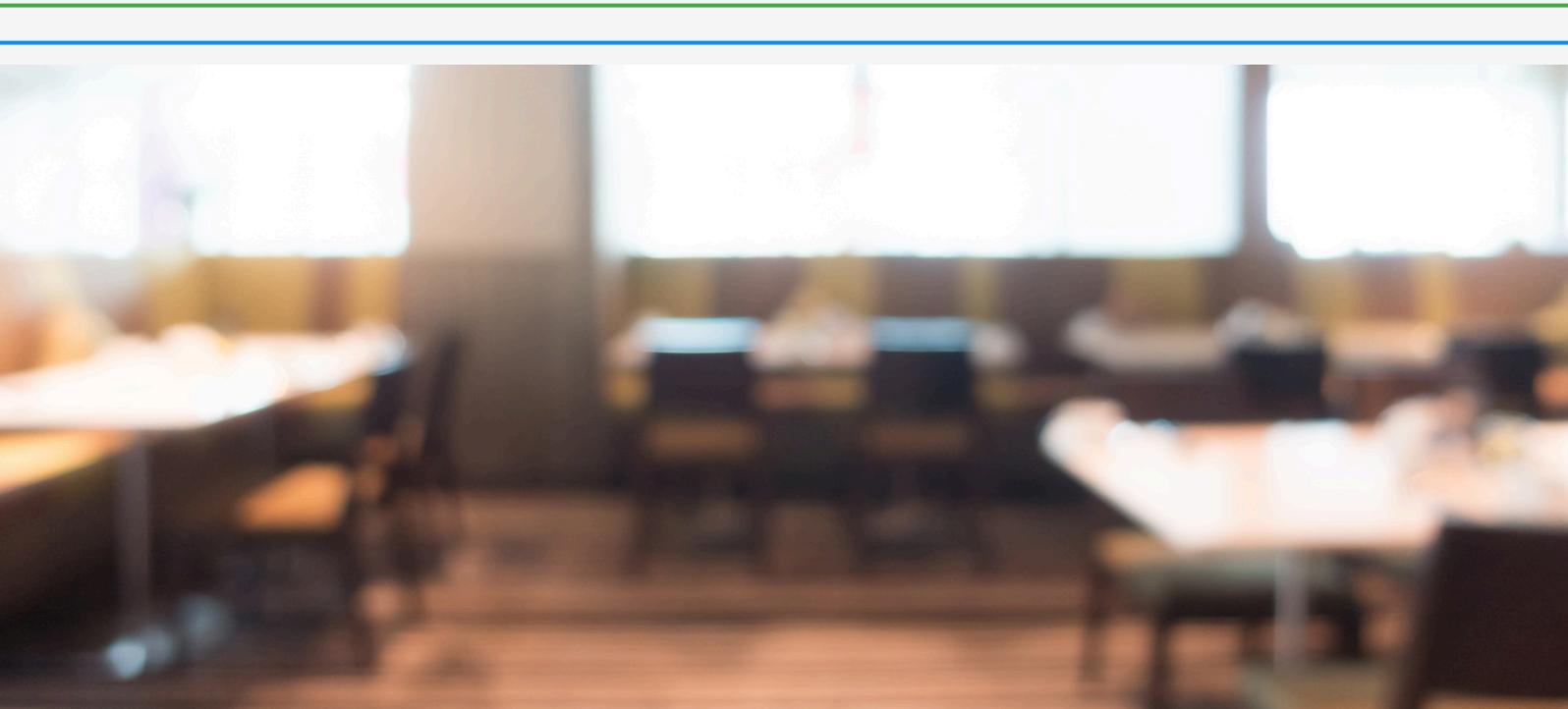


# ProgressTeaching as a Catalyst for Change

THREE MODELS FOR PURPOSE-DRIVEN IMPLEMENTATION

Written by Danielle Finlay, November 2025





## Abstract

*Successful implementation of any school improvement initiative depends less on the sophistication of the system being adopted and more on the intentionality, fidelity, and cultural readiness that underpin its rollout. This article argues that the principles guiding the effective implementation of ProgressTeaching are not platform-specific but reflect wider evidence-informed best practice for introducing any strategy or developmental tool in education (Fixsen et al., 2005). When leaders foreground culture, coherence, and purposeful reflection, they create the conditions for deliberate practice and sustained impact, ensuring that the potential of platforms like ProgressTeaching is not only activated, but meaningfully realised.*

*The article begins by establishing why culture must sit before systems, outlining the dispositions that determine whether data becomes developmental insight or compliance-driven noise. It then clarifies the mindset required for ProgressTeaching to fulfil its core purpose as a mechanism for feedback-rich, adaptive professional learning. The discussion progresses to examine a leadership-led rollout anchored in a clear Theory of Change, demonstrating how leaders articulate goals, map pathways to improvement, and use iterative feedback loops to test assumptions and evaluate impact. Following this, the article navigates three contrasting rollout approaches: leadership-led, teacher-driven, and Trust-directed, highlighting the strengths, risks, and contextual factors that influence their effectiveness. By comparing these models, it offers leaders a structured lens through which to determine the most contextually appropriate method for their setting. The article concludes by reaffirming that when implementation is culturally aligned, strategically coherent, and enacted with fidelity, ProgressTeaching and indeed any educational initiative, can achieve transformative and sustainable pedagogical growth.*

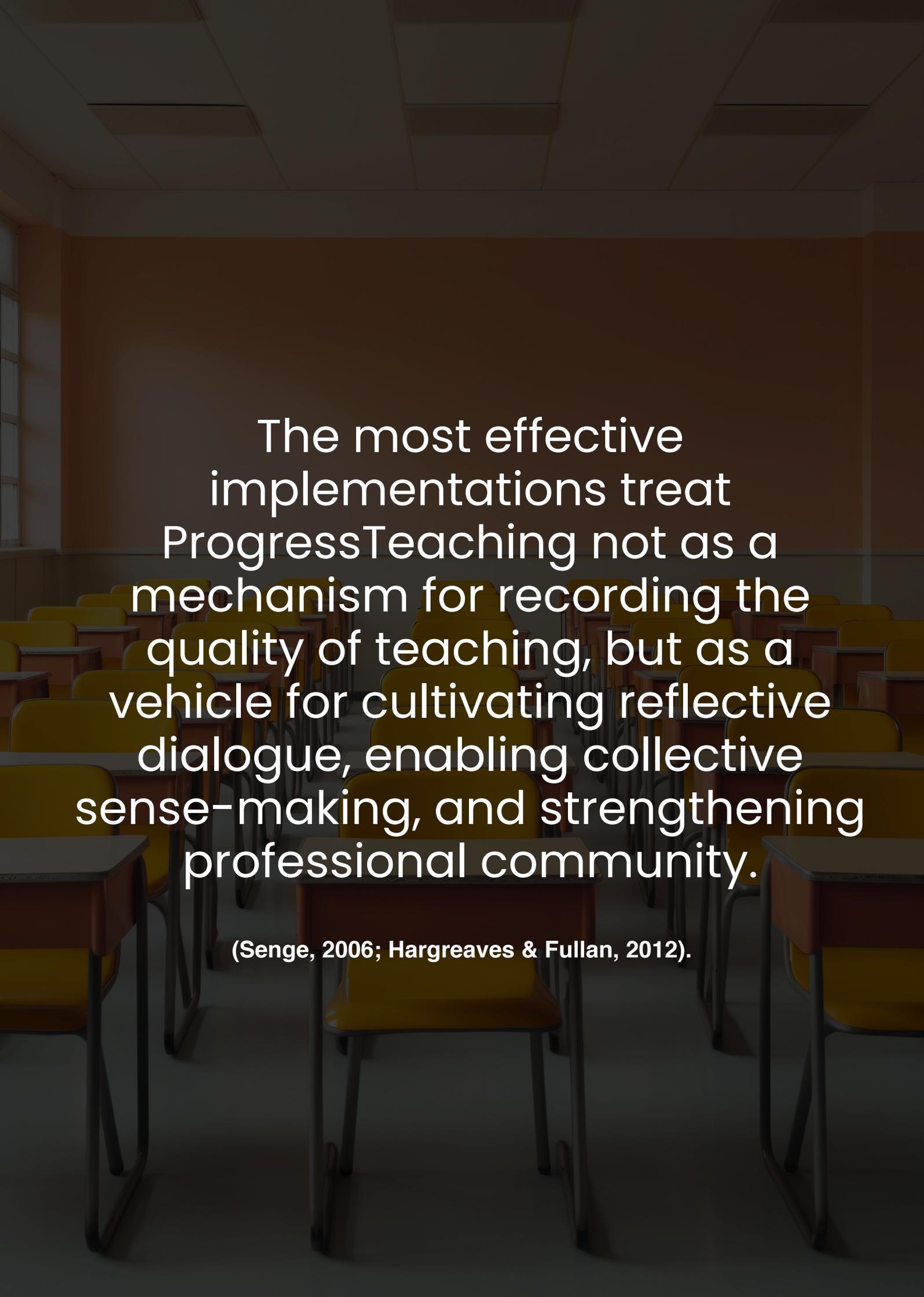


## Introduction

Launching any new policy, framework, or pedagogical approach in a school or Trust demands far more than technical preparation; it requires a deeply considered understanding of culture, context, and people. As Fullan (2016) reminds us, educational change succeeds not because the strategy is sound, but because it is sensitively aligned with the environment into which it is introduced. Every setting carries its own institutional memory: its history of prior initiatives, its rhythms and routines, its social norms, and the unspoken assumptions that govern behaviour. These cultural dynamics shape staff perceptions long before any new tool or framework is unveiled (Schein, 2010). This is why a carefully articulated approach or theory of change is essential: leaders must interrogate existing structures, professional identities, and stakeholder expectations to position their change in a way that honours the past while offering a credible path forward. Trust is central to this process. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that relational trust is the bedrock upon which school improvement rests; without it, even the most compelling innovation can quickly become viewed through a lens of compliance rather than growth. Whether introducing a pedagogical matrix, a professional learning system, or a platform like ProgressTeaching, success depends on the intentionality of the launch: it must be rooted in evidence, responsive to context, and co-constructed with staff rather than delivered to them.

In every setting I have worked with, this foundational need for intentional, trust-centred implementation has framed the next challenge: moving beyond episodic feedback towards a culture of genuine professional learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). ProgressTeaching has been one of the most powerful tools I've seen to bridge that gap. Its evolution from a simple lesson drop-in tracker to a fully integrated professional learning platform has been transformational, not because of the technology itself, but because of what it makes possible: rich professional dialogue, sustained reflection, and accountability in the truest developmental sense (Timperley, 2011).

Over the years, I've used ProgressTeaching across both school and Trust contexts. Having first worked with the platform in a large north-London Academy (which I will call Frontier Academy for the purpose of this article), I've seen it deployed in multiple ways: for lesson drop-ins, live feedback, instructional coaching, CPD alignment, and senior leadership oversight. I've witnessed, too, the consequences of poor implementation: where the platform becomes a compliance tool that fragments trust and alienates teachers. Equally, I have seen it used masterfully in a mid-sized south London Church of England school (Moral Compass Academy), where it operated as what Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017) describe as a "developmental mirror": a tool that reflects strengths, reveals blind spots, and illuminates opportunities for growth. What distinguishes these two experiences is not the technology itself, but the professional culture into which it is introduced and the intentionality with which leaders position it.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a classroom. The room is filled with rows of yellow chairs and wooden desks, arranged in a typical classroom layout. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall tone is dark, which makes the white text stand out prominently. The text is centered on the page and is written in a clean, sans-serif font.

The most effective implementations treat ProgressTeaching not as a mechanism for recording the quality of teaching, but as a vehicle for cultivating reflective dialogue, enabling collective sense-making, and strengthening professional community.

(Senge, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

In such settings, the platform becomes part of the school's learning architecture: a catalyst for shared language, transparent expectations, and developmental accountability. Where implementation is weaker, it is rarely because staff do not understand the platform; rather, it is because its purpose has not been anchored securely within the school's cultural fabric. Tools cannot compensate for the absence of trust, but they can amplify it when present.

This article comes as the first in a wider series, and culture remains an integral theme throughout. From my experience, the rollout and sustained implementation of ProgressTeaching is only effective when carefully positioned within an existing culture, and even more powerful when the rollout is intentionally aligned with the desired culture a school or Trust seeks to build. When ProgressTeaching is introduced thoughtfully, it can do more than reflect culture: it can help shape and accelerate it. In contexts where the culture is already strong, the platform enhances coherence and collective agency. In contexts where culture is emerging or fragile, a meaningfully designed rollout can support the conditions (trust, clarity, shared purpose) needed for transformation. In this sense, ProgressTeaching is not merely a tool to be implemented, but a lever for cultural evolution when placed in the hands of leaders who understand both their present identity and their aspirational one.

In this article, I'll explore how ProgressTeaching can be rolled out most effectively to raise standards, improve consistency, and deepen professional culture. I will consider three models for rollout: **leadership-led**, **teacher-led**, and **Trust-led**, each anchored in a relevant change theory. Before turning to those, however, I want to outline what I believe is the single most important factor in successful implementation: the *mindset* that underpins it.

### Implementation is relational

The impact of ProgressTeaching is determined by the intentionality, transparency and fidelity of the roll-out; *how* it is introduced matters more than just *what* it does.



## The Mindset for Success: Culture Before Systems

**If ProgressTeaching is the vehicle, the organisation's mindset is the fuel.**

Without a culture grounded in humility, curiosity, trust, and shared ownership, even the most carefully planned rollout will achieve little more than surface-level compliance (Edmondson, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Whether this culture is long-established or not yet conceived, ProgressTeaching can support the development and progression in teaching quality. For ProgressTeaching to drive genuine pedagogical transformation, its purpose must be explicit: it should both operate within and help to shape a culture of continual improvement. Where that culture already exists, the platform can amplify and refine it. Where it does not, ProgressTeaching can act as a catalyst, using its feedback mechanisms to identify what works, what must change, and how practice should evolve. In this way, the platform and the culture work in tandem: each informing, challenging, and strengthening the other.

Indeed, data is only as powerful as the reflection it prompts. The platform encourages teachers to engage in cycles of review, analysis, and adjustment. This iterative process encourages teachers and leaders to challenge assumptions, gather and interpret data, and take meaningful action, the impacts of which are then interpreted and acted on in turn, (Timperley, 2011). When educators see the platform not as a measure of compliance but as a tool for growth, the data becomes narrative and professional reflection becomes collective habit, (Senge, 2006). In this context, ProgressTeaching transforms from a performance tool into a developmental framework that strengthens the teaching profession's capacity for adaptive expertise and self-sustaining improvement, (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017).

Cultivating the conditions for this is less about mastering specific behaviours and more about nurturing the dispositions that make growth possible. Humility, curiosity, trust, and shared ownership shape how teachers interpret data, how leaders frame feedback, and how the whole organisation approaches improvement. These principles determine whether ProgressTeaching enables honest reflection or slips into compliance. Some processes are vital in creating such a culture, such as co-constructing rubrics, using iterative frameworks, responsibly and regularly interrogating data, fostering psychological safety, managing resistance, and aligning appraisal. Each of these are complex and will be explored in a dedicated article. For now, the essential point is clear: no rollout model, however well-designed, can succeed without this cultural groundwork.

The platform's potential is therefore realised primarily through the spirit in which these tools are used: curiously, collaboratively, and critically. Once this cultural foundation is established, the question becomes not *whether* ProgressTeaching should be adopted, but *how* it can best be embedded to reflect a school or Trust's unique context. Different models of rollout, whether leadership-led, teacher-driven, or Trust-directed, each offer distinct advantages and challenges. Each method can work, provided it is anchored in a coherent theory of change and deliberately aligns with a setting's current culture, not just the desired culture.



## Leadership-Led Rollout: The Theory of Change in Practice

When ProgressTeaching is introduced from the top, success depends on leaders modelling its use and communicating a clear narrative about why it matters.

Having led this style of roll-out in more than one of my settings, being as deliberate as possible with the approach, details and reflection points is imperative. From my experience, the most useful method has been to apply a Theory of Change framework to map out how and why a desired change is expected to happen within a particular context. Theory of Change offers a structured way to do this: identifying the long-term goals (for example, improved teaching consistency or stronger coaching culture), the intermediate outcomes needed to reach them, and the actions that will generate those outcomes, (Weiss, 1995; Anderson, 2005). ProgressTeaching operationalises this approach by turning abstract goals (better teaching, higher student outcomes) into concrete, measurable steps while making assumptions explicit and providing evidence to test them. It allows leaders to connect actions to outcomes and adapt their strategy in a structured, data-informed way, exactly what Theory of Change is designed to do.

When leaders use the platform to articulate the intended outcomes, map the mechanisms that drive them, and create the feedback loops needed to test their assumptions, ProgressTeaching becomes far more than a monitoring tool. It becomes the operational spine of school improvement.

### **Purpose must be explicit and shared.**

When leaders clearly articulate the “why,” link actions to outcomes, and test assumptions using evidence, ProgressTeaching becomes a driver of professional learning rather than a monitoring mechanism.

The following stages outline how a leadership-led model can translate a *Theory of Change* into practical, coherent implementation.

# 01

## Clarifying the goal

- For most schools using ProgressTeaching, the goal might be *improving teaching quality, feedback culture, and student outcomes*.
- The platform helps articulate *what that improvement looks like* (e.g. more effective feedback loops, improved teacher reflection, greater instructional consistency).

# 02

## Mapping the pathway to change

- The *Theory of Change* identifies key drivers (e.g. high-quality instructional coaching, targeted CPD, collaborative professional dialogue).
- ProgressTeaching operationalises these drivers by giving leaders the tools to structure and monitor them – through drop-in data, development plans, and review cycles.

# 03

## Testing assumptions and impact

- A robust *Theory of Change* demands evidence to test whether each link in the chain is working.
- ProgressTeaching provides the feedback loops and analytics that reveal whether professional learning is translating into improved classroom practice and, ultimately, student outcomes

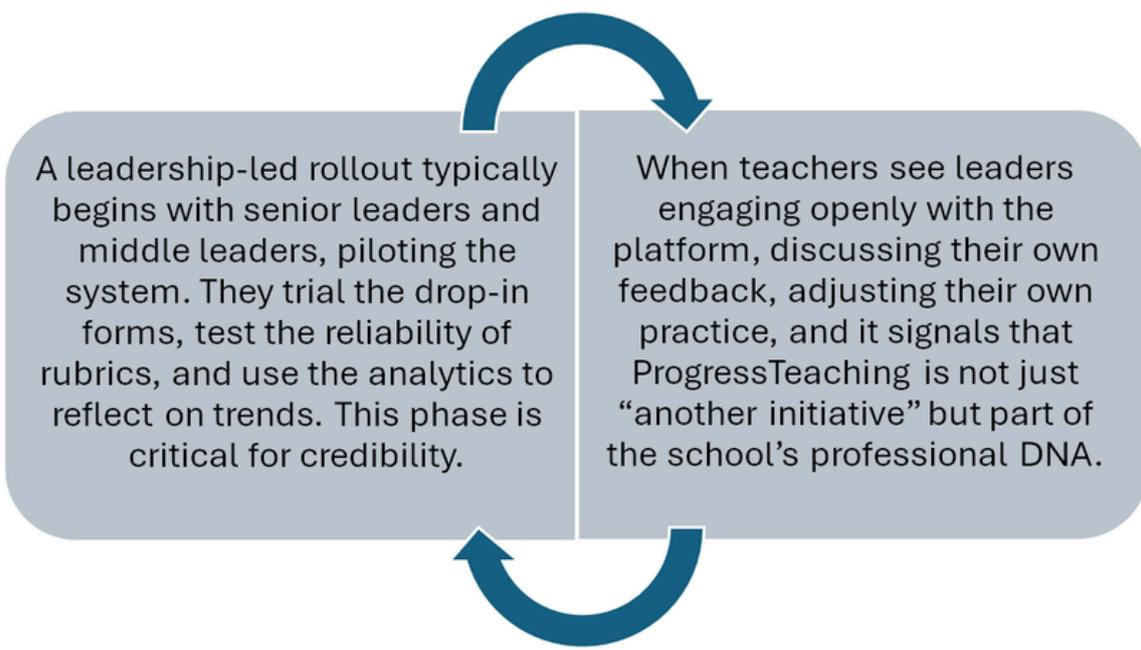
# 04

## Sustaining a culture of improvement

- The *Theory of Change* depends on a culture of reflection, trust, and continuous learning – precisely the environment ProgressTeaching is designed to support.
- Over time, data and feedback from the platform can refine the Theory of Change itself. This helps schools understand *what works, what needs to change, and why*.



Historically, I have found that approaching the rollout as a staged process supports the narrative and generates buy-in: leaders pilot drop-ins, model reflective practice, and demonstrate how analytics can inform CPD planning, (Anderson, 2005). This deliberate sequencing builds credibility, aligns the school’s strategic priorities with everyday practice, and creates a feedback-rich environment where both actions and assumptions are continually tested. By embedding these processes within the *Theory of Change* framework, leadership-led adoption becomes a coherent, iterative strategy that connects the platform’s use directly to meaningful professional growth and improved outcomes for learners, (Timperley, 2011).



At Frontier Academy, our rollout followed three distinct stages:

# 01

## **Pilot and Refine**

For the first half-term, only the Senior Leadership Team used the platform. This initial pilot phase allowed leaders to calibrate drop-in domains, agree shared standards, and collect staff feedback before any wider release. Using the tool first-hand gave leaders both credibility and empathy: having experienced it themselves, they could speak authentically about its strengths and limitations. Crucially, this stage also enabled refinement of rubrics and language so that ProgressTeaching aligned with the school's ethos and terminology. Early engagement with middle leaders through informal consultation provided valuable insight into staff perceptions, highlighting how important transparent communication would be in the next phase.

# 02

## **Model and Share**

Once the leadership team felt confident in the platform's structure, department leads were brought into the process. Targeted CPD sessions introduced the purpose and potential of ProgressTeaching, focusing on how to interpret emerging trends and what the early data could (and could not) tell us. Together, we analysed sample reports to explore the narrative behind the numbers, examining not just what the data showed, but why patterns might exist. This collaborative analysis was key in building shared understanding and avoiding reductive interpretations of data. Department leads began to see the platform as a developmental tool rather than a judgement mechanism, and their endorsement was instrumental in preparing for whole-school implementation.

# 03

## **Embed and Scale**

With structures and confidence in place, the final phase extended the use of ProgressTeaching to all teachers. Staff began engaging in drop-ins, feedback dialogues, and CPD that was planned as a result of feedback gathered and evaluated from the platform. Drop-in data was triangulated with student outcomes and departmental priorities to support a coherent, evidence-informed approach to professional learning; ProgressTeaching's data provided stimulus for the planning of a rich curriculum of CPD that was both aligned with school development priorities and responsive to the emerging patterns and needs logged through feedback. Teachers were encouraged to use the platform to identify personal goals and track their own development over time. By aligning ProgressTeaching with the school's teaching and learning priorities, we created consistency without uniformity. This allowed every teacher to contribute to collective improvement while maintaining individual agency.

Throughout all three stages, the leadership team used the Theory of Change to ensure that every action linked clearly to the intended impact. Each phase was accompanied by explicit communication about the rationale for change, opportunities for reflection, and structured feedback loops that allowed the approach to evolve in response to staff experience. This combination of intentional design and responsive adaptation mirrored the cyclical learning process that ProgressTeaching itself encourages.

The advantages of a top-down rollout are clear: coherence, consistency, and alignment with strategic goals. It allows leaders to shape the message and ensure fidelity of implementation. However, it also carries risks. If perceived as imposed, it may trigger defensiveness; if leaders focus too heavily on compliance metrics, it can undermine the developmental purpose.

### **Recommendations for success:**

- Use early pilots to build credibility before a whole-school launch.
- Communicate the rationale transparently, linking the platform to the school vision, not accountability.
- Separate developmental data from appraisal processes during early implementation to build trust.
- Establish formal feedback loops to gather staff perspectives and refine rubrics or processes in real time.

### **Pitfalls to avoid:**

- Over-centralising decision-making and limiting middle-leader ownership.
- Allowing quantitative data to overshadow qualitative professional discussion.
- Neglecting to celebrate incremental progress, which can demotivate staff during long-term implementation.

By pacing the rollout, maintaining transparency, and foregrounding developmental intent, a leadership-led approach ensures that ProgressTeaching becomes a shared framework for professional learning. ProgressTeaching therefore allows leaders and teachers alike to, on an ongoing basis, test actions against outcomes, refine assumptions with evidence, and deepen the culture of improvement.

### **Different roll-out models work – when they match context.**

Leadership-led, teacher-champion and Trust-directed implementations can all deliver transformation, but only when the approach aligns with the existing culture and the culture desired for the future.

## Teacher-Champion Rollout: Kotter's Model and the Power of Grassroots Change

In contrast to the leadership-led model, a teacher-champion rollout draws its strength from peer credibility and grassroots momentum, (Kotter, 1996; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). This approach recognises that sustainable cultural change often begins not with directives from above but with trusted practitioners who demonstrate, through lived experience, the benefits of a new way of working. Kotter's *8-Step Change Model* provides a robust framework for this process, guiding schools through stages of urgency, coalition-building, quick wins, and cultural consolidation.

In a teacher-led rollout of ProgressTeaching, the journey begins with the **identification of champions**: teachers who are respected by their peers, known for professional integrity, and motivated by the desire to improve practice. These individuals are not necessarily the most senior or technically adept but are influencers within their professional communities. By equipping them with time, training, and trust, schools create the conditions for authentic advocacy.

**Creating urgency** is the first step. Champions introduce colleagues to the "why" behind ProgressTeaching, often linking the platform to shared challenges: inconsistent feedback, lack of visibility across practice, or limited time for reflection. In this framing, the platform becomes a solution to teacher-identified problems rather than an imposed system.

Next, **building a guiding coalition** involves forming a small, cross-departmental group of early adopters who experiment, reflect, and share insights. This coalition acts as a laboratory for innovation, testing the platform's functionality, generating examples of best practice, and refining approaches before scaling up.



At Moral Compass Academy this model proved highly effective. A small pilot group of teachers began using ProgressTeaching in the Maths department to structure joint drop-ins and feedback; I selected this department to champion the roll-out as they were widely viewed as stable and high-performing with little staff turnover. Since they had little that *had* to be improved, it would therefore be their choice to truly buy-in to the Academy's cultural commitment to continuous development and creative innovation. I knew this would also concretise buy-in from SLT as a whole: since the department was seen as a 'safe pair of hands', the perceived risk was lessened, the likelihood of success seemed more solid from the outset, and the full SLT were more likely to champion the cause. The department focused on improving the *quality of professional dialogue* rather than compliance. Within weeks, they could evidence richer, more focused post-drop-in discussions and greater consistency in how developmental targets were set. When these champions shared examples of before-and-after drop-in notes during a staff CPD, colleagues could see tangible improvement in the depth and specificity of feedback. This visibility generated genuine buy-in because teachers recognised the platform as a professional learning tool rather than an accountability mechanism.

**Generating short-term wins** is critical in Kotter's framework: early gains were celebrated deliberately and publicly. Examples of how teachers used ProgressTeaching to enhance reflection were shared in staff briefings and newsletters, spotlighting both success and progress. These visible wins validated the champions' efforts, created positive association with the platform, and helped convert sceptics.

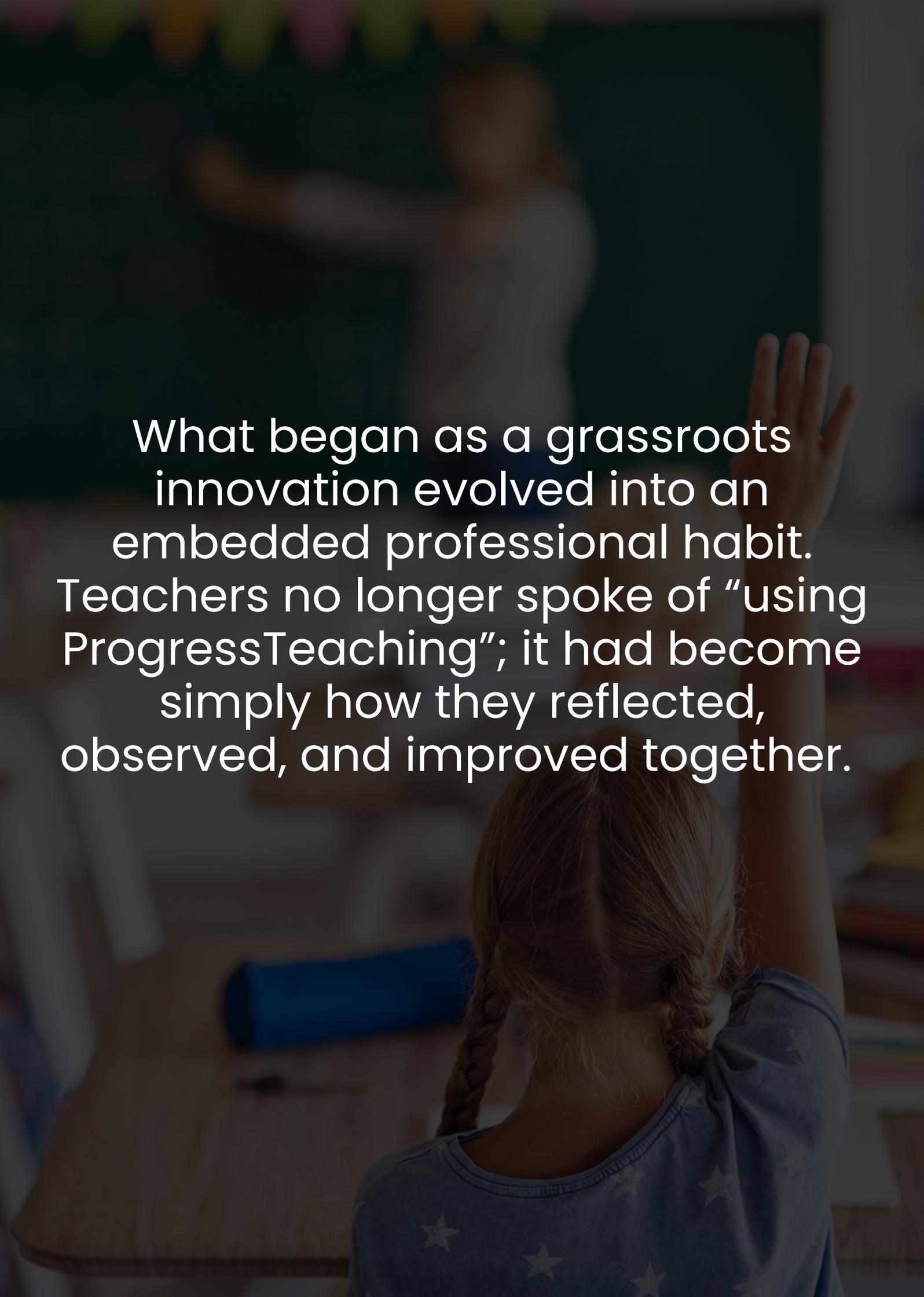
*“Through these shared explorations, the data moved from being something done to teachers to something used by them.”*

As adoption spread, the focus shifted to **empowering broad-based action**. Champions facilitated departmental workshops, demonstrating how ProgressTeaching could support subject-specific goals. Some departments used the platform to align lesson visits with curriculum intent, while others applied it to map pedagogical strengths across teams. Through these shared explorations, the data moved from being something *done* to teachers to something *used* by them.

By the midpoint of the rollout, **the coalition expanded**. Champions were joined by newly confident adopters, creating a self-sustaining culture of peer support. Leadership maintained oversight, ensuring alignment with teaching and learning priorities, but allowed the direction of practice to be driven by staff experience. This sense of professional agency became central to the success of the rollout.

As Kotter's later steps remind us, true change is not complete until it is **anchored in culture**. Once early enthusiasm stabilised, leaders formalised structures to sustain it:

- allocating CPD time for ongoing reflection using platform data;
- recognising teacher champions through internal awards and appraisal discussions;
- and integrating the tool into coaching, mentoring, and development pathways.

A young girl with blonde hair in two braids, wearing a blue shirt with white stars, is seen from behind with her right hand raised. The background is a blurred classroom setting with a teacher and other students. The text is overlaid in white on a dark, semi-transparent background.

What began as a grassroots innovation evolved into an embedded professional habit. Teachers no longer spoke of “using ProgressTeaching”; it had become simply how they reflected, observed, and improved together.



### Recommendations for success:

- Choose champions carefully: peer credibility and trust are more influential than positional authority.
- Provide dedicated time and structured support for experimentation, reflection, and sharing.
- Celebrate and publicise early successes widely to build visible momentum, (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).
- Once staff culture is receptive, align bottom-up enthusiasm with strategic and performance priorities to ensure sustainability.

### Pitfalls to avoid:

- Lack of visible leadership endorsement, which risks marginalising the initiative as peripheral.
- Champion fatigue if early adopters are not supported with time, recognition, or opportunities to influence beyond their classrooms.
- Departmental fragmentation if momentum grows unevenly and shared frameworks are not maintained.

## *Trust | Professional dialogue | Authentic ownership*

Ultimately, the teacher-champion model illustrates that sustainable adoption of ProgressTeaching depends on trust, professional dialogue, and authentic ownership. By aligning Kotter's stages of change with the rhythms of school life, schools can move from isolated enthusiasm to a deeply-rooted culture of reflection and continuous improvement.

## Trust-Led Rollout: Double-Loop Learning and the Power of Collaboration

A third model, one increasingly prevalent within multi-academy Trusts, is the Trust-led rollout. This approach promises scale, coherence, and shared accountability, yet it also carries the greatest risk of detachment if not handled with care. At its best, a Trust-driven implementation of ProgressTeaching enables schools to learn *with one another rather than from above*. Here, Argyris and Schön's concept of **Double-Loop Learning** offers a compelling theoretical foundation. In traditional "single-loop" learning, schools adapt their actions in response to outcomes: they tweak observation frameworks, adjust CPD, or modify data inputs. By contrast, double-loop learning challenges the underlying assumptions that guide those actions in the first place. It invites reflection not just on *what we do*, but *why we do it*, (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Argyris, 1991).

*When applied to a Trust-led rollout, this means treating ProgressTeaching not as a compliance mechanism but as a platform for shared inquiry into teaching, learning, and professional growth.*

The principles of Double-Loop Learning provide a framework for collaborative, reflective implementation that goes beyond mere compliance. Rather than simply enforcing the use of the platform across all schools, the Trust establishes a shared vision and encourages each school to adapt the rollout to its local context, questioning not only how practices are carried out but also the underlying assumptions driving them. Data from drop-ins, teacher reflections, and analytics are used not only to monitor outcomes but to stimulate dialogue about why certain patterns emerge, prompting adjustments in pedagogy, leadership approaches, and CPD priorities. This iterative cycle allows schools to continuously refine their use of the platform, learn from one another, and co-create improvement strategies that are contextually meaningful. By embedding ProgressTeaching within a Double-Loop Learning framework, a Trust can transform a centrally mandated system into a collaborative engine for professional growth, ensuring that both school- and Trust-level decisions are informed by evidence, reflection, and shared understanding rather than top-down directive alone, (Senge, 2006; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012).

When ProgressTeaching was introduced across several academies within a geographically spread, mid-sized Trust, this reflective mindset proved essential (we will call this Collaboration Trust). Although the platform's framework and rubrics were consistent across schools, the interpretations of key domains varied subtly but significantly. "Challenge," "feedback," and "questioning" carried different cultural meanings across contexts: what one school considered high challenge might, in another, be viewed as overly directive. These differences initially appeared to threaten consistency; when approached through a double-loop lens, they became an opportunity for rich professional dialogue.



Instead of enforcing uniformity, Trust leaders convened cross-school discussions to explore the roots of these differences: *What do we mean by effective teaching? How does our intake shape what we value in classroom dialogue?* These sessions revealed that while the language of pedagogy was shared, its meaning was deeply contextual. Recognising and interrogating these variances created a stronger, more authentic common culture that respected local realities while creating a shared set of principles and priorities with which we worked towards collective improvement. By analysing the data and its underpinning assumptions, schools began to engage in *shared meaning-making*. ProgressTeaching became more than a reporting platform: it became a diagnostic tool for organisational learning. Colleagues across the Trust and its school were encouraged to share best practice. This meant schools could adopt, adapt, and reflect upon what was *already working* rather than attempting to reinvent the wheel, (Zook & Allen, 2016).

## *“The challenge lies in achieving consistency without conformity”*

Rolling out ProgressTeaching across a Trust is not simply a question of logistics or standardisation; it is a profound exercise in organisational learning. The challenge lies in achieving consistency without conformity, i.e. in building a shared professional language that respects local identity and context. To succeed, Trust leaders must approach the process as a *learning journey*, for themselves, for their schools, and for the system as a whole. At Collaboration Trust, Trust leaders demonstrated humility in abundance, manifesting a Trust-culture which promoted collective, sustainable development. The platform is a leadership development tool which allows leaders to reflect both on feedback and the quality of feedback, so they can consider, implement, and track optimised ways of giving feedback to bring about their desired transformation. Thus, coaching happens at all levels: leaders develop teachers, and Trust leaders develop school leaders.

A Trust-led rollout, therefore, succeeds when it balances consistency of principle with flexibility of practice. The central team's role is not to prescribe uniformity but to create the conditions for reflective alignment. This involves:

# 01

## Strategic Design and Co-Creation – Surfacing Assumptions

A Trust-wide rollout begins with *surfacing the shared beliefs* about what great teaching looks like and, just as importantly, where those beliefs differ. Trust leaders should convene a cross-school design group including senior leaders, classroom teachers, and education directors to co-create the rubric or teaching matrix within ProgressTeaching.

This process embodies double-loop learning in action: it forces participants to articulate the implicit values behind their definitions of “effective teaching” and “impactful learning.” One school may associate *challenge* with extended writing and high cognitive demand; another may see it as skilful questioning and responsive scaffolding. Both are valid, but without surfacing these assumptions inconsistency is misinterpreted as non-compliance.

By co-designing the framework, the Trust turns an implementation task into a reflective dialogue, testing its own beliefs about pedagogy, accountability, and improvement. ProgressTeaching then becomes the mirror through which a shared, but flexible, professional culture begins to emerge.

## Pilot, Reflect, and Calibrate – Learning from Experience

In keeping with the principles of double-loop learning, the pilot phase should be framed as a test of *conceptual alignment*. A small group of volunteer schools can trial the platform, gathering both quantitative data (e.g. frequency of drop-ins, domain scores) and qualitative insights (staff reflections, patterns of professional dialogue).

# 02

Regular reflection meetings between the pilot schools and the Trust's education team should move beyond “*What did we find?*” to “*What might this tell us about how we understand teaching?*” For example, if teachers across several schools record lower confidence in “questioning,” the question should not simply be “*How do we improve questioning?*” but “*What do we collectively mean by effective questioning, and what assumptions sit beneath that understanding?*”

This stage helps to calibrate both the tool and the thinking that underpins it. Adjustments to the framework, training, and support materials are then better-placed to succeed because they rest upon this shared understanding that can then be made not just for accuracy, but for shared meaning.

# 03

## Scale and Support – Embedding Learning Loops

Once calibration is complete, scaling across all schools should happen through learning loops. Each school should nominate a ProgressTeaching lead responsible for coordinating rollout and facilitating ongoing inquiry. The Trust’s role is to maintain coherence through dialogue: for example, it might host cross-school professional learning communities, share data dashboards, and moderate examples of strong practice.

In a double-loop learning environment, these interactions are deliberately reflective: schools don’t just share *what* worked but interrogate *why* it worked in their context and whether those conditions might translate elsewhere.

For instance, if one school shows rapid improvement in “adaptive teaching,” others might explore the cultural or structural enablers behind that growth, such as time for collaborative planning, clarity of curriculum intent, or effective coaching systems. In this way, the Trust learns from its own diversity rather than despise it.

To sustain this cycle, Trust leaders should ensure:

- **Cross-school inquiry groups** meet regularly to discuss outcomes *and* their potential causes. CPD explicitly links platform insights to classroom evidence.
- **Data dashboards** are used to pose questions, (“What do we notice?” before “What will we do?”), (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017).
- **Trust leaders model learning** by revisiting their own assumptions about improvement strategies.

## Review, Reflect, and Redesign – Institutionalising Inquiry

# 04

Schools and Trusts must not fall into the trap of considering their rollout ‘finished’. This can stymie the reflective culture which has been built and hamper an organisation’s adaptability to changing contexts. Stage 4 of the Trust-led rollout is therefore ongoing: in accordance with double-loop learning, the Trust should facilitate structured reflection cycles in which school and Trust leaders interrogate both outcomes and underlying logic.

This might involve asking:

- What patterns are emerging across the Trust’s ProgressTeaching data?
- What do these patterns reveal about our collective understanding of effective teaching?
- Which assumptions have served us well, and which might need revisiting?

By institutionalising this inquiry process, the Trust ensures that its implementation model remains dynamic. Each iteration deepens shared understanding and enhances collective capacity.

The goal is  
learning agility:  
the ability of the  
organisation to  
adapt, question,  
and grow.





### **Recommendations for success:**

- Establish a shared vision across the Trust, grounded in agreed principles but flexible in local application.
- Begin with co-creation to surface underlying assumptions about pedagogy.
- Use pilot schools as learning laboratories for reflection and recalibration (be mindful of what works in highest performing academies might work because of the culture, people or existing processes – it may not work in your other schools, however what works in transformational settings might be a better initial blueprint for success).
- Replace compliance chains with learning loops that connect schools in inquiry.
- Ensure data is used to provoke questions, not dictate judgements.
- Ensure local school leaders retain agency in implementation.

### **Pitfalls to avoid:**

- Treating rollout as a technical project rather than a cultural journey.
- Seeking uniformity at the expense of contextual nuance.
- Using data punitively, undermining trust and candour.
- Failing to build structured reflection into the implementation cycle.
- Neglecting to close the feedback loop between Trust and schools.

Ultimately, a Trust-level rollout of ProgressTeaching guided by double-loop learning transforms both process and purpose. The Trust becomes a community of inquiry, one that learns collectively, questions courageously, and improves continuously. In this environment, ProgressTeaching does not just measure teaching quality; it catalyses it.

The most effective Trust-level rollouts I've seen are those that balance coherence with autonomy: clear shared standards, but freedom for schools to innovate within them.

## **Conclusion:** **Continuous Learning and Adaptation**

Whether rolled out from the top, the bottom, or through Trust directive, the success of ProgressTeaching ultimately depends on the *mindset* of those implementing it, (Dweck, 2006). Schools that succeed they learn, adapt, and reflect iteratively, and ProgressTeaching has been consistently integral in supporting each of the roll-out methods I have experienced. By re-examining assumptions about what great teaching and learning look like, they can build cultures, and solutions, which support great teaching in their settings.

*At its best, ProgressTeaching is a catalyst for dialogue. It enables schools to see patterns that were previously invisible, to test beliefs against data, and to align professional learning with need.*

Whether guided by the *Theory of Change*, Kotter's model, or Double-Loop Learning, the goal is the same:

*to create a culture where feedback is expected, learning is collective, and improvement is continuous.*

That is the essence of ProgressTeaching, and indeed, of progress itself.

### **ProgressTeaching is a catalyst - not the culture itself.**

The platform cannot create trust or collaboration on its own, but it can amplify both where they exist and accelerate their development where they are emerging, making it a powerful lever for sustainable school improvement.



## References

Section	Theory/Concept	Key References
Culture before systems	Growth mindset, reflective practice, psychological safety	Dweck (2006); Edmondson (1999); Senge (2006); Hargreaves & Fullan (2012); Bryk & Schneider (2002).
Leadership-led rollout	Theory of Change	Weiss (1995); Anderson (2005)
Teacher-champion rollout	Kotter's 8-Step Change	Kotter (1996); Kotter & Cohen (2002)
Trust-led rollout	Double-loop learning	Argyris & Schön (1978); Argyris (1991)
Data-informed improvement	Adaptive expertise, iterative learning	Timperley (2011); Darling-Hammond et al. (2017)
Scaling across context	Organisational learning, context sensitivity	Fullan (2007); Hargreaves & Shirley (2012)

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# TESTIMONIALS



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PROGRESSTEACHING HAS EMPOWERED STAFF TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT. IT PROVIDES CLEAR PRIORITIES AT DEPARTMENT AND WHOLE-SCHOOL LEVEL, SUPPORTED BY ROBUST EVIDENCE.



PROGRESSTEACHING HAS BEEN A KEY TOOL IN RAISING THE STANDARD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ACROSS OUR SCHOOLS.



STAFF REALLY VALUE THE INSIGHTS THE PLATFORM PROVIDES, AND THERE'S GENUINE BUY-IN BECAUSE THEY CAN SEE THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS BEING RECOGNISED AND ACTED UPON.