



IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Intervention strategies for struggling schools

By Ben Parnell, Regional Director for Greenshaw Learning Trust

As Regional Director for Greenshaw Learning Trust, Ben Parnell is responsible for improving outcomes in schools across the West of England, including Five Acres High School in the Forest of Dean where he's been Headteacher since September 2017. Ben identified Tassomai as an intervention tool for GCSE science and put strategies in place that made a big impact on grades and Progress 8 scores. In his words "we cleaned up on the results", here's how they did it...

When I heard about Tassomai I looked at the results section on their website and the correlation between usage and output looked pretty good, that was what initially drew me in. Five Acres and another school I'm responsible for - Yate Academy near Bristol - had weaknesses in science outcomes and I wanted to improve them. When Five Acres joined Greenshaw in September 2017 the school was in special measures, graded 4 across the board so we were looking for intervention strategies that were fast, effective and measurable.

One year on and we've seen a significant change in our Progress 8 measure, from -0.31 to +0.26, and in science, results have improved in both schools, from an average of C- to C+. At Five acres High - 98% of kids got 2 sciences, 71% got 2 sciences at grade 4+, 51% got a strong pass (5 and above) in 2 sciences. **The school moved from 47% to 71% in a year in 2 sciences at 4 or above.** Tassomai's been one of the intervention tools that I credit for this change; I really believe in the product and think that it works, but if you're going to use Tassomai successfully you need a whole school system for running it. You need an SLT, including the headteacher that really cares if it's happening or not.

TAKING ON THE CHALLENGE

When we took over Five Acres we had a number of challenges: the catchment area covers a market town and a number of small, ex-mining communities, almost half of the students are on free school meals, and it's not the easiest area for recruiting and retaining science teachers.

We introduced a fairly draconian behaviour management system, the children don't have a choice about whether to engage or not!

We set out our expectations - which was easy to do with Tassomai - anyone that wasn't meeting our minimum expectations around usage was given a detention. We also made it part of the routine in school, timetabling Tassomai for 20 minutes every morning and setting it as homework every evening.

ROLLING IT OUT...

At Five Acres and also at Yate, we introduced Tassomai for full cohorts in years 9, 10 and 11, it was easier to make it a whole school initiative. To launch the program we ran whole school assemblies showing students how to use it, we put Tassomai information boards around the school which really helped and we published leaderboards and league tables. We also sent instructions home and ran parents' information evenings to show them how to use it.



Not everyone embraced it. Tassomai isn't a game, it's still learning - and that's not always fun! The community weren't used to having homework that they're expected to do every night and it being followed up and checked on! Some of the parents found it hard to understand its purpose, other tools they've seen may be more obviously "teaching" rather than quizzing. But that repetitive recall is really helping embed knowledge and familiarising students with the material.

The staff find it very straightforward. It's very light on administration, they just have to set it up and let it run. If they want to dig deeper and look at individual students and what they've understood the data's all there.

SUMMING UP

Tassomai isn't a shortcut - you have to put the effort in to get a good result - that applies to the student and the school. But it makes a difference to outcomes, which is why it's been a worthwhile investment for us.