

Academy magazine

Volume 3 Number 3 Summer 2014



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Cover photographs courtesy of the George Spencer Academy Trust
From story on page 28. All photos of the FASNA Conference courtesy
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Editor

Peter Beaven

Steering group

- Tom Clark
(Executive Chairman, FASNA)
- Alex Sharratt (JCEL)
- Jo Seymour
(St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School)
- Andrew Johnson
(Springwood High School)
- Dianne Marshall
(Violet Way Academy)

Published by
John Catt Educational Ltd,
12 Deben Mill Business Centre,
Old Maltings Approach, Melton,
Woodbridge,
Suffolk IP12 1BL.
Tel: (01394) 389850
Fax: (01394) 386893

Opinions expressed in *Academy* are not necessarily endorsed by FASNA or JCEL; likewise advertisements are printed in good faith. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement by FASNA or JCEL.

Editorial contributions should be sent to editor@academymag.co.uk. Submissions for the Autumn edition should arrive no later than 12th July 2014.

Academy is published three times a year, in Spring, Summer and Autumn. £25 for a two-year subscription, post paid; discounts for bulk orders are available.

Subscriptions:

Sara Rogers,
srogers@johncatt.com

Advertising:

Madeleine Anderson,
manderson@johncatt.com

Printed by Micropress Printers Ltd, Reydon, Suffolk IP18 6HD

Copyright wholly owned by John Catt Educational
www.academymag.co.uk
ISSN (print) 2049-1492
ISSN (online) 2049 1506



John Catt Educational Ltd is a member of the Independent Publishers Guild.

From the editor

I am delighted that we are able to showcase a number of case studies from FASNA members showing how converter academies are contributing to system leadership. All too often the impact of converter academies is disparaged. It is easy to forget that converter academies have only existed for three years or less and that their full impact will take time to be realised.

Politics

In September I wrote that the then Labour Shadow Education Secretary was not revealing his education policies. Since then, Mr Twigg has gone to be replaced by the erudite Tristram Hunt. Consequently, we have looked forward to a breath of fresh air in the educational debate and have waited eagerly for Labour to show its thinking. We are promised a report next month.

At the FASNA Conference Mr Hunt was strong on rhetoric and broad principle, much of which is to be applauded. However, his speech had inconsistencies and lacked detail. On the one hand, as a believer in school autonomy, he said all schools should have academy freedoms, on the other he wanted more powers for some undefined “middle tier”. He praised sponsor academies, saying that it was obvious it would take time for this Labour policy to have the impact it is now showing; but failed to acknowledge the work of some 3000 converter academies.

I for one look forward to Labour announcing its policies. I think Mr Gove should feel the same. For too long he has been able to make policy which has not been politically challenged in a coherent way and he has not benefitted from the vigorous debate that ensues when the other side puts up well constructed and principled alternatives.

The Middle Tier

Despite the fact that Mr Hunt left FASNA delegates fearful for school autonomy under a Labour Government, it would seem that all parties have to grapple with how to deal with the situation when an autonomous school fails.

We believe strongly in autonomy with accountability – so what happens to a failing school? Local Authorities have been inept at tackling this. Debbie Clinton makes the point that the strong LAs in the North East have the fewest autonomous schools but the highest rate of failing schools. They have failed spectacularly to demonstrate their worth here.

Similarly, there are question marks about the effectiveness of too many of the large chains.

Maybe Mr Gove’s Regional Commissioners could be the answer, but their role and powers are not yet clear (see the article by Graham Burns on page 51). It is clear something needs to be done – but what? The fear of many schools and academies is that Mr Hunt will take us back to a Local Authority model which has already failed.

Politicians of all hues need to be imaginative in their approach. A one-size fits all approach is not the right way. A multi-faceted approach may offer greater flexibility, better targeting and be more cost-effective. Converter academies supporting failing schools in Multi-Academy Trusts should be part of the solution as our case studies show. Other solutions may include commercial providers, organisations with the capacity for this – such as FASNA – and some LAs if they think they have the skill sets, capacity and willingness to sell their services beyond their borders.

The question then is who will decide intervention is necessary? And decide on the type of intervention? And decide which of the several possibilities should be commissioned? And where does the budget come from? It makes sense to keep these decisions away from Local Authorities as they impact on local politics and they need to be made objectively. The issue is – then what? Maybe Mr Gove’s Regional Commissioners could play such a role.

Cont...

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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Ofsted

The recent Policy Exchange report, *Watching the Watchmen*, criticises Ofsted for lack of consistency and for some Inspectors not possessing the necessary set of skills. Some may hold the belief that the kind of accountability that Ofsted exerts will go away. This is misguided. Ofsted provides the means for schools, autonomous or not, to account for the effective spending of huge amounts of public money. It may be a flawed tool but it is the right tool.

Ofsted has responded by saying it will look at the report's findings and has expressed a willingness to continue to develop. This was a view Sir Michael Wilshaw expressed firmly at the FASNA Autumn Conference and he has repeated in his speech to ASCL in late March.

Funding

Hooray for the extra funding to the least well funded Local Authorities! Let's hope the funds find their way to the schools which are least well funded. Of course, the fear is that the funds will be distributed unevenly by Local Authorities to their favoured schools via byzantine decisions by the Schools Forum.

Of more concern is the impact of the rise in employer's pension contributions and the impact this will have on schools. But more of that next time.

Opinions expressed by the editor are his alone and may not reflect FASNA policy
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The Regional School Commissioners (see Graham Burns' article on page 51) announced on 10 April are

- South West: Sir David Carter, currently CEO, Cabot Learning Federation
- North East London and the East of England: Dr Tim Coulson, currently Director of Education, Essex County Council
- North West London and South Central: Martin Post, currently Headmaster, Watford Grammar School for Boys
- South London and South East: Dominic Herrington, currently Director of Academies Group, Department for Education
- The West Midlands: Pank Patel, currently Headteacher, Wood Green Academy
- Lancashire and West Yorkshire: Paul Smith, currently Executive Principal, Parbold Douglas Church of England Academy and Teaching School

Recruitment is continuing in two regions, East Midlands and Humber, and the North and appointments to each post are expected by September. Each RSC will be advised by a Headteacher Board made up of headteachers, or recently retired Headteachers, from academies rated as outstanding by Ofsted. There will be elections in each region during the summer term to elect members of the HTB. All academy headteachers in each region will be eligible to vote.



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Unlocking achievement and raising aspirations

Haywood Academy in Stoke-on-Trent have created a multi-academy trust that is helping to reverse a trend of underachievement in the city

We hear much of the need to raise aspirations and unlock achievement in schools across the country. Accelerated progress is the paradigm of the day. Nowhere is this more acutely in the spotlight, or indeed under scrutiny, than in Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire. The city is the third-worst performing local authority in the country with 60% of its students having never experienced a school judged as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. The city is also home to MP Tristram Hunt, the shadow Secretary of State for Education. So one might say, with a general election looming, the pressure is on.

The city has a track record of underachievement at both primary and secondary levels and for many years has not merely lagged, but dramatically fallen behind the educational progress seen in many other areas of the country.

However, the winds of change are moving quickly through the city, fuelled by an educational landscape in flux. The national setting, that some liken to the educational equivalent of the ‘forming of the great continents’ many thousands of years ago, is helping to drive quick change, borne out of a desire for more freedom and autonomy.

One of the leaders in this revolution is Haywood Academy, one of the largest schools in the city and an 11-16 converter academy situated in Burslem, in the north of Stoke, the most deprived part of the city. Despite DfE data showing that primary achievement in Burslem for the past seven years has been the lowest of all wards in the city, this has not stopped Haywood raising aspirations and unlocking the achievement of its students.

The academy is one of the most improved secondary schools

I didn't want Haywood to be the 'white knight on the charger' so it was important that we worked with our primary partner schools to create systemic improvement

in the country, with GCSE results showing an increase of 20% in the key headline measure of English and maths in 2013, placing the academy in the top 25% of schools nationally with a value-added score of 1013.5. According to Raiseonline, the academy operates within the highest quartile of economic deprivation, with 41% of its students having received a free school meal in the last six years. In January 2014 the academy was judged by Ofsted as 'Good' in all areas with outstanding and exemplary aspects.

Executive Headteacher Carl Ward says that academy status has been key to securing rapid progress. "We achieved academy status in September 2012 and believe conversion has enabled us to exercise significant freedom and autonomy to rapidly improve student achievement and progress. In essence we have been free to show that we know our students and community best and can respond to their needs in a proactive manner.

"Using the freedom that academy status provides we have been able to make swift and effective changes based on some important building blocks of 'good' education, which include: significant improvements in literacy levels of students; CPD coaching and mentoring to drive-up teacher performance; a cultural shift towards the highest aspirations for students and staff; a lesson by lesson approach to student progress and an emphasis on exemplary standards of behaviour for learning."

However, Mr Ward recognised very early on that the issues facing Haywood could not be tackled in isolation, with over 50% of its main feeder primary schools in special measures or requiring improvement, and DfE data showing recurring underachievement year after year. "To make a step change that creates improvement which becomes the norm, we had to think out of the box. I didn't want Haywood to be the 'white knight on the charger' so it was important that we worked with our primary partner schools to create systemic improvement. A number of my primary partner schools had real strengths and working together to improve outcomes for young people is the guiding principle."

The creation of a multi-academy trust is the next stage in formalising a multi-schools partnership. But unlike many other MATs, this one is going to be cross-phase, lead by Haywood, and will embed a 'can do' philosophy within its community group of schools, providing a long-term sustainable solution to tackle underachievement and raise aspirations. Mr Ward has recently become Executive Headteacher of Mill Hill, a local primary

school in special measures, and Haywood will soon become its sponsor. He has his own school improvement team of external specialists, which he uses as a local authority would have done a number of years ago. He has also been working for the past six months very closely with Chris Crook, Headteacher of a local feeder primary school, the successful Smallthorne Primary. They will also become members of the MAT.

Mr Crook calls the partnership with Haywood "a particularly strong feature of our learning community". He goes on to say: "Our pupils from five to eleven years-of-age access the expertise and resources made available from Haywood which have impacted positively through the enrichment and extension of our own curriculum. Opportunities for professional development have also been afforded for teachers and leaders as a result of this link. Our informal collaborative working model was further extended in October 2013, when, at the request of the local authority, Haywood Academy's chair and selected governors were appointed as interim governors at Smallthorne Primary school. Additional funding from the LA enabled the Headteachers of both schools to work even closer together to address issues at Smallthorne as a result of recent staffing and governance changes to the school. More recently, Haywood's finance officer has been working collaboratively with Smallthorne's office manager to streamline the financial and budgetary aspects of the school."

Mr Ward calls it "natural" to work very closely with feeder primary schools. "Many of the children that go to our partnership primary schools will come on to Haywood, so working together for the common aim of students being the best that they can be just makes sense. In the past, primary and secondary schools have always had a commitment to this, but I have been doubtful if it's really made a difference. I have this theory that if we went to another planet that had never had an education system and we were asked to create one, then it wouldn't look like the one we operate in now. For example, why do we have a standard age of 11 for children to start secondary school? Why are Year 6 children so different from Year 7 students, that at age 11 we give them five different rooms a day to learn in, but at age 10 they stay in the same room with the same teacher?

"A MAT partnership approach to learning is helping us to remove barriers, work far more closely than we have done before

and unlock real potential while saving money. Sharing finance and HR functions is allowing us to pool budgets and resources. We have already achieved savings of £20,000 on just a few SLAs with anticipated savings to come of another £40,000. This can make a real difference as we re-focus this money on teaching and learning priorities.”

Mr Ward also talks of a completely different approach to teaching from the age of nine, with a curriculum due to start in a further primary school, Mill Hill, currently in special measures. The core subjects of English and maths will be shared with the secondary academy, an age nine to 13 approach to English and maths that will be taught before GCSE study begins.

“Our soon-to-be-sponsored primary school is in a very different situation, and we have decided to be quite radical in tackling significant underachievement. Haywood English and maths staff will be teaching from Year 5 in timetabled lessons both at the secondary academy and the primary school. This approach has saved money, solved staffing problems and enabled the primary school to redeploy staffing into other areas to solve problems. Essentially, instead of classes being taught by supply staff because the primary school couldn’t attract any substantive staff, students will be taught by secondary specialists in English and maths. As a parent I know which option I would choose for my child and it made sense as the academy’s job applicant field in these two subjects is strong and we believe teaching these subjects at Year 5 and 6 is pretty much the same as in Year 7.”

Mr Crook agrees that the MAT provides an exciting opportunity to formalise an already close partnership. “Maximising the learning opportunities and life chances for our pupils though a model of continued provision from three to 19 years can unlock potential and help raise aspiration. By formalising our schools’ relationship, we will be promoting increased collaboration and sharing of good practice. The move to a MAT will provide a clear and consistent strategy and vision across a group of schools working together and will open up opportunities to build a new primary/secondary curriculum. Our MAT will foster improved transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, and create opportunities for innovation and learning across both Key Stages.”

Mr Crook adds: “Operationally, this model will offer the ability to choose key services from a range of providers and target those more specifically to our needs. As an average-



sized primary school, we are able to obtain value for money for services and resources when purchasing as a larger group of schools. Increased flexibility in the deployment of staff across all schools within the MAT, as a result of having a single trust governing all schools (one employer), not only means that expertise can be shared to produce the best outcomes for all pupils, but it also helps build better staff and leadership development across the group by providing opportunities for individual academies to develop their staff, at all levels, with exchange schemes, provide more career opportunities, and share professional development.”

Dave Johnson, who is now chair of governors at three schools in the Haywood partnership, agrees that the close approach to partnership work is the only way forward. “Sometimes it’s hard being chair in three schools, but I very much see this as a transition arrangement as we put together our governance arrangements for the MAT. Although Haywood, Smallthorne and Mill Hill will have one local devolved governance arrangement in the MAT, other schools that plan to join us will keep their own governance arrangements as they fit into the MAT structures. This will mean that they can keep the majority

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of their autonomy, while aligning structures with the MAT and unlocking the benefits of working together.”

Mr Ward talks of a shared culture moving forward but he admits conversations with Heads on joining the MAT have been interesting. “Most of our primary Heads have been concerned about keeping their autonomy, and I understand that. Heads don’t become Heads to generally be told what to do in their own schools. Having respect for feelings is crucial in building partnerships.

“The way I tend to describe it is that all Heads are accountable to someone. With a traditional LA school, it was likely to be the director of education. With an academy it’s the Secretary of State for Education. As we move to a regional commissioner system, we need autonomy structures in MATs that fit this new model. So a chief executive of a MAT would probably be the key person, linking performance in the MAT academies.

“I have also said that the MAT structure would enable partnership working to go to a new level, with systems led by the chief executive, including a team of school improvement specialists, being able to be deployed to all Heads on the basis that all schools have the desire to improve. The aim is for no school in the MAT to ever be in a position that they are failing: if you like, a joint approach on accountability pulled together by a chief executive, just like the models we have seen successfully

used at Leigh by Frank Green CBE and Sir David Carter from the Cabot chain.”

Mr Crook agrees that this approach is the way forward, adding, “The future of Smallthorne Primary school is bright, but the future of Smallthorne Academy, as part of a Multi Academy Trust, is brighter.”





Sharing good practice: the Tudor Grange experience

Jenny Bexon-Smith describes how Tudor Grange School has embraced the need to spread their expertise to other schools

In recent years I have become interested and influenced by the educational philosophy of Kurt Hahn. Hahn was the founder of Gordonstoun School. His work there also had a huge influence on the development of the Outward Bound movement and what we now know as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. One of his best quotes:

“There is more in us than we know if we could be made to see it; perhaps for

the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less”

I truly believe that all of our schools have something significant to offer the whole system. This is even more true of the outstanding schools, many of whom have become what is known as the ‘converter academies’. Our experience at Tudor Grange Solihull, and more recently as the Tudor Grange Academies Trust, has convinced me

that this is true. However, the powers of inertia are very strong, as is the power and influence of what can be generically described as ‘the State Education Establishment’. This establishment is made up of a wide-ranging group with very varied backgrounds. They are usually characterised, I acknowledge somewhat stereotypically, by having a lot of experience in local authorities, in university schools of education, in the

Department for Education, in unions/ associations, and what can be unfairly described as ‘The *Guardian*-reading chattering classes’. I exaggerate to make the point but there will be many readers of this magazine who will knowingly smile at such descriptions.

It is worth sharing some of our experiences at Tudor Grange Solihull. We are very proud that we have always had an outward-looking approach. A very important part of our development dates back to 1995 when we became part of a group of schools that were the very first community schools to achieve Specialist School status. Prior to this, such status had only been available to the grant maintained/voluntary aided sector. This status put us directly in touch with a group of innovative and creative schools that were part of an energetic and vibrant national network. At that time specialist schools were criticised by the establishment I referred to earlier and we had to listen to some of the tired and well-worn phrases to do with ‘elitism’ and the creation of a ‘two-tier system’. How often have we had to listen to such trite comments about many educational developments.

As part of the Specialist Schools Network we became directly involved in collaboration, sharing good practice, school-to-school support and advice. This was a marked contrast to the more stale geographical networks that we had experienced previously. The success of this collaborative work led to the expansion of the Specialist Schools movement and our involvement in much more focused school improvement processes such as the Department for Education sponsored RATL projects (Raising Achievement Transforming Learning). These projects were successful

and valued by all schools. Improvements were real and tangible but more importantly nearly all schools benefited, whether they were participant schools or what we called consultant schools. At Tudor Grange we benefited greatly from such involvement. However there were frustrations in this type of project. In some cases there was not the harder edge responsibility and accountability that is sometimes required in the most stubborn cases of underperformance.

We watched as we saw the development of sponsored academies under the last Labour government. We believed we had much to offer and much to gain and we wanted to get involved. So we worked on doing exactly that. It took a while and we had to nag and badger a lot of people. We made direct contact with Bruce Liddington, who at that time was the Schools Commissioner. Eventually we became an approved academy sponsor and were asked to take on the sponsorship of Elgar Technology College in Worcester in 2009. The school had a troubled history with a succession of Headteachers in a short space of time and two years of special measures. We were happy and excited to do so. As soon as this became public we experienced an interesting few months. Many of the establishment that I referred to earlier questioned our skills, our abilities and our credentials. This simply increased our energy and resolve to prove these people wrong.

On the first monitoring visit HMI described it as, “A school in deep special measures.” Where are we now? The former school is now Tudor Grange Academy Worcester and the table below shows the improvements in some of the key indicators.

We are extremely proud of what

we have achieved. In November 2013 Ofsted judged leadership and behaviour to be outstanding with teaching and achievement to be good. This was some achievement after just four years and when considered in the context of a raising bar in Ofsted requirements. However, we were slightly disappointed as we believed that an outstanding grading could, and possibly should, have been achievable in all areas.

The fundamentals of how this was achieved were very, very simple. First was the appointment of Claire Mclean as the academy’s first Principal. Claire had joined Tudor Grange in Solihull as an NQT in 1997. She quickly became a very successful Advanced Skills Teacher and is an outstanding professional who has complete understanding of our culture and ethos. She also has an unquenchable drive for continuous improvement. Her leadership was a crucial factor but we are proud that she was developed professionally at our school in Solihull. Secondly, we had an approach that can only be described as ‘no compromise and no excuses’. We were absolutely determined not to dilute what we believed in because of some misguided view that a different social context would require us to do so. I would like to quote Kurt Hahn again when he said, “The purpose of education is to save young people from the paralysing effects of wealth and poverty”. Our most challenging schools in areas of social economic deprivation need the highest standards possible and the highest expectations possible. Taking this approach we are delighted with what has been achieved in Worcester but we know as always there is much work to do.

Another part of our work that I believe to be very important is that our academies

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
5 A*- C including English and Maths	24%	28%	38%	47%	62%
ELOP English			47.3%	55.8%	80%
ELOP Maths			42.7%	58.4%	71%
Applications for 180 places	116	151	260	300	290

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In the words of Jonathan Warburton, the chairman of the 134-year-old family baker business, "When your name is over the door you tend to look at things in a different way. It is very, very personal."

In 2010 we were very keen to take the opportunities that we felt were provided by academy status. We converted to academy status in October 2010. It would have been a month earlier, if not for some protracted bureaucratic land issue. Once again phrases such as a 'two-tier' system were ringing in our ears. We have no regrets whatsoever. At Solihull we now have post-16 provision having been held back from this offer for many years by a local cartel that wanted

to maintain a very tired *status quo*. The view was, 'if it's not broken don't fix it'. Our view is always much more like, 'if it is not broken you have not looked hard enough'. Continuous improvement and development is fundamental to success in any walk of life.

There have been times when we have had concerns. Such journeys are not usually smooth every day. However the benefits have been enormous. As well as developing our multi-academy trust we have also developed our Teaching School Alliance and we have become an initial teacher training organisation in our own right. We are attractive as an employer but more importantly we have been able to provide development opportunities for many of our talented and inspirational staff. This has meant that we have been able to retain high quality staff that may not have been previously possible. We are currently making the transition from seeing ourselves as a school to

seeing ourselves as an organisation. The future is our multi-academy trust being responsible for a group of schools that will all carry the Tudor Grange brand name, for the want of a better term.

Many converter academies are doing important work in helping to lead our system. I would encourage them to continue to do so because they have much to offer. I would also encourage them to consider becoming sponsors of academies in their own right. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, they have much to offer in terms of system leadership. I am far from convinced that the large multi-academy sponsors are necessarily the way forward. Secondly, there are many advantages in developing a more focused approach to system leadership.

For those schools that are unsure and less confident I would finish by reminding them of the words of Kurt Hahn: "There is more in us than we know if we could be made to see it."



“Together, we



Pamela Wright,
Principal
of Wade
Deacon
School in
Widnes,

believes that sponsorship and collaboration gives schools the chance to surpass their potential

Following our recent successful conversion to academy status, I began to consider the next stage in Wade Deacon's future by undertaking research into the benefits of potential sponsorship of other schools. In many ways, I would argue that sponsorship is a logical extension of what we at Wade Deacon have always done, which is to actively engage in collaboration so that learning opportunities are enhanced for all members of the respective school communities.

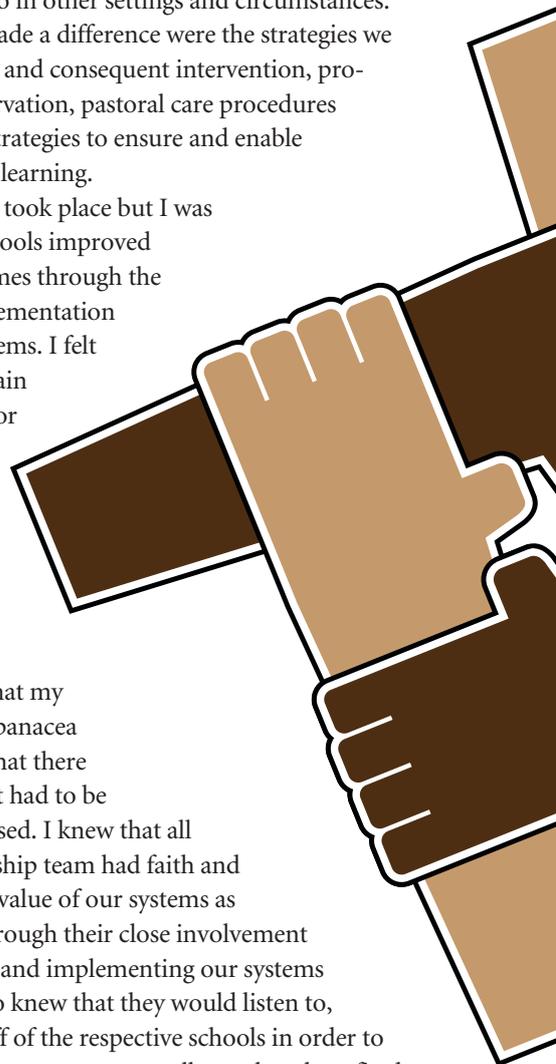
As a leader and teacher, I have always been open and receptive to sharing good practice. In the past this may have been done on both a formal and informal basis but, over the last five years, I would maintain that Wade Deacon has 'sponsored' other schools and worked closely with them to achieve solid and sustained progress. We have been a National Support School since 2008 and are currently working with a local primary school and also a secondary school in a neighbouring authority.

Prior to our conversion, we were asked by the local

authority to work with a primary school that had been placed in special measures and also enter into a hard federation with a neighbouring secondary school in order to work towards its successful closure. I strongly felt that the systems and policies that were in place at Wade Deacon were clear, unambiguous and, most importantly, worked. I was interested to see whether or not they would do so in other settings and circumstances. Areas that definitely made a difference were the strategies we used for pupil tracking and consequent intervention, pro-formas for lesson observation, pastoral care procedures and systems and also strategies to ensure and enable effective behaviour for learning.

Obviously tweaking took place but I was delighted that both schools improved their accredited outcomes through the introduction and implementation of Wade Deacon's systems. I felt that it was vital to explain the purpose clearly prior to the introduction of any new system and then ask all the members of staff involved to reflect upon its impact.

I would not claim that my school has a universal panacea for any institution or that there were no challenges that had to be faced up to and addressed. I knew that all members of the leadership team had faith and belief in the merit and value of our systems as they had ownership through their close involvement in devising, producing and implementing our systems and strategies but I also knew that they would listen to, and work with, the staff of the respective schools in order to share good practice. As a consequence, all members benefited. I strongly feel that, having worked closely in two very different settings, both individually and collectively, there was an increase in professional and personal capacity.



are stronger”

Following the success of the work we undertook on behalf of the local authority, my conviction with regard to the positive impact of sponsorship and working with other schools has definitely grown. As well as the schools we worked with becoming more successful, I maintain that Wade Deacon also became more successful through enabling the staff to grow in capacity, skills and knowledge.

When the current directors were considering academy status, following our successful collaboration, and the positive impact that Wade Deacon had on our other linked schools, they were keen to seek multi-academy trust status. Their view of school communities being ‘better together’ is one which I support as collaboration and co-operation definitely bring about positive and sustained change.

I believe that sponsorship offers a wide range of opportunities for both staff and students.

Through close and planned collaboration, along with the involvement of

all members of staff, a collaborative team

identity can be established to enable training and professional development opportunities to be

enhanced and, instead of the impact being considered solely for one institution it can then be applied to other members of the chain in

order to ensure the maximum benefit. Sponsorship provides opportunities for colleagues to plan and work together by developing learning communities in order to share ideas, produce quality schemes of work and consider approaches to learning. This would also have a positive impact on work-life balance as resources would not be replicated within individual institutions.

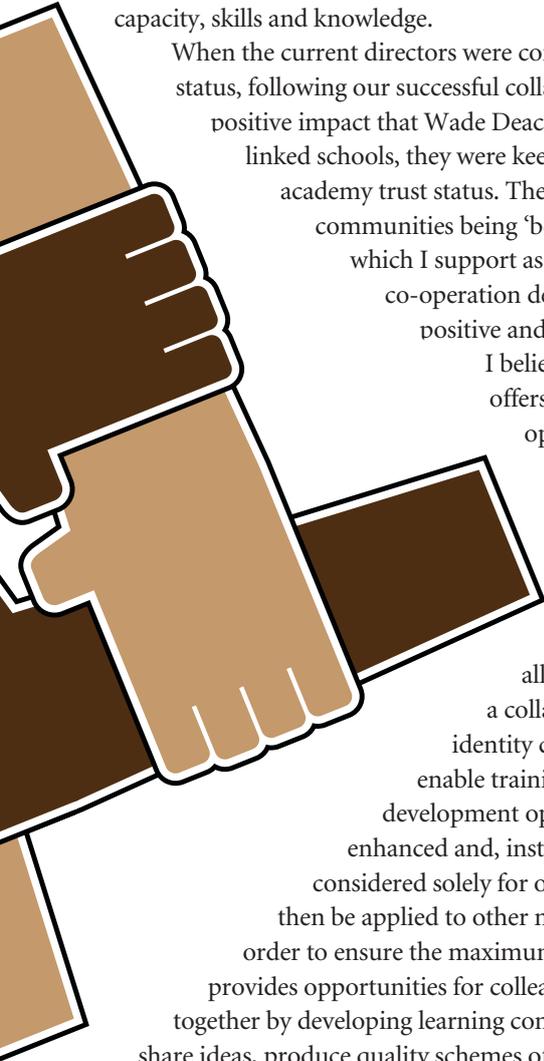
Career progression would be enhanced through working

with other schools. There was definite evidence of this through the work we undertook for the local authority. Members of staff were able to take on wider responsibilities within a supportive overall network so that their skills and knowledge could be developed. I believe that, through collaboration and sharing, these opportunities both stretched and challenged all members of staff positively and gave them confidence as they realised that their skills and knowledge could make a difference in other institutions and settings, as well as their own.

Succession planning is also easier through the vehicle of sponsorship as personalised programmes can be planned and implemented thus providing a wider range of opportunities to enable all members of staff to gain further experience. This would ensure that career progression and transition is smooth and seamless in order to provide continued personal and professional development. On an administrative level, sponsorship offers a range of opportunities to centralise support systems and, again, develop staff expertise and knowledge. Admissions, HR and finance are all areas that would benefit from sponsorship opportunities in order to provide best value through considering economies of scale as well as developing staff expertise and knowledge by providing a wider range of opportunities. The savings that would be brought about through bulk-buying would thus free resources for the direct benefit of the students.

The old maxim that ‘together we are stronger’ is definitely applicable to the purpose and process of sponsorship. It is a given that all academies want the best for their students; I would take the argument further by stating that sponsorship and collaboration provides an effective and efficient vehicle for people to work together not only to support each other but also to ensure that every institution within the trust delivers clear, consistent and cohesive systems and strategies in order to enable all members of the school communities to fulfil, or surpass, their potential.

I am a firm believer in the moral, as well as the academic, purpose of education. Sponsorship reflects that moral purpose in that it allows not only a sharing of a vision, ethos and values but also their practical embodiment and delivery on a daily basis. Sponsorship, collaboration and sharing can only bring about positive change and sustained progress. As such, I believe that it is worthy of serious consideration by all academy leaders.



The 'Aspire' plan in action

Mercedes Hernández Estrada, Principal at Upton Court Grammar School, explains how a plan of clear priorities helped improve the future of their new sponsor school



Upton Court Grammar School (UCGS) is a popular, selective school serving the community of Slough and neighbouring areas. We are an outstanding school with a strong history in providing an excellent education grounded in research and development, training and collaboration. For the past decade, we have demonstrated a passionate commitment to developing partnerships and working collaboratively with a range of institutions with the sole focus of making teaching and learning better in every classroom.

Our status as a Training School and an EBITT (Employment-based Initial Teacher Training body) allowed us to be in the driving seat of training teachers for Slough schools and providing first-rate continuing professional development for the workforce. When the opportunity came it was a logical next step for us to form a Trust as this would allow us to work even more closely with other schools in the Trust.

In a bid to continually strive to improve the education of children within Slough, Upton Court Grammar School saw the chance to become a sponsoring school as a ripe opportunity to use our expertise to raise standards, and, in the summer of 2013, we were approved as a sponsor by the Secretary of State based on our proven track record.

As a school, Upton Court strives to demonstrate exceptional leadership at all levels: governance, senior and middle leadership, as well as teacher as leaders of learning and student leadership. This, coupled with our history of raising standards and ensuring high achievement, put the school in the position to be able to sponsor a local primary school, Foxborough Primary School, which was placed in special measures in June 2013.

As an establishment, Foxborough is very different from Upton Court in terms of the demographic of the ward in which it is placed. Pupils at the school had received lower than expected educational standards for a number of years. The ward also experiences other challenges around educational

experience and aspiration as well as unemployment and health. Following inspection, five key areas for improvement were identified:

- Leadership and management;
- Quality of teaching;
- Progress and outcomes;
- Behaviour and attendance;
- Parental engagement.

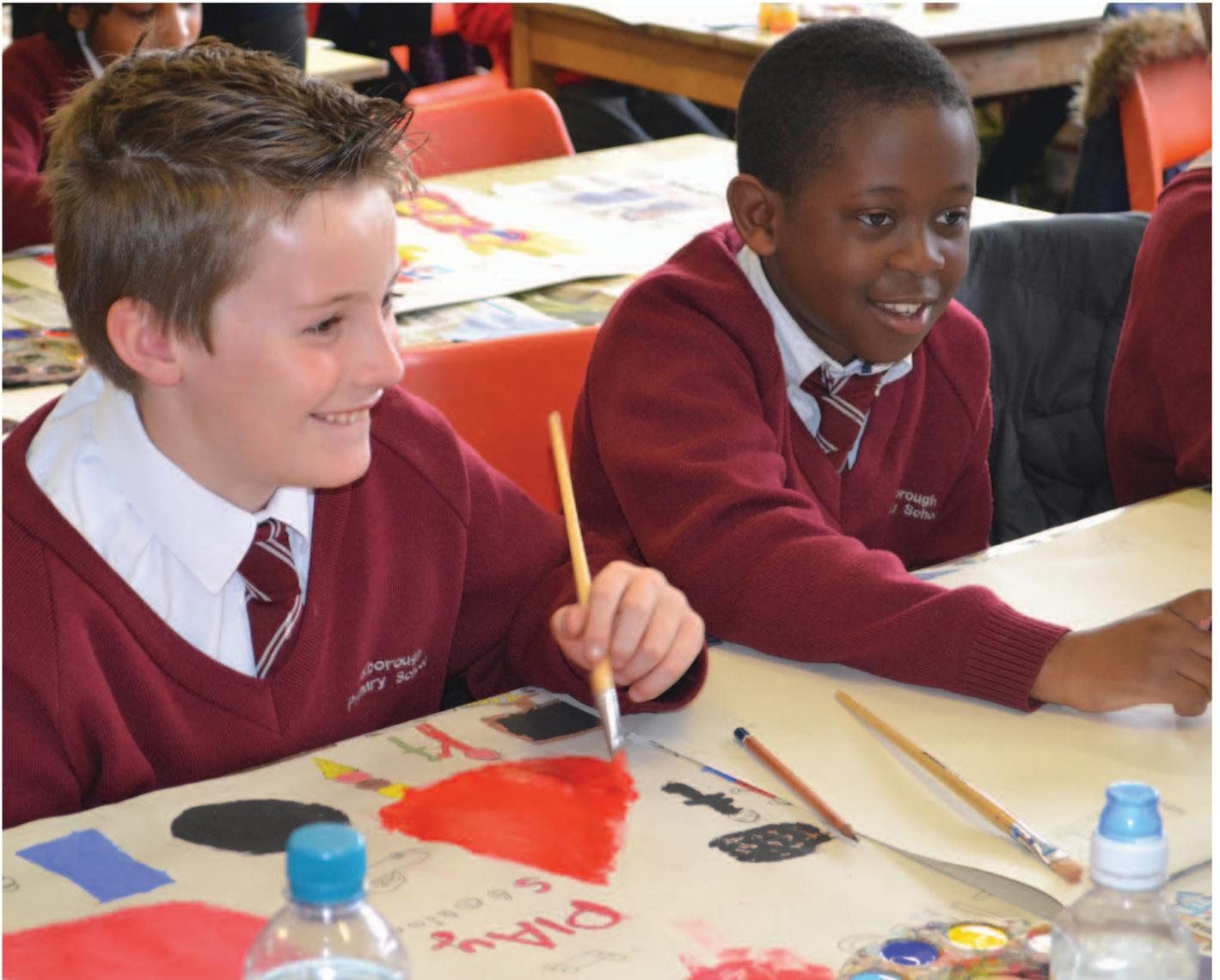
The Upton Court Trust reconstituted the governing body to oversee the improvement work at Foxborough, and drew on the local experience of Mrs Gill Denham as interim Headteacher.

Mrs Denham is the current Headteacher of Marish Primary School and Executive Headteacher of Marish Academy Trust. In her role as Executive Headteacher, she leads Willow Primary School (also in Slough) which she has seen out of special measures. Her expertise in leading in a primary setting has contributed significantly to the improvements at Foxborough supporting the work of the Upton Court Education Trust.

HMI visited and saw the benefits of two Headteachers working in partnership to support the school and described them as “dynamic”, reflecting on how much the school had advanced.

The main priority for the Upton Court Education Trust has been to establish trust with the teachers, pupils and parents at Foxborough. Quite understandably, being placed in special measures and becoming part of a Trust meant that the stakeholders at Foxborough were concerned about the pace and level of change being implemented, and so a primary concern was to reassure all involved and empower them to take control and make decisions. This was recognised by HMI in the first monitoring inspection which stated that the interim Headteacher and executive principal have “quickly started to create a ‘can do’ culture for staff and pupils.”

An ‘Aspire’ plan was created setting out clear priorities for improvement based on the findings from Ofsted.



Priority 1: Improve quality of teaching

A programme for formal observations and informal support was established from the outset to ensure consistency of practice. More important, however, has been facilitating the sharing of best practice between the practitioners at the school and across the UCET and Marish Academy Trust. A folder to record and celebrate best practice is kept to enable all staff to ‘dip in’ to techniques that they might find useful. This has seen a 20% increase in the number of lessons being graded as good or outstanding.

Priority 2: Achievement of pupils

The first stage at Foxborough was to review the curriculum and identify particular programmes that could support the work being undertaken. As such, the school is now using Maths Makes Sense and Big Writing as schemes designed to improve standards in numeracy and literacy. The school is also now using Target

Tracker to ensure that all teachers have ready access to the data needed to plan and review effectively.

Standards in EYFS in particular have improved with higher proportion (75%) of students making expected or better than expected progress.

Priority 3 and 4: Safety and attendance, and behaviour

The excellent work completed by the Foxborough staff has already paid dividends with a significant improvement in attendance. Attendance initiatives, such as the ‘happy hour’, the UCET minibus service to collect children in the morning as well as breakfast and after school clubs, paired up with improved systems and accountability, have led to an improvement in attendance figures described as “outstanding” during the recent LA review. Attendance has improved from 90% to consistently over the national benchmark of 95%.

Cont...

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The true strength of the work of the Upton Court Trust is that excellent teachers and leaders from differing institutions across Slough have been able to come together to make education better for so many young people. It is not a result of the singular leadership of one individual but that professionals who want to make a difference to young people's lives and to build community have come together to facilitate change

Key here also has been school leaders listening to pupils' views and making changes as required. The school has made changes to the lessons at the start of the day with 'early work' as pupils had perceived the beginning of the school day as 'boring' and had therefore been choosing to be late.

The school also sends the message that 'every lesson counts' and monitors attendance unremittingly which has contributed to the great improvements made. Rewards and incentives play a big part too and one student in each Key Stage left the last assembly of the Autumn Term with a brand new bicycle and regularly good attendees have a 'golden hour'.

Priority 5: Improve leadership and management

Another strength of the arrangement has been the establishment of the Trust Wide SLT (TWSLT) which sees the various senior leaders at Upton Court, Foxborough, Marish and Willow come together to share expertise and plan. Joint training has been undertaken and more is planned for the future including a training day on creating inspirational learning environments and on learning-centred leadership.

Priority 6: Improve parental engagement

With regards to parental engagement, the school has improved communications including opening up a 'parents surgery' and has identified opportunities for children's work to be shared during 'showcase' sessions. The school also celebrates local diversity through events such as the Summer and Christmas Fairs; summer 2013 saw a record turnout of parents with, among others, members of the local Somalian community setting up cultural stalls.

The true strength of the work of the Upton Court Trust is that excellent teachers and leaders from differing institutions across Slough have been able to come together to make education better for so many young people. It is not a result of the singular leadership of one individual but that professionals who want to make a difference to young people's lives and to build community have come together to facilitate change. A shared understanding of each other's work has enabled all schools to benefit, and this is where the future lies for the Upton Court Trust.

A helping hand



Helen Hyde says Watford Grammar School for Girls is happy to support other local schools - even if the work is “unrecognised, unknown and uncelebrated”

Watford Grammar School for Girls (WGGs), which I am privileged to lead, is an outstanding secondary converter academy that is not a teaching school. I have a very effective governing body and an outstanding senior leadership team. My site manager leads a skilled, vibrant, enthusiastic team. My finance and office administration teams are experienced and accomplished, and both deal confidently with change. I have had many years of Headship experience. I have energy, enthusiasm and, above all, the willingness and capacity to support others.

My priority, and overriding duty, will always be to ensure the continued success of my own pupils and the continuing professional development of my staff. However, I do not see any conflict between maintaining this focus on standards at WGGs and supporting other schools, because working in support of colleagues in other schools provides opportunities for everyone involved to learn and grow. The benefits of such an arrangement are mutual. With this philosophy and with the agreement and support of my various school

management teams, we have begun formally to assist schools in our area.

The major example of this was my appointment as Executive Headteacher, for the autumn term, of a neighbouring large secondary academy, with which we already had links. During a difficult interregnum before the newly appointed Head took over, complicated by the near simultaneous departure of the two Deputy Heads leaving the school's leadership in crisis, a local plan was devised to help. As Executive Head, I worked closely with the acting Head, a co-opted Deputy Head from Watford Grammar School for Boys, for the term. The school is now running smoothly and an unsettled staff has been able to regain their focus on teaching and learning under the new Head. I found working with another governing body challenging and enlightening; my own beliefs and management were tried and tested.



Watford Girls Grammar School has also been able to work collaboratively with five local primary schools by providing support and services ranging from site management, caretaking and finance. This has increased the capacity of the schools by sharing knowledge, experience and resource which would otherwise have been difficult to obtain. This collaboration has allowed services to be provided and delivered at lower cost and in parallel allowed the sharing of good practice, with a long term benefit to the schools involved.

This outreach programme has allowed the participants to benefit from economies of scale and protect the volatility in budgets of the primary schools allowing for a more efficient allocation of resources internally.

We have provided active assistance with academy conversion to a number of schools and developed a generic academy guidance document that through FASNA could be rolled out to other schools.

We are in the early stages of analysing the results of our approach with a view to developing a more formal collaborative approach where WGGs takes a lead role in providing a range of back office and support services. We are in liaison with more local schools to procure services from us allowing for the achievement of greater buying power and economies of scale. The scale of the support and the associated risks will be carefully assessed before we move forward but there is the potential for greater savings for mutual benefit if sufficient synergies can be identified.

Support for other schools of course includes work on teaching and learning, which is a rich source of professional development for both staffs.

- The music department supports a secondary school with ITT and G&T work.

- The geography department has provided CPD for other schools on the use of interactive OS. They also provide master classes for Year 6 pupils at primary schools.
- The head of chemistry provided support to a local school, including teaching classes for them, when they had a staffing crisis.
- The second in charge of my maths department spent one day a week working in the department of a local secondary school last year.
- The Latin and classics department has arranged to support another secondary school with their trainee as the school does not have any specialists in those subjects.
- Our professional mentor supports other mentors and the university teacher training programme.
- We regularly take additional trainees when other schools have staffing problems.
- We have supported a local school by taking their Teach First trainees for up to a week each at WGGs.
- Several teachers have spent a day in other schools as a subject expert to audit GTP/SD trainees, in maths, Latin, psychology and history.

Supporting schools in the local and direct way we do often remains unrecognised, unknown and uncelebrated. We support these schools because we care deeply about helping our colleagues. We want to help other schools raise standards and, by doing so, to provide opportunities for our own colleagues and students. We are perhaps fortunate to have the capacity to create and manage these partnerships, to the mutual advantage of both schools. But the extent of our involvement in other institutions is carefully monitored so that we ensure this activity never results in lowering the standards of our school.



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Being supported and achieving success

In our last issue, Alun Williams, Headteacher of Norton Hill and Somervale Schools, described how a hard Federation brought benefits to the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership. Here, Mark Kenny, Deputy Head at Somervale School, explains how his school responded

It was a dark winter evening in December 2008 when we finally acceded to the inevitable. The Somervale Headteacher and I were staring at financial balance sheets, primary demographic projections and achievement trend data. It was clear to both that our dearly held autonomy as leaders of a school painfully had to give way to the more urgent need of continuing to provide a high class education for our students. The school could no longer succeed alone and needed help.

It would be wrong to suggest the two converter academies started with the end in mind. The academy converter opportunity only presented itself the year after Federation and was only allowable due to the 'outstanding designation' of our sister school, Norton Hill. The Midsomer Norton Sixth Form only came about two years later when it became apparent that Somervale was now too small to function as a separate 16/18 entity. What did happen, however, from the outset, was a shared belief from Peter Beaven, the designate Headteacher, and from Michael Gorman, the former Headteacher of Somervale School, and the two governing bodies. It was in the best interests of the whole local community to have two successful schools, one big, one small, operating with one Headteacher and one governing body in a shared enterprise of raising educational standards across the partnership.

What surprised me most from the outset was how quickly the Somervale school community came to recognise the potential benefits of Federation with an 'outstanding' school. Parents had a strong affiliation with the old school but understood that partnership had the potential to widen the curriculum for their children. The extension of the option choices post-14 was achieved through shared blocking between the two schools allowing students from both schools to travel between sites for



two of their option choices, enabling such subjects as dance, drama, media, 3D design, graphics and textiles to continue despite small numbers opting at Somervale. The Federation was also attractive to parents as it enabled extended enrichment opportunities for children, for example Duke of Edinburgh's and Ten Tors, which were real strengths at Norton Hill. In 2014 25% of our Y10s are now engaged in the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award with an outdoor pursuits co-ordinator appointed across both schools to manage this.

Staff recognised the professional opportunities that working in a dynamic Federation offered them in career development and professional training. School leaders knew the growing budget deficit had been an albatross around the neck of Somervale, holding back innovation and intervention. The opportunity to share services such as premises management, IT, finance and school leadership made it possible to establish immediately a

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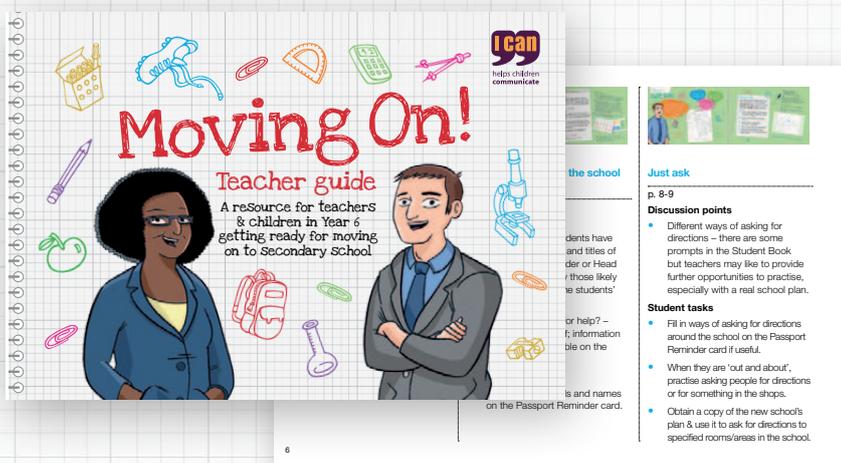
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It was particularly powerful to be able to explain to parents, ‘if you wish to consider joining another local school you will find exactly the same stance on unauthorised absence there.’

successful three-year deficit recovery programme. These changes also enabled senior teaching staff to concentrate on the core function of raising student achievement. This was driven by the financial expertise available at Norton Hill.

In Year 1 there were quick wins, visible to all. A major refurbishment of the hall was funded through a capital loan from Norton Hill’s contingency budget, paid back over time through a rental agreement to provide a Sunday service for the local Baptist church. Progress in maths had stalled and a maths teacher moved for a year to Somervale from Norton Hill to teach some maths classes, sharing best practice. Three levels of progress in maths has gone up accordingly from 41% in 2010 to 73% A*/C in 2013. Somervale had always found it difficult to recruit top quality new entrant maths teachers so in the summer of 2011 the Federation agreed to advertise jointly for two maths teachers, one to work at each school. The quality of the field attracted by the reputation of our sister school astonished us and when the candidates arrived many expressed a preference to teach at the smaller school and we were able to recruit an excellent candidate.

By Year 2 we had established that the future lay in a new shared sixth form, re-branded as the Midsomer Norton Sixth Form. The roll out took two years but by the time students at both schools were opting in 2011 students understood the benefits of a shared sixth form with over 40 courses now available and accepted moving between sites for different subjects as the norm. Again money was secured to build a totemic new sixth form space at the front of the school demonstrating to the local community that post-16 teaching at Somervale was here to stay. This investment has led to a 15% rise of those staying on the study post-16 at Somervale.

We had developed a sophisticated menu of professional development courses using the lead teachers from both schools to run over 30 twilight training courses on the art of teaching run by teachers for teachers across the partnership. The professional

shared dialogue across both schools about teaching and learning energised the professional practice at both schools. By now, teachers from Norton Hill and Somervale were attracted to the idea of year secondments to experience leadership opportunities in the smaller school such as in history and RE, or to work in a larger team at Norton Hill for lone subject practitioners. This has enabled us to hold on to talented staff and enrich their experience.

Strong trust relationships were developing between the senior teams at both schools. Senior leadership meeting time was dedicated to joint sessions, particularly to agree and debate strategic direction across the Federation. Norton Hill has long had a strong reputation for data tracking and progress monitoring and their systems were further developed and rolled out across both schools. The shared governing body insisted on the same quality assurance processes at both schools ensuring that all reporting on school progress met the same rigorous standards. The senior pastoral teams worked closely together to agree shared policy and protocols over attendance. It was particularly powerful to be able to explain to parents, ‘if you wish to consider joining another local school you will find exactly the same stance on unauthorised absence there.’ As a result attendance has risen at Somervale from 91.3% in 2010 to 95.2% in 2014.

It felt that by Year 3 the relationship between the two schools had reached maturity. Peter Beaven, who had won hearts and minds across both schools so skilfully, decided it was time for a phase two of the academy relationship under new leadership. Our own self-evaluation indicated that Somervale was now a ‘good school’ which was soon to be confirmed by Ofsted in January 2013. The appointment of a new Headteacher, Alun Williams, is significant as he was appointed by a new single governing body to be the new Headteacher of both schools.

Naturally our ambitions under his leadership are extending. The successful partnership between the two schools is seen by the governing body as one that can be rolled out to the primary phase and across the whole locality. There has been a renewed focus on the quality of teaching. This had led to a great deal of professional dialogue across schools and agreed actions closely monitored. Again the journey is a common enterprise, with paired leaders across both schools working on a shared agenda. Middle leaders across both sites work very closely to make sure that the quality of post 16 lessons has the same quality standards wherever taught.

It is light outside, Spring five years on. Numbers have just arrived for next year. In those dark days of winter in 2009 we had projected that only 25 families would choose Somervale in 2014; we have 90 first preferences and a sustainable four form entry model into the future. The roll is stable and the future secure. Somervale has thrived due to its relationship with its sister converter academy and, in my view, would no longer be in existence without it.

A transformational journey

The results speak for themselves at the George Spencer Academies Trust

System-led improvement is a phrase used easily, but rarely dissected. The fact is that as the system has been given the autonomy to create its own architecture, inevitably it has designed itself in many different forms. This plurality is healthy, as long the approach taken works. Academy chains, with corporate templates, are perhaps the most obvious and straightforward models for ministers to comprehend, particularly in terms of delivering a ‘quick fix’ for a newly sponsored academy. It is without doubt there are a number of chains which are highly effective in transforming schools and impacting on the life chances

of young people. But equally effective, more context-bound approaches are transforming school improvement in the heart of the country.

The George Spencer Academies Trust in Nottinghamshire is born out of a successful, outward-facing, lead secondary school. It has a tradition of excellence for which the school has received many accolades, including national and international awards. As one of the first converter academies in the country, a Leading Edge and Challenge Partner School GSA, it is at the forefront of innovation, individualised learning and teaching excellence. Its designation as

an approved academy sponsor, National Support School, Teaching School and licensee of the National College’s leadership development programmes reflects the extent of its contribution to system-wide improvement and builds on its excellent reputation for the training and development of teachers and leaders.

The Trust is represented by schools from Nottinghamshire, Nottingham city and Derby city. With gradual expansion, this will include other areas of the East Midlands and beyond. The Teaching School Alliance and Challenge Partners Hub include schools from within Nottingham city, Derbyshire, Leicester and Lincoln. Through these partnerships it is able to draw upon a wider support network offering excellent practice.

“We have a strong moral purpose to improve the lives of young people by inspiring them with a world class education. As a child born in one of the most deprived areas of Sheffield, I appreciate and value the life-changing impact of a good education and supportive parents who wanted a better lifestyle for their daughters than they had experienced. We are passionate about working with and supporting schools and we intend to expand our Trust over the next three-to-five years, to include both sponsored and converter schools across the phases”, says Susan Jowett, Executive Principal.

“We have the capacity and capability to draw upon a range of outstanding practice of highly qualified and experienced practitioners from the schools within our alliance and our trust, and we are always looking to identify excellence practice.”



The Trust cut its teeth in secondary school improvement, working in partnership with Nottinghamshire local authority to help move a local secondary school out of a category. Working in partnership is always a delicate balancing act; weighing the need for rapid improvement against some stakeholder perceptions that ‘some partners are more equal than others’. It is about building trust but above all about building a school-wide intolerance of any practice that isn’t at least ‘good’.

Fresh pairs of eyes can always help refocus institutions that, willingly or otherwise, have become complicit in accepting the unacceptable. However, fresh pairs of hands, both at senior and middle leadership levels also help really galvanise actions. Between 2010 and 2012, Spencer deployed three senior leaders; two of them full-time in the second year; as well as middle leaders alongside a new, passionate internal interim Head to help accelerate student progress and teaching and learning. The art of leading by example, but empowering the host school’s leaders and teachers to deliver sustainable solutions themselves, was learned here.

And the results were unequivocal. Five A*-C GCSEs including maths and English improved from 33% in 2010 to 52% in 2012; five A*-C including maths and English for FSM students improved from 0% in 2010 to 50% in 2012 and five A*-C GCSEs improved from 65% in 2010 to 82% in 2012. School leaders from both institutions have now moved



on to promotions, including three into Headship.

More recently, the trust has become the lead sponsor for a number of local primary schools. Taking on a primary school in the ‘bottom 200 schools’ in Derby city with an explicit anti-academy stance was always a challenge. But Spencer stuck firmly to its principles of understanding the context it was faced with, rather than attempting to build an institution in its own secondary, slightly more enabled image. And once again, the results speak for themselves.

The transformation from Boulton Primary School to Wyndham Primary Academy has been something quite special. Not only have results increased significantly over the last two years since Angela O’Brien became Principal, from below floor to 83% combined L4, but the whole atmosphere of the school has changed. It is now a true learning community for children, parents, staff and the community. Children want to come to school for the exciting curriculum, which is centred around literature, extracurricular activities and the use of ICT. A whole school approach to progress ensures everyone understands data and everyone is focussed on increasing the rate of progress for every child. Each Year 6 pupil has the support of an ‘adult buddy’ from the school to give confidence, help and support as needed as well as working on literacy and numeracy.

Other significant factors along the transformational journey include:

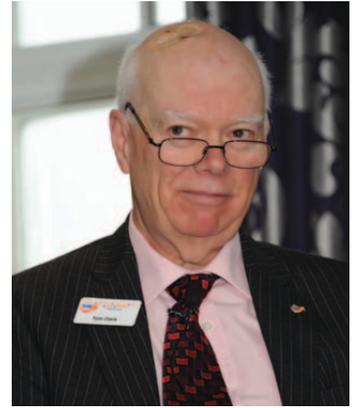
- leadership and governance re-structure
- A mini bus to round up children who want to come to school but whose parents are unable to do this
- The NEST for integration and intervention programmes
- Narrowing the gap intervention programme
- Enlisting volunteer teams of parents, friends to re-decorate the school
- Providing an exciting outdoor play area
- Increased parental support for learning as well as learning new skills themselves helping their children with the iPads.
- Membership of the Teaching School Alliance and Challenge Partner Hub which has enabled the school to access annual reviews and high quality training such as ITP OTP, leadership development programmes and enabled Angela and staff to lead Teachmeets, train as Ofsted inspectors and also support other schools

Susan Jowett is Executive Principal of George Spencer Academies Trust.
Fraser Mitchell is Principal of George Spencer Academy in Nottinghamshire.



Local Authorities – the elephant in the room

Tom Clark, FASNA chairman, examines Tristram Hunt's address at the FASNA Spring Conference



On March 11th Shadow Secretary of State Tristram Hunt addressed the FASNA conference. He complimented FASNA on its diligent and effective campaign of over 20 years for ‘autonomy with accountability’. He quoted PISA evidence that the more autonomous schools systems around the world were raising standards. He championed schools having the freedom to innovate and the autonomy to lead and to determine the curriculum within a system of robust structures but with local oversight – and there’s the rub. What does this mean? Mr Hunt was circumspect in answering this question because of the soon-to-be-published report commissioned by the Labour Party which will be the core of the Labour Manifesto at the next election.

It was put to Tristram Hunt that LAs had a poor record for ‘school improvement’ and had neither the resource nor the skill-set to come back into this arena. Debbie Clinton (Nunthorpe Academy) drew Mr Hunt’s attention to the appalling track record of some LAs in the North East of England and made the link that this was an area where there were few or no sponsored academies or converter academies to raise standards.

Mr Hunt talked of ‘new entrants’ to the middle tier and the value of ‘collaborative competition’ and ‘not going back to the past’ but this would appear to be work in progress which did not capture the imagination of confidence of delegates.

Mr Hunt was very sceptical about the emerging role of DfE ‘regional commissioners’ who would work with free schools and academies.

In his address Tristram Hunt stated that he was proud of ‘Labour’s’ sponsored academies programme but cautious and less open-minded about acknowledging the work of some 3000 converter academies – yet he seemed to be advocating that all schools should have academy freedoms under a Labour government. The question is will all schools in that scenario have all the academy freedoms earned under this government?

Clearly opposed to free schools, he worried about free schools like those in Derby and Bradford but he did not put that concern into the context of the many successes of very many free schools elsewhere in the country. He criticised the government for being more concerned with the numbers of converters than with their subsequent effectiveness, though organisations such as FASNA are working hard to support schools after they have converted.

Subsequently there have been reports in the press that Labour would give academies the option of returning to the LA.

In her vote of thanks Helen Hyde was forceful in making the point that the sins of the few should not be used to punish the many good schools through the creation of unnecessary structures around school improvement which was being successfully led by schools themselves in many parts of the country.

Other matters: Funding

Of course we are pleased with the announcement that £350 million is to be given to the 60 lowest funded LAs. This is a

small step towards getting more equity into school funding but, though welcome, the gesture doesn’t go far enough and will be compromised by the application of LA ‘averages’ and the manipulation of the many labyrinths of the school forum. No Minister or Shadow Minister we have met with thinks the present arrangements can be defended or begin to be fair not only between LAs but often within LAs. Add to this the postcode lottery that is ‘high-needs’ funding and you have to say that the reform of school funding has for too long sat in the politically ‘too-difficult to do drawer’ and the common factor in this unfairness is the application of LA managed local arrangements. It’s time for more political courage which will, presumably, have to wait until after the next election. But fundamentally the issue has been ducked for the last 25 years because there will be ‘losers’ – although apparently it’s acceptable for ‘losers’ of the last 25 years to go on ‘losing’. As Tristram Hunt said to the FASNA conference, the problem is the ‘Vietnam syndrome where many have gone into this zone but few have come out victorious’.

School meals

Meanwhile, there are silly ‘noises off’ like the provision of free school meals in the first three years of statutory education. No matter that some schools don’t have catering facilities; no matter that some parents don’t want their children ‘force-fed’ during the day; no matter that in some schools teaching time will be lost to stagger the provision of meals during the day in accommodation that is not fit for purpose or in spaces needed for lessons like PE or dance drama or assemblies; no matter that in some schools it will be some kind of ‘meals-on-wheels service’; no matter that there is wholesale confusion about who has the money (LAs or DfE) to provide the kitchens and services that some schools and parents don’t want; no matter that it is money coming out of other parts of the schools’ budget as a whole; no matter that the autonomy to make local decisions appropriate to local circumstances is ignored; no matter that there was no consultation about this with schools or even, according to rumour, within government itself. It is government policy.

Governance

And so to governance. Schools cannot be deemed ‘outstanding’ unless there is ‘effective governance’ – at FASNA we feel that this is a good thing. Yet we have a clunky Ofsted framework with bits added on to paper-over the cracks. The cultural shift required in governance is too important to get things wrong. Let’s get all inspectors to understand the new landscape so that when a school in a MAT is inspected it can’t be a stand-alone, single school perspective which fails to acknowledge the profoundly different local arrangements which may obtain for each school within the MAT. The impact of the MAT and the place of the school within it matters or it wouldn’t be an arrangement made for the benefit of the students in the first place.

Time to tear d



Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, wants state schools to learn from the very best the independent sector has to offer

Just a few weeks ago I visited the London Academy of Excellence – a school which opened just a year and a half ago and is already a shining example of what free schools and academies can achieve. LAE's students are from Newham, one of the most disadvantaged boroughs in the country, yet last year six of its first cohort of pupils received offers from Oxbridge. That's more than every other school in Newham put together. It's

own the walls

also more than many independent schools with fees upward of £30,000.

LAE is just one example of the transformational impact our academy and free school programme is having across the country. Results show that sponsored academies are improving more quickly than other state-funded schools, at both primary and secondary level. Converter academies are outperforming other schools and achieving better Ofsted reports than maintained schools.

The independence we have given free schools and academies has given them the same freedoms which have been long enjoyed by independent schools. It's an opportunity which thousands of people have already seized.

In May 2010 just 6% of secondary schools were academies and there were no primary academies. Almost four years on, 53% of secondary schools and more than 1,700 primaries are academies. From a standing start in 2010, there are now 174 free schools open and a further 100 opening in 2014 or beyond.

This programme is driven by our belief in higher standards for all children, no matter where they live or what their parents can afford. We shouldn't accept the defeatist attitude which says state schools can't be as good as independent schools. We believe that every child can succeed and should have the opportunity of a good education.

But, sadly, the Labour Party don't

agree – at least, that's what their latest statements suggest. In 2010 the man who is now Labour's Shadow Education Secretary memorably called free schools 'a vanity project for yummy mummies'. But when he became Shadow Education Secretary last year Tristram Hunt said he would put 'rocket boosters' under parents wanting to set up schools. Days later, he u-turned yet again, describing free schools as 'a dangerous ideological experiment'. And he admitted Labour still don't back parents setting up schools in areas where there are spare places in unpopular and failing local schools.

Now Tristram Hunt has called for 'an immediate halt to the free schools programme'. This is despite Ed Miliband implying just days later that Labour would let approved free schools continue, albeit with new intervention mechanisms.

Would open free schools be halted under a Labour government? Or would they be allowed to continue, albeit with new intervention mechanisms? Would free school projects which have been approved, but not yet opened, be allowed to proceed? Or would they be stopped in their tracks? Labour don't seem to know.

Labour don't just disagree on whether free schools should continue. Last year Tristram Hunt said Labour wouldn't 'go back to the old days of the local authority running all the schools – they will not be in charge.' But just a month earlier Ed Miliband had said Labour would have a

'local authority framework for all schools' – including academies and free schools. Labour's Blunkett review is currently deciding which path the party will chose. Will it back Tristram Hunt and keeping the independence which has allowed free schools and academies to thrive? Or will it back Ed Miliband by bringing back local authority control and bureaucracy? I know leaders in academies and free schools will, like myself, be extremely interested in the outcome.

My vision is clear. I want to tear down the Berlin Wall between the state and private school sectors. I want state schools to learn from the very best the independent sector has to offer – whether on providing a longer school day, more academic rigour, or tougher discipline. The academies and free schools programme enables state schools to do this. Any halt to the programme would lead to a terrible reversal of the improvement in our children's education we are starting to see.

I only hope that, as they have done on grade inflation, the EBacc, our new accountability system and the national curriculum, Labour come to their senses. Pupils across the country deserve to receive the same standard of education enjoyed by those at the London Academy of Excellence, and at thousands more academies and free schools across the country.

Labour's vision for education

Tristram Hunt, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, says raising the standard of teaching will be a Labour Government's first priority in education



We are deeply grateful for all the work that FASNA does so effectively in campaigning for freedom and autonomy in our schools. Its diligence in understanding the importance of autonomy is second to none

Whether it be William Lovett's Chartist Schools, R.H Tawney and the Workers Educational Association, Anthony Crosland and the Comprehensive Movement, or Andrew Adonis's Sponsored Academy Programme; the belief in the emancipatory power of schooling, its ability to lift people out of poverty and deliver social justice, has always been core to the Labour movement.

And whilst the means and expression of those values may have changed over the decades, our end – of equipping our young citizens with the freedom to choose how best to live their life – has remained constant.

Equally enduring is our commitment to empowering schools with the autonomy and freedom needed to innovate and raise standards.

From David Blunkett 'passporting' school funding down to school level in 1997, to the code of practice for local authority and school relations in 1998 and the dedicated schools grant in 2006, our record in government when it comes to giving outstanding school leaders operational independence, is one of which we are immensely proud.

Moreover, we are, of course, the party that first created academies with our revolutionary Sponsored Academy Programme.

There can be little argument against the importance of school autonomy when you see the transformative effect of that programme on challenging areas such as Hackney, Manchester and parts of Bristol.

Of course strong leadership, school

to school collaboration and high quality teaching also played their part in that and we would make strong argument that it is the latter of those in particular, which provides the surest way to boost attainment and give our children the start in life they deserve.

The international evidence is unequivocal on this point: no education system can outperform the quality of its teachers.

That is why raising the status, elevating the standing and lifting standards in the teaching profession will be the first priority in education for a 2015 Labour government.

However, as the recent OECD PISA survey highlighted, there is also a growing body of evidence in support of school autonomy, particularly when it comes to the freedoms over assessment, choosing teachers and developing curricula.

The Labour Party's commitment to school freedoms however, is based upon more than the international evidence. There is also a strong ideological current that flows within the party of trusting the professional integrity and moral mission of committed public servants.

In short, we believe that Headteachers should be able to make decisions about what is best for their pupils without undue interference from politicians.

And we believe that highly qualified and motivated teachers should be liberated from curriculum prescription, so that they and they alone can decide how best to awaken the passion for learning so desperately needed for a strong society and growing economy.

So we are deeply grateful for all the work that FASNA does so effectively in campaigning for freedom and autonomy in our schools. Its diligence in understanding the importance of autonomy is second to none.

However, we also believe that if autonomy works then it should be enjoyed by all schools, irrespective of type, name or governance structure.

After all, if the evidence says Headteachers should have the freedom to commission specialist provision and services, or extend the school day, why should they have to embark on a highly bureaucratic structural re-organisation in order to do so?

And if we believe that the freedom to innovate in the classroom and experiment with the curriculum can give teachers a renewed sense of confidence and professionalism, then why not spread that to maintained schools?

We should not confuse ends with means here – if we want to encourage school autonomy then the freedoms that can help raise standards, currently the preserve of academies, should be passed on to all schools.

Under a 2015 Labour Government, that is precisely what would happen.

And yet there is always a balance to be struck between encouraging innovation and autonomy, whilst at the same time making sure that standards and attainment do not suffer.

Examples such as the Al-Madinah Free School in Derby, the Kings Science Academy in Bradford, or the E-Act academy chain have exposed the inevitable limitations of the Department for Education attempting to monitor thousands of schools from Whitehall. We need local oversight to provide us with an early warning system.

But this balance we seek runs deeper than that. Indeed, as one of the Labour movement's greatest educationalists, R.H Tawney, once wrote:

“A society in which some groups do much of what they please, while others can do little of what they ought, may have virtues of its own: but freedom is not one of them. It is free in so far, and only in so far, as all the elements composing it are able in fact, not merely in theory to make the most of their powers.”

His point being that negative freedom – freedom from – does not always equate with providing the freedom necessary for positive practical action.

Freedom from local oversight therefore, can diminish the opportunities for positive collaboration and innovation.

Freedom from a national strategy to improve teaching standards might

stop teachers enjoying freedom for developing a reflective, enquiring approach to their practice.

And ultimately when it comes to such damaging policies as giving schools freedom from having to employ teachers with qualified teacher status, then we must step in to protect that most basic positive freedom within our schools system: the freedom for our young people to fulfil their educational potential.

So under Labour all schools will be subject to proper local oversight and will have to employ teachers in the classroom that are qualified or working towards qualified teacher status.

To compromise on this would, we believe, be to compromise with low standards.

If we want to encourage school autonomy then the freedoms that can help raise standards, currently the preserve of academies, should be passed on to all schools

Meeting the needs of the skills gap

Lord Baker, Chairman of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust and former Secretary of State for Education and Science, champions University Technical Colleges

Speaking to FASNA members at National Conference it is clear that since I started CTCs and grant maintained schools, independent state schools have not only survived but also flourished. I am delighted that the sector continues to grow in strength and university technical colleges form a crucial part of this.

Over the last four years the Baker Dearing Educational Trust has been promoting university technical colleges (UTCs) for 14-18 year olds. These are schools that offer a very particular curriculum that combines a solid academic education with a technical and practical one.

At present we have more than 900,000 young people unemployed and yet we need to find more than 1.2m new scientists, engineers and technicians by 2020. The UK needs advanced technical skills at all levels if we are to prosper in the 21st century. Whether in manufacturing, wind farms, rail links or hi-tech hospitals we need a workforce that can develop new products, stretch and reuse existing resources, and meet all the challenges of the future.

UTCs are a direct response to meeting the needs of the skills gap and by 2016 more than 30,000 students will be able to follow this new technical education pathway.

Specialisms, school day and size

There are currently 17 UTCs open across the country and each has two technical

specialisms in Science, Technology, Engineering or Maths (STEM). At Plymouth it is marine engineering and advanced manufacturing; at Wigan, food processing and environmental technology; at Elstree, entertainment and digital technologies; at Liverpool, life sciences; at Bristol, engineering and environmental technology; at Silverstone, motor engineering; and at Reading, computer science and software engineering.

UTCs offer a new pathway for young people to pursue their interests in an environment that values academic and technical study equally. Academic subjects are fully integrated within UTCs' technical specialisms offering students a unique learning experience. In Key Stage 4 students spend 40% of their time on technical studies and this rises to 60% in Years 12 and 13. A great deal of learning time is dedicated to practical activities, such as designing and building products, working in teams and solving real-world challenges.

So how does this all fit into the school day? A UTC has a longer teaching day from 8.30am to 5.00pm and a 40-week school year. This allows students to complete their homework during the school day and it also helps to prepare them for the adult working day.

Starting at 14 makes sense

As well as a different curriculum, students can join a UTC at 14 (Year 10). This may seem radical but in Austria, Denmark

and the Netherlands it is the norm and, interestingly, in these countries youth unemployment is significantly lower.

Our view is that it is too early to choose a specialist path at 11, and at 16 it can be too late. If a student knows where their interests lie, they can often become frustrated and underperform by the time they are 16 if they do not see the relevance of what they are studying. By integrating practical and academic learning, we show our students exactly where their learning can take them. Because they gain technical qualifications equivalent to GCSEs, it also gives them a head start and at 16, they are ready to enrol on higher-level qualifications.

At 16 students can choose to start an apprenticeship, study for A levels at the UTC, or leave to join a different sixth form or college. From 16 students study A Levels, BTEC or equivalent level 3 qualifications before leaving to start work, begin an advanced or higher apprenticeship, or study at university.

Backed by employers and universities

Fundamental to each UTC is the close involvement of employers from the very start. More than 500 employers support UTCs, including Rolls-Royce, Siemens, Network Rail and Microsoft, as well as scores of small and medium sized businesses. For the first time in our history, employers are actively involved in what and how students are learning.



UTC facts and figures

First UTC was the The JCB Academy
 17 UTCs are open offering 3000 places
 50 UTCs to be open by 2016 offering 30,000 places
 Backed by nearly 50 universities and 500+ employers

UTC governance

A UTC is operated by a company limited by guarantee, commonly referred to as an “academy trust”. Academy trusts which operate academies (including UTCs) are exempt charities, which means that they are still subject to charity law principles but they are not registered directly with the Charity Commission. Their Principal Regulator for charity purposes is instead the Department for Education. The Governors are responsible for the overall management of the academy trust and are also “directors” for company law purposes and “trustees” from a charity law perspective. The UTC Articles of Association require that the Governors appointed by the Members must include nominees of the Employer(s) and University(ies), and these nominees must form a majority of the total number of Governors. This is one of the defining features of UTCs. Two parent governors and the Principal are also on the Governing Body.

Together with nearly 50 universities they have given their time, their insights and their technical expertise to direct the curriculum of individual UTCs. More than this, they also step into classrooms, mentor and inspire students, and make sure young people are well prepared to succeed in vital technical industries.

Engineering students at Royal Greenwich UTC are working with Transport for London and Network Rail to understand how to build the railways of the future; young motor racing engineers learn their craft with the help of McLaren at the Silverstone UTC; and students at Bucks UTC are personally mentored by the CEO of Taylor Wimpey.

Set for success

Across the country parents are understandably anxious about the impact of youth unemployment on their children’s future job opportunities. The fact that UTCs offer close links with employers who, in turn, provide mentoring, work placements and practical advice is highly attractive. And results from the first UTC, The JCB Academy in Staffordshire, suggest that they are set to be hugely successful. As well as an 88% pass rate in GCSE maths and outstanding results in the engineering diploma, every single leaver went on to further or higher education, apprenticeship or employment. There

were no NEETs, itself a remarkable achievement. Little wonder that Prime Minister David Cameron has recently said, “Let’s have one of these colleges in every single major town”.

Thousands of students are now choosing to study at a UTC and by 2016 there will be 50 UTCs with more are in the pipeline.

As I visit these impressive institutions I ask students if they feel they have made the right choice. All emphatically say “yes”. It is this ringing endorsement from 14-18 year olds and the support we have from employers and universities that gives me so much pride in UTCs. Together we are actively addressing youth unemployment and the skills gap.

It's the things you don't see that make a school work



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Stellar names and lively debate

Leading policy-makers put on the spot at the FASNA Spring Conference

The Spring Conference, attended by over 150 delegates from across the country, once again managed to attract a stellar line-up of speakers.

The conference opened with Chris Wormald, the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education. Chris referred to a review of the DfE undertaken last year. This review aimed to help the Department become a “world class service”. He argued that the review was helping the DfE to meet the challenge of continued austerity, the growth of autonomous schools and academies and the need to improve the DfE’s effectiveness.

The Department had required serious structural changes to meet a 50% cut in resources. However, the challenge of bringing about a change in the ethos and

culture of the Department has been just as difficult. The audience smiled when he said that there needed to be an emphasis on Performance Management of officials (something schools have had to practice for years). Staff are being deployed flexibly and no longer remain in one specialist team. This means that the DfE may not have experts in every field but will seek advice from external experts as needs be. The service needs to be data driven (more smiles from the audience) and decision-making has to be leaner – the DfE would do those things that only a Department of State could do, and not focus on things others could do, even if these were valued by the Department.

The impact of this on schools is that the Department cannot be a source of advice and support in the way it is



Questions from the audience

has been. It sets the framework and leaves autonomous schools to it, only intervening if things go wrong.

Chris then took questions from the audience. He surprised delegates by saying that the introduction of Free School Meals for KS1 had been long-planned and not a knee-jerk response born out of coalition politics. He also extolled the need for research-based changes in education, much as there is in the health service. In an echo of Jon Cole’s speech to the Autumn Conference, Chris Wormald compared practice in the Health Service – where there is enormous respect for practitioner’s research who would never seek advice from government on how to do things – to education, where practitioners have too little regard for, or engagement in, their own research.

The Permanent Secretary of the DfE was followed by an ‘audience’ with Peter Lauener, the Chief Executive of the Education Funding Agency. Martin Latham, Head of Robinswood and Waterwells Academies and a member of FASNA’s Executive Board, questioned Peter on aspects of funding. Peter wanted



Tom Clark, FASNA chair, questions Permanent Secretary Chris Wormald

The conference inspired plenty of debate and discussions



to point out that the press coverage of academies mishandling their finances was grossly unfair. With 3884 academies there have only been six investigations into an academy's finances and six Financial Notices to Improve. He said the press should focus on what was going well.

Asked by Peter Taylor from Worth Primary why there was duplication with Deloitte needing returns in January, Peter said he knew that Deloitte was "a new swearword amongst school business managers" but these returns were needed for the consolidated accounts for Parliament. Members may not have liked



Lord Baker

the answer but they appreciated Peter's honesty and bluntness.

Peter informed conference that there was to be no consultation on a National Fair Funding Formula but that there would soon be news on 2015-16.

(Here he was referring to the announcement on 13 March, two days after Conference, that there would be £350 million of new money for low-funded LAs which may help move towards fairer funding – Ed)

Mike Griffiths from Samworth Church Academy asked about the spiraling costs of High Needs Funding, which LAs might like to enlarge as it was under their control.

Peter Lauener agreed that the system for High Needs funding needed to be watched to ensure it was working effectively and meeting needs.

Finally, in response to a question about School Forums, Peter delighted the audience by saying that these would not be needed once we get a National Funding Formula. He reiterated that this was something he supported and that he felt no political party could continue to duck this issue.

The next speaker was Tristram Hunt MP, Shadow Education Secretary. Tom Clark covers Tristram's speech in his article on page 30. Suffice to say that Tristram praised FASNA and

its campaign for school autonomy, something which he endorsed because international comparison identified high-performing education systems with high levels of school autonomy. This was good news – but then his thinking became less clear as he spoke of the need to create a Middle Tier. He would not be drawn on this idea – saying it would be announced in the next month or so – but he left the audience fearing a reduction in autonomy and a return to LA control or something like it. It certainly felt as if autonomy was not safe in Labour's hands!

Members' business included an update on the National Induction Panel for Teachers from CEO Peter Beaven, Pam Wright from Wade Deacon School and Sonia Case from Dulwich Hamlet Junior School on their contribution to system leadership. This chimed with Tom Clark's comments that FASNA members need to celebrate and publicise the contributions of converter academies to the national scene of school improvement. It finished with Helen Hyde's request for support for the National Holocaust Commission.

Lunch was a good opportunity to network and to visit exhibitors.

After lunch it was the turn of Lord Baker to outline the thinking behind University Technical Colleges (UTCs). His presentation was well received and



Questions from the floor

is covered in his article on page 36. It was fantastic to see Lord Baker's enthusiasm undimmed from his time as Education Secretary in the mid-1980s.

Conference ended with a legal update from Roger Inman of Stone King Solicitors. This is always valued by members as Roger keeps them abreast of the changing legal situation for schools. Stone King contribute regularly to FASNA's newsletter.



Tristram Hunt addresses the delegates



Martin Latham, FASNA Executive Board Member, and Peter Lauener, Chief Executive of EFA, engage with the audience



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- All FASNA member schools will receive a FREE copy of this publication

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- Commitment to support member schools to make their own links and networks



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Heading in the right direction

An optimistic Sir Michael Wilshaw believes that improved leadership and teaching are delivering a better standard of education to our children



It should be a 'badge of honour' for newly-qualified teachers to go into the most-challenging schools and be incentivised to do so by the government and by the National College

The education system in our country is rapidly improving – nearly 80% of schools are now judged good or better. More demanding inspection frameworks, but even more importantly, better leadership and teaching are delivering a better standard of education to our children.

However, while it is true that steady progress has been made to improve standards, it is also true that we still have much to do to compete with the best education systems in the world. The main reason our international competitors do better than us is because they do more to invest in their teaching force. They not only recruit good people to the classroom, but they also spend more time and money on professionally developing them. They are also much better at identifying, at the earliest possible stage, the most-talented teachers in order to promote them into leadership positions.

England must do the same. Therefore, the training and support that is offered to trainees at the start of their career has to be of the highest quality. Unless they are adequately prepared for the rigours of the classroom, retention will always be a problem and we will continue to see the haemorrhaging of talent that has been the blight of the profession for many years.

Nevertheless, I am optimistic. We have never before seen as many motivated, qualified and enthusiastic young people coming into teaching. Teach First and other similar initiatives have made a real



difference. It is remarkable that the number one destination for Oxford university graduates is teaching. I had never thought that I would see this in my career, and it is a real turnaround from the days when I first became a Headteacher, when it was almost impossible to recruit good teachers for any subject in the curriculum, never mind the stem subjects.

Ninety-six per cent of all teachers now have a degree, compared to 70% of secondary teachers and 47% of primary teachers 20 years ago. Last year, every subject recruited the highest percentage of students with a first class or upper second degree since records began.

These bright and enthusiastic teachers must not be put off teaching by the poor quality of their training or by lack of support in their first job. Training providers must ensure that strong links are forged with local schools and that regular communication takes place on the progress of new entrants. Providers must also track trainees beyond their newly-qualified year, to provide the National College with much-needed data on the quality of training and the support in the early years of the profession.

It is also vitally important that training providers ensure there is a fair distribution of newly-qualified staff to schools across the country. I am most concerned that parts of our country that desperately need good-quality staff suffer the most serious shortages. This is because insufficient thought has been given to the location and status of training provision.

The huge variation in standards across our country and across the eight Ofsted regions will only be addressed if Headteachers in struggling schools can be assured that they will receive a steady supply of well-trained teachers. We must avoid polarisation at all

costs, with good schools improving because they can attract good trainees and weak schools spiralling further into decline because they find it almost impossible to get staff. Indeed, it should be a 'badge of honour' for newly-qualified teachers to go into the most-challenging schools and be incentivised to do so by the government and by the National College. Certainly, the National College must develop a strategy to ensure that this polarisation does not take place.

As you know, Ofsted is consulting on a new framework for Initial Teacher Education. It will be a two-part framework, with inspectors looking at the quality of training as well as at the support provided to new entrants in the first few years. This more-demanding framework will weed out those providers who cannot meet these higher standards.

Teaching has come a very long way from the days when I first entered the classroom. There are more and better teachers working in a profession that people are proud to join. As I have said before, teaching can be pure magic. If we want to build on the recent successes in teacher recruitment, we need to be as honest about the magic as we are frank about the frustrations.

If we get teacher training and support right, we will have well-trained teachers who are confident, have a sense of authority and who will know how to inspire some of our most challenging children. Getting this right would not only mean retaining more of our newly-qualified teachers, but would also lead to our country moving to a better position to rival the top education systems in the world. The future success of our nation relies on good teaching and we need to make sure that all schools are playing their part in making this vision happen.

Appraising the CEO

Governor Elaine Green says that those appraising leaders need to develop within themselves more resilient judgment skills

Currently a governor at an independent school, I have also served as a community governor. My professional background is HR, now working as a member of the employment law team at Steeles Law.

Given my professional interest, I am taxed (and sometimes 'tasked') as a governor to consider how best to appraise the Headteacher (for which please read 'Principal' or 'CEO').

I ask myself primarily, what do I expect of the CEO and how might I assess individual performance against that expectation?

Formally, and rather pointedly, leadership responsibility is assigned to the senior leadership team, regardless of the leadership capabilities of the individual team members. Practically, leadership activity is not exclusive to this group, but is a competence of all involved in educating and teamworking. Maybe, when appraising the CEO, we need to look at how s/he draws out the potential of all the leaders, movers and shakers across the school to the students' advantage.

In a report recently published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) leadership is described as 'the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives'. Management is the formal process of administration, planning and organising processes or people.

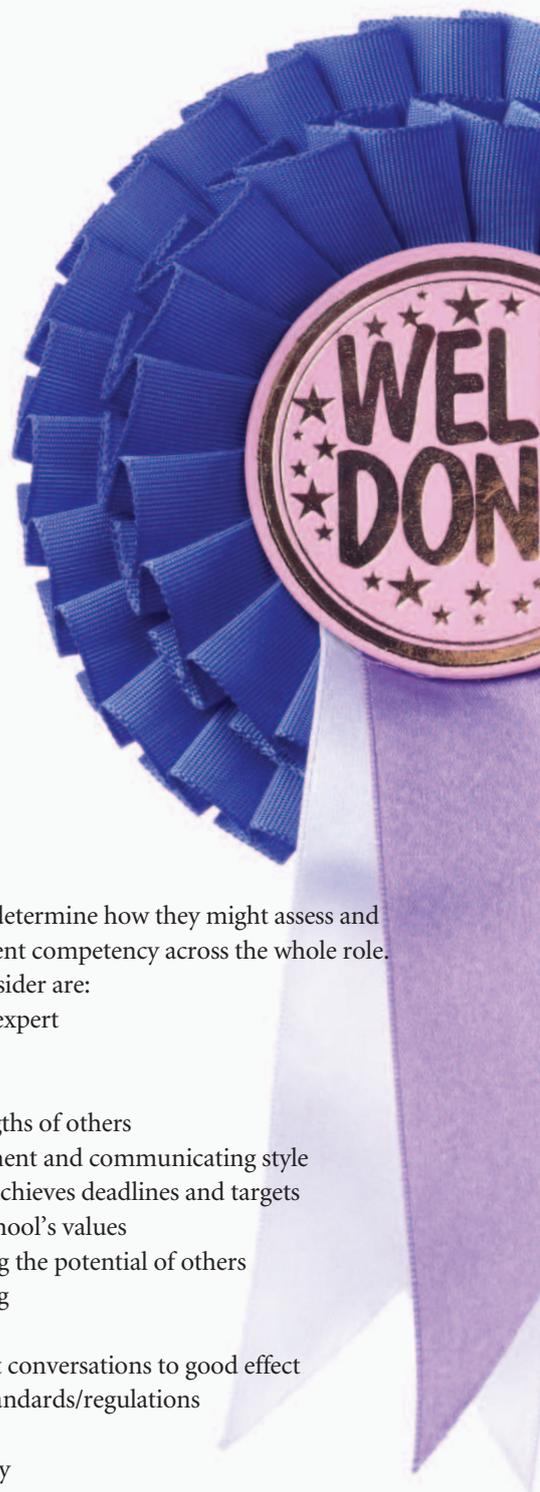
I want our CEO to be good at all of these activities, even if we were unable to test against all of them at the recruiting stage.

I invite all governors to determine how they might assess and develop good management competency across the whole role. Attributes we might consider are:

- Professional leader/expert
- Motivating
- Innovative
- Playing to the strengths of others
- Adaptable management and communicating style
- Ensuring everyone achieves deadlines and targets
- Champion of the school's values
- Assessing/developing the potential of others
- Managing well-being
- Role model
- Conducting difficult conversations to good effect
- Compliance with standards/regulations
- Managing conflict
- Delegating effectively
- Financial/business competence

Schools, indeed individual governors, may have their own list that looks something like this. We expect a CEO competency of working through others to run alongside the completion of assigned tasks and objectives. Senior roles carry both task-oriented and people-oriented responsibilities and the CIPD reports that employees expect behaviours of empathy and caring from a leader.

Yet the CIPD cites a tension between achieving objectives and





managing, indeed caring for, other people in the team. Task-oriented management focuses on achieving objectives, without regard to employee well-being; people-oriented behaviours prioritise workers over task.

Leadership style may, in fact, be as significant as competence. Some individuals are more directive than others, and individual style will shift the balance between task and people management within any group.

The appraisal is more complicated in so far as tasks and targets are often short-term and easy to measure, whilst the so-called ‘soft skills’ are hard to evaluate. As an appraiser I need to accommodate this imbalance, and then address the corresponding gaps or shortcomings in my own assessment skills.

So, I ask myself:

- Can you articulate what you are trying to achieve through your CEO?
- Are you able to identify skills or experience gaps in your appraisee?
- What data can inform you about these gaps?
- Have you put in place development and investment actions, consistent with your school values and aims, which target what you are trying to achieve?

- Are their contradictions or confused messages in your school structure or culture that inhibit good performance?

I have no ready answers, but these are my professional challenges on which I must focus. I worry too about the availability, accuracy and reliability of the evidence for verifying senior performance. Writing in the *Training Journal*, Jean Gomes describes the role that self-deception and prejudice play in the judgment of rational and intelligent people. When it comes to assessing CEO behaviours, I recognise that I need to be more alert to flaws in my own judgment capability that act against the best interests of the school. Gomes writes:

“Self-deception can be described as true information being preferentially excluded from our consciousness and replaced by false information. The impact on a leader’s performance is considerable, covering a wide scope of issues:

- How we assess risk
- The acceptance of advice
- The ability to process facts objectively
- Giving or withholding support to others
- How we recruit or overlook talent
- How we promote people or hold them back.”

Using the example of what we tell the doctor when asked about our alcohol intake, Gomes identifies difference between



Centerprise's tailored approach puts IT at the heart of learning

When pupils arrive at The Reach Free School each morning, their day starts with technology. Everyone who goes into the school in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, "clocks in" with a computerised log-in system at the front desk.

It stores identification details of staff, students and visitors along with their photographs to make sure the school is safe and secure.

As the school day goes on, IT remains at the heart of almost every aspect of pupils' learning. They have iPads to use in lessons, and can take them home to complete homework. They use Google apps to seamlessly sync their work across laptops, PCs and tablets.

A comprehensive IT suite includes PC and Mac computers, ensuring students experience a range of applications and operating systems. Pupils are even able to plug in Raspberry Pi units to help them learn the basics of computer programming.

Academy and free school experts Centerprise International worked closely with the headteacher and staff at The Reach to build a system from the ground up so the school, which opened last year, could ensure that the smart use of IT was

central to its teaching philosophy.

This collaborative working approach means Centerprise's clients get a bespoke service that fits their needs. No two schools are the same, and that's why the IT setup provided by Centerprise is tailored for each client.

For example, The Reach has opened on a temporary site and will move to a new building as it grows. Centerprise worked with the school to ensure the system could be easily moved when the time comes. Servers were placed in mobile cabinets and all the systems were linked wirelessly to minimise the need to rewire at the new site.

Centerprise is quickly becoming the go-to provider for academy and free schools and has installed tailored systems at schools up and down the country with an emphasis on security, flexibility and value for money.

Jeremy Bruty, education director at Centerprise International, said: "The

headteacher at The Reach really wanted to put IT at the heart of everything the school does.

"Our challenge was to work within their budget to deliver equipment that works seamlessly and will grow as the school does. By working closely with The Reach Free School, as we do with all our clients, we were able to deliver a package that exactly meets their needs."

Richard Booth, headteacher at The Reach, said: "Our IT is at the heart of everything we do - it's not just confined to IT lessons. For example they'll use language apps to learn Spanish, or use their tablets to research history for humanities.

"We told Centerprise what we wanted and our budget and they came up with the equipment and set it up. Every single thing we asked for, they have delivered."

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Using the example of what we tell the doctor when asked about our alcohol intake, Gomes identifies difference between deliberately hiding something from others and unconsciously hiding something from ourselves

deliberately hiding something from others and unconsciously hiding something from ourselves. The CIPD reports that less experienced and untrained managers see themselves as more competent in all aspects of being a manager than may be the case. Earlier HR research has shown that core management competencies can be taught, but mostly where learning programmes contain elements of raising self-awareness, feedback and hands-on experience. New managers are less likely to report any difficulties in their job, while those managing people for a period of between one and five years are the most concerned. The confidence levels then seem to improve for managers with five or more years of experience in their role. These findings may be applicable to schoolteachers and other staff of varying levels of experience both in professional and managerial roles, and could be helpful to governors when reviewing individual performance and development needs.

Whether duping ourselves or not, when we make judgments about the behaviours of others which impact profoundly on the lives of third parties, such as students and colleagues, we need to be actively much more self-aware and develop within ourselves more resilient judgment skills.

Citing the work of researchers Mercier and Sperber, Gomes asserts that self-deception is an evolutionary trait, central to the fight or flight response, that enables us to make rapid decisions and argue our case. Unaware of our deception, we are free to develop counter-arguments, unencumbered by the truth! The 'unconscious bias' in our decision-making has great significance for both staff recruitment and appraisal in the way we gather data and interpret them; distorting salient facts may increase governance risk for the organisation.

I can summarise what I, as governor and HR specialist, take away from all this. I need to:

- 1 identify with colleague governors and the CEO the medium and short-term priorities for senior management in terms of strategic and operational achievement. This includes aspects of culture, ethos and employer values which, when

- 2 taken together deliver a stronger and more consistent improvement in the student experience and achievement;
- 2 where priorities include operational targets and skills gaps, agree with the CEO a ranking or weighting, given their impact on the school as a whole;
- 3 explore with the CEO what the style of leadership is likely to be, if necessary engaging external help to inform our conversations about priorities and objectives;
- 4 identify and describe more clearly the management behaviours that will lead to increased performance; agree with the CEO how we measure performance against expectations, mindful that poor data on performance is likely to make it difficult for governors to address management inconsistency;
- 5 identify with the CEO barriers to good management behaviour that exist in the school structure or culture; if difficult conversations, poor communications and conflict inhibit good management; put in place measures to address gaps in experience or leadership skill;
- 6 address unconscious bias and self-deception in me or the CEO when discussing priorities and skills gaps, so minimising risk by focusing on the right course of action; build a trusting and open relationship so that we can both achieve.

Elaine Green is a governor at Leighton Park School in Reading and the Education HR Relationship Manager with Steeles Law Solicitors. She worked for many years as Director of HR in local government, higher education and social housing. As an independent HR specialist, she has advised independent schools, academies and other public sector and voluntary organisations.

She can be contacted on egreen@steeleslaw.co.uk via the website www.steeleslaw.co.uk or LinkedIn.



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“Striking, intriguing and groundbreaking”

Graham Burns looks at the DfE proposal to introduce Regional Commissioners to act as the ‘middle tier’



The Department for Education proposes to appoint eight regional schools commissioners to lead one of their most striking and intriguing reforms of the Michael Gove era. They will hold a ‘middle tier’ role, acting as a link between the DfE and academy schools, so as to progress the reforms to deliver a ‘world-class education system across England’ – an ambitious aim given our current moribund performance in international school league tables. In each region, commissioners will be assisted by five to six local outstanding Headteachers, elected by their peers. It is this feature of having Headteachers elected onto boards which is the most groundbreaking.

The operational decision-making roles of the DfE and Secretary of State will pass to the commissioners who will continue to exercise these bodies’ existing powers in relation to academies. They will have a lead role in many aspects of regulating academies, whether it be monitoring performance, seeking to improve underperforming academies, or dealing with matters concerning new academy sponsors. They will not however intervene with schools that are performing well as that would be contrary to the doctrine of autonomy for such schools. It is thought that employing such commissioners will raise standards as they will be ‘closer to the ground’ and better able to determine and resolve issues as they arise.

The rationale is to allow decisions about academies to be taken at a level closer to the academy itself, and to restore some of the local accountability which has hitherto been missing from the academy programme. This should enable feedback and influence from those directly involved in the running of academies, as opposed to those officials at the higher level of the DfE. The rise in the number of academies represents a move towards a self-regulated system, and the shift of operational decision-making from the DfE to commissioners seeks to continue this move. The Secretary of State then becomes a regulator of last resort.

Ultimately, the aim and purpose of the commissioners is to work alongside academies, and to help them identify and solve any problems that arise at a local community level. Although some may argue that these reforms still leave the most

important decisions to be made by the DfE, it is hoped that the commissioners will be able to avoid taking matters to this higher level by seeking the expertise of local Headteachers and school leaders.

A similar programme has been established in New York where Headteachers were granted greater autonomy while working alongside School Support Organisations and Superintendents of regions, rather than directly with the City’s Department of Education. Giving school leaders greater flexibility to respond to the learning needs of their pupils in New York has appeared to have a significant effect, and independent assessments have revealed that the shift in allowing greater control at school level has had a positive impact upon results and graduation rates. Hopefully the same can be achieved here.

There will need to be parameters set down as to who will be eligible for election to the school boards, and terms of reference defined. Once the board is established there will need to be a regime in place for managing the inevitable conflicts which will arise. The Headteachers on the boards will be making decisions which will have impact on their schools and neighbouring schools. The decision to move a school into academy status is both important and politically contentious - and decisions about which sponsor to favour can have a critical impact on local school communities. Headteachers who sit on the boards will also need to weigh in the balance their own views, and whether the Trusts who employ them may take a different view to their own about the best interests of a particular school. The Headteachers are sure to move into some uncharted territory, and the system is bound to come under the spotlight.

Graham Burns is a solicitor at Stone King. He has a substantial practice in the academies sector, a history that began with him acting for the West London Free School on the very first free school funding agreement.

How good is your induction panel for NQTs?

Peter Beaven reminds schools that Ofsted inspections will look at the quality of support offered to NQTs



National Induction
Panel for Teachers

In his speech at the North of England Education Conference, Sir Michael Wilshaw made it clear that Ofsted would be looking at the quality of support for NQTs. He said:

“We will be much tougher on ... schools that don’t adequately support those new to the profession. So from September, in every section 5 school inspection, inspectors will meet with NQTs to ask them if they are being well supported, particularly in dealing with pupil behaviour. Where we see NQTs struggling in the classroom, we will ask about the support in the school.”

He has repeated this in his article in this issue of *Academy* magazine, saying that Ofsted Inspectors will look at the quality of support given to new entrants to teaching in the first years.

So now, more than ever, schools and academies need to be sure that they have a clear, systematic programme of support for their NQTs. Some schools and academies already have this. They have programmes they have designed themselves which are perfectly adequate. However, many do not. Even if they do, they may have staff who are not trained in their role, systems that are not well supported with relevant guidance, and staff who are ill equipped to make tough demands of NQTs to ensure they are performing at a suitably high level.

And then, what of the Appropriate Body – which is usually the Local Authority? Do they check the quality of what their schools are doing? Do they provide support and training? Do schools get feedback on their assessments? And most crucially of all, are they willing to support schools who want to fail an NQT?

If NQTs are not up to the standard academies require, despite being well supported, academies must be confident that their judgement will be upheld by their Appropriate Body. This hasn’t been the case in the past with Local Authorities being reluctant to fail NQTs – out of more than 30,000 NQTs only 11 failed in the last year we have records for.

Clearly a structured induction programme, supported by a well-organised Appropriate Body, with first-rate quality

assurance processes, and a commitment to schools making their own judgements about the quality of teaching in their own school, is necessary. NIPT was established by IAA and FASNA to do just that.

Since it started in September 2013 NIPT has recruited over 250 NQTs and has almost 100 member schools. NIPT provides them with a clear, robust and well-structured programme to follow. This includes an on-line document library providing all the documents needed to support the programme, as well as on-line assessments linking directly with the National database.

Very often schools and academies will send off their NQT assessments and hear nothing in return. Have they been received? Are they good enough? There are no answers to this. On the other hand, NIPT gives feedback on all assessments as part of an ongoing commitment to improving and developing the quality of NQT Induction in all schools.

To ensure Induction Coordinators are sufficiently well trained NIPT holds annual training courses at different locations across the country. These are free courses and in September were attended by about 40% of member schools. They were rated as Excellent (84%) and Good (16%) by attendees. For those schools who do not want to send staff out for training NIPT has on-line training videos, which can be accessed at any time by school staff. It is this aspect which has attracted international schools, such as the Gulf English School in Qatar, to subscribe too NIPT.

Besides reading and responding to all assessments NIPT has a team of Quality Assurance Officers who visit schools to ensure processes are in place and to check everything has been done properly if an NQT is failing. Every school and academy in the scheme will be visited at least once every three years.

The National Induction Panel is determined to be responsive and able to meet the different needs of schools. NIPT can cater for schools with different and unusual term dates. NIPT can advise on, and cater for, shortened Induction (or lengthened

The level and speed of support has been exceptional. The training offered is flexible and of high quality and the resources that are provided have made the administration of the process far more incisive and streamlined. Highly recommended.

Ian Fidler
Training Manager,
The West Bridgford
School, Nottingham

As an academy with a different academic year pattern we need the flexibility that NIPT offers. Our NQTs often start before September and we need the NQT assessment process and support package to begin when they start, not several weeks later. We are really excited about the flexibilities that we have with this new provider.

Ros McMullen, CEO,
LEAF Academy Trust and Principal,
David Young Community Academy

I am delighted to see a much-needed high quality, professional alternative to the LA NQT induction programmes. I have twice in recent years experienced a refusal to fail an NQT on the grounds that it was LA policy never to fail but to carry on extending the probationary period despite the professional judgement and evidence of the academy of an individual's unsuitability and inadequate performance. The sum per NQT is a small cost to ensure that new entrants to teaching are all good or better.

Monica Cross, Executive Principal,
The Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy

I would urge you to give our new scheme serious consideration: it breaks the monopoly of Local Authorities in this area and, we believe, offers more reliable judgements as well as greater value for money.

Nick Weller, Executive Principal,
Dixon's Academies & IAA President

Thank you for sending though these resources. I have now had time to review them all - they are very helpful and it is refreshing to see NQT induction and assessment being taken so seriously.

Anne Macdonald, Assistant Head,
Queen Elizabeth's Boys School, Barnet



induction where appropriate and requested by the school). There is a technical support team as well as a quick response to email and telephone enquiries.

NIPT is now planning for its second year of operation. It is expected that demand will grow and already schools and academies are signing up to join. However, if NIPT is to maintain quality then growth has to be planned and gradual, hence there will be a cap of 750 additional NQTs from September. Places will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis and schools and academies that sign up can be reassured that there will be places

for ALL their NQTs. Existing members of the scheme are assured of their NQTs being included.

Clearly, now is the time to join NIPT and ensure your NQT Induction programme will stand up to the scrutiny of Ofsted.

If you are interested in using NIPT for your NQT Induction please go to the NIPT website at www.nqtinduction.co.uk and complete the registration form.



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Two Minute Leadership

In this extract from his new book, *The Restless School*, Roy Blatchford offers a series of tips for busy school leaders



A celebrated French general was once tactlessly asked, after a famous victory, if it hadn't really been won by the second-in-command.

The general thought for some time before answering: 'Maybe so. But one thing is certain. If the battle had been lost, I would have lost it.'

I vividly recall, as a deputy head, being told by my Headteacher that I would not make the mistakes I was watching him make – but that I should proceed with my career in the certain knowledge that I would make my own. His advice was perspicacious.

Leaders are primates and human, prone to wise judgement and crass error in equal measure. There is just no stopping it. But there is something to be

learned from observing others, both what they do successfully and where they falter.

In that spirit, and in the spirit of those self-help, one-minute-manager and one-minute-father books you find in any airport bookshop, the following are offered. Rooted in various encounters, they are not presented in any order of importance, rather as a series of take-away moments.

Talk with and listen to the students

– they help you keep your finger on the school's pulse, its corridor rumour and playground gossip. Walk through classrooms every day you can, even if it's just to say 'hello'.

Know your community – if it is changing, respond promptly. Don't wait to be told that the number of bilingual learners has doubled since you last walked the corridors.

Compliment someone at least once a day – you may find it hard to include all your staff here, but try. Practise on someone who might least expect the smile from you. Offer to take a lesson for them. And remember: cynics don't only grow old, they die.

Be resilient in the face of failure – admit when you're wrong. When you apologise, never add 'but' to the end of the apology or you'll gain a reputation for insincerity.

Grasp nettles tightly - then they won't hurt. Remember Aesop?

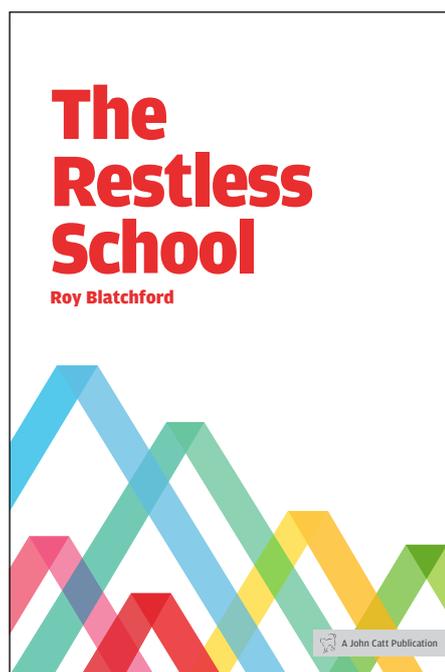
Invest in high quality toilets for students – you won't regret explaining that additional expenditure to the governors. They have children at the school, and will have been told about the plush soap dispensers, luxuriant plants and framed mirrors in the loos.

Invest in classrooms – teachers and students spend 1500 hours a year in them. Buy a chaise longue, Nespresso machine, iPad and water cooler for every teacher.

Abolish bells – they belong in another era. Put plants and carpets across the curriculum. Install a luxury fish tank in the entrance foyer to calm irate parents.

Your best friends are the dustbin and the delete button – so much 'stuff' comes your way, so protect others from it.

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Bottle the teachers who are young at heart – infect everyone with their talents. Ensure a variety of skills and intelligences in staff you appoint. Grow your own great people. Certainly look to recruit people who are brighter than you are.

Stick close to your values – and be occasionally sceptical of them. Be explicit about the ethical principles upon which you lead.

Have confidence in your moral commitment, instinct and intuitions – and have someone to restrain you, probably matron or the head groundsman.

Enjoy confronting authority and taking risks – practise the Jesuit principle of management, namely that it’s easier to beg forgiveness than seek permission. Say ‘no’ to a directive and that you believe instead in phyletic gradualism.

Thrive on accountability – and occasional chaos. Remember the old maxim (misquoting Kipling) that if you have kept your head when everyone around you is losing theirs, you probably haven’t quite understood what’s going on.

Keep in mind the big picture – someone has to. Remember the ‘third eye’ - challenge orthodoxies even if you then find out why some things are orthodox; it’s worth the journey.

Communicate, communicate, communicate – and time the communications well. Timing is all. If colleagues disagree with you, they’ll say you haven’t been communicating properly.

Tell good stories – people remember them. Stories define who you are in the minds of others, for better or worse. Humour works, not sarcasm.

Avoid delusions of grandeur – for everyone’s sake, be reasonably predictable. Perception is all. You’re paid handsomely to smile. And be a great teacher!

Don’t assume rationality on the part of the people you are dealing with – accept the idea that

there are multiple perceptions of every situation. Learn to live with shades of grey.

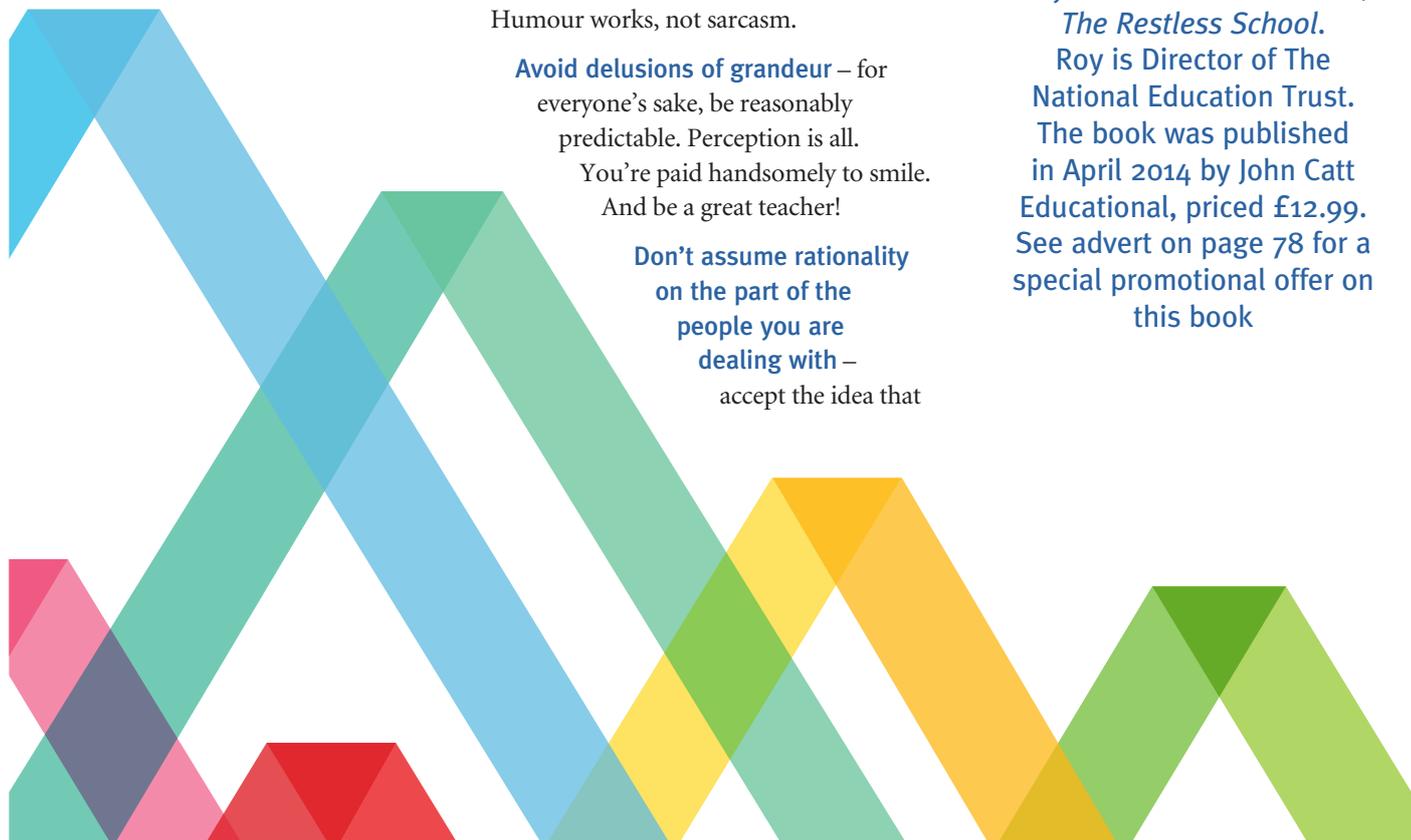
Spare a thought for Bloom – knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, synthesis. Not everyone is as capable as you pretend to be of moving upwards through Bloom’s taxonomy of thinking. Some will get stuck half-way.

Pace yourself – excellence is not an act but a habit. Focus on a limited number of objectives at a time. Secure a culture of co-workers, not hierarchies.

Read Seneca and the Stoics – strive for moral and intellectual perfection. Get the staff to read widely. Be curious and find time for our own interests.

Take Tuesdays off – if you’re going to take ‘dedicated headteacher time’ off-site, don’t do it on a Friday or the staff will think you’re off to the ski slopes for the weekend. Learn to develop your inner sloth. Rest your heartbeat somehow.

This article is an extract from Roy Blatchford’s new book, *The Restless School*. Roy is Director of The National Education Trust. The book was published in April 2014 by John Catt Educational, priced £12.99. See advert on page 78 for a special promotional offer on this book





Music departments matter

Abigail D'Amore, Musical Futures Project Leader, reflects on the important role of music departments in secondary academies

The power of music lies as much in its capacity for social and personal development as in its capacity for musical development. Music learning in schools should be accessible to everybody; no academy should be without a music department that offers high quality, practical music making opportunities.

The National Picture

A recent Ofsted report examining music teaching in England highlighted vast differences in the quality and quantity of music education in schools. It found inconsistencies around the levels of support and provision available to music teachers, revealing one in five schools to be inadequate for music.

The report noted a scarcity of good vocal work as well as identifying an underuse of music technology. Ofsted identified concerns around school leaders understanding what ‘good’ looks like in music learning. However, senior leaders do recognise engaged students when they see them.

Music support services have undergone a massive reorganisation under the government’s National Music Plan, including the development of school music ‘hubs’, which are not always in a position to support classroom teachers directly. This has coincided with a 14% cut in the number of students funded to train as secondary school teachers, affecting in particular English, art and music trainee teachers.

Currently, music is not a ‘core’ eBacc subject, which has led to some schools de-valuing the place of music during curriculum time and prioritising other subjects. In some cases this has led to music teacher redundancies or music at Key Stage 3 being offered as an option only.

Spreading innovation in music teaching is therefore a challenge, not least because in many schools music departments have only one or two full-time members of staff and opportunities for external networking and professional development are often restricted.

Despite the challenging environment, innovative work has been taking place to tackle these challenges head on. Back in 2003, Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) instigated Musical Futures, an initiative that explored issues around why young people weren’t engaging with music in school, despite often showing passion for music outside of the classroom.

Ten years on, the programme has given birth to a global movement of music educators estimated to be operating in approximately 1700 UK schools – including nearly 100 academies – and benefitting at least 185,000 young people each year.

Supporting music teachers to innovate

Musical Futures’ work has been partly based on direct feedback from music teachers suggesting that they often feel isolated in their roles and don’t know where to turn for support.

Rather than supporting delivery in schools, funding has focused on the ongoing creation of innovative teaching and learning strategies, high-quality free professional development delivered by teachers for teachers, and free, open-source resources.

Musical Futures in practice involves a series of tried-and-tested approaches based on successful learning strategies employed by music learners outside the classroom:

1. Informal learning: students replicate learning music in the self-directed way that popular musicians do, in small groups, with the teacher acting as a musical model.
2. Non-formal teaching: style of whole-class workshopping where students’ ideas and passions are expertly crafted by the music teacher to explore music and collaboratively create new compositions.
3. Find Your Voice: innovative approach to embedding vocal work and mobile technology into music classrooms.

While in reality Musical Futures looks different in every school, at its core is a set of principles encompassing:

- 1) Building learning on students’ own musical interests and passions, before moving on to explore other styles and genres.
- 2) Practical learning that is hands-on and uses aural learning as its starting point.
- 3) Students learning about the process of becoming musicians, and how to cooperate and collaborate in a group.
- 4) Tailoring music learning to meet the individual needs of students.

Musical Futures work is progressive, high quality and has a clear purpose ensuring all students aged 11-18 can participate, regardless of background, motivation or circumstance.

Young People Impacts

- Improved motivation, self-esteem, confidence in and attitude towards music in school.
- Increases uptake of music at Key Stage 4 (or equivalent).
- Demonstrable progression in musical skill acquisition, particularly listening skills.
- Improved attainment.

Teacher Impacts

- Improves teacher confidence with teaching practical music.
- Teachers feel MF helps question and improve their teaching overall, encourages innovation and has a long-term and sustainable impact on their teaching.
- Changes the way teachers approach delivering music in the classroom.

Oasis Academy in the Spotlight

Oasis Lord’s Hill Academy opened in 2008 following the reorganisation of secondary schools in Southampton by the Local Authority. The Academy specialises in Arts with Business and Enterprise, catering for 510 students aged 11–16 years. It is situated in a deprived area of Southampton, with 43% of students on the SEN register.

At Oasis, music is delivered as part of the Opening Minds competency-based curriculum in Year 7. Students may elect to take music after Year 8, and may re-choose at the end of Year 9.

Paul Ibbott, Head of Music at Oasis Academy Lord’s Hill, outlines their journey as a Musical Futures Champion School:

“Music at my school has had a difficult history. When I joined the school, prior to academisation, there had been no music teacher for two years. Building a new department from scratch was a challenge I relished.

In some respects my work was successful. Students often said music was their favourite subject, but this wasn’t translated into good GCSE candidates and Key Stage 4 attainment seemed to reach a low plateau.

After attending a Musical Futures training day, I realised that the attainment plateau was little to do with ability and everything to do with engagement – what I was offering was not really

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exciting the students.

Musical Futures gave me ‘permission’ to experiment and do something different and this informal approach chimed with my own experience.

I work with students to empower them to make creative musical decisions beyond simply learning to play the notes – they arrange songs, simplify parts and compose their own material.

Nearly all students said they preferred Musical Futures lessons to previous lessons and felt they had made progress in learning instruments. KS4 music results have completely turned around and sustained at better than national average.

Musical Futures has helped to make the department a more ‘cool’ place to be and has enabled me to raise the profile of the department in the school because students are happier to perform to their peers. There is now a stronger drive towards excellence in music making emanating from students rather than being imposed by the teacher.

Through Musical Futures I have been inspired to start a project encouraging colleagues to look at learner-led, informal approaches across the curriculum.

The Future of Music

In the current educational environment, Musical Futures is encouraging teachers to take a leap of faith and opt to trial

strategies that can seem fairly risky but offer innovative and exciting results.

The impact so far has been an increase in the engagement of students in schools across the country, with more students electing to continue their music studies into KS4. Perhaps, most critically, it has reminded many music teachers of the reason why they entered the teaching profession in the first place – to inspire students with and through music.

Musical Futures supports teachers to improve their practice through its unique pedagogy, free training events, weekly Twitter meet-ups (#mufuchat) and via a wealth of teacher-created resources online.

Musical Futures has recently launched a free App, which guides music educators through Musical Futures and contains a wealth of new material. Search for ‘Musical Futures’ from the Apple store (store.apple.com/uk) and Google Play (play.google.com/store/apps)
For more information about Musical Futures, visit: www.musicalfutures.org or @musicalfutures on Twitter



Creating life-changing experiences with the Pupil Premium

Pamela Wright, Executive Principal of Wade Deacon High School, outlines the school's commitment to engage, enthuse and make a lasting impact

Wade Deacon High School is a successful, heavily-oversubscribed school in Widnes, just outside Liverpool. As well as being proud of our academic record, we work hard to raise our students' aspirations to enable them both to compete in and be contributors to the global economy. We want our students to realise and acknowledge that they have the capacity to be true global citizens.

We are proud of our students' academic achievements as, for the past five years, all members of our Year 11 cohorts have gained at least five GCSEs at Grades A*-C. Visitors from the Department for Education commented on the clear moral purpose of Wade Deacon and the fact that 'every child is at the centre' of everything we do. We work hard to ensure each child attains his or her potential and provide a wide range of opportunities to enable each individual to do so.

This is particularly impressive as our local authority is the eighteenth most deprived in England and Wales and many council wards are in the lowest 10% for parental income and consequent child poverty. We have set ourselves a challenge of becoming a world-class school as we want our students to be successful future global citizens. This is a further challenge as the BME population in our local area is 2.5%. In North-West England it is 8.4% whilst in England it is 12.5%. We are fully aware that, in terms of direct awareness of other cultures and societies, we are not representative of the North-West, never mind the rest of England.

In order to address this issue a member of staff has been given a specific responsibility to develop, enhance and embed international links and the global agenda across the school. Over the years, we have developed strong links with schools and communities across the world, becoming very adept at writing bids to support opportunities for students and staff to visit and work with their peers. As Executive Principal, I am fully committed to this aspect of school life. I view it as an opportunity to both add an extra dimension to the curriculum and also provide the widest possible professional development opportunities for members of our community.

When the Pupil Premium Initiative was announced, as a leadership team we considered ways in which we could utilise the money to support, challenge and engage the students who are entitled to receive the extra funding. One of the strategies that has been incredibly successful in attaining our aim has been enabling students to visit our linked schools in other countries. I particularly remember the impact on a couple of our more challenging students following a visit to our linked school in Gambia. After having sought sponsorship and raised funds to subsidise the cost of the visit, they returned to school with a totally changed attitude towards their studies and went on to achieve a full measure of success. I began to consider the impact some of the Pupil Premium money could have on our more vulnerable or disaffected students.

I remember the impact on a couple of our more challenging students following a visit to our linked school in Gambia. They returned to school with a totally changed attitude towards their studies

As a consequence, the Vice-Principal and I decided to support the proposal for a visit of ten Year 10 pupils to visit our partner school in Gifu, Japan. The students underwent a rigorous application process in order to be considered for the visit. They were individually invited, with their parents, to a meeting to discuss the proposed visit. The group of students included one who had never been on a bus before, another who had never been on a train and seven others who had never been on a plane.

Following the meeting, each student was asked to write a letter describing why they should go on the visit, what they would gain from the experience and how they would promote the links with Japan once they returned to school. Out of the twenty students invited, sixteen submitted a letter. This was extremely encouraging, as the party included some of our potentially most disengaged and disaffected. Once a decision had been made, the Vice-Principal, who is responsible for Pupil Premium, formulated a tracker to measure the impact of the visit. This included clear and quantifiable data on progress, attitude to learning, behaviour in lessons and attendance.

I am delighted to say that 90% of the members of the group have shown sustained and consistent progress in each area. The students' attitude to learning has definitely improved with 70% of them consistently attaining at least one grade higher since the visit. What have also improved are the students' self-esteem, confidence and aspiration. While these qualities cannot be measured, it is evident from their engagement in all aspects of school life. The visit, according to one student, made him "look at life in a different way". Another commented that although she "was nervous", she appreciated "the challenge" that the visit provided. All the students enjoyed working with their Japanese peers and quickly realised that there were "more similarities than differences" between them. Our current Deputy Head Girl stated that she appreciated the opportunity to "learn about the history and the culture. It was not like anywhere I had been before". Another participant added, "I liked the opportunity to meet Japanese people and discuss their culture with them. I thought the Japanese method of taking small steps towards the big picture was really interesting and have tried to use this system in my lessons."

The vital aspect is maintaining the momentum of the visit by ensuring that there is regular follow-up with specific activities. This not only serves as a reminder of the visit but also reaffirms the status and value of the students who participated. I definitely feel that through this opportunity, the students' aspirations and self-esteem have been raised and they are more engaged in their learning.

As a school, we are committed to utilising a small proportion of our Pupil Premium to continue to promote the raising of student aspiration. I feel this is vital when full consideration of the school's context is considered. A group of Year 8 students are visiting Disneyland Paris to consider STEM subjects during the February half-term holiday. Again, the same rigorous procedures for monitoring and follow-up have been applied.

During the last academic year, specific departments have applied for Pupil Premium money to support curriculum enhancement activities. The English department has run a Murder Mystery weekend with Year 11 GCSE English students studying inference, deduction and interpretation. Following this weekend, 55% of the Year 10 students who attended made at least three levels of progress and 95% strongly agreed that they enjoyed the



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Following the visit the students' attitude to learning has improved by at least one grade

whole weekend. A further revision weekend was delivered and 62% of the pupils who attended made three levels of progress in English.

The mathematics department has run two residential weekends at activity centres considering the mathematical elements of outdoor pursuits and strategies for effective revision. 78% of the students who attended the first weekend improved by at least one GCSE grade and 50% attained a Grade C in the final examination. From the cohort who attended the second weekend, 75% of the students achieved at least a Grade C and 88% attained at least one grade higher than their indicated potential in the GCSE examination. Members of staff from both core departments felt that the weekends definitely made a difference to the students in both attainment and attitude.

Forty Year 8 pupils were invited to a residential weekend covering Literacy skills which included a visit to the Harry Potter Experience at Elstree. This has been followed up by extra sessions being run after school and also on Saturday mornings. Building on this, members of the English department have actively promoted reading for pleasure with pupil premium pupils in order to enhance literacy skills and encourage involvement in the curriculum. The department had recognised that these pupils were often disengaged from reading and wanted to provide a positive experience as well as encouraging them to read for pleasure. Curtis Jobling, a local author, the designer of *Bob the Builder* and author of a series of teenage fantasy books, was invited into school to speak about his work in animation and also read from his books. Pupil Premium money was used to buy each student a copy of one of Curtis Jobling's books to promote reading for pleasure.

The impact was definitely measurable. A member of the English department commented on one low-ability student who could often be unsettled. After listening to the presentation by Curtis Jobling, she went back to see him to ask if he would sign her book. Later in the day she had an English lesson. After completing the set work, she asked if she could read quietly. She was then totally absorbed in the book that she had been given. According to the English teacher, "It's rare to see this child so focused and happy. It was clearly a result of this superb initiative." Another student told his teacher that he was "going to get his Dad to read it to him and either buy the rest of the series or get them out of the school library."

Other strategies have included residential visits to universities to raise aspirations. The students who visited the universities participated in a range of taster sessions. One student

commented, "The visit gave me the opportunity to visit the university and get a better understanding of how universities work. This has given me the confidence to try harder in lessons to try and achieve my goals so that I can go to university."

Following the visit the students' attitude to learning has improved by at least one grade. The most recent visit took place at the end of February when a targeted group of Year 11 female students participated in a 'Women into Physics' seminar at Liverpool University. As well as being committed to promoting the value of tertiary qualifications, we are also committed to raising our students' aspirations. For the students who are entitled to Pupil Premium funds we want them to seriously consider being the first generation within their family to aspire to higher education through consciously providing opportunities to enable them to gain further awareness.

Targeted students entitled to Pupil Premium funds participate in an employability course, which includes further work experience. We do this to enable the students have the best opportunities and also to ensure they do not appear on NEET statistics. The entire cohort found the experience beneficial in supporting them for their proposed college course and I am delighted to say that all students have now gained college places for when they leave Wade Deacon. As this course has been so successful, we are running it with specific students in Years 9 and 10 during this current academic year to develop learning skills that will support them in their career choices. The students all agree that they now feel more confident about their future and the range of choices that are open to them.

Whilst the gap in attainment for those Wade Deacon students entitled to the Pupil Premium is lower than the national average, all members of staff, under the leadership of the Vice-Principal, are committed to reduce it further to ensure indicated potential is attained.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that the Pupil Premium provides us with golden opportunities to make a solid and sustained difference to and for our disadvantaged students. It is incumbent on us as professionals to ensure that every student has the best possible opportunity to succeed. One of my key philosophies is that every child only gets one chance at their education, so it is imperative we ensure a consistently high quality educational experience for all. Whilst the majority of our Pupil Premium funding supports academic attainment through targeted coaching and mentoring, the extra, creative dimension that we have added at Wade Deacon has definitely raised the students' aspirations and ambitions.

In pursuit of the CPD ideal

Can CPD help school improvement and meet accountability pressures at the same time?



All leaders want their teachers to have good quality CPD that develops them as individuals and makes a measurable and significant contribution to school improvement.

Exactly how schools achieve the CPD ideal was the central question for us when we met with senior leaders from academy schools for a round table event in London.

Rob Gladwin, assistant Headteacher in charge of professional development at the Manor Academy in Nottinghamshire, was one. He talked about how the school's CPD had been transformed since it was placed in special measures and this new approach to professional development was transforming the school.

Manor Academy has established semi autonomous learning bodies called teaching and learning communities. These groups are expected to do up to three hours of dedicated CPD per week. "Members of staff from different faculties are part of these and they use them to talk about professional development needs," he explained. "They help each other with their professional development. Our mantra is that the majority of answers can be found within our institution."

This approach is very similar to that taken by Blatchington Mill School in Brighton and Hove.

"We need to have different models of how to improve individual teachers," explained deputy Headteacher Ashley Harrold. "We have lead professionals for teaching and learning in a subject area and teacher learning communities. I split it into eight areas of what I think makes great teaching. The teaching and learning groups cover these eight areas. Staff focus on a particular area of pedagogy and lesson observation targets are linked to these areas."

A school's approach to CPD depends where it is on the journey to success. "When we were in special measures it was top down," said Rob Gladwin. "But you can't sustain that over the long term. It's about allowing people to address their own needs but be supportive of that."

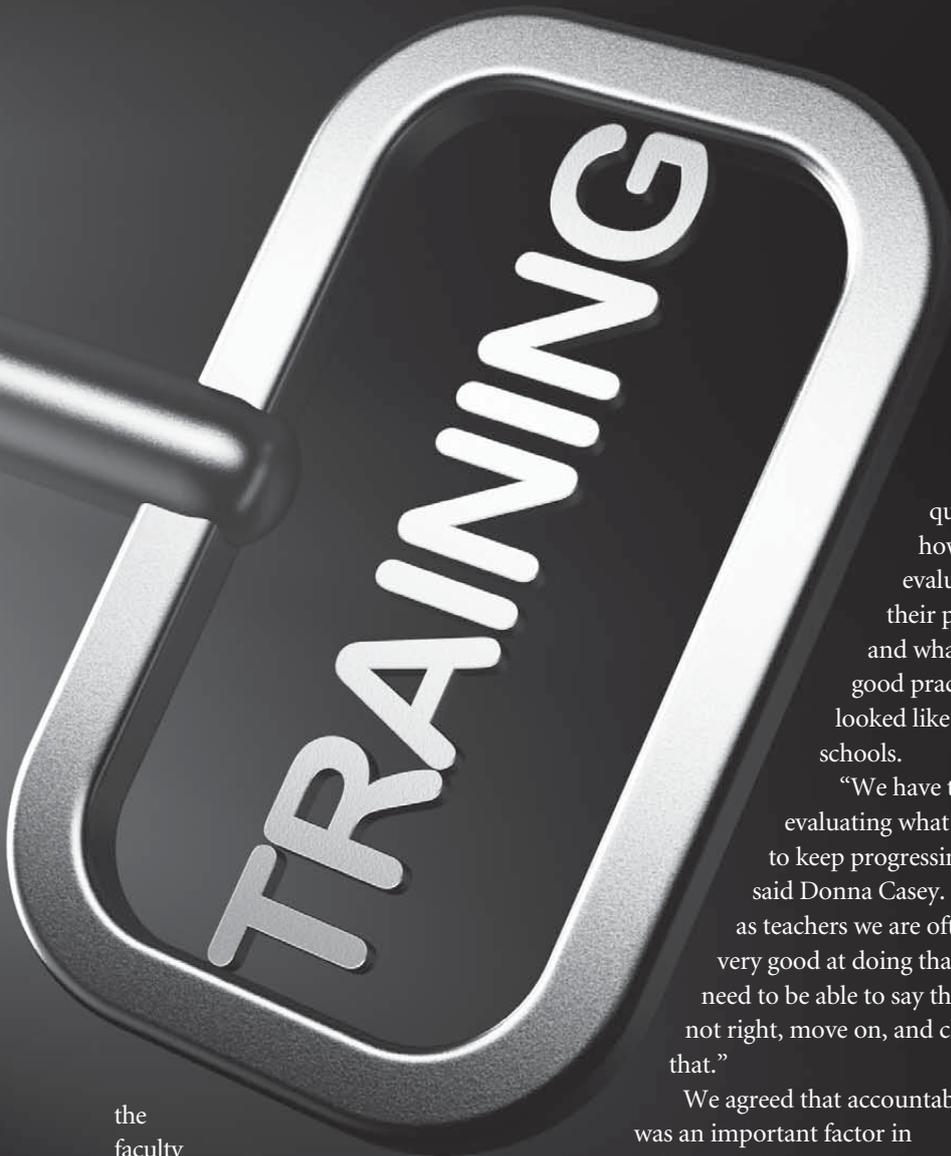
It is important not to use Ofsted pressure as a driver for professional development, leaders agreed. Ashley Harrold said the needs of the school should be foremost. "As soon as you pass on responsibility to Ofsted you lose authority," he said. "We have moved as far away as we can from Ofsted frameworks for accountability and the results are going well. There are processes where a rigid framework needs to happen but then you often get to a plateau in how to really crack the perfect teaching and learning environment."

Donna Casey, deputy Headteacher at the Manor Academy, added. "Now we are starting to get to the point where we don't live and die by our Ofsted criteria, but by doing right for our students. But it's a real journey to get there," she said.

The discussion did highlight the fact that senior leaders tended to take one of two views of school improvement – one was a "fixing what is wrong" approach and one in which staff were "helped to be more right". We discussed research that showed that the most effective thing leaders can do is help staff to improve themselves.

Lesson observations were a subject of much debate. We agreed that it was of limited use if it was not used in a supportive and developmental way. A commonly discussed alternative is lesson study, a collaborative enquiry process based around observing the effects of an intervention on learning in the classroom.

Nick Hindmarsh, principal of Dartmouth Academy in Devon, said it was important that the judgement element inherent in performance management process was separate from the developmental aspects of observation and other professional development. "In our school, performance management observations are done by me and two deputy heads," he explained. "The heads of



CPD at Manor is made up of these key approaches:

- Performance management review (PMR) targets set by the individual and greater individualisation of CPD
- Creation of teaching and learning communities
- Mini CPD sessions at staff briefing, dubbed 'tweak of the week'
- Development of Teachmeet sessions
- Strengthening of professional development links with local academies and schools across the country

Manor dedicates two hours a week to staff professional development. One hour is concerned with whole academy initiatives and pastoral training, with the other focused on teaching and learning community activity. These small groups are made up of staff from a range of different learning strands, led by an exceptional practitioner and focused on developing each member's PMR targets. Bespoke training sessions are delivered through these sessions, with evidence of the training and its impact recorded in the Bluewave.SWIFT school improving planning system.

Each teaching and learning community session consists of the same ingredients: feedback from all group members, action learning set activities, focused coaching conversations, Iris feedback and planning, technique modelling to group members, focused independent learning enquiry and personalised group CPD from external providers.

Keith Wright is managing director of school improvement planning specialists Bluewave.SWIFT - www.bluewaveswift.co.uk.

David Weston is chief executive of the Teacher Development Trust, the national charity for effective professional development in schools and colleges - www.teacherdevelopmenttrust.org.

question how they evaluated their practice and what good practice looked like in their schools.

"We have to keep evaluating what we do to keep progressing," said Donna Casey. "I think as teachers we are often not very good at doing that. We need to be able to say that that's not right, move on, and change that."

We agreed that accountability was an important factor in professional development – but it needed to apply to all players in the professional development hierarchy.

Ashley Harrold stressed that ultimate responsibility for good CPD provision lay with senior leaders. "If staff do not have access to a programme that meets their needs then you are on rocky ground as senior leaders not providing what they need," he said.

Case study – CPD at Manor Academy

Professional development at the Manor Academy in Nottinghamshire is guided by a firm set of principles: "CPD is not 'done' to staff. They direct it," says deputy headteacher Donna Casey. "We also believe that the answers to most challenges lie within the academy and this helps us develop a culture of mutual support."

the faculty teams are supporters in professional development and not the judges. You need that separation."

He also stressed the importance of observations being used to gain a more detailed view of overall student progress and measure CPD effectiveness.

Sharing best practice between schools was an approach often used as a professional development tool but this was sometimes ineffective – especially if the systems weren't there to allow for the knowledge to be transferred in a meaningful and useful way.

The cultural differences between schools were a major stumbling block here but it was a challenge rarely acknowledged in many instances of collaboration. We agreed that evaluation was important too - schools needed to

How can school-to-school support sustain improvements in performance?

Principals and Headteachers from academies across the country tell The Key's Will Millard how working with other schools has helped sustain improvements in the education they offer

When it comes to school improvement, there is no one approach that is guaranteed to be effective, but school leaders are finding that working together in different ways can help them build success.

At The Key, we regularly talk to our members, leaders in schools across the country, so we can draw on their expertise and share good practice. We recently spoke to principals and headteachers from high-performing multi-academy trusts (MATs) and stand-alone academies about how they work successfully with other schools. While economies of scale and sharing resources are well-publicised benefits of collaboration, they are not the whole story, so we asked these school leaders how they develop meaningful and successful partnerships. They identified three themes: developing relationships; learning from others to improve core processes; and establishing a culture that clearly communicates your priorities.

Developing supportive relationships with other school leaders

Nick Blackburn is the Executive Headteacher of Heathfield Primary School and Hurworth Primary School in Darlington, which converted to academy status in June 2012. Collaboration is well established in the local area, says Nick,

with academies and maintained schools working closely together. Underpinning this commitment to collaboration is the belief that mutually supportive relationships between school leaders help improve the quality of education for pupils.

Successful relationships of this kind involve asking questions, being open to the answers, listening to the concerns of colleagues, and giving and receiving constructive feedback without being defensive, according to Nick. They can be enormously valuable because they challenge and stretch participants. What's more, they can help school leaders prepare for the kind of scrutiny they will experience during more formal evaluation, including school inspection.

Relationships like these can also be highly motivating. Elaine Brook became Headteacher at Langtons Junior Academy in Essex in early 2012, after the school was placed in special measures. Elaine and her governing body decided that the school should become part of the REACh2 Academy Trust – the largest primary-only trust in the country. She now regularly talks to and trains with outstanding leaders from across the country, and this has built her enthusiasm for education. The relationships she has developed have two important features. Firstly, says Elaine, “you know the

quality of information you're receiving is outstanding – these are people with track records of success.” But, just as importantly, the process has not been intimidating or condescending. REACh2 specialises in taking schools from special measures to outstanding, so Elaine knows that her peers have made the same journey. “They know how it feels, and you trust their advice,” she says.

This kind of collaboration comes naturally in a MAT, but can this approach work in other settings? “Absolutely,” says Elaine. What matters is regular, focused communication. If the motivation is there, school leaders anywhere can work together, and school type or location is no obstacle.

Working on consistency and the core processes

Consistency across a school or group of schools can also support rapid improvements in standards, according to Mark Ducker, executive principal of the STEP Academy Trust. The trust, which brings together four primary schools in Croydon, promotes a consistent approach to lesson planning, the classroom environment, and the curriculum. Mark says that this has helped it to develop a style of education that works well for the pupils, and that promotes improvements in teaching, learning, and management.

It's not about changing everything you do, or might do. Instead it's about speaking to school leaders that have experienced similar challenges, ensuring your ideas are appropriate, and then applying them confidently

The trust appointed a new Headteacher, Paul Glover, to Applegarth Junior School 18 months after it was placed in special measures. Within six months, the school was judged 'good' by Ofsted. According to Mark, the trust's emphasis on consistency across its schools does not stifle exceptional leaders like Paul. Instead, schools are unlikely to be capable of systematic improvement if processes lack cohesion. So developing common practice and procedures can help to free up Headteachers to lead their schools. In other words, these processes are a solid foundation for rapid school improvement.

So, what can schools not involved in formal partnerships learn from this? Elaine Brook says you should not underestimate the importance of getting the basics right at your school, and support from your peers can help you to hone ideas and develop your confidence to create the conditions for ongoing improvement. It's not about changing everything you do, or might do. Instead it's about speaking to school leaders that have experienced similar challenges, ensuring your ideas are appropriate, and then applying them confidently. After taking over at her school, Elaine spoke to colleagues within the REACh2 network and decided to introduce fortnightly pupil progress meetings with her class teachers. The meetings provide space to discuss the

achievements of six pupils in reading, six in writing, and six in mathematics, and have helped improve the provision in place for each individual pupil. Systems like this have helped move Langtons Junior Academy from special measures to 'good' in little over a year, with Ofsted remarking in its March 2013 report that the school had improved rapidly, and was well placed to continue to make further improvement.

Establishing a culture that communicates your priorities as a leader

Whatever the setting, the glue holding everything together is trust, says Nick Blackburn. Without a culture of trust, staff won't buy into what you're saying, so you should use your professional networks and relationships to help you reflect on what pupils and teachers need to produce results, and then put in place a decisive and robust set of responses. It's about finding sustainable solutions to challenges. Surface-level interventions can grab attention, but won't necessarily bring about genuine improvement.

Brett Elliott, the principal of Bodmin College in Cornwall, which became an academy in 2011, encourages his staff to develop collaborative ties in the school's networks and beyond. The college works closely with local primary schools. It is

also developing a foundation qualification with Falmouth University and, as a science specialist school, has worked with universities in the UK and Europe to develop its curriculum. Brett says he encourages a culture of enterprise, and strongly supports staff who look for new ways of developing and improving practice.

Within the STEP trust, Mark Ducker says, "passion, urgency, positivity, aspiration and commitment are the principles that guide everything." Everyone buys into this culture, so staff within all the trust's schools are pulling in the same direction. Mark and his team are very clear about what their expectations are, and this culture helps each Headteacher to deliver excellent results.

Whatever the model, The Key's members are telling us that it's important to be open to learning from other schools. For all of these Headteachers, reflecting on what others do and taking on the best ideas can open up new possibilities on the school improvement journey.

Will Millard is a senior researcher for The Key, a question-answering service used by more than 7,000 schools and almost 40,000 school leaders.

A vision of things to come?

Christopher Whittington charts the birth of The Church of England Central Education Trust

In response to the challenges of the shrinking role of local authorities as education providers and as the go-to service for school improvement services, a unique partnership has been created between the Diocese of Lichfield and Birmingham and the University of Wolverhampton - The Church of England Central Education Trust (CECET). All three partners are accredited academy sponsors. CECET therefore brings together a number of very substantial organisations, each with its distinctive strengths and contribution, with collective responsibility for over 250 academies and schools.

CECET, which formally launched on March 25th, grew from a shared wish to significantly enhance the provision of education in the respective dioceses by delivering a robust and strategic approach to high quality school improvement. CECET intends to provide a range of services which will enable all Church schools to be good schools, and will adopt a strategic approach to extending educational opportunities for pupils, staff and governors across the Midlands region, operating to all intents and purposes as an umbrella trust.

CECET's purposes are twofold: (i) to provide a strong framework for school improvement and the professional development of school staff and leaders; and (ii) to facilitate the strategic expansion of academies and other new educational structures and partnerships.

The dioceses bring to CECET their respective strengths as statutory bodies and their expertise in promoting a distinctive approach to education in every phase across very diverse local communities. The University brings vital opportunities for training, professional development, academic study and research. The implementation of a 'Professional Development Framework' and entitlement for all staff, in partnership with the University, will also include a 'Growing Church School Leaders for the Future' programme. And the schools themselves will be an integral part of the school improvement strategy, forging the concept of school to school support and system leadership within a family network.

The challenge to which CECET responds is very real, and has signs of a crisis approaching. Last year the Public Accounts Committee issued a report warning that dozens of local authorities are on the brink of financial collapse, accusing

ministers of failing to come up with adequate contingency plans to prop up vital services, including those delivered by Local Education Authorities. Margaret Hodge, Chair of the Committee, commented that the Department for Education had "...failed to provide a proper cost analysis of how funding reductions will affect services to children."

The report followed stark warnings from the National Audit Office that nearly one in eight councils (12%) are at risk of being unable to balance their budgets and nearly one in 10 are under "high financial stress".

And if the general impact of the government's austerity cuts wasn't enough to deal with, the academies programme will continue to reduce the number of guaranteed consumers of non-statutory education support services, resulting in a corresponding reduction in funding to local authorities. Faced with this, local authorities will have little alternative but to continue to withdraw from direct service provision on the basis of dwindling funds and lost economies of scale. The majority of local authorities have made (or are planning to make) cuts to centrally provided education services. It would not be overstating the situation to say that a number of LEAs appear close to falling over and that a number are facing effective collapse.

It would be not be overstating the situation to say that a number of LEAs appear close to falling over and that a number are facing effective collapse



How will CECET work?

CECET's key functions will include:

- Acting as sponsor for underperforming CE schools;
- Performing the usual functions of an umbrella trust, *ie* acting as one of the members of all Church academy trusts (including multi-academy trusts (MATs)) established in each diocese, and appointing an agreed number of 'foundation' governors;
- Acting as the strategic commissioning body for the procurement of services to Church academies;
- Developing a strong accountability framework for school improvement, with appropriate intervention powers;
- Developing a common approach to school improvement for the respective dioceses;
- To provide a forum for the sharing of good practice;
- Developing a network of high performing schools, teaching school alliances and leaders of education who can provide support to others, particularly vulnerable and weak schools;
- Providing a suite of training programmes for teachers, from early career induction through to leadership positions, including system leadership and training for governors;
- To support educational policy development across the respective dioceses.

Academies that come within the CECET arrangement, whether as single-academy trusts (SATs) or MATs will be subject to regular monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance. This monitoring will be carried out in several ways:

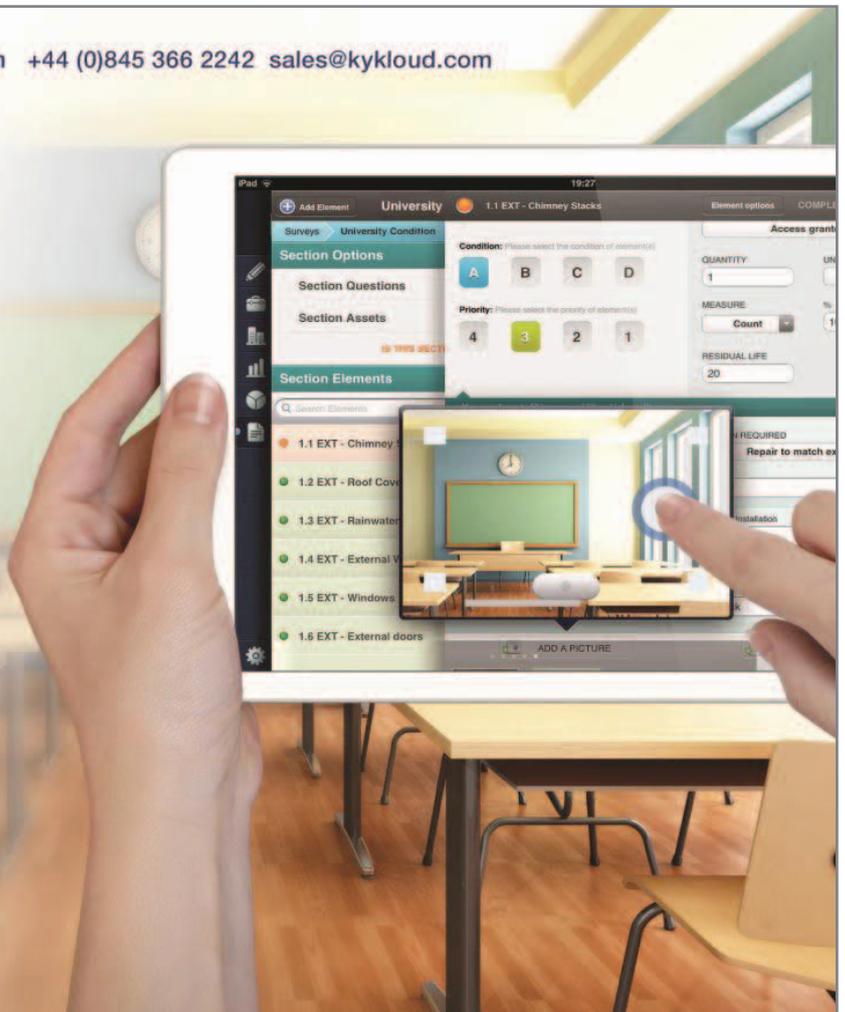
- A subcommittee of CECET will be established which will hold all SATs and MATs within CECET to account, by requiring the appropriate Directors and Principals to attend the subcommittee on a termly or more frequent basis, depending on the strength of the academy. The CECET subcommittee will be concerned to investigate all aspects of an academy's performance, including its financial health;
- Mechanisms within both dioceses will monitor academies' performance in the respective dioceses on a termly basis. This will include a regular RAG (red, amber, green) rating exercise that will identify any issues and recommend appropriate action. The RAG rating will take into account a basket of data, including school performance data, Ofsted and SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools) reports;
- CECET's Head of School Performance will maintain a vigilant overview of academies through regular monitoring and contact with the academies;



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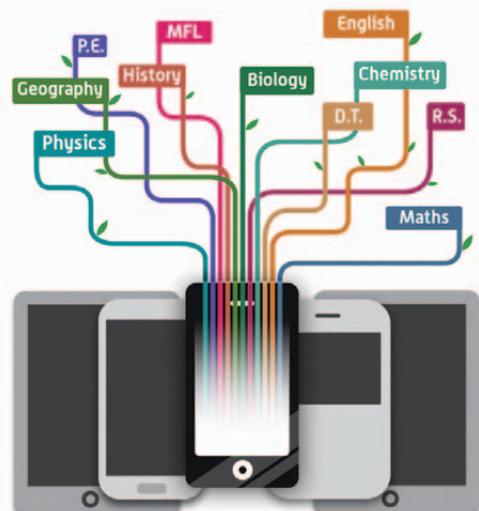
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- CECET’s data analyst will review all data on a regular basis with a view to identifying areas of strength and weakness, and in particular areas requiring intervention.

All of these mechanisms will be designed to provide CECET’s Directors with an accurate assessment of the performance of each academy within the CECET umbrella.

Powers of Intervention

A novel and unique difference from the usual umbrella trust is that CECET will be able to take direct action through powers of intervention to address underperformance and introduce steps to improve standards.

It is envisaged that interventions will be applied on a sliding scale, depending on the nature of the issues to be addressed, with areas for potential intervention grouped according to the four areas currently inspected by Ofsted: achievement of pupils; quality of teaching; behaviour and safety of pupils; and leadership and management. Various ‘trigger points’ will be used to trigger use of the powers of intervention and the nature of the interventions could involve:



If one thing is certain in this rapidly changing education environment, it is that there will a growing need for alternative provision delivered through arrangements that can provide overarching strategic support

- Deploying a task group (which would include as a minimum accredited Ofsted inspectors) into an academy in order to investigate particular issues or concerns, or to determine the extent and nature of intervention required;
- Issuing a formal warning note to the Directors of a SAT or MAT, requiring them to take remedial action in respect of school performance, or other matter of concern (including instituting capability or disciplinary action against the Principal and/or other members of staff);
- Requiring the Directors of a MAT to remove or limit powers of delegation to a local governing body (LGB) within the MAT, or in extremis to remove the LGB;
- Removing CECET-appointed Directors in a SAT or MAT.

Conclusion

If one thing is certain in this rapidly changing education environment, it is that there will a growing need for alternative provision delivered through arrangements that can provide overarching strategic support. The successful implementation of CECET will depend on its ability to co-ordinate and combine the expertise effectively and resources within the arrangement in order to deliver integrated, strategic and continuously improving services.

Christopher Whittington is a partner at Geldards LLP and Colin Hopkins, Director of Education for Lichfield Diocese, the second largest education diocese in the country with 104 schools.

“Flexibility and diversity”

St Martin’s Academy will offer the IB Primary Years Programme to prepare pupils for an increasingly globalised society

A passionate commitment to offering greater parental choice and developing pupils who ‘learn for life’ provided the original inspiration behind St Martin’s Academy and will continue to set its course for the future by being one of the few primary academies in the country to adopt the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP).

As part of the North West Academies Trust (NWAT), St Martin’s Academy started with 25 pupils, a Head of School, one full-time teacher and two teaching

assistants. It is now expecting its second reception class in September 2014, bringing total pupil numbers to 50.

This slow, organic growth has been planned and protected in the face of great demand for additional year groups from the local area and is a distinguishing characteristic of the trust’s overall philosophy of educational excellence. The progress and well-being of pupils remains a priority above rapid development on a corporate level.

This commitment to pupil progress is reflected in providing a longer, enriched

school day, with flexible and affordable wraparound care that recognises the needs of the modern family – key pledges that will remain at the heart of St Martin’s as it grows to full capacity in 2019.

A further pledge is the decision to deliver the IB PYP from Year One – a curriculum that NWAT believes offers greater scope for creative, deeper learning as they pledge to equip St Martin’s pupils with the skills needed for an increasingly complex and globalised society.

NWAT Chief Executive Officer, Steve Docking said: “We had to have



a curriculum that fitted with our own personal beliefs in education. Whilst there is no 'one size fits all' approach to learning, IB PYP offered the flexibility and diversity of learning that most closely matched what we believe in.

"The IB PYP offers a different way of thinking and makes sure that children learn whilst they are taught, not just remember what they have learnt. Hopefully the school and its approach to IB PYP will create confident aspirational children by the age of 11."

In 2011, then Headteacher Steve Docking recognised the need for wider provision within the area and applied to open a free school. Despite a number of objections, delays and planning hurdles faced by the trust over the preferred site for the school (a 19th century former vicarage) St Martin's Academy opened in 2013 as the first-ever academy conversion primary school in Cheshire. It is now rated as outstanding by Ofsted.

Steve remembers: "The day before we opened we faced bare plaster walls and a school that was all boxed up ready to be created. We were only allowed access from 1pm-10pm the day before we opened.

"The effort of the team behind the school is what makes it a success and after

12 hours of frantic painting, organising, laminating, unpacking and much more, a team of people managed to open a school. But what made me proud is next day, when we opened on time, every single one of the parents who came with us on this journey loved what we had done for their children.

"To us, this proved that a school community is so much more than a building or facilities, as great as these will be at St Martin's. It's about the belief and commitment of staff and parents and every step of the way, the passion shown by these two groups has proven we made the right decision in creating St Martin's."

The school has continued to receive overwhelming support from its parents, as they witness the impact the teaching team's delivery of the EYFS has on the children as they prepare to take up the IB PYP in Year One.

Head of School, Wenda Smith, is clear on what benefits the internationally-renowned programme will bring to the pupils:

"It's about creating diversity within learning, a chance to think and express, developing the confidence to lead your own learning and, coupled with our enrichment programme, offer them a greater insight into what makes school a

fantastic place to be.

"The PYP enables children to become creative thinkers and doers, structures learning sufficiently so that children can think in a multidisciplinary way and enables children to see the 'shades of grey'. These valuable skills are what will enable our learners to flourish as they continue their learning journeys and take these skills into the world of work.

"The PYP ensures that our children learn in a fast-moving environment, that their basic skills in mathematics and literacy are strong and that there is no underachievement. Due to our strong focus on meeting the needs of different learning styles, all children regardless of gender have the opportunity to learn creatively; differences in gender do not inhibit progress."

The most significant and distinctive feature of the PYP is the six trans-disciplinary themes, similar to the EYFS:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organise ourselves
- Sharing the planet

The school recently celebrated a visit from Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, who personally asked to visit St



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Martin's Academy whilst on a tour of the region in February.

Mr Gove was treated to a singing performance by a group of children, alongside their weekly vocal coach – one of a number of enrichment activities that the children are afforded by the extra hour in their school day, that also includes swimming, speech and drama, French and creative arts, forest school, little chefs and Crest science award.

Following his visit, Mr Gove said: "St Martin's Academy reminds me of why we created free schools: to empower parents and teachers to create a school tailored to local needs and with an uncompromising focus on excellence.

"State education in the UK is getting better and better – and it's thanks to the dedication and hard work of the parents, staff and children at schools like St Martin's Academy.

"One thing struck me more than anything on my visit: the kids love their school. With this fantastic start in life, I know the pupils of St Martin's Academy have great futures ahead of them."

Welcoming the Secretary of State's visit to the school, Chester MP Stephen Mosley said:

"I'm so pleased Michael has come to visit St Martin's Academy. This is a school

built on the determination of parents and staff to see local children get a truly fantastic education."

Looking ahead, St Martin's is now heavily over-subscribed for next year and staff and pupils are looking forward to moving into the newly-built classroom block that will link to the original building in the next few months.

The success of St Martin's has brought into sharp focus the future development plans of NWAT as they become an academy sponsor of a primary school in Winsford from Easter, most notably the importance of clearly defined roles for both the trust and Heads of school.

Steve Docking added: "Over the next few years we will build a group of schools who all want to work together to focus on outstanding learning for their children. Our group will be mutually supportive and creative thinkers who will not accept second best. We want to make sure that good schools, who want to be great, join our group and will work with others who perhaps need more specialist support.

"NWAT will make sure that all our Heads of School can focus upon the core of what we went into education for: the pupils.

"For too long Heads have had to be super humans, who one minute are doing

assembly, next dealing with drainage issues and then, arguing with photocopier engineers. This must stop and we create an effective 'boot room' for our schools that offer them support and challenge, whilst freeing Heads to take their schools beyond outstanding."



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The financial incentives for primary conversion

Adrian Shardlow says there is increased financial support for primary schools looking to convert

We are seeing a definite increase in the number of primary schools enquiring about academy conversion. Their reasons for doing so increasingly fall into one of two main camps, either a concern over the ability of their Local Authority to continue to provide services at an acceptable level or a desire to take more control over their school budget and to exercise freedom of choice in their dealings with suppliers. It also has to be said that for some primary schools the fear of a possible forced academy conversion at some time in the future is driving an interest in taking control at this stage.

For many primary schools the idea of converting alone is daunting, particularly as their funding will depend on pupil numbers so the smaller schools may not have a sufficient critical mass to support the creation and running of their own Academy Trust. For those schools the option of creating some form of academy group would appear to be a solution. Many primary academies in Multi-Academy Trusts report on the benefits they enjoy, including economies of scale, provision of joint support services like business management, enhanced staff development and being able to drive better deals with suppliers.

In a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) chain there is one Trust and Board of Directors, with an advisory body or local governing body (LGB) at each academy. The Board has responsibility for the performance of all schools but can delegate to the LGBs. The obvious efficiencies include there being one body that can bargain for and enter into contracts on behalf of the group as well as there being a single employer and holder of land titles. Associated responsibilities like the production and filing of annual accounts are centrally managed while the benefits for staff development and sharing best practices are very apparent.

The schools that are considering this form of collaboration have also received the boost from the DfE through the recently announced Primary Academy Chain Development Grant which replaces the previous Primary Chains Grant. This is a new one-off grant of £100,000 and will be offered to three schools creating a MAT where the majority are primary schools. The funding may also be available to existing single academies looking to convert into qualifying MATs but the grant is only available until 31 July and is subject to availability so interested schools should be proactive now before time runs out.

For some primary schools the concept of relinquishing some autonomy in return for the benefits within a MAT can be daunting. There are other forms of looser collaboration like Umbrella Trusts or Collaborative Partnerships but generally these do not involve shared governance and are therefore less proven as a way of providing support and protection for the academies within the group. It is also important to note that the new Primary Academy Chain Development Grant is only available where the collaboration is in the form of a MAT, so Umbrella Trusts and looser collaborations will not qualify.

We are certainly noticing a greater willingness amongst primary schools to consider joining forces with other schools and benefit from joint working and school-to-school support. This can be in the form of single phase collaborations or joining forces with secondary academies to provide local education solutions.

For many schools the introduction of Academy Trusts was at one time considered to be potentially divisive, with the academies seen as breaking away. More recently however schools are increasingly interested in working with their local education providers in the hope that they can drive forward with a common purpose to support each other and raise standards across an area.

Converting to an academy may not be the direction of choice for some primaries, but for those already interested in taking this step and of collaborating with other schools there is currently increased financial support in the form of this grant.

It is of course vital that schools considering converting as part of a group obtain advice not only on the conversion itself, but also the options and how these can be tailored for the maximum benefit of the schools and the children they support.

Partner Adrian Shardlow joined Browne Jacobson in 1992 and has been working with schools, local authorities and education providers for many years. He has been heavily involved in the academy conversions programme across the country and he has advised all categories of school on their conversion to academy status.

Robbing Peter to pay Paul

Jo Seymour says hiding your head in the sand is not an option should your school finances take a turn for the worse



According to the *Academies Financial Handbook* from the Educational Funding Agency, school leaders are under obligation to ensure; "...Public money... Spent wisely, honestly and transparently."

As school leaders, we are charged with ensuring that good financial management, both long and short term, is in place. What to do you do if it goes wrong? You arrive on your first day to discover the financial situation is far worse than you thought. What starts as a small overspend becomes an in year deficit. The in year deficit turns into a negative budget. Be brave, look at all the figures you have, take a breath, and then do something about it. Don't sit and worry, and definitely don't hide your head in the sand. There are people to help you, so take advantage of their expertise and be proactive. Remember, that although it is a school leader's responsibility, nowhere does it say you have to do it all on your own!

As the newly appointed Head and I had arrived in the school to discover that the school was bankrupt! Salaries couldn't be paid and there was no money to carry out the improvements that desperately needed to be made. Not only did the school have no money, actually it hadn't had any money for a long time, at least 20 years. Why and how this had been allowed (and why I wasn't told) is another story. What was important was what I needed to do about it. Three years down the line, the light at the end of the tunnel is shining very, very brightly; a positive bank balance at the end of this financial year is very nearly possible. At long last we have had months where we have been in credit and it appears that the financial dark ages may soon be over.

The Local Authority agreed, after a battle, to give an extra budget share, which was to be reviewed annually and removed as soon as possible. No fairy was going to come along and magic the deficit budget away. Thinking strategically, being transparent, involving governors, and seeking help and advice from those around me was the start. The role of a sound School Business Manager

cannot be understated: this invaluable partnership enables clarity, planning and action to take place. Teaching and learning balanced against financial management can be achieved by never missing a week of investigation into the current state of play and taking every opportunity to spare a few pounds here and there as well as those big savings.

The stakeholders too supported this journey. Following an Ofsted where all our financial dirty washing was hung out to dry there was initial horror and questions asked about what the governors and I had spent the money on. I had to be careful not to give an emotional and impulsive response; it was a careful, professional truth that had to be told. The result was proactive support of time and effort by parents, pupils and staff, who were able to be enterprising, knew the cost and thought about how we could meet it. This powerful tool, combined with the support of governors, gave a mandate to myself and the School Business Manager to take the situation in hand and enabled us to make vital decisions and remedy years of financial deficit.

Look at the people; your greatest cost. Those extra members of staff who are there (historically or newly appointed) to deal with 'specific' situations. They might have taken groups, to support another member of staff, those that top up staffing or release people. Everyone is costly, do an audit, look at impact. Be lean but be effective.

Check the cash flow. Do you know how much money is in the bank at the end of the month? Do you know how much you need in the bank should a money draining experience occur? What is a 'money draining' experience in your school? Is it a few weeks off sick, the unexpected (though you sort of knew it might happen) small leak in a flat roof? How much do you need to patch it? This is not about big things it is about the small things, which add up.

Oh dear Mr H is hoarding again! How many pounds are hidden away for a rainy day in classroom cupboards? Having a paint amnesty, with everyone's supply being put on tables in the hall, revealed

excessive bottles of black and no red or orange. Once equitably redistributed and the necessary missing colours bought, the impact was staff knowledge, trust and understanding of the serious situation, and even more importantly the correct tools to do the job. Why did we even have so much black paint?

Consider not only what you need, but when you need it too. For us, having sufficient green and purple backing paper for the boards next to focus tables for liturgical seasons is important. We have just had a purple paper crisis before Lent – where did it all go? Having to spend an extra £50 on backing paper disappointed me, and the staff were mortified. Then Mr H made an appearance, 'Well, it's in my cupboard. I thought if I kept it, I knew it would be safe and we would have it for when we needed it'. So nearly yet another £50 was spent unnecessarily. It all adds up. How much money do you have banked in the cupboards?

I mustn't take my eye off the ball and I always check the income, how much we are spending and the cash flow figures. My staff also remain cautious in their spending. Knowing the cost of the resources, as well as questioning the value, impact and necessity of the items available in the glossy catalogues has become every day practise to keep the financial demons at bay. Pupils too know the value of good financial management, for example the cost of an educational visit raises the questions, have we got the best value, how can we reduce the cost, can we be enterprising and earn money to enhance the trip. Selling cakes is always popular, but they know how to ensure the best profit and have a target amount in mind. Enterprise week reinforces this knowledge and understanding, as we learn about handling money and profit margins. They even ask if I am available for 'match funding'! Financial life skills for us all, learnt out of necessity to balance the books. Now I just need to apply it to my own money. Do I really need that new pair of shoes I saw the other day? Well, they do match my handbag!

Good contract management

Simon Hill says that finding the right supplier is only the first stage of the procurement process



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Since the academies programme began in 2010, almost 3450 schools have completed the conversion process. Becoming independent from their local education authorities has provided academies with new freedoms, such as the ability to design their own curriculums. Perhaps less well-known are some of the challenges that they, and particularly their school business manager may face during and after the transition period.

Quite rightly, the focus for any new academy is the education programme and the development of the new curriculum. However, this can often mean that other important areas are overlooked, such as securing the best value deals on goods and services. The responsibility for procurement can be daunting but get the contract negotiation and management right and there is potential to achieve considerable cost savings.

Good contract negotiation and management will also offer a level of protection, ensuring that the goods and services remain fit for purpose, and that contracts are fully compliant with procurement rules and regulations.

So how can academies ensure they are procuring the most cost-effective products and services?

Once the desired product or service has been clearly identified it is advisable to carry out research into the market. Find out about potential suppliers, their reputation, pricing and the quality of the service they deliver, before making an approach.

One way of ensuring your academy is receiving true market value for goods or services is asking a select number of suppliers to enter in a tender process. This could be done in a number of ways, for example, via e-auctions or sealed bids. This can be a time consuming and costly process but it is likely to deliver benefits in the long-term. Alternatively, a purchasing organisation can provide support to identify the right supplier for the needs of your academy.

Selecting the right supplier is crucial but it is only the first stage of the procurement process. Perhaps more important is the second stage of negotiating and preparing the contract. Goods and services should never be obtained without ensuring a robust contract is in place. This all-important document provides protection for both the purchaser and supplier, and ensures that what was agreed in principle is delivered in reality.

When putting a contract in place, it is vital that it clearly reflects the needs and requirements of your academy. Understanding the difference between essential and desirable requirements will help you determine what the contract needs to include, and how a supplier can deliver these requirements. Problems often arise if the requirements are not well-defined or non-essentials are included within the specification. In such instances, the likely outcome is that the customer over pays for what they actually need.

A degree of flexibility in a contract is beneficial to both supplier and customer. For example, an academy's requirements are unlikely to remain the same throughout the contract. The level of demand, the environment in which the contract is

needed, or the supply chain may change. If any of these changes take place, good contract management will ensure that your academy is not negatively affected. In fact, a flexible contract will enable regular reviews against current requirements and renegotiate on key deliverables and pricing. For this reason, YPO recommends that clauses are included in the contract to enable regular review.

Any contract should also be supported by a solid Service Level Agreement (SLA). The purpose of a SLA is to set expectations on the service to be received. This enables the customer to monitor and control the performance of the provider against mutually agreed standards, such as delivery and response times. Establishing key performance indicators as part of the SLA will help to measure the effectiveness of the service delivery, and confirm that your academy is receiving what has been agreed within the desired timeframes. We recommend that SLAs are reviewed on an annual basis.

Of course, it is important that any problems are raised quickly to give the supplier an opportunity to rectify the situation. However, it is equally important to highlight when a job is done well. It is also courteous to alert the supplier when internal issues may affect their ability to deliver a service to a business.

In a worst case scenario if a service is not fit for purpose, it is important to have a well-designed escalation route in place. If the contract is not being followed for any reason, or the Service Level Agreement is not meeting the targets, backup and protection is required. In some cases the supplier could offer financial recompense. Alternatively, ensure there is a clause in the contract enabling termination without any legal repercussions.

Good contract management and service delivery relies on effective supplier-customer relationships throughout the duration of the contract. Establishing a good working relationship with suppliers can benefit an academy in the long run. Recognising their expertise and taking their advice will help to maintain confidence that they have your best interests at heart.

YPO has launched a new free support and advice service to help academies achieve best value when buying services, such as insurance and energy contracts. The YPO Procurement Service for Academies is a free service designed to help school business managers navigate through procurement and purchasing processes. Benefits of the service include access to a procurement health check, dedicated helpline and category specialists that provide industry and market expertise.

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Invoice Reconciliation Report
Purchasing period: January 2014

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		27690027	18/01/2014	£29.83	£30.83	£1.00	3.00%
		27690074	18/01/2014	£8.72	£9.08	£0.36	4.00%
		27690027	18/01/2014	£18.16	£19.48	£1.32	7.00%

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What does e-invoicing mean for your school?

It is not often that I hear news of a new directive from the European Commission that I can get excited about. Frequently, new rules from the EU are loaded with lots of administration or additional layers of red tape that seem more of a burden than a benefit.

I was however talking with legal expert Paul Henty recently who was telling me of a new legislation that is set to come into force by 2016, which will be of interest and relevance to the way in which invoicing is managed in contracts governed by EU procurement directives.

In summary, the European Commission has published a draft directive for the creation of a 'standardised e-invoicing system'. What this means is that public sector bodies will stop receiving paper invoices and instead receive electronic invoices. It is also part of a wider movement to create fully digital public procurement processes by 2020.

This takes all paper-based invoicing 'into the cloud' meaning that at any time, anyone authorised within your school will be able to get instant access to all invoices, without them having to be manually printed and passed from pillar to post.

From what we have read, this directive will be mandatory for public sector organisations but to me this approach could work just as well whether you're operating in a public or privately-run school. In my eyes, this is real progress and is one of the few EU regulations that I welcome.

Having seen how many schools currently manage their hundreds of supplier invoices, I can see great

efficiencies for all involved in the supply chain. It would mean school staff can spend more time on more pressing tasks than simply chasing suppliers for copy invoices or credits.

So what actions do you need to consider in the meantime?

It may be advantageous to start looking into the range of systems which are already available on the market that support e-invoicing. There are a number of systems available today that not only capture supplier invoices electronically, but also enable you to undertake greater analysis on the resulting data. For example, using the invoice data information it can automatically update stock control lists, or log the information against pre-determined budgets, meaning at any time you can visibly track your budget without fussing with spreadsheets.

You can set budgets of each cost centre and the invoices are automatically allocated to that cost centre. It can then graph how your expenditure compares to your budget; and you don't even have to enter any values – it does this for you automatically. If you wanted to place an order with your supplier, the system knows what you have purchased



and allows you to enter quantities and you can email this to your supplier. In fact, the list of automated management information and tools are almost endless, especially with outputting to graphs and charts making annual reporting easier to compute.

Fundamentally, this level of analysis and budget tracking can only help towards supporting schools in not only keeping track of invoices but in taking greater control of their overall procurement management. So, perhaps the bureaucrats deserve a pat on the back this time around.

Shabaz Mohammed,
Managing Director,
Pelican Procurement
Services.

Sensible accounting will protect against media headlines

Proper audit procedures should protect academies from accusations of ‘profiteering’, say UK200Group members

A recent report in the *Guardian* highlighted how a small number of academies are paying millions of pounds into the private businesses of directors, trustees and their relatives.

And while some have urged the Government to look closely at the practice to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, members of the Academy Forum of the UK200Group of independent chartered accountants and lawyers say that adequate accounting systems and audits should protect academies from any accusations of wrong doing.

Furthermore the UK200Group say the intervention of private businesses into the academy sector should actually be welcomed.

Members of the Academy Forum represent a large proportion of academy schools in the UK, with a recent survey indicating member firms now act for 10.5% of the academies market.

Kevin Hopper, academy partner at UK200Group member firm Forrester Boyd, says that while they recognise the practice is a relatively small issue, proper audits should identify any serious risks.

He said: “It is always concerning that the large academy chains are paying related companies/individuals monies for services, which could be seen as profiting out of public money.

“However, with the external audits that are completed, the auditor should be aware of this and it should be part of their audit work to review this area.

“Also due to the nature of the relation, it should also be a relatively high risk area for the auditor, which would mean extra focus for their audit work, including reviewing who the related parties of an academy are and testing the associated systems, controls and tendering processes.

“Therefore if the audit is completed correctly and on a risk basis then increased scrutiny in this area should not be required.

“This issue therefore is around the auditor understanding the academy itself, and this is why having an auditor with experience is preferable.

“The change by the EFA in respect of the transactions with related parties, in which transactions cannot be completed at profit, should also minimise the concern in this area.

“In summary these issues are concerning, but there should

be adequate procedures in place to ensure that profiteering of academies does not happen, but unfortunately there will always be someone who still manages it.”

Rob Stokes, from UK200Group member firm Randall & Payne says the intervention by private firms into the academy sector is actually a positive move.

He said: “The focus should be on the governance procedures put in place by the academy to ensure that the expenditure, whether or not with a related party, is getting the best value for the academy, and that the purchasing/tendering systems put in place are appropriate to assist in this and consistently followed. In terms of this then being checked, the academies’ auditors should be made aware of these procedures, and having also been made aware of the related party transactions that the academy has undertaken, will direct their key testing to be around the appropriate controls and value for money.

“Rather than being a cause for concern the fact that more private sector businesses are venturing into the education sector to provide goods and services could be looked upon as another positive for the academy sector. Those who have directors who are also governors of academies will have more of an insight into the services that the academies require and how best to utilise them once they have been offered.

“Rather than focusing on the amount of money being expended by academies into the private sector and particularly to related parties there should be a primary focus on academies defining what gives best value for them. The follow up focus should then be on the academies putting in place procedures and controls that are implemented to ensure that conflicts of interest are removed, and that their value for money statement is capable of being monitored by third parties.”

UK200 Academy forum member Joanne Baldwin, partner at Nicklin LLP, says stricter guidelines on tendering and contracts should increase the focus on related party transactions.

“The figures highlighted in the article are of concern and could be an indication of public funds being spent inappropriately although it is difficult to confirm without additional information. As academies, the schools themselves

have more autonomy and with this comes increased responsibility to ensure funds are being utilised appropriately. Academies are charities and regulations and restrictions relating to the use of funds should also always be adhered to.

“Stricter guidelines and limits on tendering and the awarding of contracts may assist in the future along with increased focus on related party transactions disclosures within the financial statements. If it is felt that increased scrutiny is required, the cost of such additional work whether it be carried out by the DfE itself or by independent professional advisers should be carefully considered to ensure the work carried out is robust but also cost effective.”

Rob Stokes says academies have a duty to have a “diverse” governing body, including business people, a consequence of which is related party transactions.

He said: “Academies have been set up to control their own budgets to provide the best possible education solution to their pupils and this puts a strong onus on having a challenging and diverse governing body. This means that it is an inevitable requirement that there are business people on the board in order to properly manage the finite budget with its many areas requiring a share of the limited resources, and as a consequence there will be times at which related party transactions arise.”

Carrie Jensen, academy specialist at Forrester Boyd, says that the concern is that focus on large chains could see smaller academies lose governors.

She said: “In order to catch these potential large chain issues, it has meant that the stand alone small academy, which has a governor/trustee completing legitimate work, may end up with a loss in governors, who cannot afford to complete the work at cost and who do not want to lose this vital work.

“Tightening up on the potential profiteering of academies could potentially be at the detriment of the small well-run academy.”

Rob questions whether state-run schools are being let off the hook.

“Unfortunately the article represents another area where the fact that academies are a political animal makes headlines,” he said.

“This kind of reporting overrides the fact that not just schools but many other local and central government bodies are purchasing from the private sector as a normal occurrence.

“The lack of regulation and oversight for local authority schools means that they escape the same kind of scrutiny that academies face particularly for the area of related parties and value for money.”

For academy conversion and on going support...

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

Members of the Forum have the specialist skills and expertise to successfully plan and manage the financial and legal issues for the conversion of schools to academies, and to maintain their on going operation. Their expertise is equal to that of the large national accountancy and law firms but delivered locally.

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Education: the rock and roll years

Ageing rocker Les Walton reminisces

1954 The Flea Pit

Cinemas were always called ‘picture houses’ or ‘the pictures’ in the 1950s. Our village picture house was affectionately known as ‘the flea pit’. More than the Co-op and chapel, the picture house was the heart of our village.

There were three shows each week, plus Saturday morning ‘children’s cinema’. The adventure serial was the highlight of the morning. There were classics which still occur in the cinema. *Zorro*, *Superman*, *Buck Rogers*, *Batman*, and *Flash Gordon*. Every week I would sit, feeling quite niggled when the hero, who the week before had actually fallen off the cliff, was nowhere near the edge during this week’s episode.

Children’s matinees had been shown in British cinemas since the 1920s. After the Second World War, educationalists raised objections to the nature of the films being screened, leading to the ‘Wheare Report’ into juvenile cinema-going in 1950. One result was

certificate. X certificates were given for many reasons. For example *The Battleship Potemkin* was rejected for inflammatory subtitles and Bolshevik propaganda in 1926 and rated X in 1954 and finally PG in 1987.

In 1954 Saturday morning at the ‘flea pit’ was just plain madness. The contrast with the cane-imposed behaviour in school was dramatic. Every week Jake Wilson, with his twin brother, would flick peanuts into the projection beam and shout “it’s snowing”. Billy Sterling was once thrown out for peeing on the floor in the back seats and attempting to float a lollipop stick to the front row.

My father, mother, sister and I would go to the cinema every Friday night. We would shuffle along the upstairs front row, waiting patiently as ‘Auld George’ would unscrew his wooden leg so we could get to our seats.

Everyone would have their own favourite seats. Fred the barber always sat in the back row downstairs. One night as my father was finding our seats he accidentally knocked

the creation of the X certificate, replacing the H certificate. In 1954 it meant “Suitable for those aged 16 and over”.

To me and my Saturday morning cinema gang it was incredibly frustrating to know that *Killers from Space* and *Menace from Outer Space* were rated X certificate. Today these films would be considered to be only requiring a Parental Guidance (PG)

George’s wooden leg which fell off the balcony and hit Fred on the head. That wouldn’t have been so bad, but Fred fell off his seat, and his watch strap caught in the bra of a local beauty. The house lights then came on, accompanied by the usual stamping and shouting. Without doubt if the incident had been made into a film it would have been X rated.

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Why we arm young people

(WITH THE FACTS)

Today, more than ever, young people face a myriad of challenges. With the advent of so-called legal highs, the number of harmful substances available to them is vast, and growing on a daily basis, multiplying the threat already posed by tobacco, illegal drugs and alcohol.

The internet, and in particular social networks, brings with it a number of disturbing elements. Cyber bullying and the widespread availability of sexual content are just two examples.

So we arm young people. With information. We go into schools across the UK and hold open, frank discussions with students. We also hold discussion groups with teachers, parents and guardians, in fact anyone involved with the welfare of young people. We don't lecture, preach, patronise or judge. We engage and involve.

The areas we cover include substance misuse, bullying, body image, eating disorders, sex and depression, arming students with the information they need to make informed choices, both during their school years and in later life.

Our senior facilitators, Bob Tait and Barry Evans, have been conducting these groups both across the UK and in Europe for many years and we currently have ongoing contracts with over 300 schools.

If you would like to arrange a visit to your school, or would simply like more information on the services we provide, please contact us

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Tel : 020 3544 6392 Mob : 07787 444643 Email : paul.rubin@lacauk.co.uk Registered Charity No : 1142249