Mossbourne Federation

Intent, Evidence, Adjustment: Leading the Mossbourne Playbook Roll-Out at Scale

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7	3 + 4	1
schools across the federation	primaries and secondaries	Playbook strategy per half-term

Foreword: What matters most in implementation?

There is a moment in every large-scale implementation where confidence meets evidence.

The Mossbourne Playbook was designed to codify excellence across a growing federation of schools. The rollout was thoughtfully mapped. Leaders were aligned. Staff were engaged.

And then the data told a different story. Not one of failure, but of friction. A gap between knowing and doing. A difference between launching a strategy and embedding it.

What makes this case study powerful is not that everything worked immediately. It is that evidence helped leaders to see clearly, and in turn, leadership could act proportionately. They slowed down. Reduced volume. Introduced structural tagging. Monitored weekly. Recalibrated.

This is the difference between initiative and implementation. This is what drove impact through deliberate improvement. Across seven schools, disciplined attention to what could be seen, named and tracked transformed aspiration into deliberate practice.

Abstract

Scaling excellence across multiple schools demands more than clarity of vision; it requires disciplined implementation and forensic attention to evidence. This case study examines the initial rollout of the Mossbourne Playbook across seven schools, three primaries and four secondaries, within the Mossbourne Federation.

Although the initial implementation was robustly mapped, secured buy-in, and supported by staff CPD, early ProgressTeaching data revealed a critical gap between intention and embedding. The article explores how data signposted inconsistency, how leadership verified this through direct school visits and discussions with leaders, and how the implementation model was recalibrated: slowed, simplified and made measurable through tagging.

“Implementation cannot be assumed. If practice cannot be seen, measured and tracked, it is not embedded.”

Codifying Excellence: Why the Playbook Matters

As the Mossbourne Federation expanded to seven schools, we faced a pressing question: how do you disseminate pedagogical excellence at scale?

The Mossbourne Habits was our first truly collaborative endeavour as a Federation of four schools (two secondaries and two primaries) to articulate the pedagogical best-bets most likely to secure success for every pupil. They made the habits of great teaching explicit so that excellence was defined rather than assumed. The Mossbourne Playbook is the next step in this commitment to clarity. Co-designed with our newest schools, it set out to codify the specific instructional “plays” that bring those habits to life: explicit, repeatable strategies designed to reduce variability between classrooms and increase the likelihood of consistently strong teaching and learning.

Leading across multiple schools is often about deciding what you are prepared to make consistent and what you are willing to leave to chance. The quality of teaching, the strength of learning and pupils’ futures are not outcomes we are prepared to risk on variability. As a live framework, it remains under continual review and refinement, however each version requires fidelity in execution if we are to test its impact and truly understand what works.

With this in mind, we carefully mapped the rollout of version 1 of the Playbook. Leaders across the Federation agreed the sequence and pace of the implementation. Staff briefings and CPD sessions introduced the rationale and unpacked the strategies. Implementation overviews were shared. The architecture appeared secure. Implementation was underway.

Or so we thought.

The Implementation Illusion

When organisations scale, leaders lose daily proximity. You cannot walk the corridors of multiple schools every day. You cannot rely on informal feedback or reported impressions. At scale, disciplined systems must replace instinct. For us, that system was ProgressTeaching.

As the rollout progressed, we turned to the data expecting to see evidence of the Playbook strategies being noticed, referenced and discussed in drop-ins and developmental actions. We did not.

Postholders were undertaking drop-ins and providing regular, meaningful feedback. But there was no systematic reference to Playbook strategies. They were not being tracked. They were not yet being systematically named within feedback cycles. At this stage, we had not introduced tagging, but even narratively, the Playbook was not consistently appearing in monitoring records.

This indicated that we had what is frequently referred to as a ‘knowing-doing’ problem, which is well-documented as a barrier to implementing change. Knowing what and how to do something doesn’t guarantee it will be done. ProgressTeaching exposed this ‘knowing-doing’ gap so we could verify it and do something about it.

Verifying the Signal

Data can indicate a problem, but leadership must verify it.

Federation and school leaders undertook joint learning walks to triangulate what ProgressTeaching was (and was not) telling us. In some classrooms, Playbook strategies were visible. In others, they weren't. The uncomfortable realisation followed that we had launched implementation, but we had not secured embedding. There is a critical difference.

The Leadership Error: Over-Ambition at Speed

On reflection, the flaw was not in the vision or the mapping. It was not the leaders or teachers in the schools, who are always embodying the Mossbourne values of 'Excellence', 'No Excuses' and 'Unity' in everything they do. It was rather the pace and volume of change and not engaging early enough with the story that the data was trying to tell us.

We had attempted to roll out too many strategies simultaneously, and underestimated the collective endeavour needed to change behaviour, especially when our most expert and experienced staff have achieved superb outcomes and transformed the lives of so many children, without any such codification. If we were serious about the Playbook being a supportive mechanism to change more children's lives in more classrooms, then we would have to slow down the roll-out and make sure everyone, especially our leaders and postholders, had the space and time to understand, practise and receive low-stakes peer feedback on each strategy.

Recalibrating the Implementation Plan

We returned to the implementation plan and made three decisive changes.

1. We Slowed Down

Instead of introducing two strategies per half term, we committed to one Playbook strategy per half-term. This did three things:

- It supported teachers, and especially leaders, in having time to practise one play at a time.
- It allowed CPD to become deeper rather than broader.
- It increased the precision of teacher feedback and development.

2. We Introduced Tagging

We formalised what had previously been implicit. Every drop-in conducted through ProgressTeaching would now include explicit tagging of the relevant Playbook strategy. As tags are fully customisable, we were able to tailor these to each strategy in the Primary and Secondary Playbooks.

This single structural shift introduced tacit accountability, transformed visibility and allowed implementation to be more readily quantified across schools, subjects and year groups.

> **"Before tagging, we were looking at general teaching quality. After tagging, we were looking at Playbook fidelity. The former measured performance; the latter measured implementation."**

3. We Monitored Weekly

Federation and school leaders worked together to recommunicate monitoring expectations to their teams. We aligned senior leadership messaging across schools via a central document, which also RAG-rated the key data from ProgressTeaching in a live dashboard, reflecting the key lessons we had learned along the way:

If the strategy is the priority, it must be visible in drop-ins.
If it is visible in drop-ins, it must be visible in data.
If it is not visible in data, it is not yet embedded.

What Happened Next

The impact was not perfect, but it was a significant improvement. Within one half-term cycle:

- Tagging increased significantly.
- Conversations referenced the Playbook explicitly.
- Classroom consistency improved.
- Variability reduced.

Most importantly, we could now see the strengths and developmental needs across the federation.

The Deeper Lesson: Data as Truth-Teller

The central learning from this case study is not about tagging. It is about being prepared to change course when the data tells you something you don't want to hear. It is about recognising that we had not fully considered how to systematically use the data available to us to verify the rollout from the start, nor sufficiently anticipated the differing needs of all colleagues, particularly our most experienced staff. When implementing change at scale, we learned that it must be:

- Observable
- Measurable
- Consistently referenced, reiterated and reinforced.

In short, if you cannot see a strategy being named in feedback, if you cannot track it in monitoring, if you cannot disaggregate it across schools, you cannot claim it is embedded. And you certainly cannot evaluate its impact.

> **"ProgressTeaching clarified reality. It prevented us from mistaking launch for implementation."**

Conclusion: Implementation Is What You Can See

The Mossbourne Playbook rollout began with strong mapping, buy-in and professional development. Yet early data revealed a truth that corridor confidence alone could not: strategy was being introduced, but not yet embedded.

The corrective action was not more urgency, but more discipline.

Narrow the focus.
Slow the pace.
Make it measurable.

Attune to the story the data is telling you.

Across seven schools, this recalibration moved the Playbook from initiative to practice. The leadership lesson is simple and uncompromising: if the data does not show it, it is not yet happening.

The Mossbourne Mindset

> **“Launch is not embedding.”**

> **“If the strategy is the priority, it must be visible in drop-ins.”**

> **“If it is visible in drop-ins, it must be visible in data.”**

> **“If it is not visible in data, it is not yet embedded.”**

> **“Narrow the focus. Slow the pace. Make it measurable.”**

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