activities for this term been delivered on time? If not, which activities are off track?	
How has the project changed what happens in the classroom? What is different about teaching and learning from before?	
What other improvements has the project led to across the school?	
What elements of the project are working well?	
What improvements would you suggest?	
What has happened over the last term to increase your confidence that the impact of the project will be sustainable into the future once the project ends?	
Additional Comments (free text box):	

APPENDIX 7: PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS SCHOOLS

SCHOOLS - SECONDARY
All Saints Catholic High School
Kirkby High School
St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School
The Prescott School
SCHOOLS - PRIMARY
Eastcroft Park Primary School
Evelyn Community Primary School
Halsnead Community Primary School
Hope Primary School
Huyton with Roby CofE Primary School
Mosscroft Community Primary School (Now Willow Tree Primary Academy)
Park Brow Community Primary School
Prescot Primary School
Ravenscroft Community Primary School
Roby Park Primary School
Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School
St Albert's Catholic Primary School
St Aloysius Catholic Primary School
St Anne's Catholic Primary School
St Brigid's Catholic Primary School
St Columba's Catholic Primary School
St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School
St Laurence's Catholic Primary School
St Leo's and Southmead Catholic Primary School
St Luke's Catholic Primary School
St Margaret Mary's Catholic Junior School
St Marie's Catholic Primary School
Westvale Primary School
Whiston Willis Community Primary School
Yew Tree Community Primary School