NHS Education for Scotland

Closing the attainment gap in Reading at P3

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Introduction

The rationale of this project was to narrow the attainment gap in reading for our youngest learners. All research indicates that without focused intervention, this gap persists and widens across the years of formal schooling and is linked to future success and positive destinations.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, University of Strathclyde, 2014

Aim

By March 2022, 77% of a cohort of P3 learners across 4 schools (identified as being off track for expected average parameters), will have achieved mastery in all Early Reading Skills (Phonological Awareness) baseline 43%

Method

Teachers implemented a robust baseline assessment and used a Pareto chart to identify the key areas to focus on for improvement. There were common weaknesses across all 4 schools; rhyme production and phoneme segmentation.

Phonological Awareness Skill Analysis
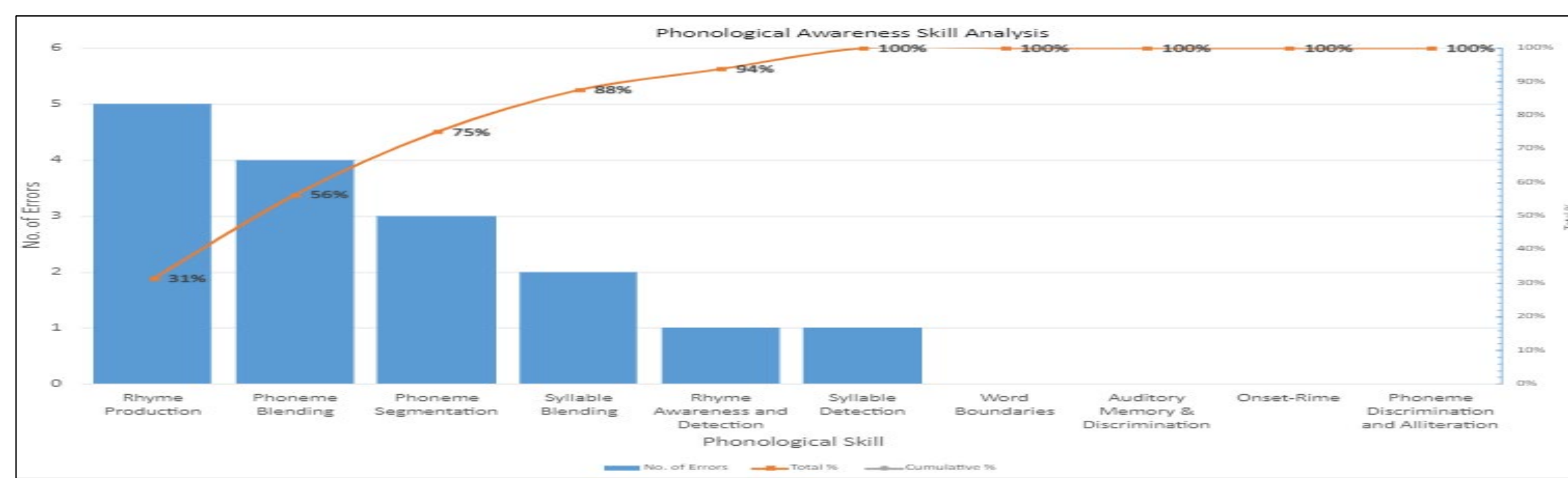
The 5 practitioners used either a Force-field Analysis or Cause and Effect tool to understand their own unique contexts and supported each other to identify change ideas which had the potential to make a positive difference to their learners. Each teacher then completed a driver diagram and starting testing changes using the PDSA process.
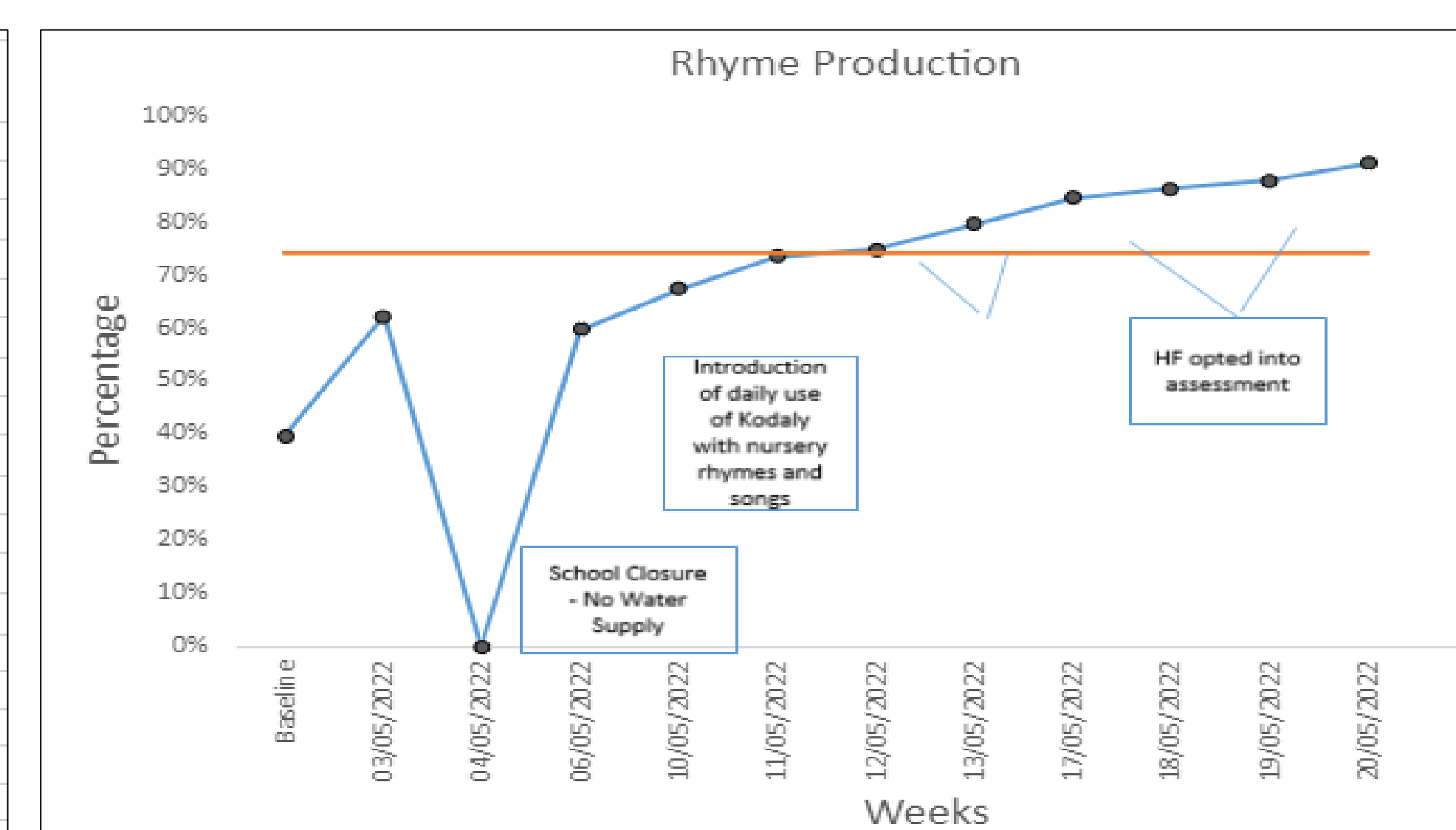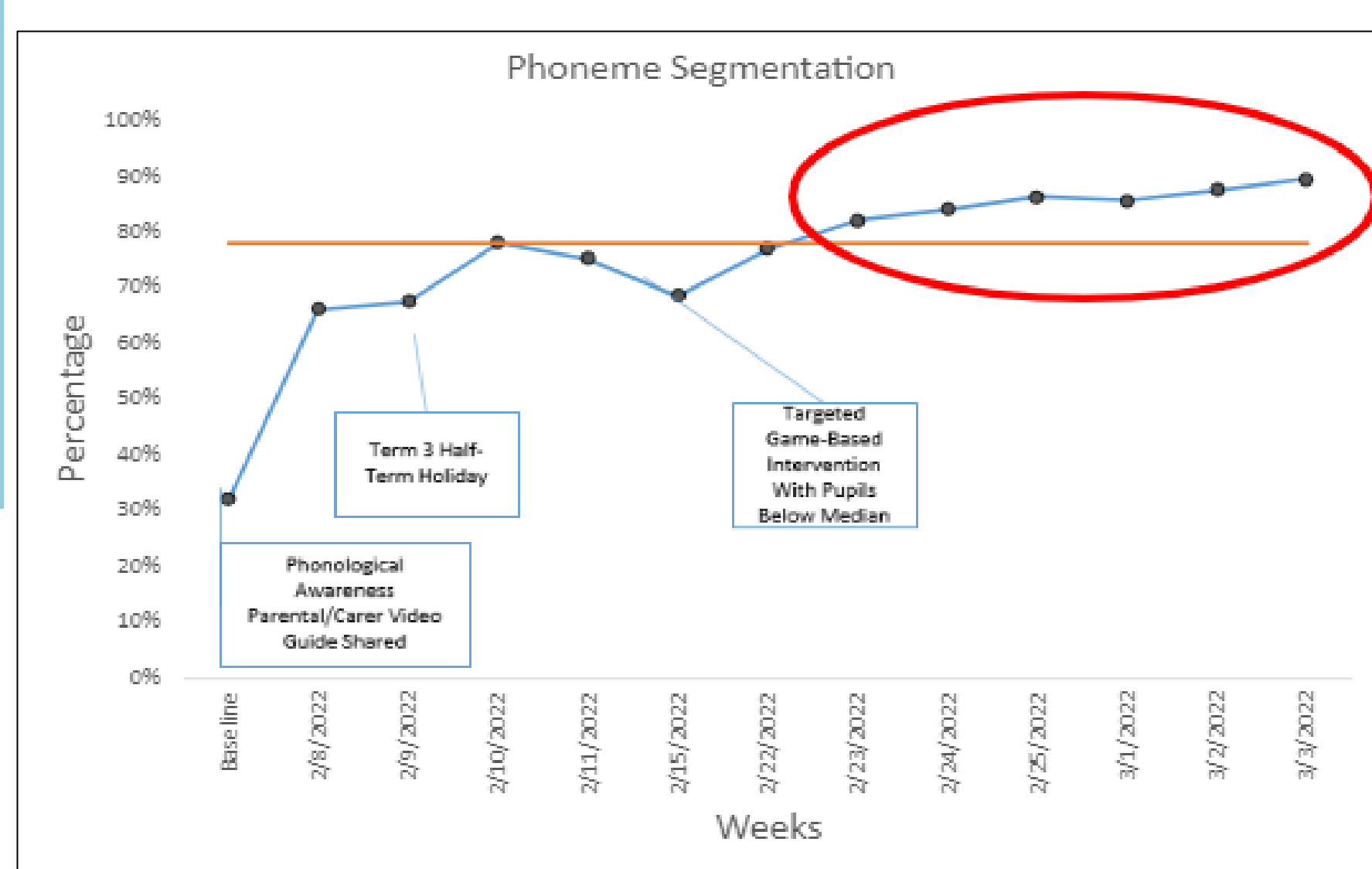
Process Changes
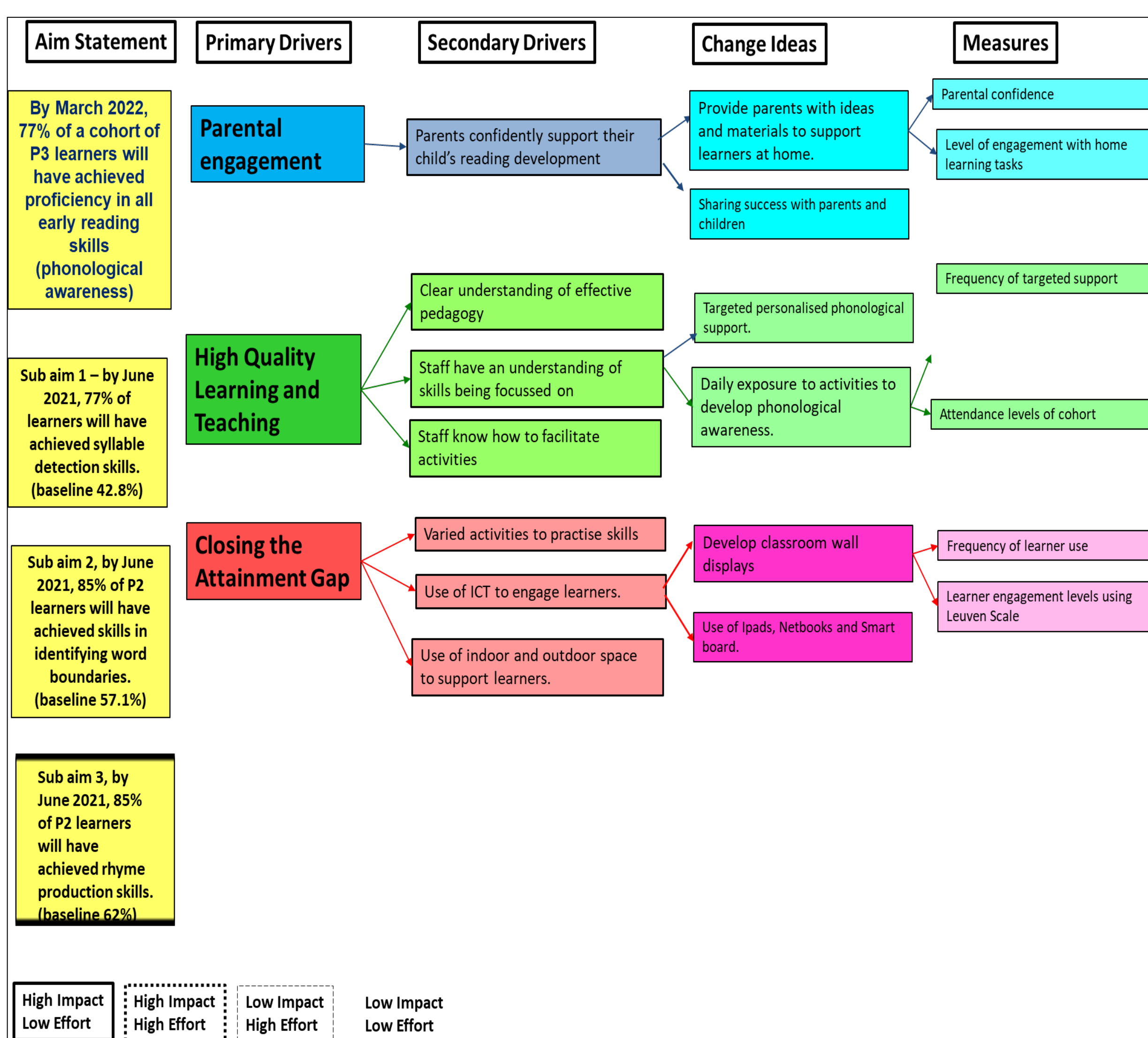
Key Reference Materials

Langley G, Moen R, Nolan K, Nolan T, Norman C & Provost L, The Improvement Guide, 2nd Edition, 2009

Results

Phoneme Segmentation

Rhyme Production

The run charts both show that daily, targeted support, using motivating activities, had the biggest impact on learner gains. Both run charts have too few runs but may signal a non-random improvement. Chart 1 illustrates a shift. Chart 2 demonstrates a trend. Ideally, data would have been collected at least 3 times per week but due to staffing issues, this was untenable. More frequent data collection would have perhaps demonstrated a run.

Conclusions

- A consistent, robust baseline assessment tool allowed practitioners to delve below the surface and tailor learning to ensure gaps were plugged
- Learners are more confident in their ability and have improved resilience
- Learners have improved spelling and confidence to write independently as a result of gains made with reading fluency
- Short, daily inputs with a narrow focus, helped to bring about the biggest gains. See illustration below

Reading - Phonological Awareness QI		
Current CfE Level	Months Added	How many months off track?
1st Progressing	6 months	On track
1st Progressing	6 months	On track
1st Intial Engagement	18 months	12 months
1st Intial Engagement	12 months	6 months
1st Progressing	6 months	On track
1st Intial Engagement	12 months	6 months

I can read really big words now, 7 or 8 letters!

Key Learning Points

- Operating in an unstable context, fraught with staffing issues still leads to pockets of improvement
- QI tools challenge assumptions and are a powerful tool for scratching below the surface
- Data is powerful when collected regularly. When analysed, it provides a narrative about the journey and gives rigorous validation to adopt, abandon or adapt change ideas. Data is for learning!

Next Steps

- Continue to build QI capacity across Cluster
- Co-lead on Early Level Listening and Talking QI local authority project
- Work with CYPIC on a national scope for Early Level Literacy

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