

Volume 1 Number 1 Autumn 2011

Academy magazine



What's going on in academies and free schools

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Academy magazine

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Cover photograph: Michael Gove at the opening of the Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy (p34)

Many thanks to William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School and Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust for the use of photographs throughout the magazine.

'the deciding factor was that PS Financials was the best solution for an academy that had aspirations to expand'



Fiscal independence: Taking responsibility for your finances

Choosing the right accountancy software for your academy can seem daunting, says Shilan Raja.

As more and more schools move to become academies, the excitement of controlling their financial destiny is tempered by new responsibilities and a step into the unknown. There are cultural and legal implications, as well as financial reporting which has to be delivered. Add to these new processes such as paying suppliers electronically by BACs and partial VAT accounting; and the future can seem a little daunting.

Academies have however been around since 2003 and during that time several key suppliers have emerged.

'It is very easy to integrate feeder schools and increase the value that the software brings'

One such supplier is leading accounting software provider PS Financials Plc. Richard Pierce co-founded PS Financials over a decade ago and spotted an opportunity in the Academy sector "We knew that many schools would be faced with moving from basic financial administration, to effectively running the finances of a small company or charity. We were able to create accountancy software specifically for academies."

Indeed the software has been so successful that it is now used by more than one third of all academies nationwide. Ivybridge Community College in Devon is one such example. With over 2,200 pupils from 14 primary feeder schools, the college recently converted. Jamie Vincent is their Finance Officer. "We'd heard good things about PS Financials from other academy users and, after looking at a range of products, Marcus Passmore (our IT Manager) and I chose PSF... the deciding factor was that

PS Financials was the best solution for an academy that had aspirations to expand."

The key for Ivybridge was access to PS Financials consultants, who hold accountancy qualifications and have worked in the finance departments of academies. Vincent continues "PS Financials' is tailored specifically for the education market and they have a proven track record, so we felt a lot more confident about their ability to deliver." Added to this is a standard chart of accounts tailored to the specific needs of academies making PS Financials a solid all round solution.

The software is also flexible enough to grow with the academy. In May 2011, Ivybridge added a local "feeder" primary school with 133 children to its finance centre, the system has already expanded without the need for any more finance staff. Vincent finishes "It is very easy to integrate feeder schools and increase the value that the software brings."



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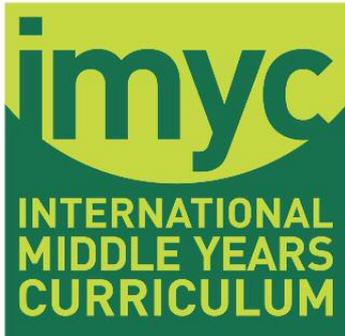
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From the Editor

Seize the day

Welcome to *Academy* - the voice of self-governing, independent state schools, a forum for debate and ideas. Its purpose is to celebrate success, monitor individual and collaborative developments, share initiatives and examples of good practice, provide information and comment.

We invite all schools to contribute to *Academy*, to show how they have developed the new freedoms that come with new autonomy for the benefit of their whole school communities.

Looking back on what has happened since the election of May 2010, change has taken place at an extraordinary pace, with over 1000 schools now converted to academy status and many more in the process of doing so. Promised legislation has rapidly reversed previous restrictions and confirmed the new educational environment. New introductions include the Pupil (and Military) Premium; EBacc; transfer of the 'Top Slice' (LACSEG) to schools; use of 'reasonable force' to restrain. Revisions, some extensive, are being made to Ofsted; admissions; league tables; the secondary curriculum and diplomas. SIPs, SEFs, the GTC, SSNB, the Schools Food Trust, BECTA, Teachers TV, BSF and QCDA have all been abolished, together with the proposals for the 'school report card'. Further action on the fast-track removal of incompetent staff, governance, health and safety regulation and VAT liability is awaited. We also await the effects of the demise of the YPLA and its replacement by the Executive Funding Agency. In addition the whole remit of academy status gives schools significantly greater flexibility with admissions, employment, pupil welfare and finance.

For those who embraced the ideas of self-determination from Local Authority bureaucracy, the past 25 years have been a long, hard road toward greater independence and self-governance for state schools. Although progress in the past 18 months has been remarkably rapid there is still much to do to achieve full autonomy.

Perhaps the most important and crucial of these is to secure and embed clear, transparent and 'light touch' funding directly from central government, independent of any involvement of Local Authorities and through a robust and permanent National Funding Formula. We need a formula that will finally bring fairness to a system of financial distribution that for years has been recognised as inequitable yet has consistently failed to be challenged. The present consultation and Government proposals now give those who seek fair funding a significant opportunity to broker the long sought-after changes. But, as George Phipson points out in his article on the National Funding Formula, there remains concern that Government retains a role for Local Authorities and School Forums in the distribution of funding. Much is still to be decided and there is 'everything to play for'. If supporters of full autonomy are to actively and positively influence the outcome in their favour they should all take note of Barry Featherstone's advice that 'Now is not the time to be silent!' and be prepared to make their views known to those who make and determine policy. Make sure you visit schoolfunding.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk before the fast-approaching deadlines.

Carpe Diem!

Paul Strong, editor of *Academy*, retired in August as Head Teacher of William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School, Lincoln, after 25 years. During that time he actively embraced opportunities for autonomy through LMS, Grant Maintained and Foundation Status. In January 2011 William Farr became an academy. He can be contacted at editor@academymag.co.uk

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FASNA: 20 *not out*

Gareth Cornwall reviews progress so far

The Foundation, Aided Schools and Academies National Association (FASNA) can trace its origins back to 1992 when the Association of Head Teachers of Grant Maintained Schools (AHGMS) was formed. Subsequent mergers with AFVAS, AHFAS and FAVASA¹ led to the emergence of FASNA in 2004.

Back in 1992, the organisation was launched by a group of Grant Maintained School head teachers who shared a firm belief in the power of self-determination to free schools from the Local Authority and deliver the highest standards for their pupils unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucracy and restrictive practices. Their belief was not ideological in origin - it was founded in pragmatism and based on real evidence of the difference to standards that freedom from Local Authority control had made in their schools. They believed that 'independence' did not need to equal isolation. Their initial intention was to secure the freedoms they had, to support like-minded schools in making the most of those freedoms, including in obtaining value-for money, and to press for greater freedoms, allied to clear accountability.

The organisation still reflects those intentions. The modern FASNA has a strong and vibrant membership, continues to offer practical advice and support to those seeking to maximise the benefits of autonomy and to champion 'autonomy with accountability'. Since 1992, FASNA has helped to transform the educational landscape. Today, the understanding that head teachers are better placed than bureaucrats to assess the needs of their pupils is commonly shared. Today, the value of diversity and self-determination in shaping

outstanding educational provision and the importance of clear accountability within this is widely accepted. None of these facets of how we understand education today would have been as clearly understood without FASNA.

When you visit FASNA's head office there are not many clues to this rich history. There are no photographs of the politicians and advisers that have addressed FASNA conferences, though every one of them has in the last 20 years. There is no written history capturing the policy shaping advice and guidance that FASNA has given to successive

total commitment to creating the best conditions in which all young people can be educated.

Alongside this, they demonstrate an absolute determination to ensure that school leaders have the freedom to shape the best provision possible.

Notable in this determination, is an element of defiance, an unwillingness over time to give in and bow to the many voices that argued for maintaining a *status quo* which failed too many children for too long.

At many points the leaders of FASNA might have looked at the odds stacked

‘The offices reflect the character of the organisation: purposeful, productive, without pomp, pretension or any sense of self importance.’

governments, though FASNA's work led to concrete change and major reform in education policy. The offices reflect the character of the organisation: purposeful, productive, without pomp, pretension or any sense of self importance. In talking to the key players in FASNA over the last 20 years, people like Tom Clark, Joan Binder, Helen Hyde and George Phipson, there are three unifying characteristics on display – passion, commitment and determination. They display a passion for the cause of school autonomy based on a firm belief in the difference it makes and a

against school autonomy ever emerging as a reality. In 1997, when New Labour acted to abolish Grant Maintained Schools, it looked like the brief period of freedom enjoyed by schools was over. FASNA lobbied, engaged, highlighted the benefits and refused to give up. Where others protested, FASNA persisted. In the 1998 School Standards and Frameworks Act, to the surprise of many, the creation of foundation status allowed a level of independence to be retained in the system. The determination FASNA showed paid off.



FASNA have put school funding and autonomy under the microscope for the last 20 years.

Through the New Labour years, FASNA continued to use the power of advocacy and the real knowledge of how schools worked and what mattered in shaping outstanding education, to inform the development of policy. FASNA briefed Tony Blair and his cabinet on the benefits of schools autonomy, liaised with Andrew Adonis and advised ministers from David Blunkett to Ed Balls in informing policy development. The emergence of trust and foundation schools across the country was supported both in policy terms and practically by FASNA. To its members, FASNA is a valuable source of information, insight and support.

Through its national conferences, workshops, briefings, and response to member questions and queries, FASNA's core commitment to autonomy manifests itself in practical ways in which its members can get the most for their pupils from the

freedoms that are available to their school.

In 2010, when the coalition government was formed, FASNA once again played a role in helping to inform policy through insight. As a strictly apolitical organisation, FASNA has always kept channels open to politicians from the three major parties. Through an understanding of the direction of travel from coalition policy makers, FASNA was able to provide support rapidly to schools seeking to convert to the new academy status. As FASNA approaches its 20-year anniversary in 2012, the passion, commitment and determination that has characterised it over time is still strong. The current government has introduced another level of self-determination for schools but barriers still remain in creating a truly autonomous system. The need for FASNA is perhaps stronger than ever in helping to show that autonomy works for schools.

More and more schools are choosing greater freedom. The support and advice FASNA provides in helping these schools to maximise the benefits of autonomy continue to be in much demand.

What might education look like in a further 20 years' time? Can schools harness the power of autonomy to drive standards forward further and ensure every child fulfils their potential? It's a tough challenge. The record shows that FASNA is not an organisation to give up on this challenge.

Gareth Cornwall is Director, The Decision Point

1. AFVAS - Association of Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools. AHFAS - Association of Headteachers of Foundation and Aided Schools; FAVASA - Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools Association.



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At last - a National Funding Formula?

George Phipson hears alarm bells about Government plans

If you, like FASNA, have been pushing for a National Funding Formula (NFF) for years then it is vital that you read on... We all know what we mean by a NFF – a formula that would set a school budget for every school. This funding would come directly to the schools without any top-slicing by Local Authorities. Those of us serving on the DfE advisory group (known as SFIG) have spent much of the last year inching towards NFF to the point where on 19th July 2011 the DfE published *A Consultation on School Funding Reform: Proposals for a Fairer System* with a closing date of Tuesday, 11th October.

The consultation is frank about admitting that ‘the current system for funding schools has many problems’ and that ‘the system results in similar schools in different areas receiving very different levels of funding’. The promise is that ‘similar schools serving pupils with similar needs should be funded in broadly similar ways, no matter where they are,’ which is what NFF is all about.

By paragraph eight, the paper is setting out what the new national formula will include – an amount per pupil, additional amounts for deprivation, for small school protection and for higher area costs. However, by paragraphs 12 and 13, alarm bells start to ring...

Under option a) ‘we would calculate a national budget for every school using a national formula, and then give Local Authorities the total local budget for all schools in their area. This would enable schools to see the funding attributed to their school through the national formula.’

Under option b) ‘we would not calculate budgets for every school, but simply calculate a budget for the local area based on the pupils that are educated within the area.’

In case you were in any doubt, paragraph 15 rubs salt in the wounds. ‘We are not proposing to introduce a national formula for individual schools with no local flexibility.’ So we appear to be back to where we are now, with Local Authorities receiving 100% of the national funding intended for schools (the Dedicated Schools Grant) and then having local flexibility to distribute the funding

as they, and their School Forum, see fit.

So Question 1 of this consultation paper is the choice between: Would you prefer the formula to be based on:

- a) a national budget for every school; or
- b) the pupils in each Local Authority area?

The only way to maintain a momentum towards a proper NFF is to make absolutely certain that Option A is adopted and then work to constrain the local flexibility of Local Authorities.

The one benefit of Option A route is that it will give every school a baseline budget from which to judge how much your LA has top-sliced your baseline NFF budget for either retaining funds centrally or to provide additional funds to other schools. If, for example, a very limited top-slice were used to recognise the additional cost of being a split-site school that might be acceptable, but even the consultation paper suggests that some constraining of LA flexibility may be needed where their primary/secondary funding ratio is substantially away from the national norm of 1.27. If Option A is in place then decisions such as these can be related back to the size of top-slicing of the NFF budget needed to pay for such decisions.

The paper sets much store by proposals to beef-up the powers of School Forums to constrain local flexibilities or allow very specific local circumstances. Unfortunately, with 152 LAs there is very considerable variation in the effectiveness of School Forums. If they are to have an enhanced power then it is very important that FASNA schools act together to ensure high calibre representation on your local School Forum.

The consultation paper shows valuable in-depth work to clarify the responsibilities that reside with different players, ranging from:

- to delegate to all schools and academies;
- to only delegate to academies;
- to retain centrally and thus the funding needed for these responsibilities

From an academy perspective, this holds out the prospect of a LACSEG based on a national formula. The paper does not however go as far as a specific NFF for academies and the mantra that

academy funding must be based on the local LA distribution is retained. The paper does not address the ‘West Lothian’ question of how academy funding can ‘match’ local funding if all, say secondary schools, are academies.

An area of importance is the section on the funding to support high-cost SEN provision – mostly delivered in maintained special schools but also through inclusion in mainstream schools or through independent providers. If you have a specific interest in this then Section 6 of the paper will be of interest and again this sector has to work alongside the private, voluntary and independent provision. Further changes are proposed for the EYSFF but you may want to respond if you feel that Early Years needs a period without dramatic changes to the funding.

The consultation has a whole section looking at the Pupil Premium. This is paid to schools direct, applying a national framework of eligibility – free school meals. One proposed change is to extend eligibility by including a pupil if they have ever been on FSM – or more precisely the options are either ‘Ever 3’ (in the last three years) or ‘Ever 6’ (in the last six years). The aim is to make the Pupil Premium funding more predictable. Two worries about

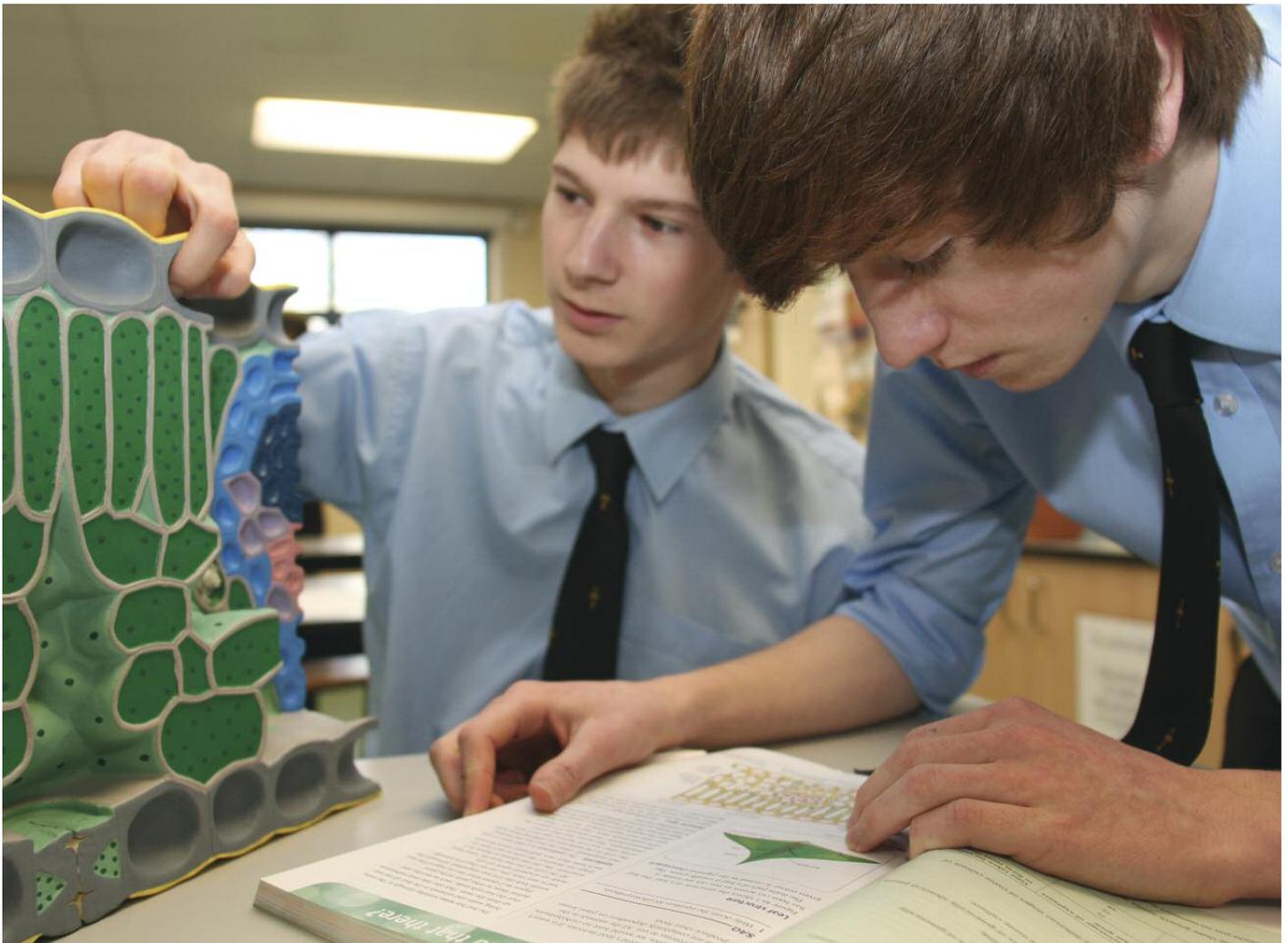
the Pupil Premium are these. With plans to pass more and more money to schools via the Pupil Premium then that means an increased dependence on FSM, which on the ground in schools does not carry huge credibility. And linked to this, FSM is not a graded criteria; some element of an index of deprivation would be a fairer criteria.

However, the Pupil Premium, like SSG before it, is a part of our quest to have funding coming direct to schools based on a national criteria – by a proper NFF. The lack of a strong commitment to a full NFF by the government is disappointing. At least though Question 1, Option A does leave the door part open towards NFF.

Perhaps when funding is less tight, government may hold its nerve and introduce a full NFF approach to school funding.

George Phipson CBE is an educational consultant

Perhaps when funding is less tight, government may hold its nerve and introduce a full NFF approach to school funding.



Not the time to be silent

Barry Featherstone advocates personal responsibility in making sure government consultations receive proper attention

At the end of the summer term a plethora of consultations came out from the Department, all wanting responses in the next few weeks. The start of term is a busy time and eyes are fixed on a smooth start. Then we get into routine and Department publications and requests get pushed down the list of priorities. Yet many of the consultations published, like that on the National Funding Formula, have far-reaching implications.

We must be proactive and we must not miss the opportunity to respond, particularly to those topics with which we have issues and those which directly affect the progress of autonomy and self-government. We cannot afford to be silent. Schools, Head Teachers and governors have a responsibility and should take every opportunity to respond. You can access those consultations through the recommended link 'Consultations' on the home page of the Department for Education website www.education.gov.uk

There you will find a summary of issues and links to the documents together with the opportunity to respond.

Current consultations relate to the following topics:

1. Implementation of the 2010-11 Review of Education Capital (The James Review): *due in by 11th October.*
2. A Consultation on School Funding Reform (The National Funding Formula): Proposals for a Fairer System: *due in by 11th October.*
3. Proposed changes to the teacher disciplinary and induction regulations following the abolition of the General Teaching Council for England: *due in by 12th October.*

4. Consultation on Proposed Increases to Contributions for Members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme: *due in by 20th October.*
5. Changes to the Care to Learn Childcare Support Scheme: *due in by Friday 28 October 2011.*
6. Changes to the Care to Learn Childcare Support Scheme: *due in by 28th October.*
7. Review of Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) Education: *due in by 30th November.*
8. Proposed changes to the newly qualified teacher (NQT) induction regulations for England: *due Thursday 1st December 2011.*
9. Auxiliary Aids for Children with Disabilities: *due in Monday 5th December 2011.*

Some of these issues may not seem relevant but there are some proposals here that have significant implications for you and cannot be left unchallenged by default. Silence is so often taken as acquiescence!

We cannot afford to be silent. Just a few minutes on a response really can make a difference. Don't leave it to someone else.

Barry Featherstone is an educational consultant and can be contacted at barryfab@gmail.com

'We must be proactive and we must not miss the opportunity to respond'

‘I was surprised at how many photographers were there...’

Year 7 pupil Saina Penrake writes about her first three days at the new West London Free School

I've never had a first day back at school when we didn't have to wear school uniform. In fact, we didn't have to do ANY work at all. We all went on a field trip instead. At 7.30am – wow, I had to get up at 6am that morning – three coaches collected us all from the school gates and took us to Priory Farm in Surrey.

Each of our forms – there are about 24 of us in each form – split up to head off to two barns. Then we went off with our form tutor to do fun activities, such as the obstacle course, a campfire challenge, a raft building challenge, a treasure finding challenge and a sandstorm tent challenge.

All five of the activities were really fun, especially the sandstorm tent challenge. Half of our form was split up into two different teams and then we would try and beat the other team. The aim was to make a successful tent with wood, string and a big plastic cover to put on top of the tent. When we'd made the tent, we had to get inside and then try and close up the holes, as the staff were going to spray us with water! It was really funny, because our team had loads of holes so everyone was screaming so much and going crazy.

I think it was a fantastic idea to have the first day as just a lovely school trip, so we could all get to know each other, meet old friends, have fun and also get to know our form tutors in an informal setting. Well done Mr Naismith for organising such a brilliant field trip.

I was so excited from the moment I got up the following morning. I was

excited to meet my new friends and spend another day with them. The first thing we did was sit down in forms and then go outside for the school photo.

Once the pictures were finished, everyone went back inside to practise with Mr Watkins, my form tutor, singing for the ceremony, the next day. We then split up into forms and practised Abba songs to perform in a singing competition at St Paul's Church in Hammersmith. At the end of the day, many parents came to watch us all perform. If I'm honest I don't think we did all that well – but everyone cheered and clapped for us.

Friday – my third day at school – was the sports day and opening ceremony. We sat down in the hall in front of the stage where three chairs awaited three important people. Parents and press arrived at about 9.30am. I was surprised how many photographers and camera people were there.

Headmaster Mr Packer, Toby Young and Boris Johnson arrived on the stage. Mr Packer gave a short introduction and then Toby Young stood up and told the story how he and 50 other people turned the school from an idea into a reality. All the adults were laughing when he made jokes. I don't think most of my year understood the humour because it was about politics.

When we came to do our song, it went very well and at the end we got a big round of applause. We sat down again

and Boris Johnson gave his speech – he was witty, too – and he officially opened the school by drawing a little blue curtain over a plaque.

Everyone's cameras were clicking away and everyone stood up to applaud. Press crowded round us and everyone got up to get in the picture. It was very squishy and afterwards pupils went to shake Boris's hand. Then we had break-time – the adults had some coffee and tea and Boris and Toby Young got interviewed again.

The parents went soon after that and it was time to line up in our forms. When I was in the line, BBC reporters came over to us with a camera and a furry microphone to ask us questions about the ceremony. Soon we were all on the coach on our way to a sports ground to play hockey and netball, boys, rugby and hockey.

My team drew two and lost two matches. It wasn't a great start but I was determined to win the netball. We tried our hardest, but sadly lost one and drew three. Everyone had tried their hardest and that was all that mattered. It was so much fun, though, and I'm really excited for the next time we do something similar...

Saina Penrake writes a blog about the West London Free School at www.wlfs.org



Raising hope

Peter Hullah draws on his leadership experience to raise aspirations at Northampton Academy

“The lessons were really good but some of the students didn’t seem as keen as we are to get to university.”

This comment was spoken by a Northampton Academy sixth form boy who was benefitting from an ‘open door’ at a helpful independent school, designed to help prepare for A levels. He is one of the new generation of students in the eastern district of Northampton who have decided to stay on post-16.

His academy has given him the opportunity to do this as GCSE results have risen from under 30% to over 72% 5A* to C and from under 14% 5 A* to C including Maths and English to 46% in the six years the academy took on the students and staff from a failing school. He and his friends all have part-time jobs.

They will have to work at university to find the next stage and there is much talk about the quality of courses available later on. He will be blazing a trail to leave Northamptonshire: his friends are beginning to look further afield and one of his colleagues will become the first student from the academy catchment area to gain a place at Cambridge and she is going to read natural sciences.

In 2005 when I talked to students at the predecessor school, they asked for one thing: “Make the lessons better.” In the early days, few teachers applied to adverts and the existing staff varied considerably in quality and drive. Principals who are transforming failing schools will tell you it takes nerve to remove underperforming teachers knowing that there may not be

an immediate replacement. The thought of an expensive stop-gap measure of supply teachers looms and behaviour issues continue to dominate.

Breaking the cycle of underperformance requires sustained leadership. The first priority is to recruit and retain teachers who are motivated by a moral purpose to make a difference. Unlike an independent school, where the established DNA of a learning community acts as a magnet, the academy teacher needs to have a vocation to teach and a willingness to be unshaken by challenges. We recruited from graduates and trained them. We talked to anyone interested in teaching and we spent time fostering a vocation to teach among our support staff. Locally as an academy and nationally as a growing





group, we invested in the future and we invested in training.

As an independent school Head I was aware that there were concerns about the supply of quality teachers coming into the profession. There is now, more than ever before, an opportunity for independent schools and academies to work together with local universities to prepare teachers who can work in both sectors. The development through coaching and mentoring of the gifted teacher who is flexible in terms of place of work and age range of students should be a key priority when local Heads meet together. Heads of academies and independent schools need

to meet regularly to talk pedagogy and assessment as there is a largely untapped resource of wisdom there.

We have, over time, recruited from overseas and these enthusiastic young people have helped turn the tide. However our success stories have been achieved through the development of middle leaders, through talent-spotting and training, who form hubs of good classroom practice. Their example, nurtured through contact with others across the United Learning Trust's family of 21 academies, draws other teachers.

Our classrooms have become open to colleagues observing lessons and giving

feedback: this was not the case five years ago. Our teachers are equipped with assessment data and can personalise learning in a forensic manner: this was not the case five years ago. And there is an increasing sense of challenge and pace in the classroom, not in the hectic pre-GCSE panic classes but embedded further down. Every year group has access to good permanent teachers: this was not the case five years ago. The time is ripe for the opening of middle leader training across independent schools and academies. This should be local, focussed and practical, allowing for flexibility and interchange. The Future Leaders scheme

Pupils at Northampton Academy benefit from an 'increasing sense of challenge and pace in the classroom'.





is in its infancy and should be supported widely across the independent sector, as it will be quality school leadership, women and men with broad experience and resolve, which will make a distinctive difference.

At Northampton Academy, we have had a very small number of teachers who have ‘crossed the floor’ and come to teach with us but they are a rare breed. We have not made joint appointments across the sectors although the doors are open for

such initiatives. However, we have made a joint teaching/research appointment with the Royal College of Music and this has been seminal in transforming our creative arts programme. Not only do we give lip service to the arts being one of the attractive programme areas which stimulates attendance; we have evidence to support the impact of partnership working in raising levels of engagement and attainment.

The members of our small local

governing body have shown us how high quality independent education, exceptional financial skills and a passion to root out underachievement come together to produce results. The character and passion of a group of committed governors has helped us move at pace. There are few if any local authority schools which have such a team working with them and governors together with the values of the United Learning Trust inspire us to find the Best in Everyone. Our governors have led us to allies and through this raft of support we have gained confidence to change the culture for our students.

I have been privileged to be able to draw on my experience of teaching at a range of leading independent schools and of being a Head of an HMC school. Working largely with volunteers in an Episcopal role gave me additional leadership opportunities. However, these rich experiences needed further developing and refining when I moved into academy leadership. External scrutiny, more like the search light of the stock market, certainly focuses the mind. Transparency, public accountability, together with awareness that rapid change is needed to root out underperformance, marks out successful academy leadership. It was a far sighted sponsoring body that enabled me to train further through attending a course at the Harvard Business School. I acquired a further skill set; however the learning never stops.

In the United Learning Trust, we like to think that we share our view of the power of “independence” in education with the best schools in the land. We are working for the same end – the development of your people in a culture where we take responsibility for the use of funds which can be best allocated for their flourishing. Like independent schools we have no ‘middle man’. We relate directly to central government, bypassing the Local Authority and like independent schools we have to work with the students who wish to come to us.

Personally I am proud that our team at



human and financial, to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to flourish at school. Our own group – the United Learning Trust Academies, working with the independent schools in our family charity, the United Church Schools Trust – is finding new ways of group working, underpinned by a shared moral purpose, which may become a template for others. The sectors have much to learn from each other and the time is now.

Northampton Academy has created an oversubscribed school of choice, while retaining an admissions criterion based on postcode rather than any form of selection by ability or faith base. ‘If only we had better students, we could do a better job’ used to be the mantra of the predecessor school. This is now rarely heard as we have become more skilled in devising appropriate robust courses for students which attract them to attend and engage with school. In this area we share ground with independent schools; however in curriculum choices more could be done to develop the common ground.

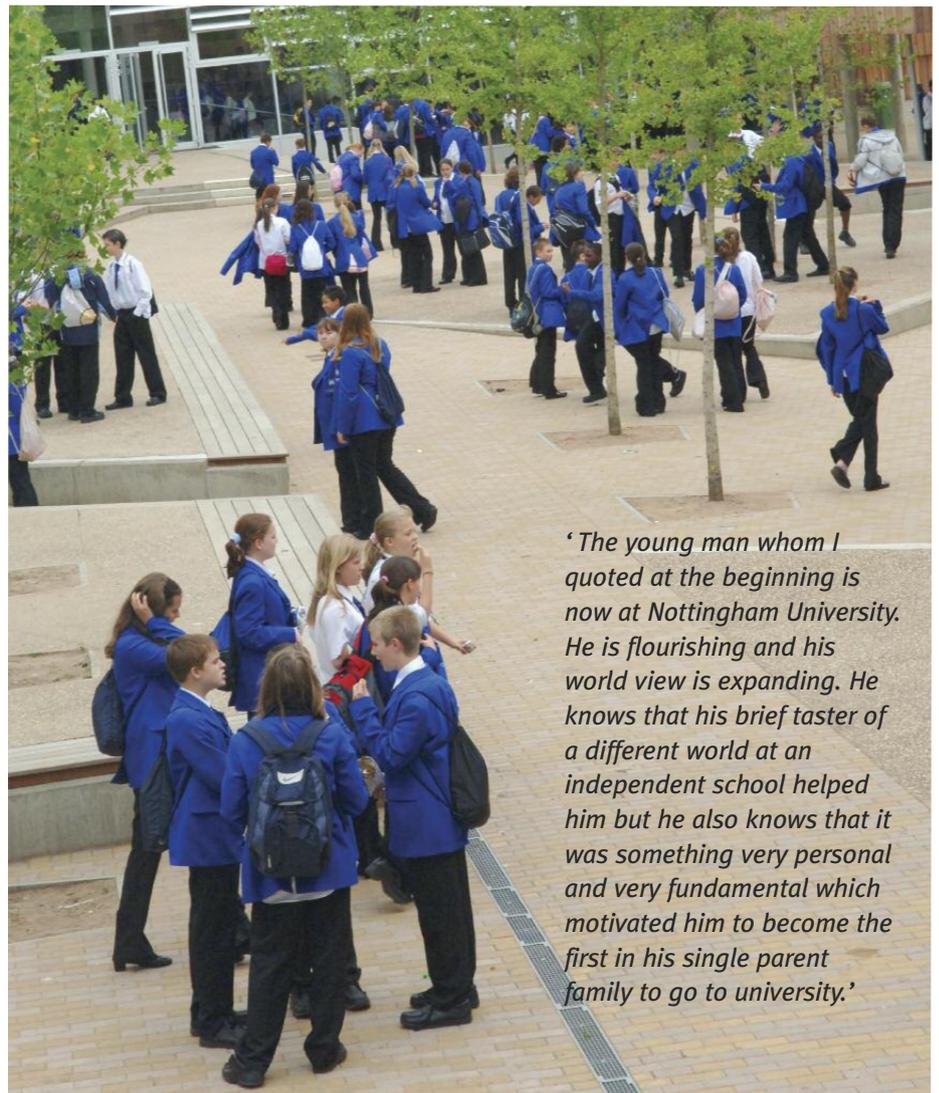
Our parents initially had low expectations for the academy. Largely the product of a failing system they stayed away and left education to happen at the street corner or in the shopping centre. This is changing and we like to think that the education of our parents, showing that we mean what we say in wanting to raise the aspirations of their children will make a difference. We do have a mission to transform the world and we do know that to do this means we have to focus on ‘grabbing a grade’ for every student and showing them the power of qualifications and a character of employability in the market place.

The young man whom I quoted at the beginning is now at Nottingham University. He is flourishing and his world view is expanding. He knows that his brief taster of a different world at an independent school helped him but he also knows that it was something very personal and very fundamental which motivated him to become the first in his single parent family to go to university.

Working together to discover and develop his talent and the talents of his friends is where deep school partnership working could have the best long-term effect.

It will take courage in leadership to develop a new family of schools and academies which share similar passions and are courageous to use resources,

**The Rt Rev Peter Hullah
is Group Executive
Director, Ethos and
Values, at the United
Church Schools Trust**



‘The young man whom I quoted at the beginning is now at Nottingham University. He is flourishing and his world view is expanding. He knows that his brief taster of a different world at an independent school helped him but he also knows that it was something very personal and very fundamental which motivated him to become the first in his single parent family to go to university.’

Balancing the books

Ossett Academy is a prime example of using restructured finances to your advantage, says Ian Buss

With over 1200 schools applying for academy conversion since June 2010, the financial benefits of the switch are becoming apparent to those that are now open.

Ossett Academy and Sixth Form College converted on 1st February, 2011. It was already part of Education Ossett Community Trust, a comprehensive specialist Technology and Sports College and a National Support School (NSS).

While the motive for becoming an academy was not purely financial – the school had already gone some way towards independence, taking a number of services in-house – it did represent a significant boost.

For the first year as an academy, Ossett's Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) was calculated at nearly £1million.

Although not entirely new funding – the LACSEG is calculated to replace centralised services previously delivered by the Local Authority – this was still funding which the school now had direct responsibility for spending.

With the school's reliance on the Local Authority already declining, the structure in place was already geared to being more self-sufficient and adept at securing services at competitive levels.

Assistant principal Tracy Jackson said: "As an NSS, we felt that we had the capacity and robust structures and systems to become independent, particularly as we have a large number of in-house services already established such as premises development, payroll and HR.

"Being self-sufficient in most areas of school life meant that this transition was easier for us and we knew where efficiencies



Ian Buss: 'With the school's reliance on the Local Authority already declining, the structure in place was already geared to being more self-sufficient and adept at securing services at competitive levels.'

lay. This enabled us to maximise that first LACSEG.

"We have seen benefits in additional funding which has allowed us to protect student-to-staff ratios. It has also provided an ability to deliver more support and enrichment to our students both at Ossett Academy and within our Trust. Other schools within the Trust are now converting to academy status."

The fact that Ossett Academy has been able to take on new staff in new roles while some schools are making teachers redundant is one area where Tracy believes Ossett made the right decision.

She explained: "We have been able to invest quite heavily in support staff, such as learning mentors and educational welfare

support.

"Prior to being an academy we could bid for funding for educational welfare – £25,000 would get us two days a week. In charge of our own budget we have been able to get a full time member of staff for that, one who can also support the nine other schools within the trust when necessary.

"We have also been able to underwrite the cost of certain projects within the trust – sharing resources such as an educational psychologist. I think sharing, becoming a community of schools which can help each other, is the key to success after conversion.

"We know that the £1 million LACSEG will not always be at that level and we are looking to the future, setting up a

sustainable financial structure.”

Despite the position that Ossett found itself in as part of a Trust, the school was very aware of the need for proper consultation regarding academy conversion and invited feedback from students, staff, parents, other schools and the local community.

This was achieved via the website, letters and the Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment (VTLE) system, which the school has made accessible to parents. Meetings were also held with all parties.

Tracy adds that the only concerns were from staff worried that the terms and

conditions of employment would change and these were quickly dispelled during the consultation.

Hard work was the next ingredient, including locking herself away for two days each week and regularly working 14-hour days.

Ossett’s experience of academy conversion is a great example of where the school had worked the restructured finances of its new status to its advantage.

Conversion is not an easy decision for some schools and may not even be the right option at the moment. It is those that really take the step of being a standalone business

and understand that increased financial responsibility can create opportunities to innovate which really begin to see the benefits that restructuring school finances can bring. As more primary schools seek to explore ways that they can convert successfully sharing resources will become a key ingredient in maximising value.

Ian Buss is Head of Education at Lloyds TSB Commercial

Tracy Jackson, assistant principal at Ossett Academy: “Sharing is the key to success after conversion.”



Strength in numbers

Etonbury Middle School has thrived since joining a multi-academy trust. Just don't tell the parents, says Headteacher Dr Al Mistrano



Imagine a rural middle school with 425 lovely 9-13 year-old children, large grounds and generally kind staff who care for the welfare of children. Imagine that this school, due to it being so lovely, doesn't take into account the bulk of the changes in education since the election of the first Labour government – not a great deal of attention to differentiation and AfL in the classroom; little use of data in the management of the school and when planning lessons; English and maths departments not working together to maximize headline figures; little systematic monitoring of teaching and internal grading of teaching.

This was the school I joined as Head at the start of last academic year. Etonbury School is a brilliant place to work which is probably why many of the pushes in education passed it by, until the local community realized that the two other schools in the area were offering more contemporary classroom and leadership practices. Within a year, Etonbury lost 30 students from their ordinary roll and continued to partially fill the roll for the following three years. Such was the school that I joined as Head last academic year.

The challenges I faced were not the Waterloo Road, inner London/choose your favourite notoriously 'rough' urban center type of issues. I walked into the school and found children who loved learning and having innocent fun. I did, however, find a long-serving staff who, due to their relative isolation, didn't have the ideas necessary to move forward as quickly as we needed in

order to survive the Ofsted focus on data, leadership and use of assessment to support learning. With the average tenure at the school being 11 years and the school's history being generally inwardly focused, the seeds of change were not as plentiful as they need to be. On top of this, the school was facing a potential £100,000 shortfall with crumbling buildings dating from the early 1950s at a time when the Local Authority was scaling back expenditure at an alarming rate.

I look back now at the distance we've travelled and I'm quite pleased with the progress. I regularly receive letters and comments about how the school has changed so remarkably so quickly. Indeed, one parent blessed me and said that the changes have been truly miraculous. We've achieved the highest English results we've ever achieved which rival our local Outstanding partner in the Trust and our SIP has judged our Key Stage 3 results as 'very good'. While it's great to receive plaudits from parents, colleagues and

'The Trust enabled me to inject new staff into the school, benefit from huge economies of scale...'

governors, the honest side of me knows with complete certainty that our development in the last 12 months has been down to our membership of Bedfordshire East Schools Trust and Bedfordshire East Multi-Academy Trust and a determined governing body fully supportive of the tight relationships that come with multi-academy trusts. The Trust enabled me to inject new staff into the school, benefit from huge economies of

scale, stamp a positive reputation on the school within the community and contribute to the community infrastructure all within the space of 12 months.

For years the school struggled to maintain a stable staff and relied on supply agencies. The long-term illnesses that come with an older staff and last-minute resignations – significant challenges for a small school to manage – became far less

Etonbury Middle School, where children 'love learning and having innocent fun'.



problematic when in the multi-academy trust as we were able to shuffle staff across sites to fill parts of the timetable with quality first teaching rather than hire unsatisfactory supply teachers at a premium cost. Similarly, we have been able to infuse within the staff the new ideas and energy that we desperately needed.

At leadership level the joint staffing arrangement has been particularly successful. By sharing outstanding leaders across the Trust we've been able to establish Outstanding management systems and the can-do approach to change that the school desperately needed. Of course, while benefitting from these fire-lighters of change, we have also been able to advertise these changes in order to have the reputation of the Outstanding school support our somewhat tarnished reputation. At present we have joint middle leaders in humanities, science and MFL and joint senior leaders in director of specialism, SEN and in the pastoral provision and are watching our leadership practices develop at an impressive rate. The impacts of these are feeding through in examination results as well as in SIP reports and lesson observations.

Along with the improvements in teaching, leadership practices and reputations, the joint staffing model makes for much more efficient use of resources. A school with just over 400 students can struggle to recruit and afford full-time top quality leaders. Across two or more schools, however, gold star services can be created alongside first class systems-leadership. This includes support services as well as classroom practitioners.

For example, schools the size of Etonbury often rely on people without industry standard expertise in IT to maintain IT and data services. To deal with technical need in the past, the school added five hours to the science technician's week to support the IT infrastructure and another five hours to the SEN administrator in order to service the data systems. As a part of the multi-academy trust, however, we've been able to benefit from systems analysts and IT specialists



Pupils can play safely and have pride in their physical environment

who previously worked in London and who now work for the Trust to create first class systems at my small rural school.

We've also been able to benefit from a property management service that has allowed for the school to be transformed from a dangerous site with rusty play equipment, lumps of asbestos-riddled concrete falling from the fascia and an appalling patchwork of multi-coloured window frames with peeling paint into a place where students can play safely and

have pride in their physical environment.

It's important to point out, however, that this relationship between an Outstanding school and one that once faced significant struggles could be seen as either a take-over or a one way relationship. In our case, we have not found this to be a significant issue. While we do gain a great deal from the Outstanding school, they also gain a great deal from us. Rather than exporting to other schools successful middle and senior leaders for promoted

posts and professional development, we have become a local challenge allowing for leadership development for colleagues without the need for them to leave the employment of the Outstanding school.

Finally, the multi-academy trust serves to support parent choice in the local community without the negative impacts on a school that falls in popularity or hits hard times. Rather than those children unable to gain a place at the Outstanding school feeling that they've got a bad deal, they know that they are part of an impressive institution with Outstanding practices developing across two sites.

Etonbury is no longer the sink school and gone is the sense amongst staff that the Outstanding school is 'nicking' kids in the recruitment game: instead we have joint investment in both schools to the benefit of the children. The children might continue to choose to go to the Outstanding school, but the funding drain is now tempered by joint investment thus allowing for substantial school improvement regardless of what would otherwise have been significant disadvantage.

Becoming part of the multi-academy trust has allowed for Etonbury to make significant improvements at an alarming rate as documented by our SIP and the parents and I'd certainly recommend the structure to anyone in my position. Just don't tell too many parents about this: I like the letters of thanks from those who think it's all down to the new Head.



‘Etonbury is no longer the sink school and gone is the sense amongst staff that the Outstanding school is “nicking” kids in the recruitment game: instead we have joint investment in both schools to the benefit of the children’

Outreach pays off

Headteacher Derek Peale shares his experience of working with IBM to promote STEM at Park House School and Sports College

Park House School and Sports College is a mixed 11-18 school of 1250 students and eighty teachers which successfully converted to academy status on May 1st 2011. In 2011, the school achieved record-breaking results at both GCSE and A level, with ALPs value-added performance placing it in the top 10% of schools nationally.

The school has been a leading member of the London 2012 Get Set education network since 2009, promoting the Olympic and Paralympic Values. Park House also fosters links internationally to schools in South Africa, Mongolia and Iraq.

The school became involved in the IBM Schools' Outreach Programme when Ruth Miller of IBM became a mentor for the school two years ago. Ruth introduced the programme initially to invite engagement from A level physics students as part of a drive to raise awareness of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) opportunities, particularly amongst female students.

'We have noted a stimulation of interest in physics in particular'

However, I quickly recognised the wider value of the programme in relation to the school's existing student leadership development programmes. Working with IBM, we put a strategy in place to ensure that engagement and involvement was extended beyond the initial subject, gender and sixth form focus suggested.

Early days

Within a few weeks of contact the first wave of events was organised within the academic year and risk assessments for visits and transport arrangements were undertaken.

Some events were run at Park House School and just required organisation of rooms, refreshments and facilities. Other events were organised mainly by IBM at the IBM Hursley research centre

near Winchester. A vibrant hub for innovation, IBM Hursley proved an inspirational workplace for the students to visit and see IBM developers, programmers and inventors in action.

Next step: the workplace

In its first phase the programme was successful and our focus on the future employability of the students increased. As a result, we worked closely together with IBM to extend the programme to include sixth form work activities and a 'Big Interview Day' for students in Year 10.

The programme was actively promoted to sixth form students as a means of differentiating themselves and to gain skills for use at university and work. Awareness was raised through assemblies, the personal development tutorial programme and careers education programme at the school. In the second year of delivery, students from the first events acted as advocates of the programme to their peers.

The volume of student interest was increased by continuous reminders from key subject staff about the benefits of the programme, supported by the careers co-ordinator and Head of sixth form. We also had excellent support from parents which was an important factor. Ruth Miller of IBM has also become a Community Governor and now works closely with our senior leadership team and the careers advisor to develop a programme of events suitable for various year groups with a focus on business and technology.

Results

The students who participated in the programme have reported increased and high visibility of technical and manufacturing industries. We have noted a stimulation of interest in physics in particular, with growing numbers of students choosing the subject at A level.

This year, two female sixth-form students, Annabel and Sadie, have joined IBM. One is currently a gap-year student and the other has started as an apprentice. Three Park House students taking part in the programme achieved Oxbridge places.

All participating students have reported that the programme has refined their presentational skills and confidence in an interview context and enhanced their initial UCAS applications.

The IBM Schools' Outreach programme has added an additional dimension to our student leadership and personal development programmes. We have experienced considerable synergy between this and other related programmes at Park House, which has added significant value to their overall impact.

Top tips if you're considering a similar activity

1. Consider if the programme is an opportunity for your students to enhance and develop their skills. If yes, then ensure the programme is experienced as complementing the curriculum and other personal development programmes which may be in place.
2. Identify key staff with the capacity to ensure regular contact with the company and time to promote the programme. Involve students as key advocates of the programme in subsequent years of delivery.
3. Offer the programme to students who match the company you are running the programme with. For our collaboration with IBM, we targeted high achievers in maths and the sciences.
4. Prepare events thoroughly for maximum reach and impact:
 - Start preparing six weeks prior.
 - Secure an appropriate venue for interviews.
 - Meet with students to provide overview.
 - Provide background information on the company and website address so that the students can conduct research.
 - Practise filling out applications forms in tutorial time. Compare good and bad and answers to the questions.
 - Allow the students to come up with questions and answers in preparation for the interview process and self awareness activities.
 - Role play interview questions.
 - Collect completed application forms at least two weeks in

advance of event – pass to the company staff to allow for their preparation time.

- Prepare certificates to recognise the students with on the day.

Sarah Williams-Gardener Director of Government Affairs and Schools' Outreach Programme Sponsor, IBM UK

The IBM Schools' Outreach programme was launched to raise awareness of career possibilities within the corporate IT sector. We are heartened to see from the recent GCSE and A level results that many more students are studying STEM subjects and hope that this trend continues.

IBM, which this year celebrates its centenary, has built its success on innovation. For innovation to flourish we need to continue to tap into a bright, young and diverse pool of talent. Programmes such as Schools Outreach enable us to support the teaching staff and open our doors to the workforce of the future.

Annabel Owsley, Business Associate, IBM UK Foundation programme

At the end of year 12, I was one of 16 Park House Formers to attend a week's work experience at IBM. This inspired me to apply to their foundation scheme, a year before university, of paid work experience.

The application and assessment process was far less scary than I had thought it would be. I felt well prepared from the practice and mock interviews I had been through at school. I was delighted when I received the phone call later offering me a job.

Since August I have worked in the graduate recruitment team at IBM Hursley. I will have the chance to experience placements in other departments within IBM alongside regular business training. I am really looking forward to my year out and would encourage other students to consider it.

Derek Peuple (right) with Cherie Blair (centre) at the 2011 Opportunity Now awards.



Sadie Hawkins, IBM Apprentice

At Park House, I participated in work experience and several Women in Technology days hosted by IBM. During this time we were given various talks, demonstrations and tours by inspirational IBM employees. This insight confirmed my desire to pursue a career in business.

I applied to the IBM apprenticeship scheme in September 2010. The application process was challenging. However, a few weeks later, to my delight, I was offered a place on the scheme and deferred until August 2011, allowing me to complete my A levels.

Since starting at IBM I've experienced a whirlwind of adventure including intense training, live demonstrations and a number of business event days. I look forward to completing my two-year apprenticeship and staying with the company for many years to come. The connection between Park House and IBM has allowed for great opportunities for me. I'm grateful to all those involved for their support and keen to remain in touch with Park House in the future.

‘We’d become invisible to our LA’

Headteacher Kevin Eveleigh explains why Barnby Road converted to academy status last year

As a Headteacher I began to become concerned that as an ‘Outstanding’ school I was becoming invisible to my Local Authority. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d seen an LA officer on my site and Preferential Courses were all about schools who struggle: the same schools every year, for many years.

I understood that LAs have to have that focus on standards but my school was not a ‘posh’ school; in fact we just make average intake on DCSI. I began to wonder when we *would* be a priority.

We then had a massive over-enrolment problem: each year it seemed that our LA couldn’t win appeals anymore and we were enrolling well beyond the capacity for our building and had grown 30% in just four years. I thought: ‘Well, now we’ll be a priority’ and for the first time in many years made a very strong case for an additional classroom. It was refused outright.

I had nowhere to put the children and had lost every space we had to offer. We built our own classrooms. The only help my LA would offer was a loan to put us into debt.

When we needed to be a LA priority more than any other time in our history we were not. We built two big classrooms at half the LA quote and in half the time, managing planning permission to completion.

We now couldn’t afford several of our LA ‘Buy Backs’ and were forced to find alternatives and become even more autonomous. In the meantime I had learnt that our local secondaries were running at huge overspends. When we

had, like most primaries, scrimped and saved to ensure we were never so much as a penny overspent.

So, when academy status was placed before my governors it was a definite no brainer. We had proven we could manage our crises best and had an LA we could no longer afford. We had developed the business skills and autonomy without choice and now figured that £120,000 (10%) of our money given to our authority by our catchment tax payers each year might never be seen by our community again without any accountability.

In times of austerity we could do far more for our children by distributing that funding directly to the children whose parents paid it in the first place.

Heads who haven’t looked into it think it’s ‘magic money’ or ‘extra money,’ but it’s actually their children’s money and with the best of intention, we were in a better position to prioritise it.

What improvements has it made?

Cynics might say “It’s all about the money.” In terms of improving resources, improving intervention strategies for children who need them an adding staff to reduce class sizes, yes it is. Try doing that without money.

First off, it has ensured job security in hard times. I can predict my budget happily three years ahead and prioritise with known ground rules.

- It has meant a couple of local people being employed at the school rather than at County Hall. Rather than the

feared ‘privatisation’ it is far more ‘localisation’ that takes place.

- We have been able to renegotiate those LA services that were good; LAs offer some excellent packages and we could cherry-pick effectively.
- We employ our own local gardener and have a grass-cutting tractor that will save thousands on landscape services and be immediately responsive to our needs on site.
- We were able to increase the proportion of PPA that is covered by teachers, not TAs, by allowing an excellent teacher to return from maternity for three days a week.
- We were able to employ an additional teacher into the line-up to create pure year-group classes and reduce class sizes to that fantasy average of 26 pupils.
- We purchased our own music tuition locally and bought £4000 of cellos made in Newark and quadrupled our instrumental provision. We also purchased a piano player for orchestra.
- We bought in a couple of extra sports providers for sports we had no skills in for after-school clubs, completing a fantastic after-school offer.
- We doubled classroom resources for each teacher and went to the Education Show to see what was offered as best practice these days.
- We purchased some excellent outdoor play equipment from a local firm to enhance outdoor play in our early years garden and bought two big mature trees for shade.

- We have invested in 'Read to Write' to improve on disappointing writing results for next year.
- We increased the one-to-one intervention provision for maths at Year Six and got our first-ever 100% two levels progress or more.
- We made sure we had a sensible carry forward to cover inevitable reductions in LACSEG over the next three years.
- We purchased a powerful tracking and target setting package that suits all our needs.
- We are in the process of purchasing a minibus to help reduce the cost of

visits to our parents in a catchment that is not wealthy.

- We have replaced all our ageing ICT equipment.
- We are employing a local man who does podcasting and animation work for boys who need to write.
- We have provided (at our own expense) 20 days of support for a local school struggling to make the benchmark. They did it with their highest ever maths results.

Yes, it has made a huge difference to staff, children and community.

The Local Authority supported the transition. They were excellent and

pragmatic in offering us visits from all their departments. Those meetings were all of good quality and allowed us to separate the wheat from the chaff. As a result we still buy back several key services.

Good lawyers make LA/LEA transition effective and keep your LA active within the process.

Just because we didn't feel we were a priority to our LA didn't mean they were a poor authority. Far from it, and our relationship today is still very positive. They want to know which services are their best and they want to work with you.

One year on from conversion: business as usual at Watford Grammar School for Girls

The school is thriving in their new-found autonomy

Watford Grammar School for Girls is fast approaching its first anniversary as an academy. The journey to academy status began before the 2010 election but moved from possibility to reality 15 months ago following the election of the Coalition Government. The regained autonomy and freedom are exciting and have permeated all areas of school life. Our new systems and procedures are now well embedded and the Academy Trust Company organisational structure is firmly in place. As a very early converter, we learned some important lessons during the conversion process and we have also been able to support and guide several schools, as well as the DfE itself, to

develop and grow the academy initiative. For the majority of the school community there has been little change. The school day remains the same, the lessons taught and the structure of the curriculum are certainly the same, staff terms and conditions remain as before, and most of the members the governing body and senior leadership team remain unchanged.

The Academy Trust Company is essentially a company limited by guarantee and as such has members (similar to shareholders) presiding over the company with a set of directors tasked with strategic management responsibilities. In our case the members are a mix of trustees and governors and

our board of directors is made up of all the previous governors retaining the same individual responsibilities. The Head is the chief executive.

The school enjoys direct funding by the Department for Education via the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). We now receive the portion of funding previously retained by the local authority, known as the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) directly into the school account, enabling us to streamline the services we use and to ensure quality as well as value for money. This has worked to our advantage because we engaged with few local authority services as a maintained VA school and can now

‘As more schools convert to academy status, the benefits will become increasingly self-evident’

choose how best to use this funding allocation.

The autonomy afforded to us through academy status means we can now make strategic decisions regarding employment, finance, resourcing, capital, and curriculum development. Indeed we have developed more creative collaborations without reference to the Local Authority. We are able to be more flexible and responsive to these changing times. We can now seize opportunities and be pioneers in our field.

Despite the opinions of the sceptics, day-to-day functions resumed as normal in September 2010; teaching and learning takes place as before; all the legal requirements have been satisfied. Funding from the YPLA has been timely

and efficient and despite concerns that the financial bureaucracy for academies would be an overwhelming burden, in reality this has not been the case.

So it’s business as usual at Watford Grammar School for Girls (notice: no change of name). Currently, we are developing a number of new systems: new accounting procedures are becoming established; we are leasing equipment instead of buying in every case; we are developing and looking for new procurement opportunities. However we see all this as simply part of our drive for continuous improvement.

This conversion was successfully achieved in the three months between May and August 2010 and we are proof that this time frame is realistic.

We believe we now have the capacity to deal with the ongoing changes whilst managing day-to-day operations effectively. In fact, we believe we also now have the freedom and capability to begin exploring new opportunities for the school through collaboration, business innovation and curriculum design. We are already developing interesting collaboration and partnership models to improve value for money and efficiency amongst schools with a common purpose and operational synergy.

We have been able to address concerns directly with our stakeholders by outlining clearly our motivation for the change and we have been able to promote the benefits to the wider educational community. As more schools convert to academy status, the benefits will become increasingly self-evident. We believe that autonomy with clear accountability can and does lead to improved outcomes for students and staff.

Helen Hyde is Headmistress of Watford Grammar School for Girls; Stephen Morales is the business director

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Much in common and much to share

The Southwark Schools Learning Partnership shows how state, academy and independent schools can work together for the greater good

Much publicity has been given to the government's desire for independent schools to sponsor academy schools. However, this is not the only sort of relationship which can exist between two.

State schools vary in many ways, such as size, age-range, location and aims, and the independent sector is equally diverse. Government ministers have often spoken of their desire to implant some of the independent sector's DNA into academies. However the only thing which all independent schools have in common is that they are independent and free from state control over their educational provision, recruitment and finances. They are equally diverse in size, age range, location and aims as state sector schools.

Some are financially well-endowed and have been able to make a substantial contribution establishing new academies, some have given sponsorship in-kind, such as expertise and resources, and some have even turned themselves into academies. Others believe that they do not have either the appropriate expertise or resources to become involved.

Those who have set up academies have usually chosen to do so in more deprived areas at a distance from themselves. However, within our cities we have a considerable number of independent schools; some of these are working in partnership with their local academies as well as with other state-maintained schools. This happens in the London Borough of Southwark. Indeed, at present

Southwark's secondary provision comprises nothing other than 10 academies and five voluntary aided schools.

In 2003, Tim Brighouse, the Commissioner for London Schools, challenged a number of London secondary Headteachers from both sectors to work together in partnership to raise standards for all children in London schools. From this, the Southwark Schools Learning Partnership (SSLP) was formed, with Dr Irene Bishop, Head of St Saviour's & St Olave's CE School, and Marion Gibbs, Head of James Allen's Girls' School, as its co-directors.

The first members were three independent schools (Alleyn's, Dulwich College and James Allen's Girls' School) and six state schools (Archbishop Michael Ramsey TC, Geoffrey Chaucer TC, Kingsdale, St Saviour's & St Olave's CE, Walworth and Waverley School).

The state school membership has



changed over the years, but now in 2011 we have 10 partner schools, the original three independents plus St Saviour's & St Olave's CE, St Michael's RC and St Thomas the Apostle College and four academies – the Charter School, Globe Academy (formerly Geoffrey Chaucer), Kingsdale and Walworth Academy. Until its temporary closure this autumn, St Michael's and All Angels Academy (formerly Archbishop Michael Ramsey) was also a member.

The underlying philosophy of our partnership is that we all have things that we can learn from one another. We want to share good practice and explore innovative ideas together to benefit our staff and our students. It is too easy for specialist staff to become isolated from others working in their own area; the era of the local teachers' centre has long gone. As for our students, we need to break down the barriers which exist in some parts of the borough and to help young people learn to work together rather than operating as rival teams.

What do we actually do? For six years we ran a Pupil Voice project, originally as a learning enquiry and then focusing more

on classroom practice and exactly what helps students to learn well. The later stages of this project were led by a member of staff from Walworth Academy and each year we met for successful student conferences in the executive suite of The New Den, home of Millwall Football Club.

We have held two joint concerts at Southwark Cathedral, one instrumental, with an orchestra and samba band, and one choral, with gospel music. At both, students from all the schools played and sang together, benefiting from being in a larger group of talented young people and enjoying working together. Students have also come together for a debating workshop, 'silly sports' days, an eco-conference, drama days, CSI investigations, team-building and enterprise workshops, language conferences, university presentations and community action, to name but a few.

Some events are specifically organised by us for the SSLP, but if one school is organising an activity for their own students, especially in minority subjects, if there is space, we invite our partners.

Links between staff are a vital strand of the SSLP and these are

Pupils in the Southwark Schools Learning Partnership break down the barriers.





There is a natural link between academies and independent schools.

forged with a great spirit of collegiality and mutual respect. The professional development opportunities are boundless and have the advantage of being related to real life in the classroom in Southwark. When they meet to discuss professional and pedagogical topics or visit one another's classrooms SSLP teachers find that they have much in common and much to share. NQTs have spent time observing and working in schools in the other sector and derived much benefit from it.

Until quite recently, most Southwark state schools had no sixth form, and the academies, along with our other state school partners have utilised the expertise of the experienced sixth form staff within the independent schools.

There is a natural link between academies and independent schools, both have greater freedom and autonomy than other

schools and can explore how best to use these together. Some academies cater for ages 4-18 years, so do many independent schools, who can share their expertise. It seems likely that within the next few years the vast majority of state secondary schools and several hundred primary schools will become academies. True partnerships between independent schools and academies can only benefit both parties.

Marion Gibbs is Headmistress of James Allen's Girls' School in, London, Co-Director of SSLP, and a member of the Girls' Schools Association.

A never-ending journey

Patricia Sowter describes how Cuckoo Hall Primary School rose from struggling to Outstanding

I joined Cuckoo Hall Primary School in Edmonton, North London in 2001. The school had been in special measures and was struggling. I encountered low expectations for children's learning and behaviour and consequently standards and achievement were very low. There was very high mobility resulting in a falling pupil roll. Not surprisingly this was due to dissatisfaction from parents who understandably looked for alternative schools for their children. For me the key principles for success were to:

- Implement strong focused leadership and robust systems that provided accurate information on where the school is and where it should go next.
- Ensure a relentless focus on excellent teaching that is consistent across the whole school.
- Promote very high expectations for ALL children's learning and behaviour.
- Implement a stimulating and wide reaching curriculum, that includes a strong focus on English and mathematics.
- Promote strong partnerships and communication with parents.

Cuckoo Hall has now had two successive 'Outstanding' Ofsted reports, we are an expanding school and over-subscribed (currently 840 pupils), standards and achievement are well above national expectations and we are recognized as one of the best-performing schools nationally. This is despite having very high levels of disadvantage.

Some of the barriers have NOT been the children, staff parents or governors. From

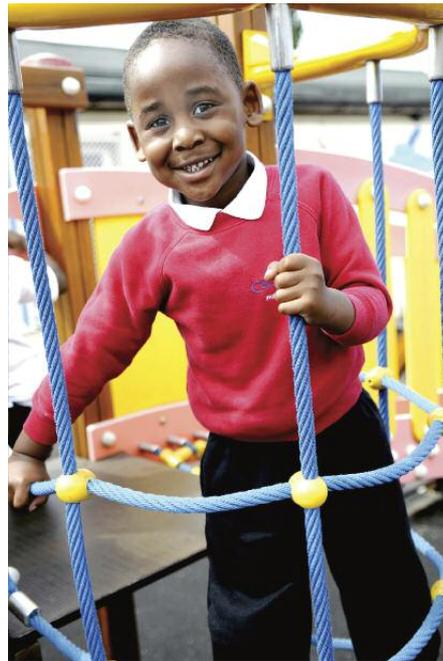


the start I encountered a lack of support from the Local Authority to improve the disgraceful run-down site and buildings. I came up against opposition from LA advisers who objected to young children being taught the essential basic skills, and an overall lack of knowledge from LA staff to support both pupil and teacher performance. There was continuous bureaucracy and interference where not needed.

I joined FASNA in 2006 and was relieved to meet Headteachers such as myself, who spoke out against the type of control and bureaucracy that could hold schools back. I knew that the only way forward was to work with staff and governors to define our own future and take control of our own destiny. We understood that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds also have aspirations for their children and we knew that too many schools in challenging areas are failing these children.

We forged ahead and became a Foundation School in 2008, a Trust in 2009 and as soon as the opportunity arose we were one of the first outstanding Primary schools to become an academy in September 2010.

I haven't looked back since. Having academy freedoms has not fundamentally changed Cuckoo Hall because I exerted



autonomy as far as possible in order to raise standards. What has made a difference is the knowledge that we are not subject to Local Authority control.

At the end of last year I submitted a proposal to open a two form of entry Free School on an adjacent derelict site that had been vacated two years previously by a failing secondary school. I had been getting nowhere with the LA in respect of their plans for this site that was an eyesore to Cuckoo Hall and the local community.

Opening a two form of entry primary school on this site made perfect sense. Not only is there a critical shortage of school places in the area but also a severe lack of good quality education. I therefore submitted a strong business case to open a new school that was approved by the Secretary of State.

Woodpecker Hall Primary Academy opened its doors to 120 pupils this September 2011. Feedback from the local community and parents has been overwhelmingly supportive. Parents have openly voiced their concern at not being able to obtain good schools for their children and are relieved at being offered places at a new school that will be led and managed by Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust (CHAT) which will oversee the governance and organization of both schools (and any future schools). The Secretary of State, Michael Gove, attended the opening of Woodpecker Hall and showed genuine appreciation that we will be offering excellent education to more children in an area of London that faces many challenges.

**Patricia Sowter CBE is
Executive Principal
at Cuckoo Hall
Academies Trust**

An artist's impression of Woodpecker Hall



Just pick up the phone...

Make friends with your local independent school, urges Neil Roskilly

The essence of independence, according to Aleister Crowley, has been to think and act according to standards from within, not without. Newly established academies are coming to realise that without the shackles of Local Authority control, they not only have a greater voice in their own destiny, but they can focus once more on the values that make them tick. To me, this is the defining difference between maintained schools and those in the independent sector. Many independent

schools, whatever their history, operate with explicit values that are not foisted from above, but come from deep inside. With the 2010 Academies Act, more schools are now able to focus on the powerful values-driven principles that can reinvigorate their practice.

A deep exploration of values can of course be unnerving and this applies as much on a community level as it does to any individual. Asking fundamental questions along the lines of, 'just what is it that we set out to do around here?', can

engender a variety of responses, depending on an organisation's capacity to reflect and engage in an honest 'warts and all' discourse. However, reconnecting teachers and school leaders with their moral purpose is a useful exercise: 'Ah yes, I remember now what I came into the profession for. That's how we can make a real difference to the life chances of the pupils who come to New Academy'. But it's easy to miss this opportunity, as new academies can misdirect much of their creative energies securing services that



Neil Roskilly: 'Many independent schools, whatever their history, operate with explicit values that are not foisted from above, but come from deep inside. With the 2010 Academies Act, more schools are now able to focus on the powerful values-driven principles that can reinvigorate their practice.'

were previously assumed. Leaving LA control is a bit like going to school for the first time as a four year-old; what if the roof blows off or there's an accident in the playground; who do we turn to? Quick: check the insurance; we haven't time for all that values stuff.

So, how do we carve out the time and

support (including legal), preferred purchasing arrangements, sports, arts and cultural competitions, low-cost professional training and political monitoring. Just as important, fellowship and networking opportunities can put academy heads in contact with school leaders in the independent sector who

chew the educational cud. Many school governorships, partnerships and bursary schemes had similar humble beginnings. As just one example among many, a top independent school in Cambridge offers 100% bursaries annually for pupils from a nearby maintained 11-16 school, instigated when its Principle was invited to be a Community Governor.

Links between academies and independent schools also exist at a more formal level. Academies play a growing part in the Independent State School Partnerships Scheme, which is directly supported by DfE and the National College. It is also worth watching out for local independent/state school partnerships. In Oxfordshire, for example, a group runs events that include secondary science festivals, geography workshops and MFL conferences.

Another example is Tonbridge School in Kent, which works closely with maintained secondary and primary schools to provide gifted and talented, and university admissions expertise. Such schemes are running across the country and academies are increasing tapping into these low cost and potentially beneficial opportunities. In addition, independent schools are part of the Teaching Schools initiative and the first independent school to be approved, King Edward VI High School for Girls in Birmingham, already offers master classes for local maintained sector colleagues in mathematics education. It is expected that such teaching schools will cover much of the initial teacher training needs and future in-service training requirements in their local area.

So the time has never been better for academies to just pick up the phone. One call may be all that is necessary to reconnect your school with the reason it exists.

'Don't be put off with the thought that independent heads are a strange breed, steeped in windy tradition and cloaked in tweed..'

get the support we need? Independent schools and their member associations are always keen to support new academies embarking on this process and many already have strong links to academies. This isn't just those academies sponsored directly by independents. Most of the independent sector associations have academy affiliates who benefit from

have come to terms with their independence. Often, it's just a case of picking up the phone and suggesting lunch. And don't be put off with the thought that independent Heads are a strange breed, steeped in windy tradition and cloaked in tweed. A few may still be, but many more have maintained sector experience and are always delighted to



Neil Roskilly is
CEO of The Independent
Schools Association.

When talking to the pupils...

How you do it is so important, explains voice expert Susan Heaton Wright

In these times of over-zealous Health and Safety legislation, it is surprising that the vocal health of teachers isn't taken that seriously. Yet vocal damage or strain is an occupational hazard for teaching staff: for some it is permanent damage; for colleagues it could mean covering for a sick colleague; and for senior management dealing with the operational nightmare of having an employee who is regularly ill.

Vocal skills – and body language – are not covered in depth within teaching training courses: young teachers I have spoken to were given a one-hour lecture with 350 students in it! Yet using the voice and body language in a positive, effective way, is a powerful tool not only for classroom management and communicating with pupils, but also for developing relationships with parents.

Making an impact with one's voice or physical presence is a valuable way of creating an upbeat, effective learning environment in the classroom. Through good posture, use of the voice and body language, teachers are creating positive role models for pupils by speaking, engaging and listening to conversations.

The voice can be used like an instrument: varying the speed of speech, varying the pitch and volume as well as having good diction make it easier for students to listen to a teacher. Varying teaching activities, for instance listening to student conversations and not constantly speaking, is a good way to maintain vocal stamina and avoid vocal tiredness or strain. A teacher able to project the voice, rather than constantly shout and potentially strain the voice, is going to be more engaging to a young person than one that students subconsciously switch off to.

In addition to the voice, having an awareness of body language or non-verbal communication is useful in teaching students to

listen and to be part of a conversation. Good open yet relaxed posture helps develop a rapport between a teacher and pupils. By keeping shoulders down; relaxing the neck and jaw; being aware of the tension in one's face all contribute to creating a two way communication flow between teacher and students.

When one's posture is relaxed, the voice becomes freer; it is easier to speak and more interesting for students to listen to. But if one's posture is 'closed' (shoulders are up, neck is strained, jaw tense and closed upper chest), the voice is constrained and the non-verbal messages being sent to pupils are negative. (Why should they want to listen to a teacher that stands like that?)

Occasionally individuals do strain their voices, even if they have taken care of them. They might raise their voice on one occasion and strain the vocal folds; or they continue teaching when they have a throat infection, which in time leads to the voice being strained. Of course, not speaking is the best treatment for vocal strain, but this is not always practical – even if it is a serious vocal strain, and many teachers are reluctant to take time off.

My advice would always take a day off to rest the voice. If the symptoms continue to persist, see a GP or pharmacist who will prescribe a drug. If the symptoms persist, ask the GP to refer you to a specialist or speech therapist. There could be a vocal damage or the way the voice being used is causing the damage.

Here are my top tips to using the voice effectively in the classroom.

- Drink plenty of water. (Tea and coffee are also permissible, but mainly water please).
- Pace yourself; see if you can vary the volume of your speaking and get the students to speak too.

‘Of course, not speaking is the best treatment for vocal strain, but this is not always practical...’



- Only raise your voice if it is absolutely necessary.
- Be very careful if you have a cold or sore throat; plan your lessons around this; possibly get pupils to do more speaking.
- Don't smoke!
- Challenge yourself to speak more quietly but to project your voice from your abdomen.
- Listen carefully to your pupils; use eye contact to engage them and face the person to show you are listening to them.
- Breathe deeply from your abdomen, making sure your shoulders are down and your upper chest area is open.
- Learn to project your voice in a healthy effective way, placing your voice correctly and supporting the breath with your abdominal muscles.

- When you speak, 'smile' with your eyes; this lifts the voice, making it easier to project.
- Be aware of your posture: shoulders down and back; neck and jaw relaxed.

Face your pupils when you speak to them, and listen to them.

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Complacency means you will get left behind...

Jenny Cornell and Rose Welshman explain why marketing and branding is as important in the state sector as it is in independent schools

Marketing and development offices are well established in the independent sector. They are still fairly new in the state sector and provoke challenging decisions for Heads and governors to make.

However, state schools cannot be complacent. Parents are more discerning now and have more choice than ever before. Schools need to be as competitive as possible and be able to convince parents to entrust their children to them.

The assertion that state funding is inadequate is becoming increasingly apparent, even with the extra academy funding and flexibility that this status provides. A growing number of schools are recognising the benefits that a development function can provide in adding value to the educational experience of current and future pupils.

Why do schools need branding?

In today's business environment it is increasingly difficult for an organisation to be noticed or even heard. The clutter, volume and visual overkill of competing messages is overwhelming. As a

result, more and more organisations are concentrating on developing a uniform, easily recognised 'master brand identity' to communicate who they are to the public.

This is increasingly true of the schools sector too. One only has to think about the turnaround of Marks & Spencer aided by simply adding the word 'Your' to its brand identity; or Tesco's 'every little helps'; Orange, 'The future's bright'; or HSBC, 'Your local bank', all capturing an emotion rather than a hard or true fact. The best current examples are BMW – 'We don't just make cars, we make joy' – selling an emotion, and Guinness – 'Bring it to life'.

People buy with their heart and justify their choices with their head, not the other way round, and this is certainly true when choosing a school.

All schools have a brand, from uniform to minibuss design, prospectuses and signs around the school site, all communicate to the public what the school brand is.

It is more than just a logo. It is a school's reputation, what people think when they hear the name of the school. There are many definitions but, essentially, it can be seen as a promise made, an emotional connection, which conveys the true personality and distinctiveness of a particular school.

To create a brand, schools need to ask themselves what their core values are, what is their mission, what is their Unique Selling Point (USP). What makes their school stand out? How is the school different to others? Are these important features conveyed in all of their branding?

A strong brand is instantly recognisable, it differentiates itself from its competitors, it creates

'Marketing is essential for communicating the school to the wider world. You don't want to be forgotten in this era of greater choice and ever-improving results.'

a long-term relationship between the school and customer, *ie* parents and other stakeholders. It is consistent and gives assurance to its customers.

Professionalism of school publicity today, both in print and online, requires that the brand is used across all aspects of school life, from the tie to letter head, signage, press adverts and online communications.

If your school doesn't have a strong brand, you could become lost in the scramble for school places.

Why do schools need to market themselves?

Marketing is all about connecting, building, retaining and deepening relationships, whether this be with current parents, potential parents, past pupils, businesses or the local community.

Marketing is essential for communicating the school to the wider world. It is important to raise awareness of the school - you don't want to be forgotten in this era of greater choice and ever-improving results. How can you stand out?

Established schools may want to 'relaunch' themselves, publicising their new facilities or moving in a new direction - *eg* a new Head, a turnaround in academic standards *etc*. New schools or schools changing their name or status, *eg* becoming an academy, need to engage with the public and media to launch

this new identity.

All schools are marketing themselves unconsciously already – via their pupils and staff, including receptionists, teachers, administrators, senior leaders and parents, not just specialist marketing staff. Do not overlook the importance of administrative and support staff in marketing because they are often the first contact for prospective and current families, donors and referrers. All staff must know and be able to articulate your 'key messages' and be able to convey them positively.

Parents can be particularly good ambassadors and word of mouth counts for a lot – so schools should engage with them to ensure that they are spreading the message the school wants. Parents will trust other parents' endorsements more than grand claims by the Head or school who is clearly 'paid to say that'. Having them on side and quoted or used in marketing is invaluable.

There are many ways of reaching out to new parents – via open days, website, prospectus, PR, press and publicity, advertising, social media. But satisfied parents are probably still the most effective (and cheapest) form of marketing for a school.

Popular or oversubscribed schools also need to market themselves and ask: are they communicating their USP

'A school's brand can be a promise made, an emotional connection...'





All schools are marketing themselves unconsciously already – via their pupils and staff.

effectively? Is customer care of existing parents and potential new parents as effective as it could be or could it be improved? How will local changes, eg a new sixth form college or school opening, impact on them? The established school must continue to differentiate itself so that it stands out from competition. Complacency can lead to schools being left behind. Retention is always cheaper than recruitment.

What benefits can development provide for the school?

Development is the inter-relationship of communications, external relations, alumni/parent relations and fundraising to foster a life-long interest in the school, helping to secure its future. Working closely with marketing, development activities can greatly enrich the life of the school.

Schools that already have a development function appreciate the benefits that this provides. Developing and building on the relationships that the school has, expertise, advice and guidance can be obtained in various different ways, from finding a

bountiful resource of speakers for school events, lectures or lessons from a wide range of backgrounds to hosting careers' fairs or offering work placements. Parents and alumni are particularly resourceful and more than willing to help their schools. Relationships in the business world can be explored to develop partnerships which could result in sharing best practice in leadership, professional development or even in a school's redirection.

A more tangible benefit to schools is the extra income that a development office generates. This is often the trigger that prompts most Heads and governors to decide to explore the development possibilities. In the state sector, both parents and alumni can provide generous support for their schools. Some schools may be fortunate enough to be located in areas where there is funding potential to be developed from business and industry.

The decision to create a development office is often not an easy one. The costs involved may appear exorbitant and the outcomes difficult to measure. Sometimes the benefits cannot be

valued financially, particularly in the short term. Some Heads find a way around this dilemma by offering development responsibilities to current or retiring teaching staff. In terms of financial outlay it may be a lower risk but in terms of creating a development strategy and achieving fundraising results, it may not be the best option. The skills and experience required for business, marketing and fundraising roles can be different to those needed for teaching.

For schools looking to set up a development office, one starting point could be to discuss the options with Heads and governors of other schools, both state and independent, that already have a development function. Whilst schools are all unique, there will be a common understanding of the need to raise additional funding and the awareness of the key elements that should be put in place before fundraising can start.

There are also professional organisations, such as the Institute of Development Professionals (IDPE), that provide service and support to educational establishments at any stage along the development journey.

Unlike independent schools, it is normal for development offices in the state sector to be self-funding with modest budgets and resources. Capital projects inevitably have to take advantage of government initiatives. There is no regular fee income to fund or help plan for them. The majority of the fundraising

income goes towards major capital campaigns rather than bursaries or scholarships.

In most state schools, there are limited opportunities to find funds to undertake development and opportunities to expand other income streams are limited. Generally, though not always the case, the alumni and parent base is not as affluent as in the independent sector. However, there is a wealth of appreciation, goodwill and gratitude from both groups for the outstanding educational experience that they receive from a non fee-paying school. This is what the development office can nurture into tangible support for our schools.

Jenny Cornell and Rose Welshman, Lancaster Royal Grammar School. Jenny is also responsible for the State and Academies Sector on behalf of the Institute of Development Professionals in Education. See our website for up and coming training seminars and conferences where you can gain extra advice and help.
www.idpe.org.uk

When building a school, you also need to create systems which will tell people about it.



Why positive PR matters for academies: how to build a good reputation for your school

Consider your pupils as your customers and reap the rewards, says Amanda Metcalf Wells

Big businesses work hard to protect their reputations, they understand the need to create a positive image and, once established, they do all they can to protect the 'brand' which is central to their success. Substantial marketing budgets are used to good effect, with skilled teams of professionals doing all they can to safeguard their company's name and product.

A decade ago, such an idea applied in the world of schools would have been scoffed at; in some quarters it still is. But a harsh economic climate has forced the independent sector to wake up to the fact that it has an expensive product to 'sell' to prospective parents. Now state schools of all shapes and sizes have realised that they too need to create that positive buzz, Headteachers want to be running schools which can benefit from positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Academies need to grasp this message quickly. There are several ways of making sure your local community knows what your school stands for. The first step is to agree a set of three or four key messages which need to be short and snappy. They need to capture people's attention and they must say something about your school's aims and aspirations.

Think of the best advertising campaigns – so often it's the short, sharp punch line which you remember. A strap line can often be arrived at once the key messages have been agreed. This strap line

needs to run across everything you produce, from the website to open evening posters to press releases, from the signage on school buildings to the sign off on printed stationary and staff emails.

This is the first step in creating a 'brand' for your academy. This is the easy bit. What comes next takes more time and tenacity.

You need to get your message out there to your prospective 'customers'. Again this is something schools have been slow to grasp. Yes, your pupils and their parents or guardians ARE your customers and you need to 'sell' what you have on offer to attract them to your particular school.

spend on a continuing series of adverts.

Instead, you need to get to know the local media. Your local newspaper can play a key part in spreading good news about your school and the newsdesk is always on the lookout for information, for news from within the local community. It's easier than you think to capture their attention: journalists are hungry for news and your school will produce plenty of newsworthy material.

To make the most of this free form of PR, you must first establish a good working relationship with local journalists. Too often schools are frightened by the prospect of courting the

'Headteachers want to be running schools which can benefit from positive word-of-mouth recommendations'

Schools often make the mistake of thinking they need to spend on advertising to get themselves noticed. Placing an advert to promote an open evening is probably a sound proposition but schools cannot afford an endless

attention of the press. If your academy is going to win itself plenty of positive, free publicity you must first work at developing trust, and building a relationship with a reporter or education correspondent.



Amanda Metcalf Wells enlightens another Head.

Schools often complain that there is a lack of interest on the part of their local newspaper. The truth is that the vast majority – if not ALL – local newspapers ARE interested. The misunderstanding comes about because too often schools fail to understand what it is the journalist wants.

Reporters like human interest stories – stories about individual success for a pupil who has overcome adversity; maybe a tale about a teacher going the extra mile to bring a subject to life in the classroom.

Is your Headteacher prepared to comment on educational issues which are making national headlines? Education correspondents on regional daily papers will be keen to talk to your Head if he or she is happy to give them a quote which gives them a regional angle on a national story.

Your website is another powerful tool,

with the added bonus that you are in control of its output. Make sure what's newsworthy is displayed prominently in the 'Latest News' section of your website. This sounds obvious, but for some schools 'Latest News' might as well read 'News which is way out of date.'

Remember, the website is a shop window which should reflect everything which goes on in school. This is your online brochure, an ever changing visual aid which allows the outside world to take a glimpse inside your academy. Make sure it shows your school at its best.

Amanda Metcalf Wells is Director of PR For Schools. She has 25 years' experience as a news reporter, spanning regional newspapers, BBC Radio and TV news reporting. She has brought that experience to the world of education, acting as a PR consultant in a variety of different schools. Her consultancy PR For Schools also advises on crisis management and offers media training to prepare schools for the glare of publicity. She can be contacted at amanda@prforschools.co.uk www.prforschools.co.uk

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Finding the right candidate for the job

Never easy, but there are ways and means to make it easier, says Richard Gould

Finance, resources, capital services, business operations, learning resources... The list goes on. You may not have decided what to call it, but it amounts to the same thing: it's every little thing other than teaching and, for many schools, it all comes under the finance director's remit.

It's a little worrying then that, whilst

A common reason for not promoting a current high-performing employee is that the employee does not have enough of the right experience and/or has a flaw or two.

Benefits of promoting from within

Recruiting: Being known as an employer who offers opportunities for career advancement is attractive to prospective

Flexibility: Newly-promoted staff can assist with training their replacements. They are available for questions and can occasionally fill in at their old position if needed in emergencies.

Culture fit: Existing employees fit in with the organisation culture (or else you would not be promoting them). Conversely, despite the most probing interview questions, you're never positive about whether a new hire will be a good culture fit or not.

While promoting from within isn't the answer 100 per cent of the time, it tends to be underutilised as an effective solution for candidate shortages. Giving current employees more opportunities for advancement can be a win-win situation for everyone.

Network

You may still know the right person for the job through an existing professional network. It's worth an approach: the worst that can happen is that someone will say no. They will be flattered to be asked, and may suggest someone you don't know. If you are a member of relevant forums or groups within the education sector; use them.

LinkedIn is a free tool which is both very quick and discreet and allows you to stretch beyond your immediate network to the second and third party networks, as well as through like-minded individuals in work sector groups. www.linkedin.com

FD forum is a trusted and informed group set up through Google by Academy FDs for

'Giving current employees more opportunities for advancement can be a win-win situation for everyone...'

most Principals and sponsors see the senior finance/resources post as vital, most Academies are ill-prepared to recruit for that post. Not in every case, perhaps, but it's worth bearing in mind that there are a number of points to check off to help ensure you attract the right person.

Who do I know?

It may be that, when recruiting to replace an existing member of staff, you already know the person for the job. Often internal or current employees can make the best candidates because they are already familiar with your organisation and successful within your culture.

hires. Interviewees are impressed when they meet employees who've steadily moved up the ranks.

Retention: When new employees see that opportunities exist for them and that there's a track record of hiring from within, they tend to stay longer with your organisation.

Cost savings: The cost of recruiting, interviewing, and inducting new employees can outweigh the cost of training current employees for certain new skills. It can take internal candidates much less time to become effective in a new position because they are already familiar with the company culture and its goals.

support and advice. If the post is a new vacancy, contact Chris Hutton through their website who will only be too happy to publicise the vacancy for you. Alternatively, if you are replacing an existing FD, get them to access the forum and publicise it. <http://thecityacademies.co.uk/>

Professional help

Whilst not always the cheapest way of solving the problem it is often necessary to seek professional help, whether in the form of sponsor/partner staff members, working with your auditors, a recruitment consultancy, or advertiser. In each case they come with their own cost and indeed benefit. As always, it's vital to make sure that at worst these balance each other out. **Sponsor/Partner FDs** can be useful in an emergency and more often on a contingency basis. They will more than likely come at a cost, but at least there is some assurance that they will have the organisation's best interests at heart.

Auditors will be ideally placed and technically sound in administering all finance requirements and are ideally placed to assist. This only really solves part of the problem however. You will still have HR, ICT, premises/facilities, security and catering to deal with, all of which, again, can be sub-contracted, but in each case at a premium. Managing each contract can end up being a fulltime job, so it's worth

picking which services you select from outside the organisation. Again it's very much a case of balancing costs and benefits here.

Choosing a recruitment firm or headhunter

Many feel anxious when faced with using a consultancy to recruit, not least because they never really know what they are going to get. It's worth bearing in mind that, while there are many recruiters waiting to take your money, there are far fewer willing to earn it.

So, if you do get someone in to do the job, be sure that you are getting your money's worth. Don't be afraid to negotiate; be bold in asking for as much service as you feel you need to get the job done. Again, it comes down to balancing the cost and benefit.

In truth there are really only a few recognised names in this market and there is nothing to stop you having them pitch for the business. This ensures that you have as clear a picture as possible of what's available, and means that you know who you are most likely to work with best. It also guarantees you pay the right price.

It is always worth considering the following points:

- Are they recognised selection experts in your field?
- Are they affiliated to the Recruitment

Employment Confederation, the industry body, and do they adhere to its code of conduct?

- Do they have recruitment expertise in this area?
- How do they attract candidates?
- How will they represent you in the company?
- What project timings do they suggest?
- Do their style and values fit into your organisation?
- What do they include in their fee?
- Do they charge a fee up front or is it purely success based?
- Is it a fixed fee or a percentage of salary?
- Do they work for your competitors?
- Are they happy for you to speak to previous clients about their service?
- What are the resources they will assign to your project?
- What's their rebate or guarantee scheme?
- Will they take care of advertising. If so what will this cost?

Advertising is another relevant route, particularly if you are keen to get the Academy's name known in the market, although this is less of an option where the role is private and confidential. Often the best means of attracting new candidates is to advertise online, where candidates are now emailed with relevant vacancies reducing the chances of missing them considerably. This also saves time and the cost of print advertising.

It's important to pick the most relevant, cost effective and far-reaching media to attract the right candidates to your vacancy. The hidden cost, worth including in that cost/ benefit analysis, is the time taken to monitor response and go through the selection process prior to interviewing.

Richard Gould is
Senior Project Manager,
Education, at Farrer
Barnes.



The International Middle Years Curriculum launched

This school year is beginning with a very different learning approach for some Middle Year students as they take on the brand new International Middle Years Curriculum.

Developed by Fieldwork Education – the organisation behind the increasingly popular International Primary Curriculum (IPC) – the IMYC is a curriculum that focuses foremost on student learning. It responds specifically to the needs of 11 to 14 year-olds by encouraging independence and interdependence in their learning through discrete subjects and themes, providing learning that helps them make connections that are relevant to their own lives. It draws on current media techniques, involves active skills-based learning, and promotes self-reflection and the chance for students to make sense of their learning.

This is achieved by directing the learning through a theme or ‘Big Idea.’ Each Big Idea provides a six-week learning unit for every year group from 11 to 14. And each Big Idea focuses on a complex conceptual theme that is challenging but within the grasp of young teenagers; themes such as Adaptability, Discovery, Balance and Creativity.

Abbeyfield School in Wiltshire is one of the first schools in the UK taking on the IMYC. “Our ambition at Abbeyfield is to create a curriculum that puts the life and learning skills of children at its heart,” says Deputy Headteacher, David Nicholson. “The IMYC is the vehicle we have chosen to help fire the imagination and stimulate our students’ desire to explore further,” he says. “The IMYC supports a more progressive view of education that recognizes learning also takes place outside the classroom and that the role of schools is to prepare students for meeting the open-ended problems they will face throughout their lives. The IMYC clearly promotes creativity and the arts with an explicit emphasis on the development of the creative process, and the IMYC helps to develop the skills and intelligences required for the acquisition of relevant knowledge.”

Within the IMYC, a structured yet flexible teaching framework, which includes learning-focused activities for every subject, supports teachers in delivering a set of learning goals for each subject as well as for personal dispositions and for international mindedness. Throughout the unit, reflective journaling encourages personal consideration with the aim

of helping each student to develop a deeper understanding of the Big Idea from their own perspective. An Assessment for Learning programme tracks the development of skills through subject, unit and year group. Finally, a student directed media project completes the unit. This provides students with the chance to turn their understanding of the Big Idea into a collaborative media-based production that culminates their learning and understanding at the end of each six-week unit.

Academy 360 in Sunderland is one of the schools that took part in the initial pilot of the IMYC Balance unit during the summer term. The Balance unit links discrete subjects together through its Big Idea that things are more stable when different elements are in the correct or best possible proportions. After this one unit, the school says it saw an immediate impact. “This is a hard age for learning,” says Jackie Treleven, curriculum leader Year 1 to 8 at Academy 360. “The children responded incredibly well to the Balance unit in terms of remaining engaged which directly influenced their learning progress.”

And it’s not just schools in the UK that are taking on the IMYC. Alison Lipp, Curriculum Coordinator at the American International School of Rotterdam, says, “It is the first curriculum that really addresses what 11-to-14 age students need. It actually attempts to put theory into practice and openly addresses the challenges that schools face when trying to bridge this gap. The IMYC shows real understanding of the unique philosophy and approach to learning that students at this developmental level require.”

Director of the International Middle Years Curriculum, Emily Porter says, “After working and collaborating with countless students, teachers and schools, we have spent several years developing the IMYC to improve learning for the unique needs of 11 to 14 year olds. We have had incredibly positive feedback from all the schools that piloted the Balance unit; about the students’ learning, interest and engagement, as well as about their ability to make connections between subjects and within the world around them.”

For more information about the IMYC contact Fieldwork Education on 020 7531 9696 or visit their website: www.internationalmiddleyearscurriculum.com

Capital project fundraising for academies

Neil Finlayson and Jane Hellings describe how a successful fundraising campaign requires organisation, commitment and good communication

Do you really need a new building?

As Shakespeare put it:

When we mean to build,
 We first survey the plot, then draw the model;
 And when we see the figure of the house,
 Then must we rate the cost of the erection;
 Which if we find outweighs ability,
 What do we then but draw anew the model
 In fewer offices, or at last desist
 To build at all?
Henry IV Part 2 (Act1 Scene3)

Academies are expected to achieve progressive improvements to performance. They are expected to challenge traditional ways of thinking on how schools are run and what they should be like. Developing inspiring buildings might well be part of this process, especially if the academy is seeking to break with cultures of low aspiration which afflict many communities with failing schools.

Over the course of years we have come across many capital projects in schools where things have gone awry because some very basic questions were not asked – and answered – at the outset. This is particularly important if part or all of your funding strategy is a building appeal.

If you are going to convince parents, alumni and others to support your project you need to be thoroughly convinced of it yourself. ‘You’ here means the whole school community: governors, local authority, sponsor, diocese or other stakeholding trust, academic and non academic staff, and pupils. The project has to be seen and understood to be a burning priority for everyone if you are to create the sense of excitement and urgency which you need to achieve your fundraising goal.

Consultation

Achieving this kind of buy-in is not merely a question of ensuring the whole school community is informed of your decision. A capital project will always benefit from thorough

preparation. It will be a better building if all sections of your community have been consulted about the needs and how these could best be delivered, and if you have considered a range of options before deciding what to do. Sometimes this is successfully achieved by convening a project planning steering group which includes representatives of all the stakeholder groups, including students. If your academy is part of a chain, other partners might have a stake.

It is a great mistake to focus on the design and rush to instruct architects before you are completely clear about your needs. A process like that shown below is ideal:



We see many clients who have identified a need, instructed architects to develop designs to provide images of the finished project, and then gone straight to their fundraising campaign, only to find that they cannot answer difficult questions from donors and other stakeholders. This can lead ultimately to a failure of the campaign which could have been avoided through better planning.

Key questions

You must have considered and be able to answer the following questions before you commit to expensive designs:

- What is the required outcome of the project and how will the project deliver the outcome?
- Is the project the most efficient and cost-effective way to deliver the required outcomes?
- What other options are there and why were they excluded?
- What will not having this building (or refurbishment) mean in the short, medium and long term to students and to staff?
- What will it cost to run – eg overheads and staff costs?
- Who will use it and for how many hours per day or week –

eg can this include members of the wider community, are there benefits beyond the school community and if so what?

- What is the use of the building in holiday times?
- What is the long term maintenance plan?
- How will the building or refurbishment help deliver the long term school development strategy?
- How does the project complement other provision locally?
- Have your land transfer arrangements been concluded and signed off within your Funding Agreement?
- Will it be possible to get planning permission?
- If there is likely to be some government funding for the project, what national, regional and local strategic needs is the project fulfilling?
- Have the end users – eg students, teachers and external groups – been consulted on the building’s features and lay-out?
- What are the implications of a proposed new building on the proposed site for the rest of the school estate and other users?
- How much will it cost to build and how are we going to pay for it?

Schools considering academy status need to be aware that if there is any building work due to be completed after a school converts to academy status, agreement needs to be obtained before the funding agreement is signed on responsibilities for completing the building work, to ensure that unfunded liabilities do not pass to the Academy Trust.

‘For school appeals an active and effective campaign board will make all the difference’

Putting the case

Once you have answered all these questions you will have a case for support to which all your stakeholders can sign up, and with which you can convince potential donors. A good case for support will focus on the benefits of the project and not its features. *ie* it will concentrate not on what the building will look like but on what difference it will make to the education and well-being of the students. If you can get students to understand this and care about it enough to get involved in fundraising then

this is a powerful message for their parents and your alumni.

But answering some of these questions might not be easy or possible to do without professional advice. It is often necessary to engage the services of a design team in your feasibility study to tell you if your list of requirements will fit on the site, or if the building you want to convert or refurbish is suitable/ large enough to meet your needs. They ought to be able to give you an indicative capital cost based on comparable facilities elsewhere. But this work should only cost a small fraction of the fees you would incur for a full design.

Sometimes it is the case at this stage that your requirements are found either not to fit the site or to be unaffordable. You then look at a range of options which would deliver more or less of the wishlist at a range of prices and undertake a cost/benefit analysis

Achieve early buy-in from your best donor prospects

Alongside the options analysis you should consider what funding might be available to inform discussion about which of the options is affordable. Armed with information on the different options and their relative prices it is possible to test the fundraising proposal on some potential major donors. Asking potential major donors for advice at this stage is a good way of engaging their interest and improving the chance of them offering you financial support in due course.

If you ask for advice you often receive help. If you ask for help before you are ready you will often just receive advice.

Key principles for capital appeals

Capital appeal definition: a defined target in a defined time period, eg £4 million by June 2013 (so the building can open before the autumn term 2014).

The time limit is crucial so donors do not get bored and lose heart.

80% of the target will come from 20% of the donors. The table below shows a typical gift table for a £4 million capital appeal

Gift /grant amount £	no of gifts	no of prospects required	Total £
1,000,000	1	4	1,000,000
750,000	1	4	750,000
500,000	1	4	500,000
250,000	3	12	750,000
100,000	3	12	300,000
50,000	4	16	200,000
25,000	5	20	125,000
10,000	7	28	70,000
5,000	15	60	75,000
smaller gifts & event fundraising			230,000
	40	160	4,000,000

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‘The project has to be seen and understood to be a burning priority for everyone if you are to create the sense of excitement and urgency which you need to achieve your fundraising goal’

Work out at the earliest stage who these 20% are. You almost certainly already know them. Your biggest donors are most likely to be people who have already given and are particularly loyal to you. Wealth is obviously a key indicator but warmth is just as important. If you cannot identify this level of wealth and interest among current connections your target is probably too high.

The table shows that for every gift you are likely need four prospects. If your parent and alumni network is already warm and well-developed this ratio could go down. If you have never communicated in this way with these people you could need a deeper prospect pool.

It is really important to start any capital campaign with approaches to the 20%. If you don't already know them undertake wealth searches of your databases and contact mapping with your governors and warmest parents and other stakeholders. Do not go to the wider school network with a general appeal until you have at least 60% of your target in place. You will not achieve your target if all your best prospects are asked for £500.

Be aware that the costs of a capital campaign tend to be around 8-15% of the target. You may need to invest in additional staff, consultancy support, a new database and events. Your Headteacher may need cover for some of their job if they are to take a leading role in the campaign.

Who should ask? And how?

Experience has shown us that the most successful asks are peer-to-peer and face-to-face. A cold mailing typically receives a 1% response rate. For a warm mailing (*ie* to people with a current connection) you could expect 5% up to 15%. Face-to-face and

peer-to-peer 80% of people will say yes (although not necessarily to the size of gift you originally requested).

Therefore leadership of your campaign is critical. For school appeals an active and effective campaign board will make all the difference. These people will each need to make a limited number of face-to-face asks to other parents, alumni and governors. And they will need to make gifts themselves at a level appropriate to their circumstances: ‘if not you then who?’

You need to match your prospects as closely as possible to the best asker. For some it will be the Headteacher or chair of governors, for others it will be another parent, or even a student. Gather as much intelligence as you can on the wealth, interests, past giving and connections of all your major donors. This is a conversation about them, not about you.

And remember, face-to-face will be several times more effective than writing letters. The fewer prospects you have the more important it is to maximise every opportunity.

Neil Finlayson is a Partner, and Jane Hellings is Director of Fundraising and Management, at Kingston Smith Chartered Accountants. For more information please contact nfinlayson@kingstonsmith.co.uk

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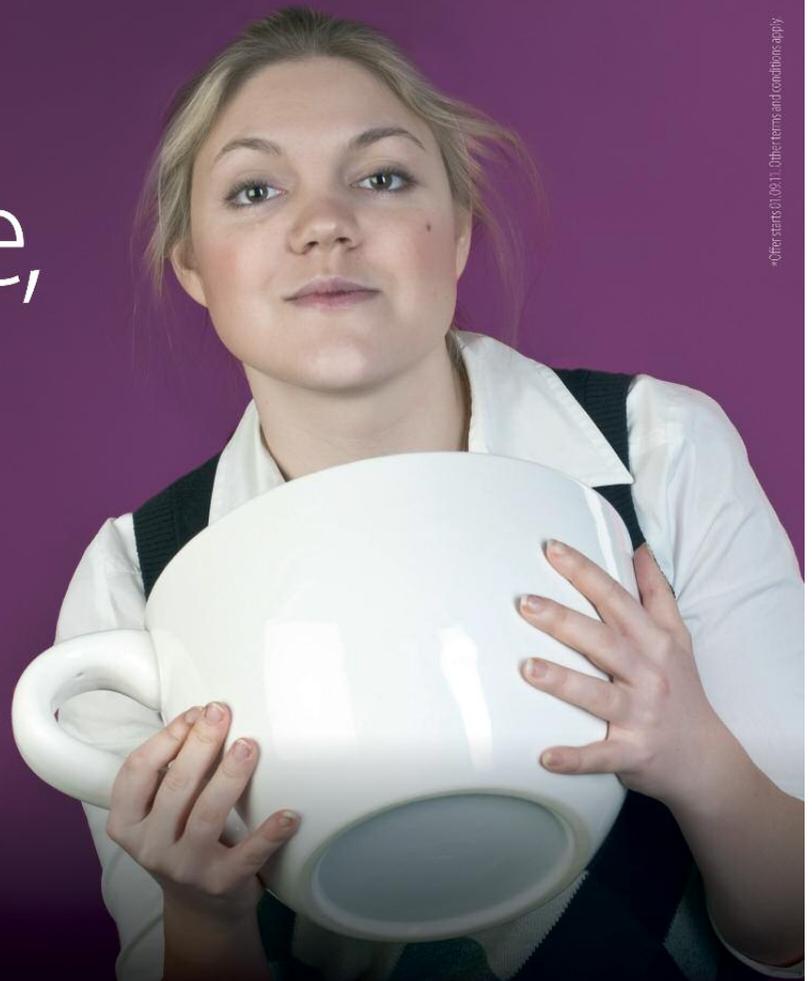
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The electronic footprint

It's virtually impossible to stamp out, warns legal expert Henar Dyson. So teach children to tread carefully and legally on the internet

There is a mind-blowing statistic on the Facebook website: it claims to have 750 million active members. Facebook stipulates that only those 13 years of age or older can set up a Facebook account. Evidence from research carried out in the United States earlier this year suggests that it could be up to one third.

Although the most global, Facebook is not the only form of social media being used by primary school children. Social media can take on many different forms: some examples are blogs (Twitter), social networking sites (Facebook, Bebo, MySpace), video communities (Youtube), online gaming (XboxLive) and internet telephony and messaging (Skype).

These allow content such as text, video and music to be posted and viewed by the world at large. As this content is digital, it is easily copied and disseminated. As a result, it can be very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to remove all content originally posted by them or about them from the web.

With this potential for exposure, there is a pressing need for schools to play their part in educating children about the dangers of online activity. Much work has already been done, focused rightly on the immediate dangers that can arise from unguarded communication online with strangers.

The dangers go far beyond this and into a child's future. What they do online today could have an impact on their future education and employment

opportunities. A college or an employer will not base important decisions on the online activities of an 11 year-old. At the same time, a history of poor judgment online may be relevant and habits formed in childhood could stay with the young adult of tomorrow.

It is not just children who approach social media recklessly. In a recent case, a pub manager made inappropriate comments on Facebook about customers in her pub who had been abusive. The customers complained and she lost her job. Her mistake was to have posted, whilst still on shift, without checking that her privacy settings would keep her posts between her and her friends. Even if she had posted out of working hours, the result is likely to have been the same.

Another recent case, involving a chain email sent by an employee to a colleague out of hours, from one home computer to another, also led to dismissal. Although email is not technically a form of social media, once disseminated, the dangers are the same. There are plenty of similar cases around.

These cases show how seriously future employers take the risk to their reputation posed by comments made or disseminated online. The unguarded postings and photos of young friends can become a bad habit that continues into young adulthood. Would an employer want to employ someone who uses a blog or a social networking site to criticise friends or boast about quasi-criminal behaviour?

What about applications for university and college? Do universities check the applications of prospective students? Some university professors have been quoted online as having done precisely that. Universities have been open about the appointment of communications managers. From their perspective, negative comments can affect their reputation and the numbers of prospective students who apply. Universities are openly known to engage 'friendly bloggers' to operate online and counter any negative comments.

The rest is, for now, only rumour, but given the ease with which checks can be made, and the lasting footprint that online activity can leave, is it so unlikely that checks are made as part of a risk management policy?

From a legal perspective, offences can be committed through social media activity:

- copyright laws are broken through the posting of photos or music without the consent of the author. It is so easy to do that, to a child, it might seem perfectly acceptable and the habit is formed;
- defamatory statements made online are an offence. 2002 saw the first case of internet defamation where a former teacher successfully sued a former pupil for comments made by the pupil on Friends Reunited. The cases have come consistently since then, with libel by Twitter the most recent forum. Any false statement

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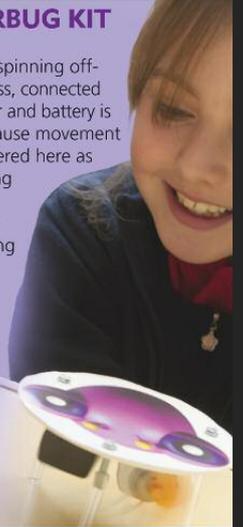


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that might affect the reputation of an individual, which is communicated to others, could be defamatory.

In terms of defences, what about the individual's right to privacy or freedom of expression? Legally, information put in the public domain by an individual cancels out any right to privacy for that individual. This means that the only way to prevent a prospective employer or college from seeing what is posted is to take great care about access rights. Nor will the noble right to freedom of expression operate as an automatic defence to an offence such as defamation.

Legislators know that they have an important role to play in protecting users of social media. The EU announced earlier this year its plans to create a 'right to be forgotten online' and to require strict privacy settings to be in place by default. This will reduce the scope for prospective employers to carry out pre-employment research.

In the UK, as across the EU, there are already strict rules about the protection of personal information. The rules are even stricter where the information relates to children. Whilst children are extraordinarily savvy about technology, it may be idealistic to expect them to wade through privacy policies aimed at protecting them. The good news is that Facebook is cautious about introducing any new features available to UK users that might breach UK data protection laws.

There is certainly more for the

legislators to do if the providers of social media do not act first. Survey evidence from this year suggests that there is a growing backlash against social media sites that do not provide easy-to-understand privacy settings and a straightforward right to close an account. As the backlash grows they will act, but for now 750 million Facebook members is a huge market for advertisers.

What primary schools can do:

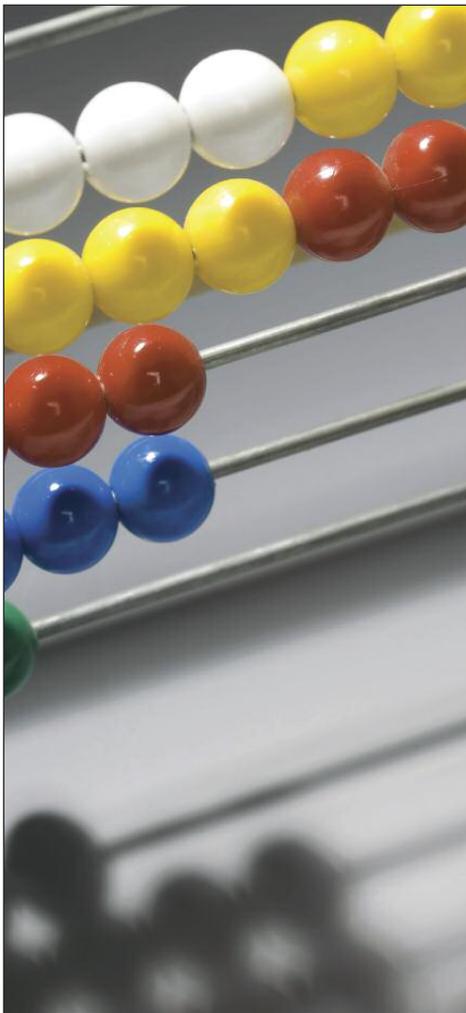
- Emphasise any age limits to pupils and parents.
- Teach children to avoid using bad language, describing or posting photos showing inappropriate behaviour by them or their friends and to avoid criticising or victimising others online. Teach them to think before they type.
- Explain that careless use of social media has legal and personal implications.
- Host a seminar for parents on the dangers of the internet.
- Suggest that children revisit what they have posted online and what has been posted about them. Anything inappropriate should be removed.
- Advise children about privacy settings and how to use them properly. Remember that privacy settings are only part of the story. A 'friend' with access to content can disseminate it to any number of people, with the possibility of serious consequences.

- Do not try to prevent use of social media. It is here to stay and, used properly, can open up many opportunities.
- Stay up to date with developments – check the ICO website pages on social networking and other websites focusing on child internet safety: www.ico.gov.uk/youth
www.clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk/index.html
www.childnet-int.org/
www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

The reality is that the law is still very reactive in this area. It cannot pre-empt what developments will emerge in this field and legislate accordingly. The principle, however, will always remain the same – any information in a digital format, whether provided willingly or unknowingly, should be considered permanent. This is an 'electronic footprint' that is virtually impossible to stamp out. As smoking behind the bike shed is replaced with blogging behind the bike shed, it is essential for the message to be sent home.

Henar Dyson is a Senior Associate at Thomson Snell & Passmore, a law firm based in Tunbridge Wells.

'A college or an employer will not base important decisions on the online activities of an 11 year-old. At the same time, a history of poor judgment online may be relevant and habits formed in childhood could stay with the young adult of tomorrow'



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Controlling risk in academies

Why getting it right matters

Since the introduction of the Academies Act 2010, the face of education provision in the UK has undergone significant change: over 800 schools have already made the shift to Academy status and the first Free Schools opened in September.

Whether or not the Act proves a success, it is clear that the freedoms associated with stepping away from local authority control bring with them new responsibilities that must now be met, largely without the protection of the current local education authority.

The risks facing academies today are many and varied – from fire to managing educational standards and the potential for ‘failure to educate’ claims.

Mismanagement of any risk can be highly detrimental to a school, but appropriate planning can have a beneficial effect, improving performance and reducing costs, as well as maintaining the school’s reputation.

Whatever the nature of a risk, it can have serious financial and reputation implications long after the event. Fire, for example, is a clear and potentially costly operational risk for an academy, threatening to spread quickly and destroy buildings, impacting on children’s education.

Yet a small financial outlay now could prevent the worst in the future. The simple steps of undertaking a fire risk assessment and putting in place appropriate measures, such as installing and maintaining fire alarms, sprinkler systems and escape routes, as well as designing and rehearsing proper evacuation procedures are, amongst others, vital if fire does strike.

On a day-to-day basis, both the mental and physical welfare of all school



users should be a key priority for school management teams. Bullying of staff or students, as well as the impact of workplace stress, must be taken seriously. A robust anti-bullying policy, which is clearly communicated and proactively enforced, will be important for its success. Similarly, a prevention, recognition and rehabilitation policy can go some way to managing workplace stress and will help mitigate the risk.

Further to the risks surrounding damage to physical assets and welfare of students, schools should also consider the plethora of new technology now in use. They leave a school vulnerable to issues associated with IT failure which, with the potential to quickly bring lessons to a halt, can hamper a school’s ability to deliver a full educational programme. However, IT failure can be prevented or minimised, with appropriate measures and the implementation of an IT disaster recovery plan.

In addition, risk management and business continuity planning should not

be approached as isolated management issues, but considered as vital components of the end goal – delivering consistently high quality education. Not only can these risks be immediately damaging to both pupils and purse-strings, they can also have long-lasting ramifications as they spiral and impact on a school’s reputation.

The good reputation of an educational establishment can take many years to gain but can be tarnished overnight. There are a number of risks that could impact on a school’s reputation, such as concerns around

safeguarding and the welfare of pupils, the mismanagement of finances and the requirement for adequate business planning to ensure the school provides for the future needs of the pupils. The potential impact on a school’s reputation is without doubt a key driver in ensuring that significant risks are appropriately managed. This is particularly important when attracting people to a new academy. The risks to academies are wide-ranging and a sensible approach to their risk management will help academies achieve their objectives.

The Risk Curriculum is part of Zurich Municipal’s unique insurance proposition. Visit: www.theriskcurriculum.co.uk. For more information on how Zurich Municipal can help with your insurance needs, please contact our education team on 0845 602 3895.



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Denis Oliver, Head Teacher Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School and Sixth Form College

For expert advice please contact Anne Fairhurst on 0161 234 8807 or annefairhurst@georgedavies.co.uk or Nicky Collins on 0161 234 8837 or nickycollins@georgedavies.co.uk

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All you need to know about Academy Status

Wednesday 5 October 2011 Ambassadors Hotel, Bloomsbury, London

This seminar will give you an excellent introduction to the legal framework, responsibilities and rewards of academy status

Build your capacity in HR Management and Employment Law

Tuesday 18 October 2011 Hotel Russell, Russell Square, London

This seminar will prepare you for the HR opportunities and challenges in the new climate of greater school autonomy and responsibility

Preparing to be your own Admissions Authority

Thursday 20 October 2011 Ambassadors Hotel, Bloomsbury, London

This seminar will prepare you for the new admissions code to be implemented in September 2013

Raising standards through improved learning environments

Tuesday 29 November 2011 City of Westminster Archives Centre, London

A 'hands-on' seminar exploring how you can still build and refurbish in an exciting way and transform your school over time. How to get best value from your capital grant

Further information about all events, and booking details, can be found on the FASNA website <http://www.fasna.org.uk>

Autumn Conference

Tuesday 8th November 2011

Hotel Russell, Russell Square, London, WC1B 5BE

9am registration : 9.30 to 3.30 Conference

The White Paper – ‘The importance of teaching’ is clear that there is requirement for schools to match international comparisons for student performance.

This conference will ask what this will mean for schools.

There will also be:

- A Members’ Business session which will include responses to the consultation on school funding reform – ‘Proposals for a Fairer System’
- A Business Managers’ Forum
- A Special Schools’ Forum
- A legal update from Stone King
- News about a scheme for brokering services for members
- News about an opportunity to work with Lathams’ architectural services on school refurbishment
- News about a new FASNA programme of professional development for *governors* in this new era of autonomy with accountability

Speakers

- Nick Gibb MP, Minister for Schools
- Sir Michael Barber, formerly Head of ‘The Standards and Effectiveness Unit’ and the ‘Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit’, formerly of McKinseys, Global Education and now Chief Education Advisor to Pearsons Education
- Kevin Brennan MP, Shadow Minister for Schools

Booking Information

If you are interested in this opportunity please e-mail Sue Ferdinando at s.ferdinando@fasna.org.uk with the following information:

- Full name(s) of person(s) attending
- Role(s) within school
- Name and address of school
- Number of places required
- Contact name and e-mail address

Places will be confirmed only when payment has been received. The cost per place is £150 + VAT for FASNA Members and £175 + VAT for non-Members.

By booking the venue we are committed to a certain level of costs and therefore reluctantly have to implement a cancellation policy:

- cancellation of less than 14 days notice - no refund
- between 14 and 28 days notice - 50% refund
- up to 28 days notice - full refund

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