

Academy magazine

Volume 2 Number 3 Summer 2013



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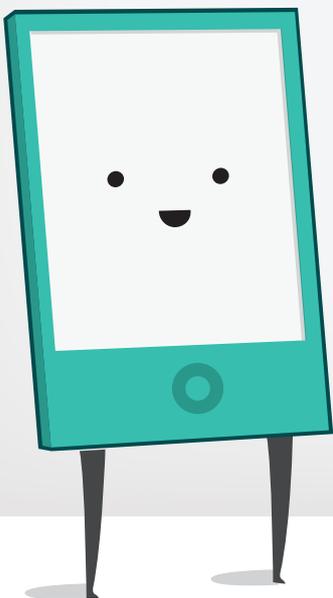
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Danger lurks in report

We start this issue with a critique by Tom Clark of the Academies Commission report. Masquerading as an independent, well-researched, academic piece of work, it is in fact, none of these.

We tell our students to evaluate sources. Let's evaluate the sources of this report. Set up by educational big-player Pearson and academy sponsor RSA, it has the Chief Executive of a Local Authority (Brent) as its chair and its Director is a Pearson employee previously employed by the RSA. The Commission's evidence was culled predominantly from sponsor academies and chains, Local Authorities and professional associations. No wonder then, that the report favours sponsor academies and finds a role for Local Authorities.

It makes sweeping, and dangerous, assertions which have no evidence to back them up. How can the performance of converter academies be generally criticised when few have had more than one set of results since conversion and the majority have had none! Similarly with admissions. Vague accusations based on evidence from pre-2008 and subjective comments from the anti-academy lobby are used to paint a picture that most converter academies do not recognise.

To suggest that unions, whose default attitude towards change is to block it, should promote excellence networks, when they have opposed autonomy at every turn, is just naïve and astounding.

The danger of this report is that it becomes part of the accepted wisdom, that it is not critically challenged, that it appears to be official 'fact' (that's why they called it a Commission). At this point it becomes a dangerous tool for those who want to rein back school autonomy and push towards a return to the old days of LA control and coy alliances with the unions who promote members' interests over that of students. If policy makers adopt the Commission's report uncritically, we run the risk of current policy being derailed. For example, it is alarming to read in the Sunday press Stephen Twigg, Labour's Shadow Education Minister, writing that Labour would not allow any new converter academies. This could well cause a rush to convert!

Raising the performance of the profession is often cited as a key goal. I would not accept a sweeping generalisation that the profession under-performs. Teacher performance and quality is, in my opinion, at its best. High quality entrants, working hard and being well supported and developed, is probably the norm. However, as with any generalisation there are those who fail to meet the standards we expect of them. ITT is not always rigorous enough; NQT induction is too often a rubber-stamp; some schools have low expectations and their staff get recycled with glowing references. We need to bite into this cycle and thereby avoid the Chris Woodhead-type comments of thousands of inadequate teachers ruining the life-chances of students. It will be interesting to assess the impact of Charlie Taylor's ideas, the new Authorised Body for Teacher Induction and the pay reforms coming in September.

Whilst the DfE is consulting on curriculum reform, as well as the accountability framework, I would hope to see some recognition for how students have developed their personal skills and attitudes. We all know that there are two essential goals for educators: to enable students to gain qualifications that open doors for them, and to ensure they develop the personal qualities required to make a success of adult life. It is ironic that all our accountability measures focus on the former whilst in reality it is the latter which may be the most important in determining how successful and fulfilled a student will be in adult life. I am pleased to see in the consultation on accountability for secondary schools, suggestions that Ofsted may focus on how the broader curriculum develops students. This is in line with suggestions made by FASNA during the consultation. Our articles on citizenship give examples of vehicles for this personal development.

We are looking for more interactivity with our readers and would welcome comments, letters or articles. Please send to the editor at editor@academymag.co.uk

Peter Beaven, editor of *Academy*, retired in August 2012 as Headteacher of Norton Hill and Somervale Schools in Midsomer Norton. He had been Headteacher at Norton Hill for 18 years and during the last three years was also Head of Somervale. He can be contacted via editor@academymag.co.uk

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Driven by its own agenda?

Tom Clark, chairman of FASNA, says the Academies Commission report makes some sensible suggestions, but is flawed by patchy evidence and sweeping statements

The Academies Commission, set up by the RSA and the Pearson Think Tank and chaired by Professor Christine Gilbert, published its report in January 2013. Titled *Unleashing greatness – getting the best from an academised system*, the Commission set out not only to consider the impact of the academies programme to date but also to anticipate what should happen when the majority of schools may be academies.

The Commission does not question the move towards greater autonomy, a key aim for FASNA, and the Commission suggests that an overly tight accountability system runs the risk of stifling innovation and suggests use of a ‘data dashboard’ to provide a simple school performance profile which would be welcome if it clarifies the measures of accountability and is light-touch.

However, whilst the report makes some sensible suggestions, it is too often flawed by patchy evidence (or no evidence) being used to make some sweeping statements. In addition it feels rather self-important in tone and language, exemplified by awarding itself the status of an ‘academies commission’. It seems grudging in its attitude to converter academies (75% of the total) and seems to have little trust in the effectiveness of autonomous schools. In raising issues it adopts a consistent stance of ‘worst case scenario’ but more disappointingly it is predictable in its conservative and ‘establishment’ recommendations. It suggests new tiers of bureaucracy and one-stop solutions to imagined crises on what often seems to be the Commission’s own agenda. The Commission seems determined not to recognise the culture that goes with freedom and autonomy, which cannot and should not be endlessly directed by the Commission’s ‘stakeholder’ view of the world. The Commission also seems determined to reinvent some role for Local Authorities despite their past failures.

Consider some of the language:

“The evidence considered by the Commission does not suggest that improvement across ALL academies has been strong enough to transform the life chances of children from the poorest families.”

It is unlikely that there would be evidence from all academies, but in praising some sponsor academies the implication, by omission, is that converter academies have made no contribution

to closing the gap between the poorest children and the rest. As converter academies have overwhelmingly been high-achieving schools, this is extremely unlikely to be the case.

Or the tone on page five:

“Not all these ‘converter academies’ are fulfilling their commitment to supporting other schools to improve.”

What is the evidence for this statement? What proportion of the sample was failing to support other schools? Does this mean that all sponsored academies are supporting other schools?

We are told there are signs of a trend of improvement among sponsor academies. Could that be because converter academies have only been in existence for two years or less at the time of this report? Whilst there may be little available data on the performance of converter academies – it is too soon, much of the data used for sponsor academies seems dated.

Whilst converter academies comprise three-quarters of all academies, the evidence gathered for the report was significantly weighted by sponsor academies. In addition, the contributors of both oral and written evidence were predominantly from sponsor academies, sponsor chains and others, who, like unions, are often critical of the policy itself.

It is inevitable but unfortunate that the report is predominantly secondary in focus. Nearly all the primary academies are converters and little or no regard is paid to their work nor any considered thought given to the role primary academies might play in an academised system. If anything, primary academies are patronised and almost always sketched as needing support from Local Authorities. The brief section on pages 33 to 35 hardly recognises the benefits autonomy might bring to the primary sector, though it does suggest ‘federations’ are the way forward.

How far was the Commission driven by its own agenda?

1. Collaboration

The Commission feels that Ofsted should not judge a school to be outstanding for leadership unless it can prove evidence of its contribution to system leadership but it doesn’t want (collaborative) group inspections. This smacks of engineering

and the attempt to micro-manage autonomous schools. Doesn't it depend where schools are in the cycle of improvement? Schools could have 'outstanding' leadership which is driving up standards, perhaps from a low base, and might not be ready to support other schools.

What instruments to measure the effectiveness of collaboration would Ofsted use for such a judgment when their focus and evidence is based on a single school view? One of the functions of an Ofsted report is to inform parents about their school or the school they might be choosing. Parents will want to first understand the quality of leadership in their child's school.

It does seem to have escaped the Commission's understanding that you cannot force effective collaboration. This is the culture that echoes past failures such as narrow target setting around five A* to C GCSE grades or the mandatory NPQH which confused 'standards' with the fashionable value judgments of the day. On page 51 the report makes the point that the school accountability system inhibits risk taking – perhaps the Commission should be careful what they wish for.

2. Networks

There is the astonishing view that unions would have much to contribute to National College licensed 'excellence networks'. On what track record would this fantasy be predicated, given some unions have been roadblocks to school improvement measures which put their members under scrutiny? The report itself recognises that unions have stood in the way of the establishment of academies and resisted attempts to use academy freedoms (p. 54).

Why on earth do we need to licence the National College to set up 'excellence networks', not to 'replicate' school improvement provision, but to 'broker' connections? What does this mean? What would this cost? Can't autonomous schools find and network with organisations for themselves? These 'excellence networks' would 'ensure schools in a region improve' (how, I wonder?) and 'ensure underperforming academies received targeted support' (how, and on what authority would they do this?). And this would be in addition to the roles of academy trusts, self-supporting chains, school membership organisations like FASNA, Local Authorities, Ofsted, The National College, teaching schools, NLEs, LLEs, NLGs and the DfE?

Apparently 'school partnerships could bid to run these networks' – and presumably one way or another the money for all this would come from schools' budgets? Given that the key to education success is teaching and learning, I wonder if there will be enough teachers left in schools to teach.

3. Admissions

The plea from FASNA was to accept that nearly all schools want and practise fair admissions observing the admissions code, so why try to build a system on the assumption that they don't? Deal instead with the detractors using the available levers. The report deals with admissions by a series of smears around 'mays', 'mights'

and 'coulds' and the views of 'some' witnesses. Remember, at the time of the report, the earliest converter academies had only been able to set their admissions for one year of entry (2012) – hardly the basis on which to make these kinds of statements. Alarm is generated around derogation from the code yet we learn on page 68 that there have been no requests to the Secretary of State for derogation – nevertheless press coverage was left to imply that converters were fiddling admissions.

4. Parents

We are told some parents told the Commission they did not feel valued. How many parents is 'some'? When does the quest for a perfect stakeholder model become wholly impractical, leading to huge bureaucracy in writing more reports that people don't read and holding more meetings that parents don't want to attend? And what does all this cost, not least in nervous energy?

5. Royal College of Teachers

In case there is not enough network resource (section 2 above) for schools, it is recommended that we have a Royal College for Teachers. It is suggested that the DfE pump-prime such an organisation. Where would it operate from, what would it cost and where does the money come from? Whilst the Commission appears to want to micro-manage school autonomy (a culture clash, surely), the education establishment grows fatter and more bloated. I note that Professor Bell in his article on page 22 of this edition states that the last thing he wants is to create another organisation that simply adds to the current crowded landscape. I truly hope so. There is merit in a Royal College but let's consider what it might replace in that case.

6. Local Authorities

On the question of a 'middle tier', the report seems muddled. On the one hand it argues for Local Authorities to be given a clearer role, yet on the other it argues for school sector-led provision, quality-assured in part by LAs. FASNA welcomes the statement that: "The Commission is attuned to, and supportive of, the impetus towards 'bottom up', professionally-led provision of services." (p. 94).

The Commission envisages a role for Local Authorities that is unquestioned and blind to the failures of Local Authorities in the past. Whilst it may be right to argue that some local body needs to plan school places and ensure sufficiency, it ignores the fact that too often local politicians fail to act over places because it is too difficult, politically. It would also seem obvious that Local Authorities could act as champions for the interests and needs of children in their area and as corporate parents for those in public care. However, this has often meant expensive and bureaucratic structures without proper quality-assurance. We accept that "their democratic base gives Local Authorities leverage" (p. 37) but this does not mean that they are any more likely to support and develop high quality education in their locality, or deal

The Commission seems determined not to recognise the culture that goes with freedom and autonomy, which cannot and should not be endlessly directed by the Commission's 'stakeholder' view of the world

with poor school performance, than in the past. To now argue that the Local Authority should articulate concerns about the quality of school provision and comment on each school's performance in a robust way, or that a Local Authority could even set targets above those expected by central government, or that Local Authorities could quality-assure academy sponsors, flies in the face of experience and current capacity. There is no consideration as to whether or not Local Authorities have the skill-set or resource to do this well. LAs would write reports about all this and the funding would come, presumably from schools' budgets? Doesn't (shouldn't) Ofsted do most of this anyway?

7. Governance

It is interesting to note the 'key risks' identified for governors on page 104 are in regards to: understanding their responsibilities; governors' roles in school improvement; a lack of skill-sets; and lack of engagement with key-stakeholders. Those 'risks', where they exist, are common to governors in maintained schools and are not, as is suggested in the report, any more acute in converter academies.

The Commission could have made clearer the role of governors as strategic partners of the school leadership team – it sometimes feels as if the strategic and operational responsibilities of governors are blurred. Operationally governors appoint and performance-manage the Headteacher – essentially, that is all. There is a role for organisations like the National College, FASNA and IAA with extensive school networks to facilitate school-to-school support and to offer professional development.

Other aspects of the report are to be welcomed. For example, FASNA has long argued for the need to improve governance and to make more 'professional' the appointment of Chairs of Governors. Consider the rigour shown by governors in the appointment of Headteachers compared with the 'process' for appointing Chairs of Governors. Indeed, FASNA is active in this field and provides bespoke training on governance.

This is probably a useful report. However, as it is a snapshot

taken at too early a stage of 'academisation' with an apparently loaded agenda, its importance may lie in the fact that it starts a debate.

What's going on at FASNA

FASNA Summer Conference

Thursday 27 June 2013 – The British Library

The event is 'An Audience with the Secretary of State, The RT Hon Michael Gove, and the Shadow Secretary of State, The RT Hon Stephen Twigg'.

There will be an opportunity for tours around the library after the event. Please contact admin@fasna.org to book your place.

Seminars

FASNA is running the following seminars:

- Academy Status - 'Exploring the Contents' Follow-up Workshops - 1 May 2013 - Central London (free – funded by DfE)
- Procurement Seminar – 18 June 2013 – Central London
- HR Workshops – 19 June or 20 September 2013 – Central London
- Effective Governance – 21 June, 9 October or 13 November 2013; 28 January or 27 March 2014 – Central London
- Admissions – 25 September or 15 October 2013 – Central London
- Admissions Appeals – 4 March or 12 March 2014

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Academy freedoms at the heart of school improvement

Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, says the best schools are ‘incredibly innovative’



Since Michael Gove asked me to become the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools at the Department for Education, I think it would be fair to say that the learning curve has been steep. Although my background is in business, my wife and I set up a charity to support young people eight years ago, and since 2008 we have sponsored Pimlico Academy in London. I was also a Non-Executive Director at the Department between 2010 and my appointment as a Minister. Working to support and improve the quality of education available to children and young people is without doubt the most interesting, inspiring and rewarding thing that I have ever done.

When my predecessor, Jonathan Hill, wrote in this magazine in the summer of 2012, he celebrated how far we had come since giving all schools the ability to gain academy status. Since then, the pace of change has not slowed, and we now have 2724 academies open, 2091 in their own right and 633 with the support of a sponsor.

Many academy Head teachers have told us about the difference that academy freedoms have made to their schools, their staff and their pupils. How they have been able to truly innovate based on what they know works. How they

can listen to their staff, pupils and local communities and take quick action as a result. Hummersknott Academy in Darlington, for example, since conversion has increased investment in its school buildings, begun to provide a wider range of staff development and training opportunities, and expanded its foreign school exchange programme. They are now also the sponsor of a local primary academy.

I am passionate that all academies should be constantly asking themselves whether they can do more with their freedoms to improve, develop and help others. The best schools are incredibly innovative – never resting in their search for better ways of teaching, better ways of providing the best education for all of their pupils.

It has been inspiring to see how many successful academies are now sponsoring other schools, or working together as academy chains. As we work to increase the sphere of good that they can do, all academies that are performing well should be strongly considering taking one of these paths. Head teachers tell us that working in partnership with other schools can have many benefits on both sides, including improved results, development opportunities for staff and increased economies of scale.

A key part of any successful academy is a dynamic governing body. One that is there to work with and support the Head teacher, but also to continually challenge on pupil attainment and progression and thus to hold the school leadership to account. To be able to do this successfully, governing bodies need to have the right range of expertise at their disposal but with all governors focussing on the all important aspects of attainment and progression. Although by no means always the case, I fear that large governing bodies often militate against this.

I am keen to see more schools use their abilities to set teacher pay and conditions to enable them to recruit and reward the best staff. Harris Federation academies, E-Act Blackley Academy in Manchester and the Malcolm Arnold Academy in Northampton have all shown that flexibility in terms of reward and recognition can help to recruit, retain and develop top quality teachers and rapidly turn around struggling schools.

I have seen from my own experience at Pimlico Academy that introducing strong performance management, professional development, coaching and reward can also make a huge difference. The Bushey Academy in Hertfordshire, and Midhurst Rother College in West Sussex, both schools that have transformed

E-Act Blackley Academy are using flexibility in their recruitment of staff



performance management procedures since becoming academies, have also seen astonishing turnarounds in pupil performance.

Many academies are tailoring their curriculum to the needs of their pupils, but the best are also introducing a greater degree of richness, with a curriculum offer that is broad enough to enable pupils to develop and follow passions and talents. Alongside this, they are offering a wide and varied range of extracurricular activities, trips and additional development programmes to build excitement, motivation and inspiration.

I am interested to learn more from those academies providing an extended day not just for extracurricular activity, but also to allow extra time for those pupils who most need it to receive high quality tuition. At King Solomon Academy in London, an all-through school that Ofsted called ‘an outstanding and unique 21st century school’, the

primary school day runs from 8.30am to 4.00pm and the secondary school day runs from 7.55am to 4.30pm. The longer school day gives more time for an intense focus on English and mathematics as well as providing a broad curriculum offer.

The dynamic, innovative education that academies such as King Solomon provide will, I think, be held up as a

benchmark for all schools for many years to come. If we can get every school to provide this kind of education, I am convinced that we will see the substantial increase in the performance of our education system that is necessary to both educate our pupils and re-invigorate our economy. I am looking to academies to lead the way.

It has been inspiring to see how many successful academies are now sponsoring other schools, or working together as academy chains



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Tactics, the endgame, and our Secretary of State, the Jose Mourinho of the political world



Andrew Fielder, CEO Cornwall Academy Trust and executive principal, Sandy Hill Academy, wonders whether Michael Gove is playing a clever game with the press

In summary then, the academy strategy (policy? gospel? call it what you will) is the source of all evil. It is an unholy, chaotic never-ending mess, guilty of creating wicked, selective admissions policies. It is anti-Local Authority and threatens democracy. It puts profit first and children last, avoids accountability, offers no clear idea for the future, is wasteful and profligate, and has created in the Secretary of State a super villain whom we all can boo and hiss every time he enters stage right (well it wouldn't be stage left, now would it?).

On the ground, we hear elements of all of the above in one format or another, sometimes on a daily basis. As ever, the devil is in the detail. It's true; policy direction from the centre is pretty sparse. There is not a great deal of policy that indicates what the education landscape will look like by 2020. But thankfully, by and large, academy leaders are at the forefront of educational innovation and know that they are on the right track. They face down their detractors, keep calm and carry on. We rather like being left to our own devices, to move forwards at our own pace. Counteracting such mythologies about academies and networks, disproving the half-truths and downright deceits is best done through actions not words, although it is infuriating to see so much nonsense given excessive exposure. We seek the truth in very practical ways, those of us who have evolved into academies, chains, and diverse partnerships.

What then, is the actual policy endgame here, and what should our tactics be to counteract this litany of false accusation? Worryingly, those that profile academies in such emotional and blatantly untrue terms seem to have started to dampen down the Government's reforming zeal and enthusiasm for their radical education policy.

A new Minister, Lord Nash, brings a new emphasis. We

now hear words like 'quality not quantity' and rightfully so, but also, more worryingly, ideas about financial accountability through expert financial whizz kids on Trust Boards; robust business plans to be rigidly adhered to; and being 'summoned to Sanctuary' to nail us down to those very same business plans. It is unclear how the architects of the worst banking crisis in history can overnight become active and helpful members of Academy Trust Boards. Let's hope that this particular good idea will rapidly disappear to the same dark, sunless place as SIPs, the School Profile, and FMSiS. Let us also hope that this isn't another sign that reactionary forces are creeping ever nearer to us.

The truth is there is little detail on tactics, policy content, and strategy in what Mr Gove says. Rather, he seems to court strong reactions, delivers messages and ideas that the press and our detractors latch onto with glee. He confirms their worst suspicions and fills countless column inches. This is a good thing for us. It's not unlike football manager Jose Mourinho at the height of his pomp and power, who would enter the Chelsea press room and say the most outrageous, and at times positively mysterious, contentious, unfathomable, things. The suspicion that he was doing so for his own specific reasons, not always football-related, did linger at times but nobody seemed to care. He would know exactly how to press the buttons of the tired, cynical old soccer hacks and become, after a few sentences, the centre of attention entirely. Sky Sports just loved him.

The press also lapped it up. He did this, many say, in order to distract attention away from his team and to allow them more time and space away from the unwanted (although not always unmerited) attention of the press. And it certainly seemed to work. Jose's strategy gave all his talented leaders on the pitch room to make mistakes fearlessly, be assertive, score



the occasional own goal and win matches whilst he stood up and took one for the team. There were also times when he issued a pre-emptive, pre-match strike, knowing as he did that, whilst the press room reeled in astonishment, they wouldn't be looking too closely at the team's performance on the pitch 90 minutes later or the dubious personal lives of its players.

Let's be honest, a large proportion of these reactionary forces just don't like Mr Gove. You hear their slightly frantic jeers and scorn echoing from the news media, anti-academy websites, diverse professional bodies and associations. Don't they just boo him, good and loud, almost all of the time? There are a lot of folk out there, practitioners, commentators, unions, who just don't like what the Secretary of State has implemented. Then, to compound their problems and confusion, our coach, the Secretary of State, will launch forth with another idea for our 21st Century schools that seems to be firmly embedded and sourced in the decade when Elvis ruled. Not enormously helpful, a tad idiosyncratic, but enough to confirm to us that he is on form and setting many a false trail for the press hounds to follow. Listen carefully anytime and you can hear them baying in pursuit just beyond the horizon.

Academy freedoms and the remit to shape the educational landscape for a generation of children is not a comfortable world

for a number of our colleagues and critics. They seem to want to work in a conveniently easy place where they know who to despise and who to trust, that their heroes are easy to recognise, preferably clothed in white and silver, charging to rescue them from this ill-conceived and chaotic Ministry. These defenders of the downtrodden LAs and under-performing schools are well practised in hurling accusations at us but we must look beyond this hyperbole and see them for what they are: folk that look forever backwards. They offer nothing new to ready our children for the world of work in 2020. Their vision for the future seems to be embedded far too firmly in the past, and they seek every opportunity to devalue all that academies and academy chains are trying to do.

Like it or not, the academy strategy has shone a very bright light on us all and every day reveals yet more and more failings in the old system. Vast unwieldy and expensive quangos; lumbering, bureaucratic overstretched LAs; non-compliance rife in buildings and finance; overregulation; too many downtrodden school staff abused and bullied; fragmented, dysfunctional unions constantly playing catch-up and seeking to influence policy rather than protect their members; and all in an environment where mediocrity was the accepted norm.

These are hard truths but there are ever increasing amounts

There are almost limitless options available to us to create a superb, world-class education system

of evidence to substantiate them. In this increasingly exposed old world we can see ever more clearly a place where outstanding outcomes and practices were only too easily left out in the cold, in the dugout, on the reserve bench. And, just as significantly, system-wide their voices were drowned out, their critically important influence undervalued, dissipated and diluted.

We should be euphoric about the changes since May 2010, cheering from the rooftops, not bumbling along changing names and little else. There are almost limitless options available to us now to create a superb, world-class education system for our children. To do this we must work together to completely reshape and modernise the workforce; develop clearer, more effective relationships with unions; take control of the curriculum and systems of accountability; and strategically lead on education in ways we barely dared to dream of in the past. What we do not want are unhelpful constraints put back into the system by an establishment that is fearful of change and electoral failure.

So, while the Secretary of State winds up the press and becomes the focus, we, the team, knowing the overall strategy, can run onto the pitch, get radical, be as creative as we wish to be, shape up and deliver our vision for schools. The endgame is in our hands; the manager has allowed us a precious breathing space and room to be innovative and bold. So where does Jose Mourinho's (sorry, the Secretary of State's) vision for the future take us all? Unlike Chelsea, let's not get too defensive. We need to get out there and use the freedom of choice we have been given to turn the manager's few, more radical ideas into action.

How about we imagine a world by 2020 with no Department of Education, no LAs, no middle, third, or 93rd tier? No Ofsted? Imagine a world where every penny goes into schools, where we are measured and held to account almost solely by parents and their children. A world where crude or overly complex league tables become largely irrelevant, and Ministerial approval, and micro-management by Governments are a thing of the past. A little like, well, dare we say, the world of Eton, Harrow, St Paul's Westminster, and Cardiff Sixth Form?

If we value all our children equally, which we do, surely an ambition to create schools for all, that provide a standard of education better even than these institutions, should be our goal? More than this, imagine a world where everyone in an academy is rewarded for their part in producing outstanding pupil outcomes, from cook to caretaker, accountant to secretary, TA to Principal.

There will be those that argue that this is a pipe dream, unachievable without a heavy casualty list, a great deal of collateral damage resulting in too many children being left in sink schools and struggling in diminished LA rumps. The truth is you won't find a good or outstanding school leader who would ever allow this to happen. Put them in charge of the system and then make the assertion that under their leadership any child would be left behind in such circumstances – we all know what their response would be, more Brian Clough than Mourinho.

Which is kind of what is being asked of us, isn't it? This is the endgame. Good and outstanding leaders running all our schools at every level, no longer being maintained or led by organisations without the capacity, single-minded focus or expertise to do so. Five hundred or so innovative multi-academy trusts run as highly-effective school improvement businesses led by outstanding practitioners, competing and co-operating with each other. The winners here are the children and their families. There are no losers.

In a society and world that is rapidly changing, with diminishing budgets and a UK economy that will stay in deficit for another decade or more, we must not be afraid when the Minister stands up and announces strange policy or the Department 'leaks' plans that talk of profit and loss. It is merely the backdrop against which we, as academy leaders, drive education policy forward in the face of criticism, scepticism, pressures and problems.

Our pupils will be entering a world of work where the USA will no longer be the number one power, possibly not even second or third. Western economies will be subservient and dependent upon emerging powers from across the globe. The children in our nursery units today will face a very different world in 2030 when they leave university and face this new world order. Will governance, employment structures, and an education system designed in the educational dark ages, prepare them enough to compete and win? These then are the real challenges the present Government want us to face and overcome. Not the headline-grabbing, voter-pleasing, media-feeding sound-bites we see almost everyday.

We need to see the bigger picture. We need to see that if all could be achieved in just 90 minutes, the full delivery of the academy and sponsorship agenda is merely the the first minute; the next 89 are where the real challenges lie.



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Freedom to shape your future workforce

It is time to put schools at the heart of initial teacher training, says Charlie Taylor, Chief Executive of the Teaching Agency and National College

As a former Headteacher, I believe that schools have often been too remote for too long from the training of new teachers. For most Heads, teacher training has been something that is done ‘elsewhere’, in a university or in someone else’s school. Indeed, universities often complain that they cannot place student teachers because schools are reluctant to take trainees. School Direct was launched in 2012 to counter this imbalance by providing a new way of training teachers that puts schools – as employers – at the heart of the process.

The Secretary of State’s vision for the education system is about trusting good Heads to do what they do best, to take the lead. With School Direct, the school bids directly for teacher training places, selects the provider they want to work with and agrees the content and focus of the training. Significantly, schools can negotiate directly with a provider to determine how the funding for that training should be allocated, and even more importantly, Heads can recruit the candidate they want, the candidate they know their school needs.

School Direct is transforming the face of teacher training and recruitment by giving schools a majority stake in the selection and development of their future workforce. The merger of the National College and the Teaching Agency is part

of this clear commitment to creating a genuinely school-led system. The new agency will bring together support for the development of inspiring leaders and excellent new teachers, in recognition of the symbiotic relationship between the two. School Direct presents a fantastic opportunity for schools to be at the heart and the start of shaping the teaching profession. I envisage that teacher training should no longer be discrete but will become part of a process that takes teachers from training, through great CPD, to middle management, and for some, school and system leadership. However, I fully realise that this will not be without its challenges, and that is why our new agency will be here to support and facilitate that transition to a school-led system.

Partnerships

The key to success with School Direct will be for Heads to come together to form partnerships of like-minded schools. These are the best sorts of partnerships as they are not artificially engineered by the government or by Local Authority. Schools will set them up to suit their local recruitment needs and serve their purposes. An important element will involve school leaders being clear about where they need support from ITT providers, as well as being aware of their own strengths and resources. Heads will

need to assess what they can reasonably deliver within their partnership, and what services they will need from universities and SCITTs. Schools should aim to become ‘smart shoppers’, with the confidence to procure elements of teacher training provision at the right price and from providers that best match their requirements. Put simply, as the customer and the employer, schools can negotiate the bespoke training they need, how they need it and when they need it.

I would strongly encourage new and established School Direct partnerships to learn from one another and to develop supportive relationships in order to build up confidence to procure training effectively. This will be a new responsibility for schools, even for academies and chains accustomed to maximising the value of their school contracts, so it makes sense to collaborate and learn from the experience of others. Our new agency will aim to help this meeting of minds by setting up an online hub for the burgeoning School Direct community, in which we will encourage schools to share examples of the funding agreements that they have agreed with training providers.

Planned recruitment

I know that some schools, especially small primary schools or schools with very low staff turnover, may be

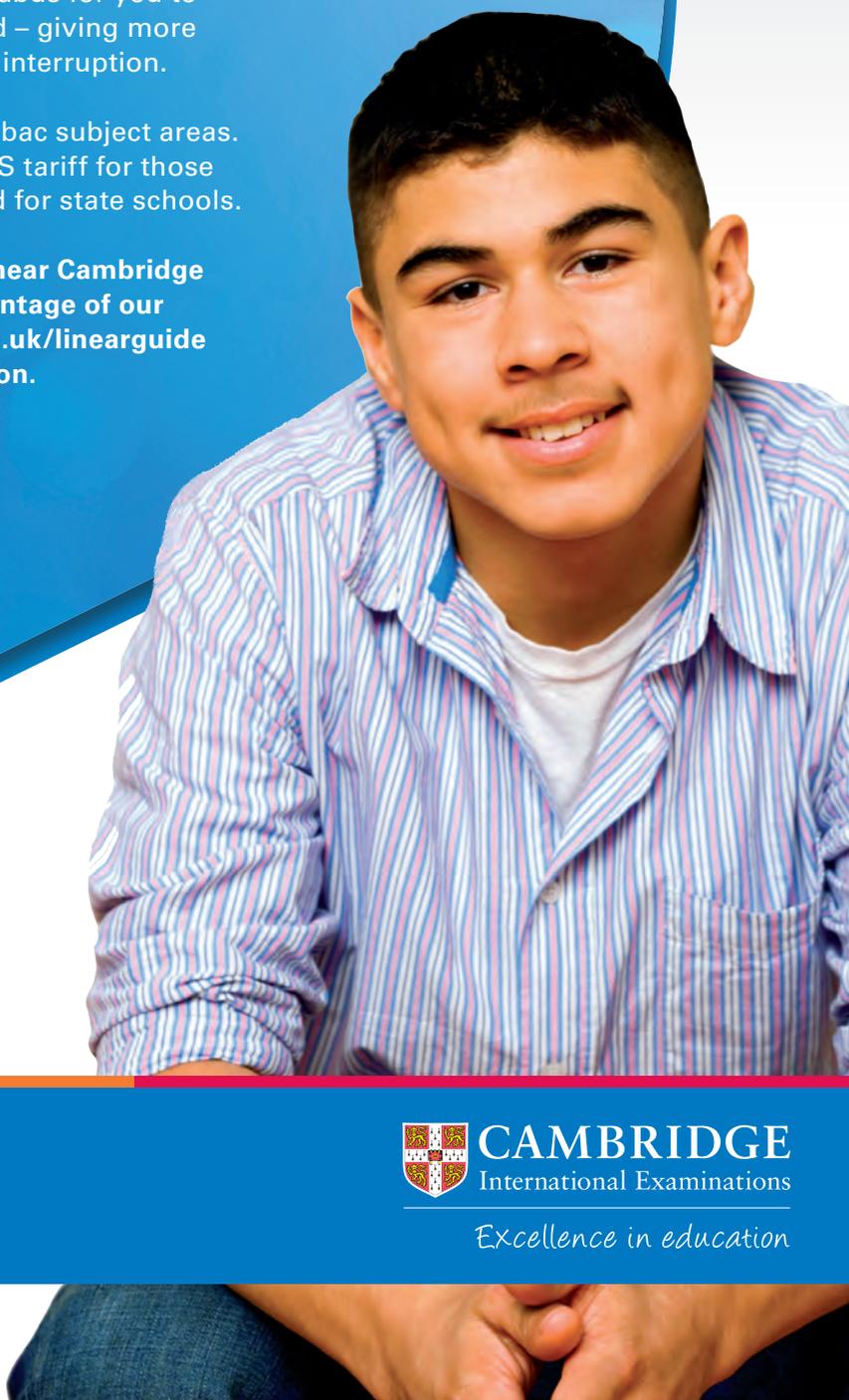
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“It is an investment in the future wellbeing of a school, ensuring the baton of excellence is passed on from the current generation of teachers to the next.”

concerned by the challenge of meeting the expectation that trainees will be offered employment on completion of their training. A partnership approach, in which a lead school bids for allocated places on behalf of a group of schools, ensures that this commitment to recruit, train and employ new teachers is a shared responsibility. In addition, not only will the trainees gain experience across a range of different schools, the teachers and leaders in those schools will also learn from and support one another, resulting in a genuinely self-improving system.

It is important that schools do not underestimate the staff time required for recruitment of trainee teachers, but Heads and their colleagues should be assured that this time will be time well spent. It is an investment in the future wellbeing of a school, ensuring the baton of excellence is passed on from the current generation of teachers to the next. By ‘owning’ recruitment and training, Headteachers can ensure a seamless transition between the development of new recruits and the ongoing professional development of their school workforce.

What Headteacher wouldn’t wish to be able to plan and tailor their recruitment in such a hands-on manner? Ninety percent of the success of an organisation depends upon the quality of its workforce and schools are no different. With School Direct, partnerships of schools can influence and in the future, decide upon, recruitment patterns in their local area. After all, aren’t school leaders best placed to know what numbers they need in particular subjects? As School Direct develops at grassroots level, Heads will have the freedom and the confidence to plan ahead, enabling them to be proactive with their staffing levels, rather than reactive. This journey to a school-led system may seem daunting at the outset but the end results will be worthwhile, and it is trailblazers such as outstanding academies and free schools that will lead the way.

With that in mind, I’d like to invite schools to contact the agency’s field teams if they have ideas and suggestions about how we can improve School Direct while we make the transition to a school-led and eventually, school-managed system. We are particularly interested in hearing from schools seeking full accreditation as initial

teacher training (ITT) providers. Drawing on specific feedback from school leaders, we are already developing ways to make full accreditation easier to obtain. Becoming an accredited ITT provider or SCITT can be an attractive future option for some schools as it puts Heads fully in control of the funding and opens up opportunities to provide services to other schools.

Freedom to shape the future

For the foreseeable future, teacher training is likely to remain a partnership between schools and training providers. However, we all know that the education system depends upon excellent leaders as well as excellent teachers, so I envisage a time in which all outstanding schools will view themselves as leaders of teacher training as well as leaders of workforce development. School Direct gives schools the freedom to do things differently and individually and the best schools will want to grasp this opportunity. And as the education system develops and changes, so will the new agency. Our aim is to serve the needs of schools, not to dictate to them. Where schools lead, we will follow.

The National Induction Panel for Teachers: improving the quality of our workforce



National Induction Panel for Teachers

Peter Beaven and Philip O’Hear explain why FASNA and IAA are establishing a new Appropriate Body for NQT induction

Academies and schools up and down the country will be in the process of recruiting new staff to start in September. Amongst those will be many who are new to the profession of teaching. Headteachers will use the usual tools of recruitment – the interview, an observed lesson, references from the teaching placement and from the training provider – and hope that with support, the newly qualified teacher will turn out to be a good ‘un.

Of course, it is difficult to always get this right; after all we are looking at potential, not the finished article. Is performance on the interview day a good indicator of potential? What allowance do we make for nerves, for inexperience, for having a cold or for poor training to date?

Can we rely on references from training institutions, which are so bland and formatted that they are virtually meaningless (compare references for two candidates from the same course, written by the same tutor and you will see what we mean)? Is the reference from the placement school any better? Does that school have the same high expectations as you do or is it one where the harassed mentor writes a quick reference for the hapless student who has done their best in difficult conditions with little proper guidance and support? We all know this happens.

Scraping a pass

We also know that PGCE students who are failing in a placement school are often moved to less demanding placements in the hope of scraping a pass. In many cases “less demanding” does not mean the school context is less challenging but one in which expectations are lower – sometimes unacceptably so.

In reality there is a good deal of pot luck involved. We may be experienced at this; we may have good instincts or the best

possible processes and manage to spot the raw talent, the good potential, of a future outstanding teacher. But there are also those occasions when early promise fails to materialise, when the new teacher does not respond to guidance, advice and support, when undetected character traits, which make for poor relationships, begin to emerge. What then?

Of course, there is always the induction year when the NQT’s progress is monitored and there is the option to fail the student. In reality this is difficult. Of 30,000+ NQTs, less than a dozen actually fail. Schools sometimes report that their Appropriate Body, the Local Authority, will pass students they feel should fail. Often, the LA will demand that they observe the NQT in order to assess competence and when they do accept the standard as satisfactory when the school deems it not to be so. As Mark Thompson pointed out in his article in the last issue of this magazine: “Local Authorities take the money and leave the issue of quality well alone.” All of this just leaves the school with the issue of capability farther down the line.

Recycled in the system

Other failing NQTs jump ship in the hope they can complete their training in a less demanding school. Once again, this often means a school where the standards required of teachers are less demanding (*ie* lower). These weak teachers are then recycled in the system. We have all come across the highly recommended teacher applying for a position in our school who turns out to be nothing like the description in their reference, who does not seem to possess the experience claimed and whose standards are not good enough for our school.

This is the scenario that gives rise to the number of poor teachers working in our schools. Whether we accept the figures

touted by the likes of Sir Chris Woodhead or Sir Michael Wilshaw we have to accept that these teachers exist.

All of this is made even more pressing as we now have short-notice inspections which focus on the quality of teaching and an expectation that schools can demonstrate robust performance management procedures which tackle teacher underperformance. Poor teacher quality always impacted on students and their learning; but never before could it have such a critical impact on an Ofsted judgement and through this, the school's reputation or even its future. Schools will be expected to implement Sir Michael Wilshaw's declaration that there can be "no excuses" and that "we have tolerated mediocrity for too long".

Motivation

It was addressing some of these issues that gave FASNA and IAA the motivation to set up the National Induction Panel for Teachers.

The core principle of this scheme, which will start in September 2013, is that the school and not some third party should make judgements about performance. After all, the school employs the NQT and their performance is seen in the school context. They should meet the standards the school expects of them.

The role of the scheme is to provide the structure and processes, the quality assurance and the support required, both for the school and the NQT.

For the school, the scheme will provide training for all induction tutors to ensure their role is clear and they are able to carry it out. The scheme will be underpinned by an online system for recording NQT performance and reporting this to the NQT, the school and the National Panel. No more paper forms that no-one seems to read. The moderation of these reports will ensure that processes are followed – that the NQT is being fairly monitored, that feedback is being given and access to any support required.

A team of quality assurance officers will moderate the forms each term and visit up to 35% of schools each year. They will pick up any problems – where there is a difficulty with an NQT and the school needs reassurance or where the process are not being followed and there is a danger that decisions run the risk of not being supported by clear and recorded evidence. They will not observe lessons and validate the school's judgement; they are there to ensure that the processes demonstrate that the judgements are being reliably and fairly arrived at.

Regional conferences

For the NQT there will be regional conferences to reinforce the concept that they have a responsibility to develop themselves professionally. The online system will ensure that the NQTs know clearly what is expected of them and how they are measuring up during their induction year.

The school will be expected to make the decision whether the NQT has met the induction standards required and therefore

passed their NQT year. The National Panel (which is the Appropriate Body) will have the necessary evidence to support the decision made by the participating school. This places the decisions on performance where it should be – in the school. The systems and the support provided ensure processes are high quality, clear and fair. We believe this will meet our goal of ensuring NQTs are performing at the required level and avoid the situation in which NQTs of dubious quality are being passed via a weak and under-demanding process.

Obviously, this will reassure schools and academies when they are recruiting staff that have passed through this scheme. They will know that it has been rigorous and that they can ask for sight of the feedback as part of their recruitment process. Thus the benefits go beyond those of the NQT year.

The cost of using the scheme is estimated to be no more than £465 per NQT and this may be reduced depending on how many NQTs register. Full details of the scheme, asking academies and schools to register an interest in having their NQTs participate in the process, will be sent out at the beginning of next term.

In the next month or so, we will be looking for academies and schools that are interested in playing a part in the training aspects of the scheme and the quality assurance processes.

In the meantime we hope that you bear this scheme in mind when considering who to use as your Appropriate Body next year.

If you want to register interest in this scheme, please contact us via admin@nqtinduction.co.uk

Philip O'Hear retired in August 2009 after five years as Principal of Capital City Academy in Brent, London. From 1999-2004, he was Director of Education Youth and Leisure for the London Borough of Hillingdon. Previous posts included Assistant Director of Education in Camden (1997-99) and Headteacher of Acland Burghley School in Camden (1989-97). From January 2013, he has taken up a temporary role as Interim Headteacher at Holbrook Academy near Ipswich.

Peter Beaven retired in August 2012 after 14 years as Headteacher of Norton Hill School in Midsomer Norton. For the final three years he was also Headteacher of Somervale School, Midsomer Norton, in a hard Federation with Norton Hill. Both schools became academies in 2010. Peter now works as a consultant and is editor of *Academy* magazine and a member of the Executive Board of FASNA.



Get ready for performance-related pay

With performance-related pay on its way, it is time to make sure your appraisal processes are robust and ready, says Keith Wright

The announcement late last year that national pay scales would be scrapped in favour of performance-related pay (PRP) from this September represents a major challenge for all school leaders.

Although many academy Heads have had flexibility on setting pay levels for some time now, most still choose to stick to the national pay scales.

But come September every Headteacher will be able to set pay levels according to a teacher's performance. Instead of automatic progression up the traditional pay scale, pay bands will be kept as a reference point and Heads will have discretion over where in the band they place any member of staff.

There will of course be many Heads who will be concerned about this. They may be afraid that it will leave them open to accusations of favouritism that may set colleague upon colleague.

The risks exposed by the introduction of PRP are even starker when you consider the information management 'gap' that exists in most of England's schools. Most still do not have a systematised way of managing and tracking school improvement planning processes like staff performance, school development planning and CPD.

Heads find it difficult to determine where their staff are in meeting the requirements of the new teacher standards in the current performance management arrangements, not least because the teaching standards changed last year, creating a significant knowledge gap. The same applies to teachers. This is worrying, especially when we know that these very same standards will be used to judge PRP.

I believe that Headteachers can prepare their schools for the challenge of PRP by taking a fresh look at their existing performance appraisal processes. A good starting point is to test them against a set of key principles.

First of all, it is vital that any decision about pay based on performance is justified by hard evidence and that this is

benchmarked against one set of standards by which everyone is judged. As Russell Hobby, general secretary of Headteacher union the NAHT said back in December 2012: "Staff have a right to confidence in the performance management system before their progression is connected to it."

Confidence will come from a robust, transparent and systematic approach to performance appraisal. Without these core characteristics PRP will be compromised. This could lead to the Headteacher being accused of inconsistency and favouritism. At worst, this could even lead to legal proceedings such as an employment tribunal.

But good performance appraisal shouldn't just be about PRP. It is important to get performance appraisal right because it is one of the main tools for supporting and developing staff. Good performance appraisal helps you deliver the most effective teaching and learning possible for your students.

So what should the process look like? It should involve reviewer and reviewee for starters. It should be structured, systematic and set clear objectives and timescales. A good approach will clearly set out expectations and state exactly what measurements will be used to assess whether they have met targets. It will identify areas that stretch and develop that individual. If a performance issue surfaces in an appraisal these can be quickly identified and appropriate measures, such as tailored professional development, can be put into action. Talents and particular strengths can be identified and resources put in place that will help to quickly develop that member of staff. Good performance appraisal develops and supports your people and helps them deliver the best for your pupils.

School leaders also need to bear in mind the demands of inspectors when looking at the performance appraisal process.

Ofsted wants schools to give full account of the school improvement processes that ultimately have a huge impact upon pupil attainment. It wants evidence the SLT knows the

Good performance appraisal: Six key principles

- It should be about more than just the annual appraisal process – it must be part of the bigger picture.
- It must be clear and transparent so that everyone knows what they should be doing and why they are doing it.
- It has to be consistent in terms of process and procedure, but flexible enough to cater for individual roles and responsibilities.
- It should promote objectivity by making possible fair and equitable discussions which make all the stakeholders in the process feel confident and valued.
- It needs to be scalable so that it has the capacity to grow and flex with the development of the school.
- It must be future proof. Evidence put into the process today must automatically carry forward and presented in context so that the work put in does not become redundant.

Are you ready for PRP?

Ten quick questions that will help you assess your school's readiness for performance related pay:

- 1 How familiar are you, your SLT colleagues, governors and staff with statutory and non-statutory PRP guidelines?
- 2 Does everyone in the school understand the importance of gathering evidence for their performance appraisal and long-term career development? And do you give staff time to reflect on and gather performance-related evidence?
- 3 Is performance-related reflection and evidence gathering scheduled into the school working week?
- 4 What guidance is there for staff to understand exactly what good evidence of performance is?
- 5 Is the school development plan used as a driver for measuring performance?
- 6 Do you give staff the opportunity for discussion, feedback and guidance on their performance, other than in performance appraisal meetings?
- 7 Is there an agreed complaints procedure for any PRP disputes?
- 8 Do you have easily accessible systems in place for recording ongoing performance related evidence?
- 9 Are the systems consistent, fair and transparent and are staff given adequate training and support to use them properly?
- 10 What did Ofsted think of the school's performance in all of the above areas?

school's strengths and weaknesses, that leaders are immersed in self-evaluation and that development plans are focused on improving teaching and raising achievement. Inspectors will want to see decisions made about pay progression; that means a 'yes' or 'no', each with a rationale, not simply a blank box on a document which suggests the issue has not been considered. Good performance appraisal plays a crucial role in binding all of these elements together.

Teachers also need to know exactly where they are in this. They need to be as well informed as the school's leadership when they enter the performance appraisal process. The reality is that each person is ultimately responsible for their own career progression and without compelling reasons for maintaining or advancing through pay scales, they are themselves at risk. If they have evidence that they have met the standards expected of them then they will be in a strong position in pay negotiations.

PRP will test even the most solid and progressive performance appraisal approaches. But if schools ensure that these are based on the sound principles of transparency, robustness and

fairness then they will be in a better position to deal with the challenges PRP will bring. Most importantly, this will ensure that performance appraisal empowers and supports staff to be the best they can be.

Keith Wright is managing director of school information management specialist Bluewave.SWIFT. For the past six years Keith has worked with Leeds City Council to develop their quality standards framework for adoption by schools in the UK and overseas. He has also advised overseas education ministries on raising school standards through the effective use of school improvement support systems. More information is available at www.bluewaveswift.co.uk



To boldly go towards a Royal College of Teaching?

Professor Derek Bell says there is general support for the idea of establishing teaching as a chartered profession

In today's complex world, with all its pressures, constraints and opportunities, the imperative for a high quality, high status teaching profession has never been greater. As it was succinctly stated in the McKinsey Report of 2007: "The quality of an education system cannot exceed that of the quality of its teachers." Furthermore, quality of life (globally, nationally and locally) and our future prosperity (individually and collectively) depend on the quality of education. Thus there is a great deal resting on the shoulders of the teaching profession in all its guises. The question, not for the first time, is what to do about it.

Ensuring that the quality of teaching is of the highest possible standard and that the teaching profession is given the recognition it deserves is a complex problem influenced by many factors, which include:

- the status of teaching as compared to other professions and how it is perceived by government, the general public, young people and, importantly, teachers themselves;
- the challenge of recruiting high-calibre individuals;
- the quality of initial training available for teachers;
- the availability, relevance, type and quality of CPD;
- the degree to which the profession has control of its own destiny;
- the development of a culture in which professional expertise in teaching and education is highly valued;
- the need for an enabling and supportive political climate.

Other professions, notably medicine, accountancy, the law and engineering, have a greater degree of self-determination in addressing these and other issues. So why not teaching? Are there lessons to be learnt from these other professions and models which could be developed for teaching?

In particular is there potential for developing "a new, member-driven College of Teaching, independent from but

working with government, which could play important roles, inter alia, in accreditation of CPD and teacher standards" akin to "the Royal Colleges and Chartered Institutions in other professions" ?

This could include the possibility of establishing teaching as a chartered profession that carries both personal and collective responsibilities for professional conduct, standards of training and quality of practice. Given impetus by the publication in May 2012 of the report, *Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best*, the debate has already started.

Ministers in the DfE have indicated general support for the idea but are very clear that any such development must come from the profession and be independent of government.

Teacher unions have also shown interest in the proposal. Indeed, writing in the *TES*, Mary Bousted (General Secretary of the ATL) and Russell Hobby (General Secretary of the NAHT) included "A Royal College of Teaching, created and run by teachers" as one part of their four-point plan for the future of the teaching profession.

More recently the Academies Commission in its report in January 2013 recommended that, "The DfE should pump-prime the establishment of a Royal College of Teachers that would be independent from, but work with the government, to promote teachers' professional development, provide evidence to inform education policy, align practice and research and promote peer-to-peer collaboration."

Since May 2012, a group of individuals including Charlotte Leslie MP (a member of the Education Select Committee), Chris Husbands (Director of the Institute of Higher Education), and myself (Professor in the College of Teachers) have been meeting informally with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the potential of this recommendation. One outcome of these discussions will be the publication of a pamphlet to be launched

The last thing we need at this, or indeed any stage, is fragmentation and the formation of splinter groups

in late Spring 2013 with contributors setting out their views on the idea of a Royal College of Teaching.

In parallel, the existing College of Teachers (COT) has adopted a very positive and proactive approach to the initiative and is contributing extensively to the debate in a variety of ways including a special edition of its journal *Education Today*, published March 2013, devoted to the issue.

Independently, a group of Headteachers asked the Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) to host an exploratory workshop to discuss the idea. This was held on 5th September 2012 and produced a report which is available on the PTI website. The key outcome of this workshop was the proposal that the PTI act as honest broker to establish a group to explore the potential and feasibility of setting up a Royal College or similar body. A Commission, chaired by Chris Pope, co-director of PTI, has now been established and its work formally commenced on 7th March 2013.

Currently, all these groups are in contact and working together in order to stimulate discussion more widely and to explore possible models and the feasibility of such a body. This is important because the last thing we need at this, or indeed any stage, is fragmentation and the formation of splinter groups. Neither do we want to create another organisation that simply adds to the current crowded landscape. From my perspective, at least, the development of a Royal College must be a sustainable, unifying force for teaching, otherwise there is no point going any further.

To date there is clearly much support for the idea of a Royal College of Teaching but it is touched with the realism that the 'devil is in the detail'. A fully-fledged body will not happen overnight; not least because to be appointed a 'Royal College' an organisation must meet certain criteria and so it may have to be a staged process. To date there is a long list of things that a Royal College might do but we have to be clear: it can't do everything.

Indeed there are things that it should not do, specifically activities that rightly sit with trades unions, such as pay and conditions and other employment matters.

There is unanimous agreement that it should promote the professional development of teachers and, as the PTI report summarises, there are several areas to be addressed including the need to:

- ensure high professional standards;
- provide stability through changes in political cycles;
- promote evidence-based initiatives;
- bridge the gap between classroom practice and research;
- establish an authoritative voice on professional standards;
- raise the status of teaching as a profession.

All of these are based on the premise that, ultimately, the main objective of teaching is to improve children's learning and thereby enhance their personal life-chances and the contribution they make to the society in which they live.

We are still in the early stages of the debate but 'to boldly go' (if I am permitted to use that well known split infinitive) is something we must do. This is not just my view but also that of others from a wide range of backgrounds, as the many discussions that have already taken place and the reports referred to in this article demonstrate. We know there are obstacles to overcome and setting up a Royal College will take time but, as with space travel, it will be an exciting journey and (to push the analogy a little further) we could reach the stars.

At this stage, however, we need to keep our feet on the ground and ensure that there is as wide a consultation as possible in order to ensure that, if a Royal College is established, it genuinely does come from the teaching profession. There will be significant activity over the coming months but, in the meantime, if you have any views or issues you wish to raise please do not hesitate to contact me, derek@campanulaconsulting.co.uk

It's been a time to look back ... and forward

Baroness Campbell, Chair of the Youth Sport Trust, on using London 2012 as a springboard



Recent weeks at the Youth Sport Trust have been akin to that of a manager from a Six Nations rugby team. Whilst Stuart Lancaster and his counterparts have been reviewing past performances and analysing areas for improvement, and then looking ahead to upcoming games – in the world of

PE and school sport we have been doing something similar.

There have been two significant developments in recent weeks that have led us to reflect on previous successes in school sport, and look forward to how PE may be shaped in our schools in the future. These have come in the form

of a four-year Ofsted report which has studied PE and school sport provision in recent years, and the publication of a new draft PE curriculum which sets out how the subject could be delivered in schools going forward.

Ofsted report, *Beyond 2012*

Let us start by looking back. Whilst the title of the Ofsted report published in February was *Beyond 2012*, much of the content studied the quality of PE and school sport over the previous four years. The headlines show that PE is in “good health” – with the quality of teaching good or outstanding in the vast majority of schools.

However, the report was critical of the nature of PE in some schools, arguing that many children and young people do not spend a sufficient proportion of their PE lessons being physically active. At the Youth Sport Trust we welcome this report, which highlights some excellent work that has been taking place in schools, but also offers some areas of concern that must be a catalyst for action.

Ofsted states that fewer primary schools are achieving outstanding PE than their secondary counterparts and this is of particular concern. From our own research we know that primary school teachers are not receiving adequate training in how to deliver an effective PE experience and this can leave teachers lacking the confidence and competence to deliver the subject effectively.

Another worrying report finding

is that PE lessons are not always active enough and in some cases young people are not being physically challenged. The benefits of a good physical education and a healthy lifestyle are obvious and the PE experience for every young person should be of a high quality.

The report covers in some detail the strides that have been taken to advance the provision of PE and school sport through the tireless work of those involved in School Sport Partnerships – previously funded through central Government investment. This system enabled schools to work in partnership, both with other schools and across community settings which, as clarified in this report, achieved significant improvements.

The Youth Sport Trust therefore supports Ofsted’s recommendation for a national strategy on PE and school sport going forward and are pleased that the report shows that a collaborative approach between schools has been extremely successful previously. Ensuring schools work together and share resources is the most effective way to raise participation rates and increase competitive opportunities.

National Curriculum review

Turning attention now to the future of PE and school sport, the Government has recently published a new draft National Curriculum setting out key priorities and content across a range of subjects. The draft included programmes of study for physical education at all key stages and



Ensuring schools work together and share resources is the most effective way to raise participation rates and increase competitive opportunities

Not everyone can be an Olympic champion, but everyone should have an opportunity to enjoy sport in whatever form they choose

will be the subject of a full consultation, with a closing date of 16th April.

Encouragingly, the Department for Education recognises the importance of physical education by ensuring it is a compulsory subject alongside English, maths and science. The Youth Sport Trust will be submitting a full response to the consultation on the new draft curriculum, and will be working with our member schools to ensure they are fully engaged in this process.

We are delighted that the PE programme of study supports our belief and work around ensuring all Key Stage 1 students develop physical literacy to achieve and progress in physical education.

Lead your generation

There has been much discussion around legacy from London 2012 and recently the Youth Sport Trust launched its Lead your generation legacy commitment. A key aspect of Lead your generation is young people developing legacy plans for their schools by building on the Young Ambassador initiative – which sees young people using the Olympic and Paralympic values to inspire others.

Through Lead your generation, Young Ambassadors will co-ordinate sports festivals, activities and events that are ultimately driven by young people to inspire their peers. We want to empower young people to be role models and make a difference in their schools and

communities. It will also ensure there is a clear legacy plan in schools which draws together and embeds the work of the Youth Sport Trust to support that.

We are very excited that Olympic gold medallist and triple jump world record holder Jonathan Edwards is to join the Youth Sport Trust's Board and support Lead your generation. Jonathan, who was a key figure in supporting the successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, will bring a wealth of experience to the Board and made his first appearance in his new role at the Youth Sport Trust's national conference in Telford in February this year.

The promise from London 2012 was that the Olympics and Paralympics would 'Inspire a Generation'. It certainly achieved that in the short term and the focus must be for that momentum to be maintained.

Not everyone can be an Olympic champion, but everyone should have an opportunity to enjoy sport in whatever form they choose. Those who play, and win, in the 6 Nations rugby championships often suffer blooded noses and setbacks along the way. School sport has had its fair share of cuts and bruises in recent years, but across the country there is also a team of winners who want to deliver the very best school sport opportunities for young people.

The Youth Sport Trust is passionate about helping all young people to achieve

their full potential in life through the delivery of high quality PE and sport.

They work to:

- Give every child a sporting start in life through high quality PE and sport in primary schools.
- Ensure all young people have a sporting chance by developing opportunities for those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Support all young people to achieve their sporting best in school and their personal best in life.

Find out more by visiting

www.youthsporttrust.org

Sue Campbell has been with the Youth Sport Trust since 1994. Sue is a former junior international pentathlete and netball player and represented her country as a player, a coach and a team manager. Trained as a physical education teacher, Sue has taught at the University of Manchester and lectured at Leicester and Loughborough Universities. Before joining the trust, she was Chief Executive of the National Coaching Foundation (now Sportscoach UK). Sue was a speaker at the FASNA Autumn Conference.

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FASNA's influence and voice reflected in primary sport £150 million award

FASNA members who attended Kevin Eveleigh's seminar at FASNA's Autumn Conference, or readers who read his article in the last issue of *Academy* magazine will remember how he argued passionately for funding for primary school sport.

Kevin (above) was FASNA's representative voice as part of the 'expert' sport group representing primary schools, called to London to share their views on competitive sport with Mr Gove.

At that meeting with Mr Gove, Kevin was passionate about:

- Ring-fenced funding to encourage Heads to prioritise competitive sport
- Money for coaches to get to fixtures and training
- More funding exclusively for primary schools and local sports associations
- No return to a 'top-down' initiative from external bodies
- More autonomy and freedom for primary Heads to allocate any funding
- Money for cover for those teachers attending in-school fixtures and events

- A recognition that sports teachers in primaries need greater status
- Money for time to arrange fixtures
- More TLRs for sports
- Flexibility to spend the money on existing teachers and outside providers
- A broader, less urban base for sports bodies, sharing resources further afield

He also thrust this list into Baroness Campbell's hands as she left the FASNA Conference last autumn.

I know members will share his pleasure that Mr Gove has announced £150 million for just that. The Government says that its draft PE curriculum will put competitive sport back at the heart of school life and this funding will help deliver that.

This is a fantastic outcome for all our primary colleagues. Spend the money wisely on events, matches and staffing – not meetings. Well done Kevin and well done FASNA.

Getting the best out of best practice

Introducing this year's IAA Best Practice Awards

“With freedom comes responsibility,” once said Lord Adonis, IAA Honorary President and former Minister. This motto for the academies movement is being put into action by the Independent Academies Association's Best Practice Awards, which both member and non-member academies can enter. The awards recognise a range of key aspects of practice fundamental to the founding principles of the academies movement.

Amongst last year's winners was Thornaby Academy. Andy Williams, Director of ICT and Enterprise, said of the

award “It validated the academy vision with recognition of the ‘can-do’ culture at Thornaby Academy, illustrating the values of working in partnership with local businesses and the community along with providing opportunities for our students and raising aspirations.”

2012/13 Award Categories:

- Academy Transformation
- Partnerships with the Wider Community
- Entrepreneurial and Innovative Practice
- Development of Inspired Approaches to Inclusion

- Partnerships through Educations Outreach
- Achievements in Learning beyond the Classroom
- Sustainability
- Innovative and Effective Governance

To apply please visit www.iaa.uk.net/bestpractice to download details of the criteria and an application form, or contact Rukia Shaffi on iaainfo@iaa.uk.net or 0115 942 1238. Closing date for applications is 26th April 2013. Category winners will be announced at the Awards Dinner held in London on July 4th.

Helping students to make meaning of their learning

Academies find a curriculum solution through the International Middle Years Curriculum

Finding an enriching and engaging learning experience for Key Stage 3, one that is practical for the school to deliver, inspiring and relevant for the student, and prepares them well for the next stage in their learning, is a challenge for any school to achieve. However, a number of schools, including The UCL Academy in London and Dartmouth Academy in Dorset, think they have found the answer with the International Middle Years Curriculum.

Making a difference

For The UCL Academy, the move to adopt this new curriculum saw almost immediate impact as Headteacher, Geraldine Davies explains: “At the end of the very first IMYC unit, the staff were shocked at how much understanding the children had gained from their learning.” Assistant Principal, Thomas Bowen agrees: “We were amazed at the engagement and the work produced. It’s so exciting. The children get it immediately.”

For students, it’s a curriculum that helps them find connections across all their subject learning and makes links to a conceptual theme (a Big Idea) for a period of six weeks per unit. Each unit guides students to make meaning of the Big Idea through a personal and global perspective. Within each unit there is a learning process designed to engage and inspire teenagers, helping them to become confident, independent learners.

Tom Bowen explains why the academy chose to take such an approach

with KS3 learning: “We’re a brand new school, we’re an academy that wants to make a difference, we’ve had the chance to take a whole new and forward-thinking approach to the learning and to the way our students are making meaning of their learning. We’re focused on developing the whole student and the IMYC curriculum supports that extremely well. There are no isolated learning sessions; all the learning is connected as a result of working with the International Middle Years Curriculum. Our aim is to create the best learning environment to achieve an actively involved and motivated student, providing opportunities to learn both collaboratively and independently.” The academy calls this learning environment ‘the nature of learning’, which came about from collaboration with the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London (the academy’s sponsor). It involves the students working in SuperStudios (open learning areas enabling group learning), and in learning sets (a group of six who stay together within each learning session). “Everything is evolving together very well,” says Tom. “Having the IMYC Big Idea as a theme across all curriculum areas has proved to be very successful,” he adds. “It’s a benchmark to support students in developing their understanding within all their learning. The students are seeing the links in their subject learning before the adults do. They can identify connections in their

learning in ways that we teachers don’t always see and they are understanding exactly how to use the Big Idea to help them find relevant links. We hadn’t anticipated the students’ ability to make the links so effectively and what’s most interesting is that it’s a very personal thing for each student; they can find connections in very different ways.”

Responding to the teenage brain

Teachers, parents and scientists alike across all cultures recognise that adolescence is a difficult time and that students really struggle in many ways. One researcher whose work influenced the IMYC, Harry Chugani, a neurologist at Wayne State University in Detroit encapsulates this experience perfectly: “Adolescence is a time when brains are absorbing a huge amount, but also undergoing so many alterations that many things can go wrong. The teenage years rival the terrible twos as a time of general brain discombobulation.”

During this time, teenagers find themselves struggling to deal with their developing brain which is often the cause of poor executive function, a need for independence, a desire to find meaning and purpose in what they do, an increase in peer acceptance, and an impulse to take risk and seek pleasure. The International Middle Years Curriculum was designed around these specific needs. As a result, it is providing an enriching learning experience for KS3 students says Tom: “The learning process of the IMYC is

The students are seeing the links in their subject learning before the adults do. They can identify connections in their learning in ways that we teachers don't always see

central to how we've developed our planning, our teaching and how we're utilising our space." He explains the IMYC's learning process: "An entry point at the beginning of each unit is the hook to help the students make sense of the Big Idea and to engage them. A knowledge harvest helps us to identify what the students already know and what they need and want to know which informs our planning. Research and recording tasks create opportunities for a wide range of investigation and exploration, and encourage teachers to facilitate the learning rather than to take a didactic approach. This more self-directed approach to learning may take some time for students to acquire; they haven't got a teacher looking over their shoulder the whole time, but the students know the outcome and they have the choice of how to achieve the outcome. A big part of the learning is working out what the best way of achieving the outcome is. Sometimes the best learning happens as a result of making a mistake during this process."

Tom explains about the learning structures that support the development of understanding: "Through journaling and blogging students reflect on the Big Idea and what it means to them (drawing on their subject learning but then taking it to a personal perspective). Once they've done all their subject learning for the unit, the concept can then be crystallised and distilled into something personal (through a media project called an exit point), enabling the students to show

their understanding of what the Big Idea means to them personally."

The impact this is having at The UCL Academy is significant says Tom. "The joy of the IMYC is that it can produce a very individualised learning response to a challenge that's set. It fits very well with our vision; where learners learn to think for themselves as wholly educated human beings. It's a research-led, engaging curriculum helping us to have ultimately happy, motivated, engaged students and enabling us to make links with the international community."

Supercharging students

At Dartmouth Academy in Dorset, Headteacher Nick Hindmarsh describes his year 7 students as 'supercharged'. "There's a noticeable difference in the year 7s, more than ever before," he says. Dave Strudwick, a curriculum consultant and Headteacher who supported Dartmouth Academy with the introduction of the IMYC says, "What we're already seeing is that there is so much depth to the IMYC."

Dartmouth Academy has invested extra time to support year 7 teachers during the new curriculum's implementation. This has involved leadership time, mentoring and team teaching, and the creation of larger learning spaces which provide new opportunities to learn in different ways. "What's important is that all this investment has been focused on improving the learning," says Dave. "All our conversations are about learning and about enabling and facilitating learning

rather than on teaching. This is helping us to focus on the learning needs of the children. The culture at Dartmouth is changing," he adds. "There's a real energy about what we're doing and about our success and the IMYC is an integral part of that. It's exciting because, as an all through school, the impact of all this is already filtering into primary with years 5 and 6 already taking some of the learning aspects of the IMYC in preparing the children for year 7. The curriculum from primary to secondary should be a logical next step for students, rather than a huge chasm and we believe the IMYC is helping us to achieve that."

The International Middle Years Curriculum is now being used by schools in 21 different countries including Qatar, Indonesia, Costa Rica, Kenya and the Netherlands as well as state and independent schools and academies in the UK. In June the IMYC in collaboration with Dartmouth Academy and E-ACT will be hosting a learning-focused conference for schools committed to supporting Key Stage 3 students. The conference, entitled 'Making meaning – making connections. How to inspire, challenge and engage students with their learning', will be held at Dartmouth Naval Academy on 5th June.

More information about this and the IMYC is available at www.greatlearning.com/imyc

**Anne Keeling works for
Fieldwork Education**



Teaching talking

Jean Gross, former government Communication Champion for children, shares some innovative practice in speaking and listening

The proposed new National Curriculum puts a big emphasis on spoken language. It should, the draft says, be developed alongside reading and writing as ‘integral aspects of the teaching of every subject’. A whole range of language functions are listed, including: giving well-structured descriptions and explanations; speculating; justifying thinking; negotiating; and building on the ideas of others. Ofsted, too, will be looking at how well teachers develop spoken communication skills and developing pupils’ ‘articulacy’ is one of the new professional standards that should be the basis for performance management for all teachers.

All this poses challenges for a school system in which the predominant mode of classroom talk is still quick-fire question-and-answer. The average length of a pupil’s contribution to a class discussion is just four words and opportunities for true collaborative discussion between pupils can be limited – as in the case of the teacher who said to her class, ‘I don’t mind if you cooperate, as long as I can’t hear you!’

But in my two years as government’s Communication Champion for children and young people I saw many schools with great practice in speaking and listening. It is this I want to share here.

A reason to talk

A key feature in the outstanding schools I saw was that children were given real reasons to use talk for a range of purposes other than just answering questions to which their teacher already knew the answer. As in a brilliant secondary science lesson, where pupils worked in small groups to make models of cells using salt dough, plastic bags, string and jelly. They had a list of words that named the structures in the cell that they had to use in their talk to each other, and then they were asked to explain what each part of their model was, using these words.

And as in a primary lesson where children had the opportunity to be history detectives, analysing a bag of evidence about World War II in groups, coming up with hypotheses then and presenting their ideas to the class.

There are many ways of making talk purposeful. Here are some of the best.

Giving an opinion

Everyone likes to give an opinion, and I saw some really good ways of enabling pupils to give theirs. In Sheffield, for example, schools encouraged children to use wooden ‘soap boxes’ and to come together for a Speakers’ Corner event in the centre of town.

An interesting organisation I came across was the Speakers’ Corner Trust, which helps young people from all backgrounds to express their views. The charity can provide school-based workshops for students and has developed a website for young people (www.youthamplified.com) with films and other resources focusing on confidence, projection, persuasion and negotiation.

Debating

Debating is not just an archaic activity beloved of more traditional Ministers. If we can give young people lots of practice in debating skills – particularly those who are socially disadvantaged – we immediately help them move confidently into the more formal language of which they may have little previous experience. Debating also seems to impact on achievement; research in American high schools showed that students who took part in debating activities were 25% more likely to complete their formal education than those who did not.

There are several organisations which support debating in schools. Debate Mate (www.debatemate.com), for example, works in primary and secondary schools and trains undergraduates from top universities to run weekly after-school debating clubs. The charity also provides bespoke workshops for teachers and training for students who want to ‘debate like a world champion’.

Using technology

Putting a microphone or any other recording device into children’s hands instantly provides a real purpose for talk –

whether this is preparing talking captions for a display, using Skype to communicate with another school, being a ‘roving reporter’, making a podcast or running a school radio station.

One of the best school radio stations I came across was at Lyndhurst primary in London, where Grove FM broadcasts to the whole school every Friday, with content generated by pupils. Last summer’s programming included ‘a brilliant chicken joke from Nursery’; a story written by a pupil after studying Greek myths; facts about the Olympics; the word in the playground about the royal wedding; anti-bullying raps written by the children; a broadcast by the School Council; an infomercial about computer hacking; and a special programme about transition made by Year 6 pupils who were preparing to go to secondary school and children who had left Lyndhurst in the last few years.

Role play

Role play areas are not just for Reception. I came across KS2 World War II Anderson shelters; a ‘hide’ made of draped Astroturf with slits for birdwatching (furnished with sleeping bags and spotters’ guides); the booking office of the Titanic with a telephone for children to take calls from passengers’ relatives; and a football manager’s office where a Year 6 class applied their maths learning to planning fixtures, working out transfer fees and making calls to bid for new players. Adults modelled for children ways in which they could use these areas and appropriate vocabulary and language structures.

Philosophy for Children

Finally, if you have not already got into Philosophy for Children (www.sapere.org.uk), I would encourage you to do so. Here, children are presented with an initial stimulus, which might be a picture, a piece of film, or a text. They then come up with questions, based on the stimulus. The class vote on the question they would most like to discuss as a group, and one question is chosen – a question like ‘Should you always tell the truth?’, or ‘Is Heaven the same for everybody?’

I heard a wonderful example of the power of philosophical discussion in a Sheffield school. The teacher had read a Year 6 class the story of a scorpion who asked a frog to carry him across

the river because he couldn’t swim. The frog said, ‘Yes, if you don’t sting me.’ Half way across the river, however, the scorpion stung the frog. The frog said ‘Why did you do that? Now we are both going to die.’ But the scorpion said, ‘I can’t help myself. It’s in my nature’. The children were asked to discuss the story, in small groups. One group drew a parallel with recent history – ‘It’s like 9/11... it’s like suicide bombers.’ Another likened the scorpion to Judas Iscariot. Groups presented their ideas to the rest of the class, then held a class discussion on the question ‘Are you responsible for your own actions?’

More than a reason

In my view, having a reason to talk is the foundation of teaching talking – but not, on its own, reason enough. Left to themselves, children may simply use talk contexts to recycle what they already know about language. To take their skills to the next level, they also need explicit teaching strategies that target vocabulary, listening skills, sentence structures and the skills of social interaction. But here, too, we are seeing a welcome increase in programmes and resources to support schools – my top five are listed below.

Helpful links

1. Talk Boost primary intervention programme www.ican.org.uk/talkboost
2. Secondary Language Link multimedia screening and screening and teaching package www.speechlink.info/secondary
3. Secondary Talk school development programme www.ican/secondarytalk
4. Talking Partners and Talk across the curriculum resources and training www.educationworks.org.uk
5. BT’s All Talk free communication course for secondary students www.bt.com/alltalk

Jean Gross CBE is the former government Communication Champion for children. There is more information about promoting language development, and school case studies, in her new book *Time to talk* (Routledge, 2013)

Removing the glass ceilings

It's hard work, but involving your students in the Career Academy programme can bring real results, says Miles Harris, Head of Business at Norton Hill School

The skyscrapers and bright lights of the banks at Canary Wharf can seem a world away from the lives of many of the teenagers growing up in some of the more deprived areas of London's East End.

Yet some of the country's leading companies knew that there was talent to be found right on their own doorstep. Companies such as Citi Group, HSBC and the Lloyds Banking Group wanted to overcome the social barriers separating these two different worlds to reveal and celebrate this talent.

In the context of this backdrop, Sir Win Bischoff, Chair of Citi Group Europe, led a group of twelve senior colleagues in multinational companies to meet leading educationalists. His intention was to introduce a new educational initiative for young people, inspired by the original work of Career Academies in the United States, but developed within the contexts of UK education and corporate responsibility.

In 2002, the first Career Academies were piloted in local schools and colleges to offer internships and a taste of city life to deserving students in the East End of London.

The success of this programme spurred further growth, so that today over 120 UK schools and colleges, predominantly in urban areas of social need, are involved in and benefit from the programme. Currently, 3000 employee volunteers, from over 1000 organisations, contribute time and skills to the Career Academy programme across the UK.

Career Academy students follow a rigorous two-year enrichment programme alongside a curriculum equivalent to at least three A levels, enabling students to progress to higher education or the world of work. Examples of Career Academy pathways include business, finance, information technology, marketing and communications, media, and engineering. Fundamentally, and regardless of subject theme, the Career Academy model is special in the way it mainstreams employer support in the young people's coursework, something few education-business link activities succeed in doing.

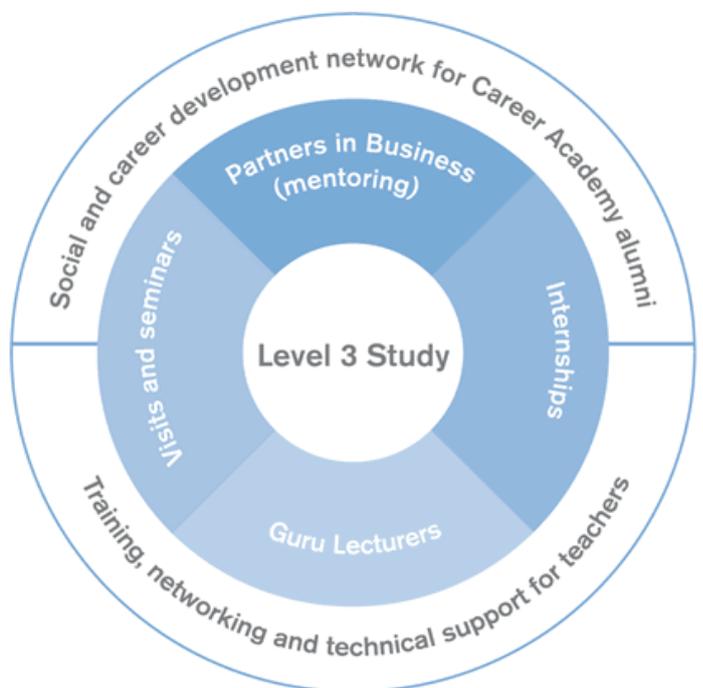
The programme involves putting business support at the

heart of young people's sixth form studies as part of a two-year course, breaking down barriers between academic and vocational study.

The benefits to students include the opportunity of developing their understanding of business and greater interaction with adult professionals which really can help develop their confidence as well as providing a crucial insight into future career paths.

The Career Academy model (represented below) ensures that there is a consistent approach to Career Academies across the UK. Yet, the model is deliberately flexible enough to enable schools and colleges to respond to the particular needs of their local community.

The Career Academy structure



Partners in Business

Partners in Business are employee volunteers who provide Career Academy students with one-to-one support with coursework and life skills. They act as a role model, critical friend and advisor.

Partners in Business meet their student about ten times over 18 months. Each meeting lasts approximately an hour and a half and is an opportunity to help the student: reflect on recent coursework; reinforce classroom learning with real life examples expanding their understanding of business culture and workplace etiquette; practise employability skills such as time management, problem solving, CV writing or interview techniques to widen their network of business contacts for the future.

This consistent contact with such a role model ensures the student is supported throughout the programme and is able to clearly see the transition between academic studies and the workplace.

Visits and seminars

What makes the Career Academy curriculum come alive for students, apart from excellent teaching, is the input they receive from a range of employer-led visits and seminars, related to course content.

These are arranged by individual Career Academies in partnership with local employers. Additional regional and national 'highpoint' events are also offered centrally by the Career Academies UK. Topic possibilities are virtually endless. Recent sessions have included corporate social responsibility, world trade and economics, an introduction to financial law, CV writing, and dressing for success.

Simple behind-the-scenes workplace tours can be equally beneficial. The experience of being welcomed into unfamiliar corporate environments is a massive confidence builder for young people, not to be underestimated.

Guru Lectures

Students will also receive Guru Lectures where business specialists volunteer to talk to a group of 16 to 19-year-old Career Academy students in their classroom. By sharing their business expertise and experiences, Guru Lecturers complement other teaching resources, enhance the knowledge of Career Academy teachers and help to ground the curriculum in the real, and current, world of work.

Internship

The 'jewel in the crown' of the Career Academy model is the internship, which takes place in the summer between the two years of the course. Employers provide a six-week paid work placement, based on a standard working hour week in a real operating environment and aiming to use the skills and knowledge the student has learned in school/college. This hands-on experience provides each student with the opportunity

to be 'work-ready' after completing their qualifications, a luxury very few students have when leaving full time education.

Michael Connor, a student who graduated from Norton Hill School's Business Career Academy, was mentored by a local accountant who supported him with his coursework as well as preparing him for his interview and subsequent internship with Bupa in the centre of Bristol. For six weeks, Michael travelled into the centre of Bristol and delighted the team at Bupa. In fact, Michael was offered the same job in each of his ensuing holidays throughout his studies. His success both academically and on the Career Academy programme saw Michael's efforts recognised by Career Academies UK and he received the Win Bischoff Award in 2010. He has now completed his second year at university and is the first member of his family to complete A levels and attend university. Michael is now a Career Academy ambassador, acting as a role model for new Career Academy students in local centres.

The programme really does have a positive effect on everyone who gets involved. Students notice changes in themselves. One student wrote, in her final evaluation of the programme: "The Career Academy has made me more serious about full-time employment. My punctuality has improved and I am more motivated and focused. I have a clear insight into my career path in the financial industry. Being so exposed to the working world has raised my confidence and self esteem. The programme has kept me interested and more motivated to continue with further studies. It's a lot of extra work; however, the rewards are definitely worthwhile in the long run."

At Norton Hill School, where I am Business Manager, the Career Academy model has provided a structured programme to our relationships with our business partners. In fact, the mentoring aspect puts the student at the heart of managing this relationship. This has provided many of our students with fantastic opportunities to enhance their understanding in business. For example, one of our students, mentored by the supply director at Mulberry, has been able to visit not only the production facilities in Somerset but also to attend meetings with board members at the marketing headquarters in London. For the students, experiences like this are quite unforgettable. By the end of the two years, the Career Academy model helps to ensure that the students are not just college-ready but they're also ready for the world of work."

Schools have also found that the model can strengthen relationships with all of their business partners. There are so many ways that supporters can get involved; they can tailor their support to be as little or as great as they wish. The key means of involvement include offering a presence on a local advisory board (a steering group for the local Career Academy), offering Guru Lectures, mentoring a student and even offering an internship. Furthermore, relationships with the school or college's alumni can be improved.

For example, Norton Hill School have had ex-students, who are now working for both local and multinational companies, offer

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“Employers recognise the development opportunities of getting their young staff involved in the initiative”



Guru Lectures, interview practice and become Business Mentors. Clearly, employers recognise the development opportunities of getting their young staff involved in the initiative.

Moreover, the businesses that work with schools can use the programme as a development tool for young staff who can mentor students as well as offer lectures, workshops and seminars. Young staff can even develop their interview skills as they help to recruit and select internship candidates. In addition, businesses can gain favourable publicity from community involvement, as well as supporting the development of an extensive pool of young staff who are ‘work-ready’. Involvement in such projects can also help to attract and retain the best staff.

Indeed, praise for the Career Academy model has come from the very highest echelons of management. As Hector Sants, former Managing Director of the Financial Services Authority, has written: “Active engagement with the UK Career Academy Foundation allows my organisation to support a community initiative in a really useful way, preparing the next generation for university and employment whilst developing my own staff team’s leadership and management skills. This is a genuine example of a ‘win-win’ programme.”

James McCreary, Chief Executive of Career Academies UK, explains: “Career Academies help young people to understand that there is no glass ceiling out there. They can do whatever they want to do. As long as they have the right attitude and the determination to succeed.”

Over 3000 employee volunteers from 900 organisations around the UK contribute time and skills to a Career Academy, as guest speakers in the classroom, one-to-one mentors, or by hosting workplace visits or internships. Some senior managers also join a local advisory board, steering and championing individual Career Academies within their own communities. Employer supporters range from SMEs to multinationals and cover both the private and public sector.

Over 2800 students have graduated from Career Academies to date. Over 2000 are currently on the programme. Nearly 85% of Career Academy students progress to university, often the first in their family, or into employment. And it’s not just the students who benefit. Employers tell us that engaging with a Career Academy enhances staff development and approaches to employee diversity – and helps bring their corporate and social responsibility policies to life.

Career Academies UK’s significant expertise lies in training schools and colleges to forge their own relationships with employers and manage their own Career Academy programme. The approach, akin to a franchise, requires schools and colleges to invest significantly more hard work and commitment than traditional education business partnerships. But the impact, on students, teachers and employers alike, is worth it.
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FASNA Spring Conference: a glimpse of what lies around the corner

The FASNA Spring Conference took place at the Grand Connaught Rooms near Holborn in central London. Over 150 delegates attended and, in addition to providing an opportunity to ask key questions to the key people in inspection and government policy, networking proved to be positive and valuable.

Sir Michael Wilshaw (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector) addressed the members with a well prepared and succinct speech that laid out the priorities that he is addressing. He began his talk by complimenting FASNA for being key element of educational leadership at a national level. He recognised the influence of FASNA and that FASNA is an important organisation representing academies, school leaders and governors. FASNA was keen to point out that their membership is not just convertors, but all schools.

He spoke of his missionary zeal to improve schools and to oppose

Questions from the floor



mediocrity and called on educators to act as the Boudicca and Bravehearts and to man the barricades to find ways to improve education. As embryonic thoughts he has suggested to the Secretary of State for Education to recognise 'Exceptional Leaders'. This new designation would be given out by The National College to Heads leading outstanding schools and who were working to support other schools – either

by leading federated schools or groups of schools. He went on to say more Heads are challenging their schools and pointed out great schools have both great leaders and great governance.

The common theme of narrowing the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils was mentioned and he stated that from September, 60 schools seeking support will be given the opportunity to use expert help for leadership or governance.

Sir Michael commented on the responsibilities of the Local Authorities (LAs) and pointed out that 70 LAs have not issued any warning notices to schools, despite the fact that many of them had failing schools. "Why should children be blighted by where they live?" was the question he asked.

FASNA members were congratulated for challenging mediocrity: academies are improving faster than other schools. It was also suggested to the elder members that, as long as they aren't soft and fuzzy round the edges, they might consider joining Ofsted as HMI Inspectors. The career path now is better than ever:



HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw, addresses Conference



‘Was it something I said?’ Dame Helen Hyde (centre)



Joe Gridley, of Free the Children, addresses Conference



Janet Aldridge, Chief Operations Manager, FASNA



Schools Minister Rt Hon David Laws

there are no longer lay inspectors; recent teaching experience is essential; and as some Heads now move on at 60 they have another 10 years to give. This raised some smiles amongst the audience!

Questions from the floor were testing and centred on the consistency of inspectors, funding, social mobility and EAL, all of which Sir Michael took on board. When asked if data on the success of Academy Chains would be produced to help schools and Governors decide which chain to join he agreed this would be helpful. He demonstrated a willingness to review his reforms if need be and appeared to accept that, as with anything new, there may be some bits which were not yet quite right. An example was the new Data Dashboard, and he asked schools to write in if there were specific concerns.

There was an inspiring presentation highlighting the charity Free the Children. This is an international charity and educational partner, working both domestically and internationally to empower and enable young people to be agents of change. We Day, which is both a celebration and reward for young participants, was launched and took place in Vancouver last year. It was announced that the first UK We Day would take place on 7th March 2014 at Wembley Stadium. Registration for schools would open on 22nd April. www.freethechildren.com

Janet Aldridge, the FASNA Chief Operations Manager, opened the members meeting by announcing that the summer conference will be on 27th June at the British Library and that Michael Gove had confirmed his attendance.

Peter Beaven, a FASNA Executive Board Member and Editor of this magazine, advised the delegates that FASNA’s bid for Teacher Induction was still with the Department for consideration. Peter also advised on the current Department consultations: the review of funding 2012-13, the accountability framework for secondary schools, and the review of the National Curriculum.

Tom Clark followed, firstly advising on the new articles of association and then most vociferously on the inaccuracies of the Academies Commission Report. He proclaimed the report a “disgrace”, that it made sweeping statements based on no evidence, its attitude toward primaries was patronising. Press coverage added to the confusion.

Dame Helen Hyde, FASNA President, spoke about School Forums and how they are dysfunctional. Too often Local Authorities are manipulating them to their own ends and FASNA continues to be concerned. It is expected that the Admissions code of practice will remain as it is at least until next government. Although the LAs are trying to take control of Admissions, it is understood Gove is preparing to reject their advances.

David Laws, the Liberal Democrat Minister for Schools, began his talk



Tom Clark leads the members’ meeting



Roger Inman of Stone King gives advice to members

close the gap and demonstrate effective use of the Pupil Premium. If they cannot do so, they face intervention.

John Carr, Deputy Director at the Quality and Priorities Division of the Teaching Agency, replaced Charlie Taylor who was unable to attend. The merger of the Teaching Agency and National College was in progress but the name of the institution was not available in time for the conference. The new agency is there to address under performance in the system. Built on the best of the TA and NC it is there to support a school-led system, and will be up and running by 1st September 2013.

The agency will seek to reform initial teacher training (ITT). Teaching schools will partner with universities and will lead ITT, not central government, although the New Skills test will continue to be centrally controlled. Accreditation will be needed for ITT providers.

There will be two schemes. Firstly, School Direct, who will select trainees and choose a provider to award QTS with the expectation to employ the trainee.

by congratulating Dame Helen on her inclusion in the New Years' honours list. He followed by presenting his views on Education. He said that there needed to be ambition, autonomy and accountability.

His ambition is to see higher standards. He asked the simple questions – Is it right that our floor standards allow 40% of primary school pupils to be below the accepted level of competency in English and maths? Is it right that we accept that 40% of 16-year-olds don't get five good GCSEs (when many would say that a grade C in itself is not good enough)? Laws recognised that the situation is much improved over the last 20 years but argued it was still not good enough for the 21st century. The way to do this, he said, is to close the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged.

He argued that there needs to be autonomy for schools to achieve great things, and admitted that, while there is a temptation for government to meddle, schools are the experts and should be given not just freedom from LA interference, but the freedom to actually *do* things.

Finally he focused on accountability. He said the best schools have the greatest sense of accountability and that governors

exercise their responsibilities well. He admitted that if the accountability system is wrong it drives the wrong behaviour and needs to be carefully constructed. Schools will have to account for how they



Tom Clark and John Carr, Deputy Director of Training Agency



*John Carr
addresses the Conference*



A full house!

Secondly, School Direct (salaried) – high quality graduates with some years’ experience. The agency is trying to get funding direct to the schools.

The agency is expecting a surge as schools have been through the cycle. There are now 300 bodies taking School Direct and this year there will be far more: over 9000 places from 850 groups of schools linked in with 150 ITT providers. 50,000 applicants are

expected. Initial start up funding is not available and schools will have to invest in the scheme themselves and will not retrieve it if they do not achieve results. Being in a cluster will of course spread the risk.

Roger Inman, partner at Stone King, concluded the presentations with an interesting legal update. He spoke about the composition of boards for academies and free schools, the ability for them to be

able to make changes to their articles and also board structure.

An example of whistle-blowing, employment law and breach of contract was given to help Heads and he reminded members that with the new funding procedures for Special Needs, it is important for Heads to be aware in order to respond to questions from parents.

It was a day with glimpses of what lies around the corner. There were promises of a clear vision, but also of misguided perceptions. The clear message from FASNA: improvement is being driven by the Heads of autonomous schools.

**Jonathan Evans is
Managing Director of the
publishers of *Academy***



Delegates in discussion



*Jonathan Evans of John Catt Educational
with Academy editor Peter Beaven*

*Photos courtesy of Esther Rose Photography:
erphotography@hotmail.co.uk*

National Citizen Service: it all starts at ‘yes!’

Martin Sainsbury, from the Cabinet Office, encourages schools to get involved

February half-term 2013 saw the first Year 11 and Year 12 students take part in this year’s National Citizen Service (NCS) programme. Participants enjoyed outdoor adventures, took on fresh challenges, made new friends and developed skills for work and life.

Now in its third year, in 2013 the flagship youth programme is bringing together up to 50,000 16 and 17 year-olds of all abilities and backgrounds from across England. NCS supports their transition into adulthood, giving a unique opportunity to make friends with people they would not normally meet, develop new skills and attitudes to boost their employability, and work in teams to make a real difference in their communities.

With Ofsted’s new Framework for School Inspection focusing on how schools and colleges support achievement, behaviour and social and moral development for the full range of pupils, helping your Year 11 and 12 students to take part in NCS can bring real benefits to your educational institution.

NCS takes place over several weeks, during holidays and at weekends, providing a productive use of students’ free time. Participants begin with a week away from home at an outdoor centre, where they form teams with new friends and build

self-confidence by facing new challenging experiences such as hiking or white-water rafting. Each team then returns to its local community for another residential focused on life skills, including work with charities, businesses and social leaders to learn more about their area. This inspires young people to identify an important local issue and design and deliver a social action project to support it, again building on their skill sets.

NCS is a great addition to young people’s CVs, providing an opportunity to work with employers and demonstrate qualities such as leadership, teamwork and independence. A recent NCS survey found that employers value extracurricular activities, and particularly like young people who are team players, are confident, can mix with people from different backgrounds, have interests outside of school and have volunteered for community projects.

As Clare McDougall, Head of Community and Education at RWE npower says, “I’m confident that every single graduate of the programme stands head and shoulders above many of their contemporaries because of their NCS



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experience. npower values the skills learnt during NCS and looks for that when recruiting staff.”

National Citizen Service provides particularly valuable support to university applications, and features in UCAS guidance as an achievement admissions staff like in personal statements. NCS increases aspirations for further education, with independent evaluation by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) finding 85% of participants increased awareness of education and employment opportunities and more young people intended to continue studying after NCS.

With each participant volunteering 30 hours of social action in their community, NCS provides an ideal practical follow-on to Key Stage 4 PSHEE and citizenship lessons, giving your students the opportunity to apply and develop what they have learned in the classroom. And for many NCS is just the start, inspiring them to go on to play a more active role in their community.

NCS is delivered independently of your school or college, by carefully selected charities, college consortia and voluntary, community, social enterprise and private sector partnerships. They work with fully trained and CRB-checked staff from over 100 youth and community organisations all over the country, with years of experience delivering programmes for young people.

The programme also comes at no cost to your organisation – and with government backing, participants pay a maximum of £50 towards the costs. Bursaries are available to support disadvantaged young people, ensuring NCS is accessible to all. In 2011, nearly a quarter of participants were eligible for free school meals. This strong social mix can improve cohesion in your school, with independent evaluators NatCen finding 85% of participants felt more positive towards people from different backgrounds after NCS.

NatCen’s evaluation confirmed a wide range of NCS benefits:

- 95% of participants developed skills for work and study
- 85% learnt something new about themselves
- 90% increased their understanding of people different to them
- 9 out of 10 participants would recommend NCS to others

NatCen also found NCS improves behaviour, with more participants wanting to ‘stay out of trouble’. Teachers have agreed that NCS’s structured programme of activities in

students’ free time has prevented them from taking part in anti-social behaviour.

Tens of thousands of teenagers have already benefitted from NCS – like Saad from Harrow who “was just a guy on the streets, fighting, getting kicked out of schools” and who “learnt there is so much in this world that you can do”, and Melissa from Lincoln who through NCS was able to develop “vital skills” for the vocational university course she has been offered a place on. These experiences were shared by over 26,000 young people across England last year. By visiting www.NCSyes.co.uk/teachers, you can make sure your students are among thousands more enjoying the benefits in 2013.

National Citizen Service is available to Year 11 and Year 12 students in all schools and colleges across England. Young people can sign-up now at www.NCSyes.co.uk. For more information, read the NCS leaflet at www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-citizen-service-leaflet or email ncs-teachers@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk.

The academy Head’s view – Phil Ryland, Priory City of Lincoln Academy

The Priory City of Lincoln Academy first became involved with National Citizen Service when we were approached by the Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership (EBP) asking permission to speak to our Year 11 students. They were offering an opportunity for the students to take part in NCS following the completion of their GCSE studies. As a Head, my first concern was that students might be distracted from their studies at a vital point in their education. However, on speaking to a member of the EBP team and gaining further detail on the potential benefits to young people, I was reassured and the assembly went ahead.

Looking back I can confidently say that the students who took part in NCS were not distracted from their studies and that the differences I have seen in young people as they came back to sixth form are clear evidence of the positive experience they had. The students were able to talk in detail about the benefits of taking part.

Ashley Diack, a Year 12 student at The Priory City of Lincoln Academy said: “I didn’t want to go at first, but was encouraged by my parents to take part. I’m so glad that I did, I don’t usually like meeting new people and was nervous at first, but I have made many new friends who I wouldn’t have met and am much more confident about meeting new people. I would recommend NCS to other young people, especially those who wouldn’t normally do things like this. NCS allows you to be who you want to be. NCS has encouraged me to work harder once I returned to school and it helped me to get a part-time job, as taking part in NCS was recognised as being good evidence of a positive attitude to work and the community.”

I have been so impressed with what I have seen and heard from young people that I have taken a secondment to work with the EBP on extending the NCS programme to reach even more young people.

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Inspiring active citizenship in the classroom

Jessica Bentley-Jacobs, UK Director of Free The Children, outlines the work of the charity and how schools and students can become involved in work that has both local and global impact

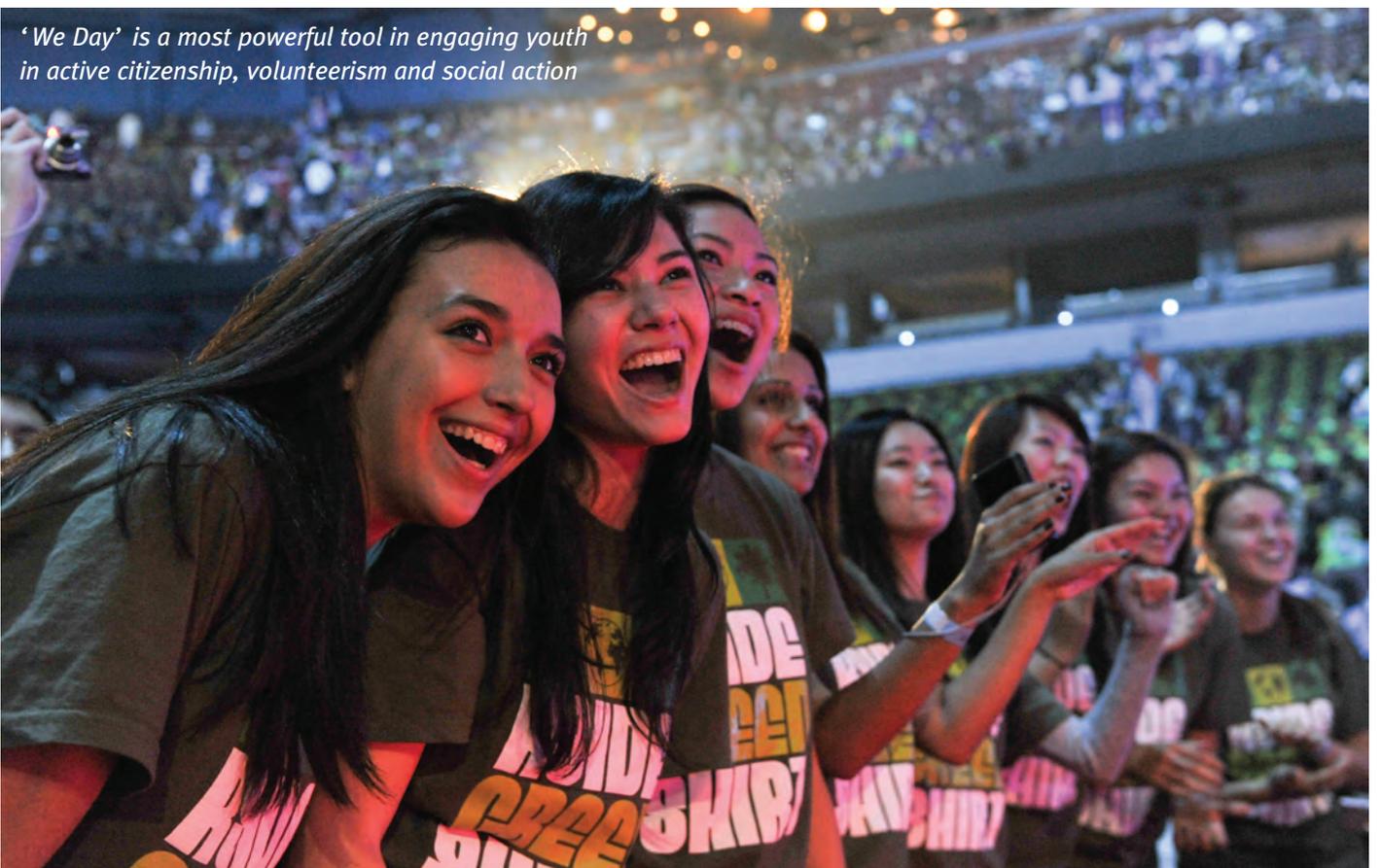
Free The Children is an international charity and educational partner with more than 1.7 million young people involved in innovative education and development programmes. Founded in Canada by international activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children believes in a world where young people are free

to achieve their fullest potential. Our domestic programmes educate, engage and empower hundreds of thousands of youth in the UK, North America and around the world to become engaged global citizens.

As a result of participating in our programmes, 95% of students believe they can make a difference in the world and

82% of young people have demonstrated increased leadership amongst their peers. Our international projects, through our holistic and sustainable 'Adopt a Village' development model, have built more than 650 schools and school rooms and provided clean water and sanitation, health care and food security to one million

'We Day' is a most powerful tool in engaging youth in active citizenship, volunteerism and social action





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people around the world, freeing children and their families from the cycle of poverty.

Free The Children began working in the United Kingdom in 2010 to deliver free active citizenship and leadership programmes for young people. Through our educational programming, we have worked with more than 175 primary and secondary schools, academies and other notable youth organisations, providing us with the opportunity to work with more than 40,000 young people across the UK. We are always striving to grow our network of engaged youth and schools.

Telling the unique and inspirational story of Free The Children's beginnings to young people all over the world helps us grow this network. In April 1995, at the age of just 12, Craig Kielburger gathered together a group of his school friends with the goal of ending child labour. They wanted to raise awareness of children's rights and gain a better understanding of the issues brought to Craig's attention by an article he read in his local paper. The article's headline read: 'Battled Child Labour, Boy, 12, Murdered'. Craig was struck by the raw but courageous story of a boy his age named Iqbal Masih, who was born in Pakistan and sold into slavery at the age of four for roughly £10. Six years of his short life were spent chained to a carpet-weaving loom. Following his release from the factory by child rights activists, Iqbal captured the world's attention by speaking out against child labour. Eventually, Iqbal's wide media coverage caught the attention of those who wished to silence him. At the age of 12, Iqbal lost his life defending the rights of children.

Craig concluded from Iqbal's story that the bravest voice can live in the smallest body, and, with the help of his friends, vowed to fight the injustices that had claimed Iqbal's life. Today, Free The Children aims not only to free children from poverty, neglect and exploitation, but also to free youth domestically from the notion that they are powerless to make a positive difference in the world.

So how can your school get involved?

We achieve our aims by engaging



schools across the UK in our free active citizenship programming. Our free motivational speaking tour and workshop, sponsored by Virgin Atlantic Airways, encourages young people to think about global issues and to make a difference to a cause they feel passionately about. Just as Craig started Free The Children at the age of 12, we believe that anyone can achieve great things, regardless of their age. That is why we visit schools to tell Craig's story, encourage students to believe in themselves as young leaders, and to inspire them to become active citizens. You can arrange for a Free The Children visit to your school by contacting Jessica Bentley-Jacobs, Director of Free The Children UK, on 020 7921 4305 or on Jessica@freethechildren.com.

In addition to our school visits, we also celebrate the power of young people to make a difference in the world through an initiative we call 'We Day.' We Day is a stadium-sized educational event – there are now nine across Canada each year, and two set for the US. It's our most powerful tool in engaging youth in active citizenship, volunteerism and social action. It brings young people together to defy apathy and lead global change in any cause they choose to embrace. We Day is also free to attend: schools earn their tickets through taking one local and one global action to make the

world a better place.

Through each We Day, Free The Children provides a platform for passionate and inspiring speakers to be heard on a diverse range of issues. Craig and Marc Kielburger, Free The Children's co-founders, share the stage with Nobel Peace laureates, heads of state, celebrities, rock bands, actors and pop icons to inspire a generation to take action. Past We Days have hosted speakers and performers such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, former US Vice President Al Gore, Mikhail Gorbachev, Sir Richard Branson and Holly Branson, Nelly Furtado and Justin Bieber. The first UK We Day will have similar globally recognised speakers and performers that will educate young people about a variety of different issues.

Free The Children is excited to bring the inaugural We Day UK to Wembley Arena in March 2014. Up to 10,000 young people in Year 6 and above from all over the UK will have the chance to attend the event, and tickets will be allocated to registered schools on a first-come first-served basis. Your schools can sign up to register for tickets to We Day this September by visiting www.freethechildren.com, and be part of this global initiative. Your school can sign up to register for tickets to We Day on

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22th April 2013. Please contact Free The Children directly to receive information on how to register and be part of this global initiative.

What is unique about We Day is that it is not just a one-day event; rather, it marks the start of We Act, a free year-long school citizenship programme and support system for youth and schools. We Act allows young people to turn their inspiration into tangible results by engaging in local and global awareness-raising and fundraising actions. Free The Children actively supports schools through We Act by providing teachers and youth with campaign kits so that they can take action. Each of our campaign kits comes with lesson plans, fundraising suggestions, posters, and teacher how-to guides to help make it as easy as possible to take action.

At Free The Children, we recognise that one of the benefits of being an autonomous school is increased freedom over the curriculum. That's why we often work with schools on an individual basis to embed global citizenship into the curriculum in a way that suits them. Every one of our lesson plans can be adapted to suit each school's needs, with the help of dedicated staff in the UK office. We also offer other opportunities for schools to enrich their curriculum, such as overseas volunteer travel placements for school groups, and the chance for students to attend our annual Youth Summit, which brings together young people from all over the UK for a free day of interactive workshops and speeches based on social action and leadership.

A great example of embedding global citizenship into the curriculum is our recent work with a free school based in the South West. We worked with a Year 8 teacher to construct a seven-week programme of citizenship study based on our lesson plans and the school's curriculum. The programme was delivered to 100 Year 8 students, and focused on global citizenship, poverty, hunger, clean water and the environment. During these seven weeks, we also arranged a

speaking tour visit to the school from our motivational speakers, designed to tie in with those lessons. During the visit, pupils heard the story of Free The Children and the inspirational personal stories of our speakers, and took part in workshop modules on global inequality, learning to believe in themselves as leaders, and developing action plans to raise money for education in India. Since the visit and the lessons, the students have worked together to organise a Winter Fair fundraiser at school, with the help of Free The Children UK office staff. What's more, several students have used their experience to apply for our scholarship trip to India in summer 2013, demonstrating how the programme has engaged and inspired young people at this school.

Independent studies by Mission Measurement, an independent strategy-consulting firm that helps clients to create value through social change, have shown that We Day and We Act result in tangible behaviour change and attitude shifts. The findings reveal that 96% of students who participate in our programmes intend either to lead or to play an active role in social action projects at their school. The young people recognise that they can play a part in making the world a better place. And it isn't just about creating more socially-active citizens. Participation in our programming boosts students' self confidence, making them more likely to get actively involved in their school environment.

Students are not the sole beneficiaries of Free The Children programming. Following We Day and We Act, 81% of teachers now feel better equipped to teach their students about social justice issues, and 79% feel a renewed sense of purpose as a teacher. The results highlight that involvement with Free The Children helps reduce, rather than increase, teachers' workloads. Our aim is to make teachers' jobs easier, by providing them with ready-made resources to help complement existing Citizenship or PSHE programmes, or explore social action across other subjects.

As such, the lesson plans on offer from Free The Children are designed for all Key Stages across a variety of subjects. Each lesson plan contains a breakdown of suggested activities, timings, and worksheets for photocopying.

And the support doesn't stop there. Free The Children's unique charity model means that both teachers and students are supported year-round by a dedicated team of Youth Programming Coordinators based in our UK office. Our young and dynamic staff provides year-round support for programming implementation at schools, and for students wishing to undertake fundraising activities with us. Youth Programming Coordinators are able to offer fundraising advice and support (in person, via email or over the telephone) and follow-up speeches and workshops.

Given the success of our work in the UK since we started here in 2010, Free The Children is now looking to engage more schools in our programming. We can offer free schools and academies speeches and workshops, trip opportunities, lesson plans and classroom activities. If you are interested in getting your school involved in any of our programming, please get in touch. You can contact Jessica Bentley-Jacobs, Director of Free The Children UK, on 020 7921 4305, or on Jessica@freethechildren.com to find out more. We will happily work with you to devise a programme that best suits your school and allows you to take advantage of all the exciting opportunities we have on offer.

Free The Children aims to help young people all over the world achieve their fullest potential. We look forward to working with you, as teachers at the forefront of the British education system, to help make this happen.

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Free The Children in
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Alternative provision: a revolution for vulnerable pupils



Seamus Oates, Executive Headteacher of Tri-Borough Alternative Provision, and Tom Brooke, of Stone King solicitors, look at the opportunities arising from recent reforms in alternative provision

There is a quiet revolution underway in alternative provision, and it looks set to become a lot louder. Kick-started by Charlie Taylor's report *Improving Alternative Provision (AP)* in March 2012, radical change is here and happening now. Widespread reforms have already come into effect and the pupil referral unit (PRU) as we know will soon be a thing of the past.

High profile alternative provision academies, such as the Everton Free School and the Tri-Borough Alternative Provision (TBAP) project in West London, are receiving national media attention and placing what would otherwise be forgotten pupils at the heart of a new agenda which is set to revitalise alternative provision.

Taylor's report focuses on provision for what Michael Gove has called an "educational underclass", some 37,000 pupils outside the mainstream education world who fail to achieve academically and grow up without the skills to become successful adults and members of society. The report acknowledges "truly outstanding practice" but is strongly critical of "a flawed system that fails to provide suitable education and proper accountability for some of the most vulnerable children in the country". Within days of the report being published, Gove stated in an open response to Charlie Taylor: "On behalf of the Government, I accept all your recommendations."

Twelve months on, new regulations have come into force, statutory guidance has been published and new funding arrangements are in place. These reforms look to completely redraw the map, to make a different way of working not a choice, but an inevitability.

LA influence on PRUs is to be drastically reduced. PRUs will have delegated budgets, bringing financial autonomy and responsibility for the recruitment and management of staff. Management committees will have fewer LEA members and more drawn from the local community, particularly schools.



PRUs will have a greater say at Schools Forum. Beyond the basic £8000 per-place funding, top ups will be negotiated by the provider with the commissioning body, increasingly likely to be a local school.

Schools have greater responsibility for the regular review of off-site placements, whether in PRUs or other alternative provision, and for involving parents where possible, and Ofsted will look at a school's monitoring of pupils in alternative provision. The exclusions trial, whereby schools will retain responsibility for the education and outcomes for permanently excluded pupils, is to run until 2014 but adoption of its basic principles are widely anticipated including provision for schools to pool resources to set up their own AP academy or AP free school, or to put PRU/AP services out to tender.

There will be competition between providers with AP free schools opening across the country and commissioning schools

The Tri-Borough Alternative Provision (TBAP) project in West London is receiving national media attention



and LAs will be able to seek places both inside and outside the area of their LA.

Clearly the DfE expects these changes to create an environment in which PRUs, schools and LAs develop new and effective ways of working, often by creating AP academies or AP free schools and, where a stick is needed, the Secretary of State has a broad range of intervention powers, new to PRUs. Failing PRUs, in special measures or requiring significant improvement, can be closed or taken over by successful AP providers and independent executive boards can be appointed to takeover underperforming PRUs, often to oversee conversion to academy status. LAs can't establish a PRU without first seeking proposals from providers of an AP academy or an AP free school.

These reforms will provide an environment in which the PRUs themselves will reconstitute and rethink their relationship with each other, with local schools and with LAs. Taylor's report strongly favours the free school/academy route, indeed of the eight recommendations relating directly to PRUs, six advocate this route. Taylor states:

"Many PRUs have expressed an interest in operating independently from the LA as academies. They would have greater freedom to develop wider services to provide for schools and children, both locally and further afield. If they failed to

provide a high-quality service suited to their pupils needs, then commissioners would be able to choose other providers."

Many management committees and their senior management teams will be considering how to respond to these reforms but some have already embraced change and seized the opportunities on offer. In West London, the three boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, supported by Stone King LLP, have created a consortium for AP provision known as TBAP, the first of its kind, with the stated aim of achieving staggering progress for disaffected learners in 21st century learning environments across the whole TBAP area, under the leadership of Seamus Oates, Executive Headteacher for TBAP provision. The project utilises three key strands to meet its goal of strong learner achievement: rigorous self-evaluation, external challenge and the reconstitution of all four TBAP pupil referral units as alternative provision academies.

All staff met at the beginning of the project to agree a shared vision and values for TBAP. Local staff teams then used an online school management system called Bluewave Swift across TBAP to complete ongoing whole school self-evaluation allowing a rigorous review of progress against school development plan priorities.

TBAP is a member of Challenge Partnership, which has

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The AP revolution has arrived and provision for thousands of often overlooked children and young people is being revitalised



carried out reviews of the three PRUs: the Bridge Academy, the Latimer Education Centre and Beachcroft school. The outcomes for the Bridge Academy confirm an Ofsted judgement of “outstanding” and a move from “good” to “outstanding” teaching with the report praising exceptionally strong management systems and the use of ICT, including SIMS and Bluewave Swift to ensure that all aspects link strongly together. The report for the Latimer Education Centre notes that students’ work demonstrates good progress in English, maths and science. Similar positive outcomes are expected from the review of Beachcroft School conducted in March.

With the full support of the three boroughs involved, TBAP is well on the way to reconstituting the alternative provision offer as the TBAP Multi Academy Trust. The three founder members of the MAT are the aforementioned Charlie Taylor, Alexia Featherstone, JP and Paul Dix, School Behaviour Consultant. The process begun in March 2012 when the management committee of Bridge Academy resolved to apply to the Secretary of State for conversion to academy status. An academy order was granted in July and on 1st April the Bridge Academy converted to academy status. The Primary PRU (The Courtyard) is expected to convert alongside the Bridge Academy. Over the coming

year the TBAP trust will lead the other PRUs through their own conversions within the TBAP Multi-Academy Trust.

The AP revolution has arrived and provision for thousands of often overlooked children and young people is being revitalised. A few are already leading the way with some really exciting and innovative developments, new ideas will be create new partnerships and new structures will be forged. Most importantly a new sense of pride and autonomy in AP will inspire and empower learners.

Seamus Oates is the Executive Headteacher of TBAP (Tri-borough Alternative Provision), a joint project involving PRUs in Hammersmith and Fulham Council, Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Tom Brooke is a consultant solicitor with education solicitors Stone King LLP who are supporting and advising the TBAP schools

How was it for you?

Almost two years since conversion, Dr Dianne Marshall, Principal at Violet Way Academy in Staffordshire, reflects on the journey to date

Our decision to convert to an academy was primarily because our own priorities and needs did not marry with those of the Local Authority. Over many years our confidence had grown as we worked increasingly with our own agenda, focused on innovation and ensuring the very best for our children. Our conversion date was June 2011. By this time we were running a very successful independent nursery and employed all our staff directly as we became increasingly disillusioned with contract services. Ensuring best value for money was a well embedded practice and there was a growing awareness among teachers that we had the necessary expertise to develop a highly appropriate curriculum for the children at Violet Way.

Recent discussions with staff at the school clearly show that initially there were feelings of vulnerability, nervousness and some uncertainty. Pay and conditions of service were the greatest concerns. Would the governors expect them to work on Saturdays? Would their pension entitlement remain as it was? Would working within an academy be detrimental to their job prospects? These concerns were shared with union representatives and governors at an initial meeting very early in the process of conversion. I am pleased to report that last week my deputy gained a Headship, thus building confidence among ambitious staff. Any work out of school hours has resulted in additional remuneration being paid. Indeed, some schools have already used their freedoms to set higher pay to recruit top quality teachers.

Administrative staff at the school initially felt that they had more work following conversion, but latterly have referred to it as 'different work'. They also talk about feeling 'more in control' and 'more commercially aware'. The difference is that we are now customers and recognise that the marketplace for both services and resources is huge. The freedom to access the best buy is appreciated. There is an increased confidence with being in the driving seat and making autonomous decisions. We insist on high quality service and value for money. Dealing with solicitors and accountants has made our admin team feel and behave in a more 'professional' way. They talk about having received 'credible support', which in turn has increased their personal feelings of worth.

Six years ago we took control of our own catering, probably the most effective of all our service transformations. All our food is of a high quality, locally-sourced. Fresh fruit and vegetables are served every day. Children eat from proper crockery and are treated like customers. We believe we have a moral duty to serve healthy meals. Children played a significant role in the design of our menus and everything is made from raw ingredients on site. In order to be able to afford to do this without increasing costs to parents, it was necessary to increase our own entrepreneurial skills. We needed to generate additional income. Consequently, our catering staff now bakes and sells celebration cakes and has a weekly cake stall for parents. The school is let at the weekends and holidays for birthday parties and, more recently, we have established 'forest school birthday parties' in our woodland. We also prepare meals for nursery children at the college in Burton on Trent and occasionally buffets for meetings and conferences. This 'win-win' approach has meant that staff have increased hours of work which is welcomed in these difficult times. The catering team report that they 'enjoy the free reign and trying new things out'.

The necessary increased accountability which accompanies conversion to academy status includes visits from auditors acting on behalf of the DfE. We found the experiences to be much more supportive than anticipated. Auditors had realistic expectations when we were new to the processes and were helpful in indicating the best way forward. As the school's budget is received on a monthly basis, it is managed much as a personal account might be. This means that we now order consumable items on a termly basis. Staff feel less pressurised at the end of the academic year. Ordering is more accurately based on need and storage is less of an issue. The vast majority of staff have noticed that there has been an increase in resourcing and sincerely believe that this has impacted on standards. Accounts established with organisations such as Ikea, Amazon and Argos also mean that we have fewer individual receipts from staff. Auditors appreciate the transparency this brings to accounting.

The scrutiny expected of governors in an academised system is welcomed. It is highly appropriate that the school's work, free from local and central government control, is transparent



“Residential visits, seaside experiences and whole weeks in the woodland feature in our ongoing curriculum development”

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and rigorously challenged. The make-up of the governing body remains largely unchanged, but we are able to define its numbers in a more flexible way. For example, the various groups of governors may be defined as 'a minimum of'. Governors have been supportive of our innovative curriculum, extended day and substantial extracurricular activities.

It is generally acknowledged within the school that we do know our community very well and are therefore best suited to respond to local needs and pressures. A previous frustration, when in LA control, was the 'one-size-fits-all' messages received from them. As an example, some Early Years' organisational issues preferred and advocated by the LA were not upheld by Ofsted during our visit in 2012. The inspectors appreciated the knowledge and understanding we had of our setting, including the response we are able to make to children who are more and less able academically. Our mixed catchment area and high expectations of parents and staff mean that we can and do respond readily to children who are ready to access the more formal aspects of the curriculum. This ensures continued engagement and enthusiasm at a highly appropriate level.

Teachers thoroughly understand and openly welcome the freedoms we have as an academy. Staff confidence has grown and teachers are much more flexible about changing their planning at short notice. One teacher recently described feeling that 'the school has embraced a creative, risk-taking and child-centred ethos'. Curriculum development has been, and continues to be, a gradual enrichment of opportunities. Time for reflection and consolidation are built into our self-evaluation processes. We have been fortunate in laying claim to an area of woodland adjacent to the school, at the time of the title deeds being passed to the governing body in trust. The land is approximately two acres and was previously an area of considerable neglect. The land is now developed and maintained to provide an outstanding area of woodland. Forest school philosophy and practice is becoming increasingly embedded in the life of the school. Outdoor learning, taking risks and being experimental are all recognised as priorities for development for us over the coming years.

One teacher commented last week that she has been encouraged to 'think much more independently and outside of the box' over the past two years. Innovation at the school stems from the vision, values and ethos it holds dear. We believe that all children can excel at something. It is for us to discover, encourage and facilitate experiences in order that they want to come to school each day. The curriculum is rich, varied and exciting. 'Wow' experiences are commonplace. Most recently, we have been able to turn a classroom into a purposely-designed art room. Staffordshire is renowned for being the 'creative county'. Children are learning to make pots, plaques and pictures out of clay. They have a good understanding about how a kiln works and enjoy woodwork, sewing, glass mosaics, cooking, weaving, swimming and drama on a regular basis. In Year 2 children perform at a theatre during the summer term. It is so rewarding

to see so many children perform on a stage with confidence. Confidence and 'can do' attitudes pervade the school. Residential visits, seaside experiences and whole weeks in the woodland feature in our ongoing curriculum development.

The main aim of academies is to raise standards. Autonomy and independence are underpinned by strong improvement strategies. Like many schools we have issues surrounding boys' literacy. The reviews and reflections we engage in regarding our curriculum include small-scale research projects. At the time of writing, we are collating and annotating samples of literacy work completed by boys, particularly following forest school experiences and first-hand, outdoor and practical sessions. We are beginning with the premise that practical experiences improve the recall and understanding for boys, which hopefully will impact on both instructional and creative contexts for writing. Teacher development is linked to a culture of classroom observation, peer support and research.

As a school we are advocates of specialist teaching. To date, this has included: ICT, art, music, swimming, French, cookery and forest school work. CPD days held in recent weeks have included willow-weaving, pottery and mosaics. Sessions were relaxed, activities were purposeful and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Everyone learned something new and fully appreciate how that feels for children. New initiatives in education are evaluated and only adopted if relevant. The freedom to develop the curriculum at our local level and in response to community needs is being appreciated. It certainly was not a case of throwing out 'baby with the bath water'. Curricular developments are gradual and on reflection have been so for many years. It is not a new thing that the school has been somewhat 'maverick' in its approach to the content of the curriculum. Conversion was a natural 'next step' in a school which has always been somewhat unorthodox and independent in its thinking. This was expanded upon by one teacher who said, "As a school we've always weighed up the pros and cons of new initiatives, made our own judgements and then dared to go our own way. The increased freedoms have allowed us even more control over curriculum design." Standards are high at the school, and we fully expect them to continue to rise.

The academy programme has invigorated an education system which desperately needed energy, innovation and inspiration. The future growth will be in successful academies learning from and supporting other schools, making significant contributions to the wider debate about school improvement. As a 'Primary Academy Associate' school we are more than happy to discuss or work with any school interested in any matter raised in this article, or any school considering conversion to academy status. Asked about any regrets at a talk given to governors recently, we can honestly say 'none whatsoever'.

Dr Dianne Marshall can be contacted at
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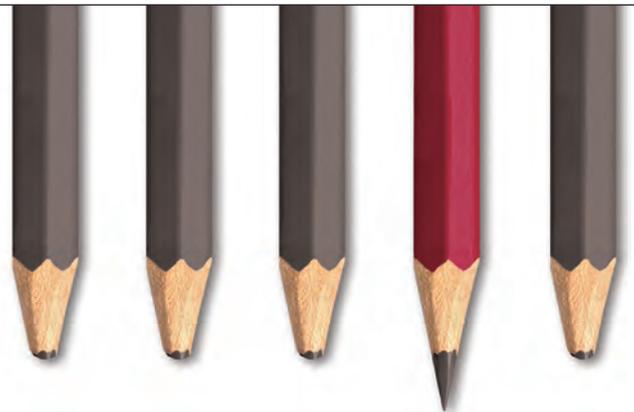
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“Around the school there seems to be a different atmosphere”

A changing culture

Jayne Harrison, Business Manager, says ‘satisfactory’ is no longer acceptable at Violet Way

From *The Average Child*

I don't cause teachers trouble
 My grades have been OK
 I listen to my classes
 And I'm in school every day
 My parents think I'm average
 My teachers think so too
 I wish I didn't know that
 Cause there's lots I'd like to do
 (Michael Buscemi)

It may seem strange that this article begins with an extract from a poem about a child, but for me this sums up the reason I do my job and why becoming an academy was so important.

Every child deserves the right to a good education and at Violet Way Academy every child now has an “outstanding” education (Ofsted 2012). So just what difference has becoming an academy meant 18 months into the journey?

Certainly we have seen many changes and yes, it has been a very steep learning curve. I recently asked the administration support staff what they thought of the change and the initial response was ‘more work’. However, on reflection this quickly changed to ‘different work’. They now feel much more part of the team. They feel able to put forward new ideas; these ideas are valued, listened to and often acted upon. They constantly review practice and

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are now asking questions such as, how can we improve our service to parents, pupils, staff, and the community? This recently resulted in a new approach to how and when parents pay, offering those options that go hand-in-hand with technology and the demands of living in the 21st century such as online banking and instant responses via mobile phone. Delivering a better service, evaluating what we do has become the norm.

This supports Mr Gove's desire for schools to be more accountable. We see accountability as not just about finance, but that overall delivery of the service to our 'customers'. This may be the person who answers the phone, financial controls or our auditors at the end of a financial year.

Across the school the increase in accountability has led to leaders being more prepared to monitor and intervene to ensure that standards remain 'outstanding'. Raising standards remains a focus for all. In some ways as an academy and an outstanding school, this has meant the pressure is greater but leaders are rising to the challenge. We, in the office, see it as our responsibility to support teaching and learning by explicitly focusing on areas such as best value, for example. Yes, we will challenge; no, we will not accept high prices or poor performance. Yes, we are customers too, and we demand the very best for our children.

We are not afraid to make local decisions that are right, not just for our

school, but also for our community. If it doesn't feel right then we won't do it. Of course, to achieve this culture, trust is important. Having an administration team that were excited and ready for the challenge of academy status was important, as was having a leadership team who could be trusted. Managing that change, keeping everyone involved and opinions respected, eased the transition.

I could talk about the changes to finance, but to be honest this is now the norm. Similarly, understanding things like pensions and DfE returns such as WGA, budget forecast and AAR. Initially, these seemed daunting, but take each one step-by-step. Use the information on the DfE website, forums such as FD Forum, your accountant and the National College's PAA for support. There is always someone who can help you.

Two top tips: firstly, employ a solicitor who understands the education sector. We have a service level agreement and are supported with training when any major changes are implemented. Secondly, engage a responsive firm of accountants. Our first annual audit was a very positive experience. We did not feel under suspicion, it was very much a supportive process and we have learnt a great deal. My only comment would be do remember you are a school; accountants get a little too focused on the 'business'.

However, becoming a business is a reality. We have made several changes to

our financial structure and are generating more income than ever by, for example, investigating ways to expand our increasing cake sales and also creating a new funding stream by taking younger children. We now look for opportunities to protect our income, particularly with the uncertainties of future funding. We are offering a breadth to our curriculum and focusing on creativity having opened an art room, complete with kiln. Again, this may prove to be additional revenue as we increase our services to the community.

Generally, around the school there seems to be a different atmosphere. Teachers have renewed enthusiasm and energy, cleaners are proud, lunchtime supervisors are enthusiastic, and the administration team is professional. Governors increasingly challenge accountability and are developing a greater knowledge and understanding of how the school works.

So how does the poem fit in? We are in the middle of a culture change. Ofsted has changed its judgements; no longer is 'satisfactory' acceptable. For me the poem reminds me why we do what we do: for the children. At Violet Way we want our children to feel they can build rockets, or start stamp collections. We don't want any child to feel average. Satisfactory, as with average, is not acceptable. Children deserve better and we believe as an academy we can make that difference and as our aims states: "Reach for the Stars."

It comes down to trust

Andy Buck, Managing Director at Academies for United Learning, explains how school leaders can create a climate of engagement within staff

At the heart of great schools is outstanding teaching and learning, supported and enabled by great leadership. As we know, it is the potent combination of the two that ensures all pupils are given a great education and the very best start in life. And as the leaders of state independent schools, all of us who work in the academy sector have that little extra freedom to make this happen.

But setting aside what feels like common sense for a moment, how does great leadership actually lead to change within schools? I recently had the privilege to attend a week-long leadership development programme at Oxford University's Said Business School. Although this was a generic leadership course with leaders from all sectors and all corners of the globe, I came away with one strong message: that the relationship between leadership and results is only, in fact, indirect.

Translated into a school context, the key proposition is that as school leaders we consciously or unconsciously set the culture and climate in a school. In this context, culture is taken to mean 'the way we do things round here', whereas climate is more about how it 'feels' to work in a particular school. The better the culture and climate, the more likely staff are to go the extra mile, or to make greater discretionary effort. In this sense, discretionary effort is what individuals contribute over and above what they need to do to hold onto their job. It is a measure of the engagement of staff.

So the link between leadership and results has two intermediate stages, with leadership creating the culture and climate, which affects the degree of discretionary effort and this, in turn, is what delivers results.

So the key question then becomes this: what is it that school leaders do that creates the right culture and climate?

In my view, it all starts with trust. What we do as leaders will either build trust in an organisation or reduce it. Where levels of trust are low, staff will be working in an unproductive environment, often associated with unrest and where staff are divided into political camps; where bureaucracy slows down productivity and creates low levels of innovation and development. What this means is that the energy individuals are putting into their work is often less effective than it could be.

In organisations with a high level of trust, systems and procedures are helpfully aligned and bureaucracy kept to a

minimum, individuals are trusted to carry out their work with reduced levels of supervision or checking and there are positive and transparent relationships with employees leading to innovation, confidence and loyalty. In these organisations, the energy of staff is released in a highly productive way, allowing for great progress towards an organisation's goals.

When I was leading the London Challenge 'Good to Great' programme, the Heads of London's best schools and academies had created a culture and climate in their schools that was, of course, based on a culture of high aspiration and self-belief, rigorous self-evaluation and a relentless focus on pupil progress and the quality of teaching. But what also set these schools apart was the way the leadership of the Head had created a climate of trust throughout the school.

"Trust is equal parts character and competence... You can look at any leadership failure, and it's always a failure of one or the other."

Stephen M.R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*

Two types of trust

When we decide whether we can trust someone, we are actually thinking about two things. After all, imagine for one moment that you are leading an expedition to the top of Mont Blanc. In deciding whether to join you on the expedition, the potential climbers will be weighing up whether they think you are competent to lead the trip. For this reason, they may well be questioning your track record in leading similar expeditions. But following a week's intensive training, they will also be wondering if you are being honest with them when you say you think they are fit enough to make the trip. In other words, they need to trust both your competence and integrity.

So, for us as school leaders, it is really important to think about both these elements when thinking about what we do.

When we are building trust in relation to our competence, we are constantly trying to improve our own personal output. We are operating as reflective practitioners who value feedback and try to act upon it in a way that makes us more effective in the workplace. We share our own goals. We publicly hold ourselves to account for these goals and make sure that we look after our own professional development needs to ensure we achieve them. This has the added

advantage of modelling the focus on performance for the whole of the school workforce and helps to create an environment where people are motivated to take responsibility for their own personal development and see each day at work as an opportunity to learn and become more effective.

Equally, it is also really important that we are honest and tell the truth. We should always keep our promises and respect others' confidences, however tempting it can be to do otherwise. We should also avoid the temptation to create false impressions or spin the truth. Not only does this approach build trust but it supports the creation of transparency and develops a culture where it is okay to talk about things that may not be working as well as they might. It also means there are no surprises for staff. Everything is out in the open.

The process of becoming an academy is in itself a time that requires significant trust. Many Heads reading this will have put their personal reputations on the line during this period of transition. In recommending such a move, Heads are asking their peers, governors and the wider school community to trust their judgement that the change is in the school's best interests. For those becoming stand-alone academies this can be particularly challenging. Heads need the external confidence to lead colleagues through the change but also the internal confidence to be honest when things do not automatically go to plan or when there are setbacks and disappointments along the way.

For us as a group of schools at United Learning, we are

also working hard to build trust between our academies and independent schools to enable us to work together for the greater good of students in all the schools. In creating a series of collaborative networks of Heads and senior and middle leaders, we are starting to harness the benefits of peer-to-peer support and challenge. At the heart of this approach is the United Learning teaching school alliance that has just been designated by the National College, with one of our independent schools, Guildford High School, taking a lead role in working with our central team to provide high-quality teacher training and professional development for staff in all our schools across the group.

Of course this all sounds fine in theory. The day-to-day pressures of leadership in the school setting are both incredibly challenging and wonderfully exhilarating at the same time. But I am a firm believer that we should all take the time to reflect occasionally on what has become a central approach in the business world. One of the delegates on my Oxford week, from an oil exploration background, had one objective for the coming three years: to improve the level of employee engagement in his company by 15 percentage points. It's not 5 A*-C with English and maths but it's probably more important in the long run.

Andy Buck is Managing Director, Academies for United Learning. His book, *What Makes a Great School* is available via Reception.Oundle@unitedlearning.org.uk



“What is it that school leaders do that creates the right culture and climate?”



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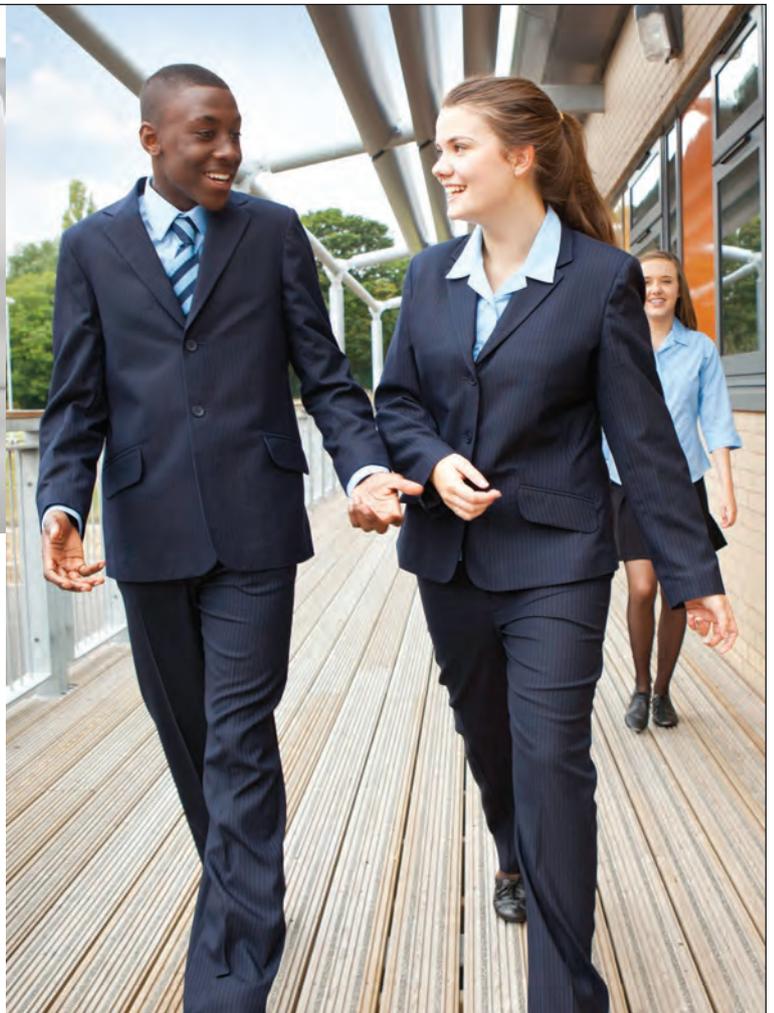
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Support available for primaries considering conversion

The Primary Associate Academy programme swells in numbers

FASNA and the National College have been working in partnership since Autumn 2012 on providing support to schools considering academy conversion. We have grown our initial group of 15 Primary Associate Academies (PAAs) and now have a group of around 50 PAAs. Their role is to provide school to school support to:

- Enable primary schools to make an informed choice about academy status, through a good understanding of:
 - The decisions to be made pre-conversion
 - The role and responsibilities of governors pre, during and post conversion
 - The potential impact on school organisation especially with regard to the financial, HR and legal changes
 - Appropriate resources and support available
 - The opportunities of greater autonomy
- Inform and support primary colleagues going through the process of conversion

- Enable primary schools to realise the benefits of greater freedom and autonomy

PAAs are Headteachers/principals, chairs of governors and school business managers who have successfully led, managed and learned from the process of academy conversion and who are keen to share their experience with other primary schools. FASNA and PAAs can provide support through:

- telephone advice
- visits
- meetings with governors, Headteachers, chairs of governors
- workshops
- conferences

If you would like to access the support of a Primary Associate Academy, please email academyconversion@fasna.org.uk to discuss your requirements with a member of the project team. We will then try and match your needs with one of our team of PAAs to support you. This project is providing additional school to school support for you to access.

Case study: Chadsmead Primary Academy

As principal of Chadsmead Primary Academy, a converter academy, I was pleased to be approached by FASNA to become a Primary Academy Associate. The role was outlined effectively in our training organised by The National College and FASNA and further enhanced by a presentation, which will be available to utilise with interested groups.

As a team we have enthusiastically taken up the role of being Primary Academy Associates, advising schools on the issues surrounding conversion. I am a firm believer in the benefits accrued by the increased autonomy of the system.

The take-up of primary schools converting to academy status has been fewer than in the secondary sector and it has been interesting to explore the reasons for this in the many meetings I have held with Headteachers and governors. While only commencing the role fairly recently, we have already met with three chairs of governors and have made presentations to two cluster groups within the local area. My bursar, Vanessa Williams, has also met with admin staff from other schools

and has been able to give them the benefit of her considerable experience in academy conversion. Likewise, my chair of governors has been able to talk to other chairs and relate his enthusiasm for academy status. Most of these contacts have arisen from approaches by schools within the local area and some have included informal chats on the telephone. One group has already decided to take up academy status while ongoing discussions continue in the other schools.

The main concerns outlined have been around losing the 'safety blanket' of the Local Authority and about the capacity of primary schools to cope with some of the additional demands, especially around the administration of finance. Many of these concerns can be overcome, possibly by the sharing of resources across groups of academies. Our academy staff would be pleased to discuss these and other issues regarding conversion to academy status with any interested schools.

Lester Davies, Chadsmead Primary Academy

First year's report for converter academies

Henry Briggs considers the initial conclusions that can be drawn from early analysis of the annual accounts returns, recently completed

Although some financial analysis was produced for converter academies on their results for the year ended 31st August 2011, the pace at which schools have converted since then means that the first really meaningful and comparable figures are those recently submitted to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) at 31st January, for the year ended on 31st August 2012.

No doubt the EFA will, in due course, produce comparative results on a national basis from the Annual Accounts Returns (AAR), but those involved in preparing and auditing them know that the sheer volume of information required may well mean that there will just be too much detail for many to digest the statistics sensibly. For most of the academies involved, the figures will be their first set and so, rather than being a means of measuring their performance, they will form the base line for future measurements and comparisons.

There will, of course, be many useful ways of comparing and contrasting the wealth of information held in the AARs, which go beyond statutory accounts – historically a poor basis for drilling into the detail of what an organisation's results tell us, apart from the headline figures.

My firm decided to undertake a survey of our 50 or so schools clients and compare the different types of independent schools, on the grounds that converter academies are both independent and capable of affecting their own future financial performance. The model is set so as to expand as more results can be analysed.

The independent sector has been well served in the past with benchmarking surveys which help school bursars both compare themselves with others or the average of their type of school, and to observe and learn from trends in the sector, which is, after all, market driven. Newly converted academies are more likely to vary more by type and size of school and the Local Authority area they are in, as they have little influence over their income levels at this early stage. Using benchmarking to analyse an individual school's performance in detail is more meaningful and helpful if prepared in the form of an individual report set against a

comparable control population of the same type of school. To draw general conclusions, it is sensible to concentrate on some simple analysis that makes sense and does not draw the reader into too much confusing detail.

For the purposes of using the initial results of our survey, we decided to compare the two main types of converter academy – primary and secondary – with each other and with LA maintained schools (where possible) and fee-paying independent day schools. On a 'global' basis of income and costs per pupil this produced some interesting results, if not wholly unexpected.

The results are best summarised in Table A.

	Converter academy (primary)	Converter academy (secondary)	LA maintained (secondary)	Fee paying independent
Income per pupil:				
External	£3,947	£5,369	£5,360	£7,709
Self-generated	£384	£410	£214	£344
Total income per pupil	£4,332	£5,779	£5,574	£8,053
Costs per pupil:				
Staff costs	£2,822	£3,965	£4,731	£5,691
Educational costs	£374	£653	£469	£732
Premises costs	£122	£223	£68	£254
Maintenance costs	£239	£242	£155	£330
Other costs	£405	£365	£137	£544
Total cost per pupil	£3,964	£5,448	£5,560	£7,552
Surplus per pupil				
	£368	£330	£14	£501

Table A: Cross-school comparison

Comparisons are, of course, difficult, in that some LA areas operate a senior, middle and junior school system and others primary and secondary. Most independent schools have control of their feeder schools, so are operating throughout a pupil's whole school career, potentially. This all goes to make for some

The big nettle to grasp for all schools will be their costs, of which between 60-80% across all schools is accounted for by staffing

muddling of the figures, but what the survey shows is that the income per pupil in secondary academies is close to that of secondary maintained schools, and not so far behind that of the independent schools surveyed. Primary schools have a lower level of income per pupil altogether.

The surplus achieved per pupil is likely to be the subject of much discussion in future, and to review this, costs as a proportion of total income need to be considered, as shown in Table B.

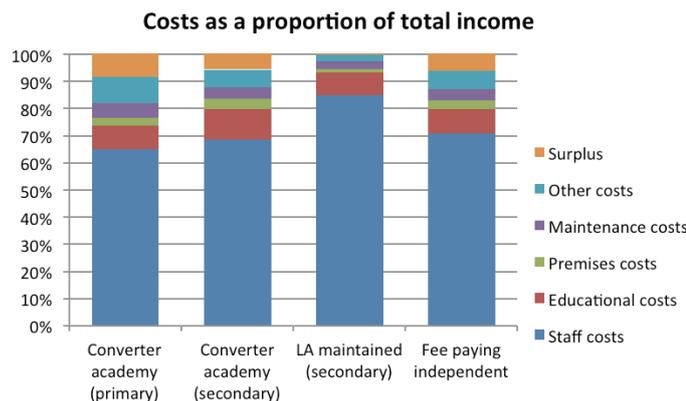


Table B: Costs as a proportion of total income

This leads on to a comparison of per pupil income and expenditure and this is set out from the survey in Table C.

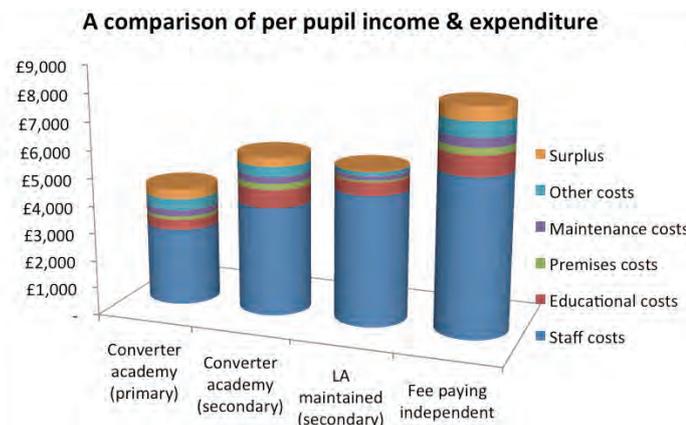


Table C: Comparison per pupil of income and expenditure

There is no doubt that the type of school is the single most influential factor affecting its costs, but most are in a clear band. We have not covered the earlier sponsored academies in our survey, but other benchmarking surveys on them show that of the academy sector, they are the 'rich relations' in terms of funding per pupil, as they set up on more favourable terms than the later converters. This apart, the results show that income for schools appears to be becoming less of a lottery than it may have been in the past.

The big nettle to grasp for all schools will be their costs, of which between 60-80% across all schools is accounted for by staffing. The signs so far are that academies are reluctant to drive down these costs, but are more likely to look to drive up performance and productivity in schools on an existing cost base instead.

I have not gone into detail on capital expenditure in this article, a matter of great significance in the future. Nor has depreciation on buildings been taken into account. This may well be skewed by PFI schools converting later, as their barriers to doing so are higher than those schools with uncomplicated ownership of their premises.

All organisations devise their own measures of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and academies in control of their own destinies will need to decide which are best monitored for themselves. A combination of pupil numbers to capacity, total income and income per pupil, staff costs as a percentage of income, and overall surplus as a proportion of income, are all likely to be a part of these. Not forgetting, of course, working capital.

It is making sense of a school's figures for its own management purposes, that these KPIs are really important.

Benchmarks and surveys provide a useful starting point for a sector that is starting to feel its way in the whole area of determining its own financial performance.

Henry Briggs, senior partner of the Birmingham office of Haines Watts Chartered Accountants and a former school governor, acts for many academies and independent schools

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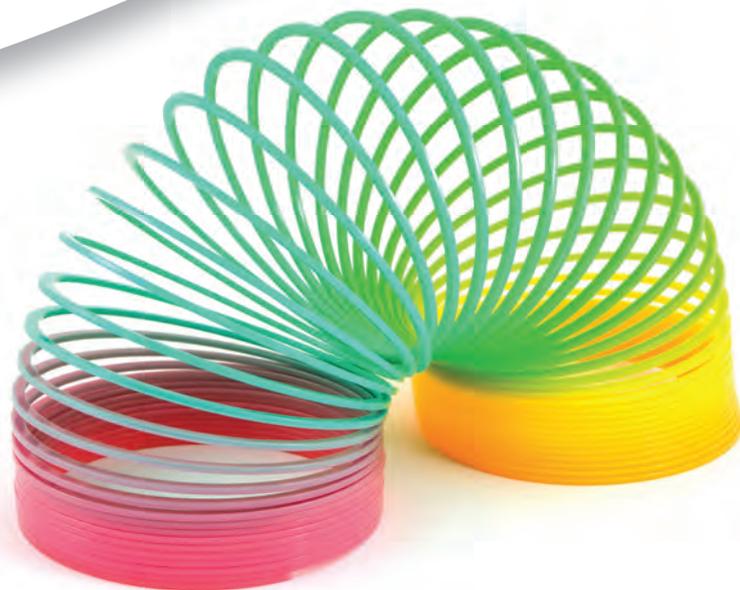
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The Education Funding Agency's service to academies

The EFA explain how they can help

The role of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) is to calculate and pay revenue and capital funding to, as well as seek assurance over the use of public funds from, academies of all types, including those that are sponsored, free schools, university technical colleges, and studio schools.

We also support an academy's compliance with its Funding Agreement by responding to any requests that you may make of the Secretary of State as required by the Funding Agreement. This may include such things as approval to enter into a lease, to dispose of land, or to make significant changes to provision, for instance by adding a sixth form.

To support you, we aim to provide an accurate, responsive and professional service and we are continuously looking for ways to improve. We monitor our performance on a regular basis and use customer surveys to get feedback on how we are doing. Following your feedback on our first survey in July last year we introduced two new things that you said would be helpful.

The first is the academies business cycle which is published on the Department for Education website and designed as a wall-planner. This sets out important information with the aim of helping Head teachers, finance directors, business managers and the governors of academies to plan, and to prepare to meet requirements. It includes the dates of announcements about funding and payments, the deadlines for submitting financial assurance returns and reminders, for example about the schedule relating

to admissions arrangements and the pupil census dates.

The second thing we did in response to your feedback was to publish a statement of our service to academies. This can also be found on the Department's website. It is a short summary of our role and the service we deliver to academies, and it tells you how to get information and support from us.

If you need information, please look on the website first. About the EFA is the gateway site for all EFA customers and has specific areas for academies. The Academies' Financial Handbook, information about School Funding Reform, Schools Forum Regulations, the Priority Schools Building Programme and the Schools' Admissions Code are just a few examples of the things that can be found there. We are increasing our use of it all the time to enable you to find what you need to know when it suits you.

Every fortnight we publish an e-bulletin that contains information for academies. It highlights key developments and changes in policies and procedures, events and things to look out for. We often use it to remind you of returns that are due. You can subscribe to the bulletin through a link on the website.

The Enquiry Service can be accessed through the following email address: academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk. Please use this if the website doesn't answer your questions. We aim to answer questions within 48 hours. We resolved 70% of the enquiries we received between the beginning of December and the end of February within two working days. If we can't do that, we will tell you and we will

keep you informed of progress.

Certain types of enquiry are dealt with by one of the EFA's specialist teams. We will let you know if this is the case.

In certain circumstances we will allocate a named point of contact for you to deal with. Examples of these are:

- If you want to make a request of the Secretary of State as required by the Funding Agreement, such as approval to make a significant change to your academy. In cases such as this we will give you the name of the member of staff who will deal with the matter through to its conclusion. This means you can be confident there is continuity in handling the case and you know who to speak to if you have any questions about it.
- Free schools in their first year of operation.

If you have a complaint about something we have done, please use the procedure on our website to raise it: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus/efa

We are developing a secure, convenient and efficient way to do business with you in future, including a confidential account where we can share funding and financial matters. We continue to develop online services so that you will be able to make applications about your funding agreements much more easily. These changes will take place over the course of this year. If you have other suggestions how we might improve the service to you, please contact us on academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk.

Charity Commission guidance welcomed

New guidance will help governors understand their responsibilities, say specialist academy accountants



“In our experience, the governors of almost all academy trusts are somewhat unaware of the extent of the responsibilities placed upon them as a governor of an academy trust”

Members of the Academy Forum of the UK200Group of independent accountants and lawyers have welcomed new guidance issued by the Charity Commission for governors of academies, foundation and voluntary schools.

Entitled *Charities and Charity Trustees*, the guidance has been published by the Commission in conjunction with school governor recruitment charity SGOSS and the Department for Education after concerns that governors did not know their responsibilities under charity law.

There are more than 2500 academy schools and 8000 foundations and voluntary schools that are charities and are exempt from regulation by the Commission. However many trustees and school governors are unaware that they have the same responsibilities as trustees of registered charities.

The Academy Forum of the UK200Group represents a large proportion of academy schools, with recent estimates suggesting members firms act for roughly 9% of the academies market.

Kevin Hopper, an academies specialist at UK200Group member firm Forrester Boyd, said: “Having helped a number of schools through the conversion process it is plain to see that the governors do not understand what their responsibilities are when they convert and this document will hopefully help cover that issue.”

James Barker, from UK200Group member firm Randall & Payne accountants, said the guidance is timely to remind governors of their responsibilities.

“In our experience, the governors of almost all academy trusts are somewhat unaware of the extent of the responsibilities placed upon them as a governor of an academy trust. These responsibilities are not too different to those of a normal school governor, however it is only on conversion that governors become more aware of the legal requirements placed upon them.

“Most governors are aware of the need to produce accounts, but many do not know that these accounts will be in the public domain at Companies House.”

James says the new guidance clearly sets out the roles that governors now have in academy schools.

“The recent guidance issued by the Charity Commission explains these responsibilities clearly and concisely so that governors have a sufficient understanding of the responsibilities laid upon them,” said James.

“This guidance is written in a very easy to read and open manner which gives governors the key facts they need to know, and also prompts them to look deeper into certain areas by giving guidance on where additional information can be found.”

Kevin said that governors/trustees should use the document in the conversion process to ensure they understand their new role and what is required of them before they go into it, adding:

“The document also gives background on the types of schools and other summary of information, which should aid further understanding. However, I feel the key area is the understanding of the responsibility they have.

“The information is written in a fair way without scaring them into feeling there is a massive responsibility change, as the fact they are governors of a school, they already have substantial accountability, which they probably do not realise.”

Kevin says that it is the issue of not knowing their current responsibility which seems to increase the fear of being a governor.

“They now have professionals mentioning the responsibility in a very formal manner, which is daunting,” he said. “If they had understood their current requirements, the step to being a trustee and director would not look so great.”

Despite being encouraged by the new guidance, James says it doesn’t go far enough, especially in respect of reporting requirements for the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

“Many governors (and indeed some business managers) are unclear on the reporting requirements for the EFA,” he said.

“The governors are meant to approve the returns submitted to the EFA as it is ultimately them that are accountable. This is arguably not down to the governors’ lack of understanding, but more due to the constantly changing requirements and deadlines laid down by the EFA over the last 18 months.

“At most governors meetings I have attended, the governors usually ask what the reporting requirements are, what the implications are for filing certain returns, and what they should be considering going forward – this shows that there is unclear information on this area available to governors. This has started to prove less of an issue after academies have run a full year post-conversion and they are now more aware of the returns that are required and when. However, for academies in the process of conversion or soon to convert this will continue to be an issue.

“Overall the guidance goes a long way towards helping governors understand their responsibilities and clarifies a lot of issues that governors may otherwise not be aware of. This guidance should be read by all governors, whether they are new to their post or not, as it covers a wide range of topics. However it is not focussed towards academies and there are some additional responsibilities for the EFA that are not detailed within the guidance, however these are typically only reporting requirements.”

Going for academy status?



UK200Group Academy Forum is part of UK200Group, the UK’s leading quality assured member association of independent **chartered accountants and lawyers**, with over 150 offices nationwide.

Members of the Forum have the specialist skills and expertise to successfully plan and manage all the issues for the successful conversion of schools to academies, and to maintain their continued successful operation.

Academy Forum member www.uk200group.co.uk/Academy

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FASNA membership provides opportunities and benefits to your School Team – Head Teacher, Leadership Team, Business Manager, Governors, Clerk & Company Secretary

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- A range of Academy Conversion training seminars – some are free, funded by DfE
- FASNA in partnership with the National College are offering support through the Primary Associate Academy programme (PAAs). Our network of PAAs will support primary schools to make an informed choice about academy status, give support whilst converting and enable schools to realise the benefits of greater freedom and autonomy
- Email your specific request for support to academyconversion@fasna.org.uk
- 5% discount off the legal costs of Academy Conversion or Academy Sponsorship provided by Stone King
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Contact our team who will ensure your membership queries are answered

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Raising Standards through Autonomy with Accountability

Education: the rock and roll years

Ageing rocker Les Walton reminisces on times past

1947

For me, there is only one great American singing star of 1947 that I would wish to mention. Francesco Paolo LO Vecchio or Frankie Lane. I believe 'Old Leather Lungs Frankie' was the forerunner of rock and roll music. His big songs in 1947 were That's My Desire and That Lucky Old Sun. He continued to make records right up to his final performance in 2005. Hits included Mule Train, High Noon, I Believe, Rawhide and, of course, the unforgettable Champion the Wonder Horse.

For many of us growing up in the 50s and 60s, the strains of Champion the Wonder Horse and Rawhide meant that our favourite TV programmes were about to start. However the Frankie Lane song that had most effect on me was Mule Train. I loved to go to variety night at Newcastle Empire Theatre and watch Bob Blackman blow up a hot water bottle and sing Mule Train whilst rapidly hitting his head with a silver tray! You can still see Bob on YouTube. Please tune in; it will change your life.

The first post-war Minister of Education was Ellen Wilkinson, MP for Middlesbrough and later Jarrow. Her main task was to implement the 1944 Education Act. She raised the question of the school leaving age. Ellen estimated the first stage of the 'Raising the School Leaving Age' scheme (ROSLA) would require the creation of over 200,000 new school places. Her plans to increase the school-leaving age to 16 had to be abandoned when the government decided it would be too expensive

In 1947 Ellen Wilkinson, depressed by her failure to bring in all the reforms she believed necessary, took an overdose of barbiturates and died on 6th February aged 55. In April, one month after her death, after the Treasury had sought unsuccessfully to delay ROSLA, the school leaving age was raised to 15.

Brian Oglethorpe (former Headteacher of Oxclose Comprehensive and Chief Inspector for Sunderland) recounts his time in an 11-plus preparatory class in Canning Street School Newcastle in 1947. He remembers pupils "being flogged with considerable frequency and well-practiced technique with a leather strap on hands for even such slight misdemeanours as blots on exercise books or repeated spelling mistakes". Also "jumping through the intelligence testing hoops and being on the top row of desks in the back of the class – desks arranged from the back strictly according to ability".

1947-48 was also the year selection took place for grammar, technical school or up the stairs to senior school in Canning Street. After a series of tests administered by the Headmaster at Canning Street, Brian was told he had a place at Rutherford

Grammar School – many of his friends were destined for the top floor with others in Canning Street.

1967

On 1st June 1967 the Beatles released 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band', widely recognised as one of the most influential records ever released. The recording made extensive use of many new recording techniques such as multi-tracking and using new modular effects such as the wah-wah pedal and the fuzz box.

The new technology the Beatles were using contrasted with the ageing technology used in the secondary modern school where I worked and where pupils still left at 15. As well as having the responsibility for the distribution of school milk, introduced by Ellen Wilkinson in 1947, I was given one promotion point for being responsible for the 'technology control room' at school.

I now was responsible for:

- The Bell & Howell 8-mm movie camera
- The epidiascope, which would project images of books, and drawings on to a viewing screen by shining a bright lamp onto the object from above
- The Gestetner Cyclograph, a stencil method duplicator
- The Banda or Roneo Machine, spirit duplicator

Spirit duplicators were used mainly by schools because of the limited number of copies one could make from an original, along with the low cost and correspondingly low quality of copying. Alcohols were a major component of the solvents used as 'inks' in these machines. Even now when I mention the word Banda, the 'gadgees'* among us swoon when they remember the faintly sweet and intoxicating aroma of the Banda machine – and I got paid for this!

In 1967 the school took a giant leap forward in the use of educational technology by introducing the overhead projector. I can still remember the sales pitch – 'no more tired arms writing on the chalkboard, you can clean easily with a tissue or paper towel and best of all you can keep an eye on the class as you write!'

* "Gadgee: a person who generally gets no respect" *New Urban Dictionary*

Can you recall stories about post war education or the technology of the 60s? If you know anyone who went to school between 1945 and 1950 I would love to hear from them. If you do, please email Les at les.walton@northerneducation.com

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