



FASNA

Academy magazine

Volume 4 Number 2 Spring 2015



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It is likely that the forthcoming election will dominate the education debate over the next five months. As written in previous editorials, we want to know what the main parties' policies are for education. At the FASNA Conference in November (reviewed on page 7) Headteacher associations, ASCL and NAHT, and other organisations such as NASBM and IAA, set out their hopes of the next government. In this issue FASNA clearly articulates its position and the areas it will campaign for. There are few surprises here:

- autonomy and freedom from bureaucracy coupled with strong accountability measures,
- a slim-line, cost-effective middle tier which only concerns itself with failing schools, leaving successful schools alone
- a focus on improving governance, including moves away from the stakeholder model towards a skills-based model
- demands for a fair National Funding Formula as well as a national approach to High Needs Funding
- schools funding to be protected even if overall education funding is not

Read for yourself the details of FASNA's expectations. Unlike many other organisations, FASNA has avoided the naïve trap of making demands which require funding increases. We should all understand that, whoever wins the election, there will be no more money. Hence it would be naïve to go cap in hand with an idealistic wish list. FASNA at least has been brutally honest about this and deals only with what is to be done with existing resources, without expectation of more. Of course, these are watershed issues.

We know the next Government will not increase education funding, but will they cut it or protect it? Will they allow reductions in schools budgets whilst protecting non-school education spending? This is absolutely critical considering the increases in employer pension and National Insurance contributions coming into force this year. These are effectively budget cuts, which many schools will struggle with.

What decisions will be made about the Middle Tier? Will it be light touch or cumbersome and invasive? Will we see a move back towards a command and control model – eroding the ambition of schools to be better than they were, curtailing freedoms to innovate and improve, reducing parental choice, undermining parental demands for a good school for their child, and thus disabling all the levers for change and improvement.

Will schools still be allowed to become autonomous and break away from Local Authority control? Will existing academy freedoms be protected, extended or curtailed? Will system leadership be supported and seen as the means of achieving system improvement or will Local Authorities or others be charged with school improvement?

Will they retain the stakeholder model of governance with all its imperfections and uncertainties or move towards a skills-based model which can be properly effective in holding heads and schools to account?

Will National Funding remain in the “too difficult to handle drawer” and leave us with a socially unjust system of funding children's education? Or will there be a determined move towards a socially fair national funding formula?

In essence, will there be continued reform and change or will education become a backwater paying only lip-service to the siren calls for every child to have an equal chance of attending a good school and be taught by good teachers?

Let us not lose ourselves in the political debate entirely. It is tremendous to see articles from schools such as Dulwich Hamlet Junior school that are wanting to lead the system, from schools that are working together and turning themselves around and improving their children's life chances (Hilton and Fern Primary academies), and from teachers wanting to contribute to developments in children's learning.

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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Consensus formed at the FASNA Autumn Conference

In November FASNA held its autumn Conference at the Grand Connaught Rooms. This was the first of a two-part event. In the run-up to the General Election next May, it gave delegates the opportunity to hear from key educational groups what they would like to see from a new government. Thus, it is to be hoped, voices from the world of education will be able to influence the politicians as they draw up policy proposals for their manifestos.

The second event, to be held in the British Library in March, will give the politicians the opportunity to present their key policies on education should they be elected. Between these two events, FASNA is publishing (in this edition of *Academy*) its own position on several key issues.

Tom Clark, FASNA Chair, opened the Conference by outlining the current landscape. Tom described a ‘confused’ education scene, so diverse when compared to the situation in 2010. Standards are more rigorous than ever and accountability is more demanding, especially with the growth of system leadership. The paradigm shift, described by Tom, is one that is relying heavily on multi-school frameworks and highly skilled, effective governance. This climate demands ‘joined up’ leadership with SBMs, governors and Head Teachers working together and time is needed to bring stability to education.

Tom asked what the incentives are for system leadership? Actions are secure when schools have ‘serious weaknesses’,

but less clear when schools require improvement. External and commercial sponsors are growing their chains and by the time of the general election (May 2015) will have a significant hold on large groups of schools. Meanwhile, small schools urgently need to consider their futures and viability. School funding remains a lottery and is far from fair...and all the time the rhetoric is ‘no more money’!!

System leadership is currently an underrated contributor to sustainable school improvement. The need for stability has rarely been more urgent. Education will be dropping down the political agenda and being replaced by concerns about the NHS and future relationships with Europe. It is not likely or desirable to foresee a return to Local Authority control as we have known it. However, it is reasonable to expect some form of regional oversight in the coming years.

Tom was followed by a stirring presentation from Les Walton, Chair of the Northern Education Trust, entitled “What do we want from the next Government”. Les has written up and expanded on his presentation for this issue of *Academy* which can be found on page 36.

The next speaker was Leora Cruddas, Director of Policy at ASCL. Leora outlined ASCL’s document *A Blueprint for Change*. ASCL is being told by members that they feel ‘done to’, that there is too much change happening too quickly. ASCL’s document sets out their vision for improving the education system, which comes from inside the system. She quoted David Hargreaves as saying that ‘vision won’t come from outside the system’.

The principles underpinning ASCL’s blueprint separate accountability in terms of roles. They advocate that the state has a role to determine accountability on behalf

Mike Butler of IAA addresses the Conference



of the electorate, but that ‘teachers and school leaders must be agents of their own accountability’. The current climate, which is witnessing the growth of system leadership, is surely opportune for school leaders to step forward and government to step back in pursuit of a ‘self-improving’ system.

Leora made reference to Joel Klein who said ‘you can mandate adequacy, you can’t mandate greatness. It has to be unleashed’. The emphasis on local contexts and school-to-school frameworks echoes the shift referred to by Tom.

ASCL found a strong correlation between collaborative cultures and system success and they argue that the need for trust within the profession is an absolute necessity if policy and practice are to be developed from teachers and schools working together. Decision-making, according to ASCL’s blueprint, needs to be devolved to the most immediate level consistent with its’ implementation. If this is to be true, then must the question of accountability also be devolved to system leaders? ASCL has less interest in LAs and more interest in how regional accountability is to be defined.

Bernadette Hunter, immediate past President of NAHT followed with reference to NAHT’s manifesto which demands from government: Stability, Respect, Fairness and Trust. Once again, conference heard about how the profession is best placed to bring about change: ‘Change which reaches every child in every school’.

Bernadette called for the profession to lead the way and a period of calm whilst this evolves. All political parties need to sign up to this. She defined the role of the Royal College of Teaching to be an enabling agent for teachers to take responsibility for their own destiny. Also, an ‘independent education standards authority’ was described, (*Ed:* but this is surely muddling a system already crowded with middle tier agencies?)

Bernadette referred to how other countries have systems of improved collaboration and better pay and conditions for teachers. Improved CPD



opportunities and a review of CPD for new Head Teachers lie within NAHT’s manifesto. This includes capping hours worked in each week and a half term secondment for all teachers every ten years. (*Ed:* This is difficult to reconcile with no more money)

Accountability needs to be ‘chosen rather than imposed’ and NAHT advocate peer reviews and schools signing up for their own paths to improvements.

The session just before lunch saw delegates attend one of four workshops:

1. Academy conversion and available grants
2. Effective, not just innovative, use of Pupil Premium
3. Sixth Form Funding Developments
4. How to get an ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted, including governance

After lunch Roger Inman from Stone King gave a legal update on Admissions, SEN and Safeguarding, followed by Stephen Morales from NASBM giving an update on funding changes.

Mike Butler past Chair of the Independent Academies Association reiterated the preference for ‘hard-edged, peer challenge’ in terms of standards and accountabilities. He also had concerns about schools becoming isolated and stressed a preference for all schools to join a MAT. The role of the LA in IAA’s view should be reduced to ‘place-

planning’. Mike was optimistic about the opportunities now available to teachers. He referred to an ‘opportunity to think outside the box’, particularly with regards to formative and assessment ‘measuring what we value, valuing what we measure’.

Other IAA concerns included:

- Still half a million children in this country without access to technology
- Daily Act of Worship being outdated and not necessary
- Funding allocations should be made on three-five year cycles with no ring-fenced grants and a review of Post-16 funding
- Priority given to early intervention strategies
- Ofsted needs to be reviewed
- Action on Masters level entry to profession
- Reform of Governance is needed





Mike recognised the need for a new regulatory body which embraced standards for Trust Boards, for executive principals and chief executives. The mission for IAA was a repeat of ‘no forgotten children’.

Stephen Morales from NASBM rounded off the conference by identifying funding issues and arguing the case for School Business Managers being professionalized. SBMs should have their role recognized and rewarded, but they need to play a part in supporting the strategic direction of the school and sharing responsibility for pupil progress. FASNA and NASBM will work together in supporting this.

Tom Clark delivered a plenary and outlined the common issues raised during the day. These included:

- The need for a period of stability
- Governance being a mess and in need of reform
- A lack of confidence in the assessment regime which needs to be taken out of politicians’ control
- A system of National Fair Funding being essential
- Schools needing to take control and not be victims of change
- Acknowledging that a collaborative approach is the mood music of the day but that it needs to be hard

edged and accountable

- Recognising the tension that exists between autonomy and the accountability frameworks. However, we should not accept only the ‘autonomy to do what we are told’. Instead we should have strategic direction set by democratically elected government, then letting schools get on with it whilst holding them to a transparent accountability framework
- Finally, it is clear that there will be no more money. Demands from NAHT and ASCL for funding for large programmes of CPD are therefore optimistic.



What FASNA stands for

Peter Beaven, executive board member, explains why FASNA are such strong advocates of school autonomy

Since 1992 FASNA (Freedom and Autonomy for Schools - National Association) has campaigned for school autonomy. This is borne out of a belief that it is school leaders who are best placed to make decisions about their schools – they know the community, the children, the parents and what is best for them. The view that standards are best raised in systems with autonomous schools has now become widely accepted in many countries. There is international evidence that the most autonomous systems work best for their students.

Thus it is FASNA's aim to secure autonomy for schools:

- to free them from bureaucracy (both Local Authority bureaucracy and that from the DfE), which shackles them and deflects from the goal of raising standards;
- to give them the freedom to teach their curriculum in the way which best suits their students – as they know their students best;
- to give them the freedom to manage their staff - to motivate and reward to achieve the highest standards of performance;
- to give them the freedom to manage their own finances, making their own decisions about where to target their resources, rather than having the LA or the DfE spend money on their behalf;
- to give them the freedom to manage their site and buildings – setting their own priorities for improvement which impact best on their students, and monitoring quality and value for money;

- to give them the freedom to establish their own ethos and identity which their students and parents buy in to and subscribe to.

Obviously, if schools are autonomous they need also to be accountable. It is neither feasible nor reasonable to expect that publicly funded schools do not account for their effectiveness. FASNA not only supports the need for autonomy but also for robust systems of accountability. Clearly, schools need to account for outcomes and standards probably through Performance Tables. They should also be held to account for the quality of their work in a broader sense, the quality of input - that is teaching, curriculum breadth, extra-curricular work, personal development, leadership and so on. This can only be achieved through Inspection. There should also be financial accountability, which comes through audit.

FASNA has no objection to such accountability measures, but of course, the devil is in the detail. What outcomes are valued and how? This has become a political football over the last ten years with Labour valuing vocational courses and driving for their 'equivalence' with academic courses, and the Coalition wanting to emphasise rigour with a narrowing of the acceptable range of subjects, and curriculum content and assessment methods being constrained. Thus Performance Tables have kept changing and schools have had to play catch-up.

Similarly, Ofsted has repeatedly changed the framework for inspection. Satisfactory is no longer satisfactory (but



requires improvement) and Inspection outcomes have been criticized for being too arbitrary.

There is also the question of who schools are accountable to. Local Authorities singularly failed to exercise this responsibility effectively for decades. Now the question of 'The Middle Tier' exorcises politicians of all hues. This isn't really about accountability per se, it is more a debate about who intervenes in the case of underperformance. It is an issue of acting to raise standards and ensure students are getting a fair deal.

Obviously, in an autonomous school the first line of accountability is to the Governing Body and the Trustees. As this is the case, there is an issue around the quality and ability of governors and

trustees. FASNA recognises the issues around this and campaigns for governors to be selected for the skills they bring, rather than the group they represent (as this representation is often ineffective). Governance must be developed, nurtured and valued.

Not only have accountability measures constantly changed, but schools nationally don't have an even playing field. To compare outcomes between schools when there are huge discrepancies in resources allocated is in itself unjust. Not only are similar schools in different Local Authorities funded at hugely different levels, this is compounded by similar schools in the same Local Authority being funded differently. The consequence of ages-old formula for funding education in Local Authorities is compounded by the vagaries of local funding formulae and capricious school forums.

Hence FASNA has campaigned, and will continue to campaign, for a fair National Funding Formula, which values each student equally and funds disadvantage equally.

In many parts of the country the question of admissions is also an issue with some parents, and some sections of communities, being denied access to good schools. Just as funding should be fair and equal, as well as simple and transparent, so admissions codes should be fair, equal, simple and transparent, openly regulated with clear procedures for grievance.

The following set of articles, written by FASNA members, outline in more detail what FASNA wants from the next government on each of these issues.

FASNA has a strong and vibrant membership, and offers practical advice and support to those seeking to maximise the benefits of autonomy

and to champion 'autonomy with accountability'. Today, the understanding that Head Teachers are better placed than bureaucrats to assess the needs of their pupils is commonly shared. Today, the value of diversity and self-determination in shaping outstanding educational provision and the importance of clear accountability within this is widely accepted. None of these facets of how we understand education today would have been as clearly understood without FASNA.

Since 1992, FASNA has helped to transform the educational landscape and here FASNA demonstrates how it will continue to do so.

In the following five articles members of FASNA outline what FASNA will be campaigning for during the next Parliament.



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Post-Election: Where next for schools' autonomy?

Tom Clark, CBE, Chairman of FASNA

FASNA's philosophy is to promote autonomy with accountability for all schools. FASNA is about autonomy not about structures. In this we agree with ASCL that: "decision making should be devolved to the most immediate level consistent with its implementation and to the place closest to students - to schools" and such autonomy should be accompanied by intelligent accountability.

In debate, there is tension between the concepts of 'autonomy' and 'accountability' but this is not an 'either - or' issue, FASNA wants both. In a democracy it is proper for government to shape the direction it wants for education but then it should get out of the way. The accountability mechanisms provide the checks – The Education Funding Agency for audit and satisfying the National Audit Office; Performance Tables to satisfy parents and politicians; Ofsted Inspections to satisfy the DfE, and for academies, the developing role of regional school commissioners.

How schools deal with the curriculum, pay and conditions, issues relating to the estate, or the purchase of services should be left to the schools. The perception that assessment is, or can be politicised to meet government targets, needs to be addressed. More generally government should leave to the professionals things such as which books children read, or how children are taught to read, but hold schools to account for the outcomes of their work.

The present and continuing landscape

There is a diversity of schools which enjoy greater autonomy than Local Authority

'community' schools. These include 'academies', 'free' schools, 'UTCs', 'Studio Schools', 'trust' schools, 'foundation' schools, VA schools, and of course the independent sector.

Too often the term 'academy' is used without proper understanding – there are different sorts of academy. There are type one 'sponsored' academies which grew up under Labour and Andrew Adonis between 2000 and 2010 and were failing schools which were closed and then re-opened with new governance, leadership and usually with new buildings. These schools often benefited from additional funding from entrepreneurial philanthropists and were generally urban in character. They were all secondary schools.

Since 2010 there have also been 'converter' academies which have an entirely different DNA to type one sponsored academies. Converter academies are high-performing schools choosing to be autonomous. 71% of academies are 'converters'. Now both successful primary and secondary schools could choose to be autonomous converter academies.

There are stand-alone converter academies, but also schools working together in clusters, typically with up to ten schools. Some of these are 'umbrella trusts', many are 'multi-academy trusts'. Many of these will include a struggling school working alongside successful academies.

Then there are academy 'chains', with as many as 30 or 40 schools in the 'chain', some successful like ARK and The Nottingham Academy and some others



less successful, but seeking to develop schools which were usually struggling before they became part of the chain.

Numbers

In April 2010 there were 203 'academies', all secondary. In November 2014 there are 4243 academies. 1873 are secondary academies; 2215 are primary academies (in April 2010 there were none, there are now more primary academies than secondary); and some 1200 are 'sponsored' academies. (The term 'sponsored' is not entirely helpful as it suggests a commercial relationship: I prefer the term 'supported').

But academies are not the only autonomous schools. There are over 3750 VA schools and 736 Foundation Schools,



as well as over 2500 independent schools. So there are roughly 11,229 schools with different degrees of autonomy greater than that of LA community schools. I am not aware of any serious demand for any of these schools to come under or be returned to LA control and any possible future requirement upon these schools to be 'controlled' by LAs denies the very concept of autonomous schools.

Freedom from what and why?

Over the last 40 years the record of Local Authorities in respect of school improvement and standards has been lamentable. Today LAs have neither the skill-set nor the capacity to be helpful. Bureaucracy – yes: effectiveness – no. Schools are not victims and should not be victims of the slow decision-making bureaucracy of LAs, their disproportionate costs, and lack of quality. Why would any self-confident school not want to determine for itself and partner schools its effectiveness with regard to standards, value for money, customised curricular provision, managing its site and estate, or employing

and rewarding its own staff in the context of understanding its own pupils and parents? Where schools don't have this self-confidence then they might give consideration to joining a MAT.

FASNA will continue to campaign to protect the hard-won freedoms of these confident, autonomous schools – and to protect the opportunity for other schools to achieve this autonomy.

Funding

The basis upon which schools are funded is indefensible. It would help if politicians, though ever mindful of the political cycle, would have the courage to take out of the 'too difficult to do drawer' the matter of a national fair funding formula for schools. This is dealt with in more detail in a later article.

This funding should go directly to schools without licensing third party 'agents' like LAs to spend schools' money on schools' behalf whilst embroiling schools in layers of costly bureaucracy. Let schools decide which services they want to buy (including from LAs) – that way schools can see what they are being

charged in a transparent way and pursue value for money in the interests of their pupils. A national fair funding formula would have the added bonus of being able, at a stroke, to get rid of any need for there to be a schools forum.

Funding going directly to schools without being earmarked by the LA or the DfE is a vital aspect of autonomy.

Letting schools decide for themselves what they spend their budgets on is a key part of FASNA's mission.

Standards

Standards have become higher, tougher and narrower. GCSE's and A' Levels have been made more demanding, 'Satisfactory' is no longer satisfactory. Broadly the attempts to raise the bar is to be supported.

The middle tier and system leadership

Contrary to the rumblings of LGA and the NUT – this is not now a wasteland; if anything the middle tier has become too crowded. LAs continue to operate but accountability and support involves

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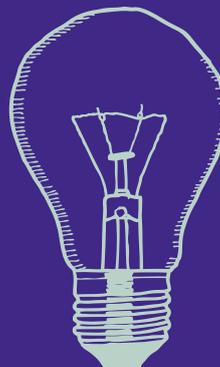
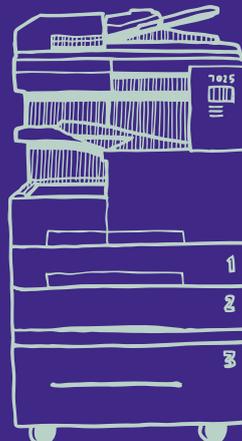
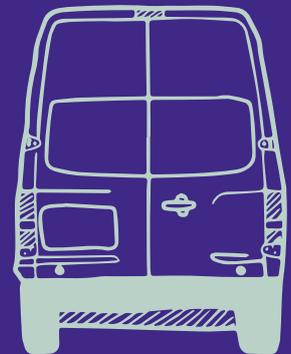
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other players – for instance, the trustees of MATs and chains, and regional school commissioners for academies.

There are governors, National Leaders of Education, National Leaders of Governance, Local Leaders of Education, Teaching Schools – which together contribute to ‘system leadership’ now provided much more by front-line, practising school leaders. System leadership should come with hard-edged accountability. The number of players may reduce but grow in influence, as they sharpen their focus and mature over time. Intelligent consideration needs to be given to how we incentivise ‘system leadership’ to increase the capacity of ‘successful’ schools to support other schools and share a collective responsibility for standards and financial probity. Perversely it has been the custom to fund ‘failing schools’ at the expense of ‘successful’ ones but too often without changing the culture of those failing schools with a result that comes dangerously close to re-cycling failure.

Worryingly, from the FASNA perspective, there is emerging an unannounced, unstructured, inconsistent ‘assault’ on schools from Regional Commissioners and Local Authorities, prompted by data trawls, which demand bureaucratic form filling and ‘improvement focused’ meetings in the name of ‘accountability’. Potentially this undermines academy freedoms if the purpose is to channel autonomous schools into a standardised provision.

Finally school leadership is not just about the Head Teacher - the resource needs to include the leadership team and subject specialists as well as governors and the school business manager –the leadership resource needs to be joined up!

Governance

Governance is a mess. Schools cannot be judged ‘outstanding’ unless there is effective governance. This is fully considered in Joan Binder’s article.

I don’t think that the significance of placing governance in the Ofsted framework is well understood. The culture of volunteers and stakeholders with a single school perspective has shifted to one of the non-executive director of not-for-profit public companies with a multi-school perspective. The further shift is from the stakeholder governor to governors with more professional capacity and skill sets.

Governors now need to be able to pass the FASNA test – are they professional in practice and membership; are they accountable in a way that can be evidenced though their appointment and structures; are they strategic in operation and outlook; are they skilled in understanding data, questioning, challenging and supporting?

Is the appointment of the Chair of Governors professional in practice or that of the last one standing on a foggy night?

It doesn’t help that Ofsted has to look at clusters of schools through the prism of a single school and it doesn’t help that too many Ofsted teams don’t seem to understand MAT structures and their context when judging the effectiveness of school governance.

The future landscape – a perfect storm?

There will be no more money for education in the next Parliament. Indeed, there may well be a perfect storm brewing in relation to schools’ funding. The cost pressures of increased employer’s NI and Teachers’ pension contributions, coupled with the impact of reduced post-16 funding for some schools, will present a real challenge. The demand for value for money and support for efficiency in school procurement matters will become ever more strident. Schools will need to collaborate, not just because of the financial numbers, but because they won’t be able to afford to provide their pupils with the curriculum to which they are entitled.

Also, as budgets shrink, the size of ‘small schools’ which need extra financial support will become much bigger - and remember ‘small school support’ comes from ‘bigger schools’ – it is not new money – and those ‘bigger’ schools are going to have to face a real financial challenge of their own. There is nothing wrong with the principle of small-school support but there needs to be transparency about where the money comes from and how it is spent. There also needs to be some hard decisions about stand-alone small schools and viability. Decisions to retain small schools which are not economically viable should be made strategically and not just be a decision ducked.

FASNA supports the EFA’s strategy of sparsity as a means of identifying strategic need in these instances

What do we fear at FASNA?

- The return of any degree of local control with its costs and bureaucracy;
- a reduction in the scope and range of school freedoms and autonomy;
- any increase in the politicisation of assessment and accountability;
- further delays in the fair funding of schools and the funding of high needs pupils;
- and a narrow concentration only on the contribution of type one ‘sponsored’ academies.

We want assurance from all political parties that school autonomy and academy status is secure and there will be the opportunity for other schools to convert to academy status.

What must we do

Seize the agenda: refuse to be victims: demonstrate the effectiveness of more autonomous schools in this country and others: collaborate and support FASNA to make this happen.

Accountability and performance measures

Sarah Ray, FASNA Chief Operating Officer, and Dame Helen Hyde, FASNA past President and Head of Watford Grammar School for Girls

Since its inception 23 years ago, FASNA has welcomed accountability as an essential prerequisite of autonomy - leaders being free to lead their schools without government interference whilst at the same time as being held responsible for achievement and expenditure of public funds. FASNA continues to campaign for school leaders to be autonomous and accountable.

The strong relationship between autonomy and accountability is supported by international evidence. The OECD identified three forms of accountability:

1. Performance accountability through examinations and assessment;
2. Regulatory accountability through inspections and audit; and,
3. Market accountability that emphasises parent/carer choice.

Performance tables

FASNA concurs with 2009 results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Their report 'What makes a school successful?' shows that a robust accountability framework is essential to improving pupils' achievement.

Before the 2013 consultation on accountability measures, the DfE had received an increasing amount of evidence that the headline measure of the percentage of pupils achieving

five or more A*- C grades at GCSE (or equivalents) including English and maths was distorting teaching and qualifications. Their new proposals are designed to make schools accountable for all their pupils' progress across a broader range of subjects. This is called Progress eight, a pupil's progress across eight subjects. FASNA holds that Progress eight is a fairer measure which values all children's progress equally.

DfE will show school's performance measures in three ways to cater for all audiences:-

1. Snap shot on each school's website, so parents can quickly understand a school's effectiveness.
2. School performance tables will continue to provide more detailed information, including breakdowns of the performance of different pupil groups, such as disadvantaged pupils.
3. The Data Portal will provide a single point of access to include almost (why almost?) all of the information the DfE hold on schools and pupils. This detailed information will be of interest to Ofsted, schools, governors, academic researchers, and to parents.

The DfE will set minimum floor standards requirements for schools.

If pupil progress falls below the minimum standard, the school will come under scrutiny through inspection, and intervention may be required. This might include a maintained school becoming a sponsored academy. The

minimum requirement will be set on the Progress eight measure, which takes into account each school's intake. The DfE thinks the fairest way to identify an underperforming school, is when it fails to meet the floor standard. That is, if pupils make an average of half a grade less progress than expected across their eight subjects. So, for example, a school is underperforming if its pupils were expected to gain eight C grades (because that's what their peers, with similar prior attainment, gain elsewhere in the country) but they actually achieve less than four C grades and 4 D grades.

On the other hand, schools will not be inspected by Ofsted during an academic year in which their pupils make an average of one grade more progress than expected across their eight subjects. This is unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example where there are safeguarding concerns. Schools which are seeking an improved Ofsted grade, and want to showcase their results to inspectors, can elect to opt-in for inclusion in the normal Ofsted inspection cycle.

Early adopters

The DfE is giving secondary schools the opportunity to adopt the new accountability measures a year early in 2015. They believe that the new measures offer a "fairer" accountability system and will enable schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stages 3



with equal pay and status, FASNA has evidence that this is not always the case. With less money and more accountability, the role of the SBM is crucial.

FASNA is actively engaged in supporting the development of SBMs provided that SBMs accept co-professional responsibility for the strategic direction of the school and for pupil progress.

Like FASNA, IAA challenge that it is not healthy that the EFA are allocators of funding as well as adjudicators.

Tom Clark spoke to FASNA members in November about the tensions around accountability and autonomy. He stressed that as there is no more money, we therefore need to have a fairer distribution of funding if accountability is to be fair. We sometimes hear about a lack of financial accountability in academies, but let us remind ourselves about the poor value for public money in many Local Authority schools, where individual examples of financial mismanagement are hidden by LA bureaucracy.

The role of governance in the accountability framework

In April 2014 the DfE produced a report on accountability and governance to explore research priorities and questions.

'Accountability matters, it is the mechanism by which central Government can ensure that schools and colleges provide high quality education for all children and, where educational standards fall short, swiftly and decisively intervene.... We want to be challenging, fair and transparent, holding autonomous schools and colleges to account for the education they provide. This includes the need for high quality school governance, the front line of our accountability system.'

From 2016, all secondary schools must publish four key measures on their website:

1. Pupils' progress across eight subjects. This will enable parents to see whether pupils at a school typically

and 4. 'Progress eight' will be rolled out in 2016 and will be based on 2016 exam results across eight subjects: English, maths, three other English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects and three other subjects either from the EBacc list or any other high-value arts, academic or vocational qualification.

Inspection

Ofsted will continue to be a central pillar of the accountability system; identifying the best performers, challenging and incentivising others to do better, and holding to account those who continue to underperform. Inspection adds a more rounded element to accountability which performance tables cannot provide.

Whilst NAHT have argued for a move towards peer review, FASNA has argued instead for reform of Ofsted. This view is also supported by IAA. It may be that the consultation Better Inspection for all will lead to the consistency and objectivity required. That Inspection teams have been brought back into Ofsted and HMI rather than being contracted out is a step in the right direction. What must emerge is a better trained Inspectorate, with Inspection Teams skilled and equipped to carry out the task.

Thankfully, Sir Michael Wilshaw

has abandoned the idea of no-notice inspections for all schools. FASNA had opposed this idea except for exceptional circumstances. These will only occur if there are serious concerns requiring immediate inspection.

Audit

The DfE claim that financial accountability is ensured through annual independent audits. These audits check financial controls, systems, transactions and risks. Every governing body/trust must have an audit committee. If they do not, they must establish one by recruiting or training a professional clerk.

In addition, the EFA will monitor spending in academies and seek assurance that funding agreements are being complied with and that there is financial probity. If there are concerns the EFA will carry out an inspection of an academies finances. In Maintained Schools, it is the Local Authority who should carry out this role.

FASNA works with NASBM to promote joined-up leadership, where the Head Teacher, chair and school business manager (SBM) are partners in school leadership. Although the DfE states that finance directors or business managers are securely established as senior leaders

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with age, we say it comes
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achieve one grade more than expected, or one grade less;

2. The average grade a pupil achieves in these same 'best eight' subjects. This will show, for example, that pupils in a particular school average a high B grade or a low D grade in their GCSE's;
3. The percentage of pupils achieving a C grade in English and maths; and,
4. The proportion of pupils gaining the EBacc, which will continue in its current form.

In October 2014, Nicky Morgan told the Enfield Governors' Annual Conference that the DfE has five aims for

improving governance and accountability. These are to:

1. Be clear about expectations.
2. Attract and reward high quality governors.
3. Improve the rules and regulations for schools and academies.
4. Build capacity in governing bodies, recognising that governing bodies are the best place to decide what training is required.
5. Monitor governance effectiveness, with reference to Ofsted's ability to recommend External Reviews of Governance.

When speaking about governance

at the autumn conference Tom Clark stated to members that FASNA has told ministers that placing governance in the Ofsted framework has. Deb important. Length of tenure or representing a stakeholder group is irrelevant if Governors are not skilled.

FASNA's view is that it is skills and accountability that creates strong governance. This theme is picked up in detail in the article by Joan Binder.

Great systems use performance to identify best practice and ensure that lessons are shared with other schools, with FASNA members playing a vital part in this school to school support.

The vexed issue of the middle tier

Peter Beaven, FASNA Executive Board Member, and Tom Clark, CBE, FASNA Chair

Since successful schools were enabled to become academies in the summer of 2010 we have seen over 4200 schools become independent state schools – that is independent from Local Authority control. With so many schools answerable directly to the Secretary of State, the question of what happens when such a school fails comes to the fore. In answer, the calls for a return of Local Authority control are heard from those with vested interests in this – for example the unions, whose cosy relationship with Local Authorities has been undermined; elements within the Labour Party and Liberal-Democrats whose local power-base and seed bed for budding politicians has been reduced; and the Local Government Association which has seen its powers dwindle.

Whilst FASNA champions all schools being autonomous, FASNA also recognizes the impossibility of all

schools being answerable to the Secretary of State. Central government does not have the capacity or local knowledge required to directly commission and monitor thousands of individual schools effectively. This could pose a risk to the goal of every child being able to attend a good school.

FASNA recognizes the impossibility of all schools being answerable to the Secretary of State

Thus there needs to be some sort of 'Middle Tier' to act in cases of failure, to foresee when schools begin to slide and require early intervention, and to possess the local knowledge required to do these things effectively.

However, a return to Local Authority control is not the answer. We need to remind ourselves of why Local Authority control was reduced in the first place.

It began with schools having greater control over their budgets. Gone were the

days when the Local Authority decided on how many staff a school could employ and how many Scale two points were allocated to the school.

It continued with structural changes prising schools away from LA control. Grant Maintained Schools, City Technology Colleges, sponsored academies and finally converter academies all shifted power away from Local Authorities to schools in the attempt to ensure continually rising standards.

That these changes were required reflects on the inability of Local Authorities to tackle underperformance and raise standards. City Technology Colleges and Sponsored Academies were simply an attempt to rectify underperformance in city schools which had been failing for decades; a failure that LAs had failed to address.

If Local Authorities had failed to provide

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What is required is a slim-line structure, regionally focused to ensure local intelligence, thus knowing which schools require support and intervention and who is best placed to provide it

the solution when they had resources and manpower greater than they have today, why should we think they would be able to play this role effectively now? With the loss of control over much of the education budget, coupled with reductions in local authority budgets, we have seen Education Departments shrink hugely. They failed to show they had the expertise in the past, they certainly don't have it now. Most LA education teams have no-one with expertise in secondary school improvement and, although some still have a small team of primary school 'experts', they are too few in number, and too lacking in recent leadership experience.

Despite campaigns by the unions, including the NAHT, and support from David Blunkett's Review of Education, FASNA would not want a return to the controlling, bloated bureaucracies we had before: bureaucracies which denied schools access to as much as 40% of the schools budget, and which failed to tackle underperformance in so many schools under their control. As we can see in the article on school funding, the LAs response to school failure was often to overfund failing schools – at the expense of successful schools – and with little eye to improvement, or even expectation of it.

If further evidence is needed to illustrate the failures of Local Authorities one needs only look at Wales where all schools are still LA controlled.

FASNA would oppose a return to Local Education Authority control of schools.

So, if not a return to Local Authorities, what would FASNA advocate? FASNA argues that there is no need for a bureaucratic, and expensive, Middle

Tier to oversee and intervene in all schools. Successful schools should be left alone. They are judged by the rigorous accountability processes of Performance Tables, Ofsted Inspections, and financial audit as described in the previous article by Sarah Ray and Helen Hyde. Their line of accountability is to their Governing Body and, if part of a MAT or a chain, through governors to the board of trustees. Obviously, this places great responsibility on these volunteers; an issue adeptly covered by Joan Binder in the next article.

What is required is a slim-line structure, regionally focused to ensure local intelligence, thus knowing which schools require support and intervention and who is best placed to provide it. The Middle Tier should only identify what needs to be done, not be a provider. After all, there is now a plethora of local organisations and people able to contribute to supporting underperforming schools: National Leaders of Education, Local Leaders of Education, National Leaders of Governance, Teaching Schools, Multi-Academy Trusts, sponsor academies and, dare I say it, Local Authorities where they possess the expertise and the will. There are also national organisations such as FASNA able to play a part. Thus the Middle Tier's role is to identify struggling schools, assess what they need to improve and broker support from other players.

FASNA recognizes and argues that any Middle Tier needs to be a slim-line, cost-effective structure only concerned with failing schools – leaving successful schools to get on with the job

The newly established Regional

Commissioners could play such a role, although there is growing evidence of them going beyond the brief of intervening in underperforming schools. This has to be resisted and curbed. There is also the question of the effectiveness of operating over such a large area and the capacity of Head Teacher Boards and possible conflicts of interest.

The Labour Party would see an increase in the number of Commissioners, from the current eight to 40. Obviously, this is less than the 140 or so Local Authorities. FASNA is clear that Commissioners need to operate across a number of Local Authorities as this increases the range of opportunities of finding solutions to underperformance. Whether eight commissioners is too few, and whether 40 is too many, is a moot point, as is the kind of team that supports them. FASNA is clear one key issue, that the Middle Tier should confine its work to identifying schools that need support and brokering, but not providing, that support. In this way the Middle Tier supports and feeds system leadership. Lean, focused and cost effective.

Finally, what of Local Authorities? They have a strategic role in planning, but not providing, school places. They inform the Middle Tier who broker the provision of new places, as well as the reduction of surplus places. The LA has a child protection responsibility, tying together the intelligence from education, social services and health, and planning cross service support for the children at risk. They may even be service providers competing for school business in the market place.

Where next for Governance?

Joan Binder, FASNA Vice-Chair and Chair of Governors at both a primary and a secondary school

Everyone with anything to do with education agrees that in order to prepare young people to succeed in the next stage of their learning and life in the 21st century, the quality of school leadership as a whole is paramount.

Everyone with anything to do with education agrees that 'Governance' is important in this 'whole' school leadership but it is also inconsistent in operation and effectiveness, in need of quality support and guidance, or even, some would argue, statutory direction.

Ofsted has no fewer than 14 bullet points by which it will judge the effectiveness of governance. ASCL proposes the development of a Foundation Code of Governance 'owned by the profession' and guidance for 'reviews of governance'. NAHT believes that 'governance is heading towards crisis' so training should be 'compulsory' and funded by the government. NGA is reluctant to let go of the 'stakeholder' model of governance and defaults to the Local Authority for provision of governor services and execution of an 'oversight' function.

Lord Nash wants to see small professional and skilled governing bodies concentrating on strategic direction and progress. IAA argues for the removal of a stakeholder requirement in academy governance models and proposes National Standards for non-executive bodies to be developed.

The DfE appears to be focused on establishing a homogenous governance model through the universal application of the latest Governors' Handbook and their recently initiated discussions on common principles of 'governance

oversight' for all schools, as a direct consequence of the Birmingham Trojan Horse scenario.

While there is a consensus that governance is not as good as it must be given the increased accountability, diversity of types of schools and governance models, there is less common ground in identifying exactly what needs fixing and how.

Common themes are:

1. The stakeholder inclusion model versus solely skills based appointments
2. Governing bodies lacking appropriate skills, an effective chair and good clerking arrangements
3. Governors having an inadequate understanding of their role and responsibilities whether it is also as a director and trustee or simply an 'advisor' particularly in the Multi Academy Trust models which have very different schemes of delegation
4. Governors not fully understanding their strategic role
5. Whether training should be mandatory
6. Accountability – where does the ultimate accountability reside? What is the evidence that this is effectively discharged?
7. The emerging concept of 'oversight of governance' implicit in many of the concerns raised about accountability

Common themes 1-4: skills, practice, understanding

The quality of governors and a good understanding of their role and responsibilities is paramount in enabling schools to be autonomous in the way

they respond to the needs of their pupils and community and evidence robust accountability.

To support governing bodies in achieving a clarity of purpose and coherent operational strategies we have developed a number of guidance materials and seminars based on our acronym of PASS – Does your governing body PASS the test? Are you:

- **Professional in membership and practice**
- **Accountable with robust structures**
- **Strategic in operation and outlook**
- **Skilled in challenging and supporting**

Professional in membership and practice

The professional element of PASS answers the first three of the common themes identified above – lack of skills, poor understanding of responsibilities and inadequate clerking while the strategic element answers the fourth common theme.

Membership and skills

The FASNA view is that in order to be more professional in terms of membership the stakeholder model is outdated. FASNA promotes the appointment of governors including parent governors based on the skills and experience they bring to the table rather than an often time consuming election process or an unpredictable nomination from a third party.

We have produced a robust skills audit which asks individuals for evidence through a relevant qualification, professional or business role, voluntary or community experience to support

Everyone with anything to do with education agrees that ‘Governance’ is important in this ‘whole’ school leadership but it is also inconsistent in operation and effectiveness, in need of quality support and guidance, or even, some would argue, statutory direction

their level of skill in a particular area rather than seeks their subjective opinion of competency. The audit also asks for evidence of the ‘softer’ skills such as team work, good communication and interpersonal relationships. This enables a governing body or academy trust to make effective decisions about appointments and to identify skills gaps.

A skills audit could also be used as the basis of an annual self- review where the contribution of an individual governor is reviewed alongside a record of their attendance, participation in monitoring visits, school events, peer support or statutory committees.

FASNA believes that Governors should be appointed for the skills and experience they have.

Practice and the appointment of Chair of Governors

The DfE Governors’ Handbook January 2014 states that ‘One of the most significant decisions a governing body makes is the selection and appointment of a Headteacher’ and devotes further paragraphs to process and signposts guidance, yet is silent on the selection and appointment of a chair of governors, arguably an equally important role.

ACSL argues for ‘a professional process for appointing chairs of governors’ and FASNA goes further believing that the post should be advertised, accepting

applications from outside the pool of governors and a robust interview process carried out.

FASNA has long argued that the role of the chair of governors should be remunerated to recognise the additional responsibilities and accountabilities of the role and IAA has a similar position with regard to multi academy trusts.

FASNA believes that the Chair of Governors should be professionally appointed and remunerated

Practice and professional clerking

There is an increasing focus on the role of the Clerk as the independent key advisor and support to the governing body.

It is important that the clerk has access to legal advice in order to advise the governing body on procedural matters particularly if a governor panel is hearing an appeal or exclusion review. As the role of clerk is being scrutinised more closely it is becoming accepted as good practice that the clerk should also clerk all governing body committees so as to provide a consistent approach and efficient service to governors.

FASNA believes that it is for the governing body to decide who is best placed to provide this service, be it the School Business Manager, an independent person with appropriate skills or a ‘bought in’ service from a commercial

enterprise.

In making this decision the governing body must:

- Ensure that there is a clear job description with identification of line management
- Agree a remuneration package
- If clerking is to be undertaken by another employee, for example the SBM, or combined with the role of Company Secretary ensure that there is a clear understanding of potential conflicts of interest

General professional practice

For FASNA this includes such elements as:

- Fulfilling statutory duties effectively and compliance with accepted codes of conduct for public bodies
- A committee structure and monitoring procedure which supports robust accountability
- An annual ‘appraisal’ of the impact of individual governors

FASNA advocates that Governors appoint a professional clerk who can provide the legal and other advice required including identifying training needs.

Strategic in operation and outlook

The strategic PASS element is another important building block and relates to point four above. Get this right together with the professional element and the

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other two elements become clearer, more focused and more effective in practice.

The strategic role is often presented simplistically as a 'thinking role'. FASNA believes that in the new landscape of diversity, strategic governance also encompasses the need, for example, to take a lead in reaching out to other institutions to encourage collaboration and the need to establish a relationship with local councils and promote the longer term development of the school in the light of planned building or infrastructure proposals.

Being strategic in outlook can be summed up by 'Look international, look national, relate to local and make informed decisions'.

Clarity of strategic vision includes considering external influences which potentially have an impact on the school to determine the vision, the role of the school in the lives of its young people and for governors to relate important decisions to this vision. Using the analogy of a chain there should be a continuous link between the values and influences underpinning the vision, through to individual decisions made by the governing body, for example about curriculum provision.

Common theme 5: mandatory training

NGA and NAHT both advocate mandatory training for governors but are silent on the issues of purpose, quality assurance and relevance, seemingly assuming that 'training' is self-evidently effective. ASCL argues for an 'external review of governance' a concept possibly tainted by the resonance with a potential Ofsted judgement.

The FASNA position is straightforward – we do not support compulsory training. Autonomous schools with a professional and skilled governing body should decide for themselves what type of training they require through a self-review assessment and seek a provider in the market place to meet their particular needs. The concept of the local authority as the single source of

provision with a 'one size fits all' approach is, like the stakeholder model, outdated.

FASNA does not accept the need for mandatory training for Governors. Instead autonomous schools should decide for themselves what they need.

Common theme 6: accountability

There is common agreement here that governors need to understand what accountability means and where the ultimate accountability for different elements resides. There is a common concern that there is a general lack of effective accountability largely based on anecdotal evidence or a common denominator principle of assuming the worst practice is widespread. Clarity about who holds whom to account and for what, is fundamental to good governance.

Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) vary considerably in their schemes of delegation and governors are frequently left floundering as they try to make sense of the Articles of Association to identify the respective accountabilities at Governing Board level or the school level Local Governing Body.

FASNA supports the fact that the MAT can be established to reflect and provide for the needs of a particular group of schools, to enable them to operate as autonomously as possible, but this can lead to some confusion not least among Ofsted inspectors and Regional Commissioners' representatives, making it more important for governors themselves to have a very clear understanding of the accountability function.

This article is no place to explore the richness of accountability structures, practices, evidence of effectiveness and impact on pupil outcomes. A key role of governors at most levels of responsibility will entail rigorous monitoring of school progress and standards. As a minimum requirement here, there needs to be an agreed monitoring process linked clearly to the School Development Plan and evidence that governors challenge the impact of strategies and outcomes.

FASNA has developed a range of

professional development resources which link to the Ofsted framework and give governors guidance on how to undertake the accountability role across all the facets of finance, personnel, skilled and probing questioning.

Common theme 7: oversight of governance

This is the elephant in the room and one which is picked up in other contributions in this edition. The Birmingham Trojan Horse affair has much to answer for.

The theme 'oversight of governance' might be one common to a number of associations and government but there is no agreed definition of what this phrase actually means. Unions are advocating the return of the LA, aided and abetted by the DfE whose recent circulation limited draft paper supported the view that the LA should have the legal right to intervene in any school where governors were not undertaking their core responsibilities effectively.

It is evident that there appears to be a 'free for all' at the present time with Regional Commissioners, the LA, the DfE, the Education Funding Agency, Ofsted all vying for credibility but only Ofsted operating with a structured framework, protocol, some measure of quality assurance and a complaints process, which may not be liked but is at least understood by schools.

The way forward

The MAT structure of groups of schools appears to be the preferred model emerging; how those groups are decided is another debate but the structure offers the opportunity to revisit governance. Schools are becoming more disposed to collaboration but there exists a tension between that and the desire to retain autonomy. We have to move on from here and consider the concept of a straight forward lean accountability structure with one strong professional and skilled Governing Board for a group of schools focused on the core responsibilities of governors and answerable to Ofsted.

Are we helping ourselves? The issue of school funding

Peter Beaven and Martin Latham, FASNA Executive Board Members. Both are recently retired Headteachers



As ever, education funding is a critical issue. Whilst schools have been largely protected from austerity measures since 2010, it is clear that a perfect storm is brewing and many schools will face financial difficulty whatever the outcome of the next election. Blowing across the educational landscape we have clouds on the horizon that can already be seen and will not go away. These are:

- **Superannuation increases:** a 2.3% increase on school's teaching staff costs because of increased employer pension contributions from September 2015; for support staff this is estimated to be 1.4% from April 2015 and a further 1.5% from April 2016.
- **National Insurance increases:** the 3.4% increase in National Insurance contributions for any staff in an occupational pension scheme (that is most staff) from April 2016.
- **Pay awards:** an average 1% pay rise in September 2015 (unknown for 2016 but at least 1% again)

These increases are estimated to cost a one-form entry primary school £20,000

in 2015-16, rising to £49,000 in 2016-17. Thus the cumulative extra cost in 2016-17 would be £69,000.

For an average secondary school this is estimated to be £88,000 in 2015-16, rising to £205,000 in 2016-17. The cumulative extra cost here is estimated to be £305,000 in 2016-17. This situation is even worse for schools with Sixth forms as the final year of cuts to Sixth form funding (which will vary from school to school) also take effect.

Whilst others in the education world are putting forward manifestos and making demands of any future government for extra resources to fund their ambitions for schools and education, FASNA understands that, whichever party is elected to office in May 2015, there will be no extra money for education. At best, education will continue to be protected from cuts – although in real terms there would be no protection from inflation, and the increases in staff costs mentioned above are in reality cuts to school budgets.

Yet we must not be naïve. Although the Liberal Democrats have committed to protecting the education budget the other

parties have not, so further cuts may be on the way.

For FASNA there are five key issues for the next government to face, whatever their political hue.

Firstly, there is the issue of the way funding is distributed nationally. It is a disgrace that similar pupils in different Local Authorities are being funded at hugely different levels. In 2013-14 the per pupil funding, in terms of the total Dedicated Support Grant, in different parts of the country ranged from £4,829 in Leicestershire, the lowest funded authority, to £9,268 in Hackney, the highest (excluding the City of London). That's an incredible difference of £4,439 per pupil. Can it be justified that a pupil in one school is funded at almost double the amount of a similar pupil in another school? Can our society justify that one child's experience can be so enriched when compared with another?

FASNA recognises that there is a need to enhance a pupil's funding if there are special needs – be they learning difficulties or disadvantage.

There may also be a need to have some area cost adjustment to offset such things



as the London weighting on teacher's salaries. However, the current situation is unjustified and immoral.

The current government has made some minor moves to tackle this issue with an extra £300 million funding being distributed in 2014 to the lowest funded Local Authorities to distribute to their schools. However, this was small beer and did not address the issue which the government had identified in its own Schools' White Paper in 2010 which said:

"We want all schools to be funded transparently, logically and equitably, in contrast to the opaque, anomalous and unfair school funding system which reflects the historic circumstances of local



authorities rather than the specific needs of individual schools and pupils; and leads to similar schools, facing similar challenges, receiving very different levels of funding."

The situation was further recognised in the 2013 Annual Spending Review, when Chancellor George Osborne, announced:

"Schools spending will be allocated in a fairer way than ever before. School funding across the country is not equally distributed but distributed on an historical basis with no logical reason. The result is that some schools get much more than others in the same circumstances. It's unfair and we're going to put it right."

The question of a National Funding Formula should not even be a matter of discussion yet it continues to be put off. The standard reason given is that there will be losers as well as winners amongst schools. However, this ignores the fact that we have had winners and losers for many years with the current system. Generations of students have been underfunded by comparison with their peers and have almost certainly had a poorer educational experience as a result. However, apparently it is politically too difficult to introduce a fair system in which some schools will have budget reductions. Hence the present government put off any move towards a National Funding Formula until after the 2015 election.

FASNA will continue to campaign for a fair National Funding Formula

Secondly, there is the issue of local funding. Any unfairness in funding across Local Authorities is compounded by unfairness within Local Authorities. FASNA played a considerable role in influencing the DfE to reduce the number of factors allowed in constructing the local formula from over 60 to just a dozen. However, despite this, similar schools within a Local Authority can experience huge differences in funding.

It appears that many Local Authorities are still working within the formula

"Schools spending will be allocated in a fairer way than ever before. School funding across the country is not equally distributed but distributed on an historical basis with no logical reason. The result is that some schools get much more than others in the same circumstances. It's unfair and we're going to put it right"

Governing bodies and Headteachers need to understand that old structures may no longer be adequate and that schools need to seek economies of scale by collaborating – as well as wider benefits from working with others

factors to try and maintain their school structures. For example, how can it be justified when funds are moved from larger primary schools to small village schools which are already quite well funded and who refuse to consider how they might be more efficient and effective, simply because they are opposed to change? In this instance the LA actions supports maintaining the status quo instead of grasping the nettle to achieve the best for all.

In all of this, the role of the Schools Forum must be questioned. So much has been written and spoken about this structure – FASNA has over many years highlighted the misuse of forums by LAs who in too many cases use them to drive what they want and those present on the forums have little capacity to stand in the way. There are too many examples where the lateness of papers, lack of transparency, imbalanced and unwieldy membership, and the inability of members to understand what is happening means the LA officers get what they want. There is the annual acceptance of what has gone before and simply tinkering with last year's budget rather than getting back to basics, is considered.

It is no wonder, in meetings with DfE, that Local Authorities and various unions extol the virtues of school forums – they enable them to control what they want. The answer is simple – a National

Funding Formula does away with the need for a school forum.

FASNA understands that the move towards a National Funding Formula will be a stepped process and that, in the interim there may need to be a schools forum.

In the meantime FASNA will campaign to ensure that the Schools Forum functions more effectively and fairly.

FASNA argues that, for the transitional period of no more than five years, Schools Forum should:

- Have its purpose clarified and defined by the regulations not by the LA.
- Be accountable and able to hold LAs to account.
- Have professional and efficient proceedings and a secretariat managed independently of the LA.
- Have transparent outcomes.
- Have a smaller membership with the skill sets and competency to challenge the LA and call them to account for their decisions – Schools Forum should not be consultative: it should be a decision making body with representation limited to schools *ie* end users.
- Be more effectively scrutinised by the EFA's scrutiny.
- Have a minimum and maximum number of formula 'variables' (eg AWPU / deprivation / scarcity).

Thirdly, there is the issue of how much of the education budget actually reaches schools. It is surprisingly difficult to get an answer to the simple question "How much of the government's education budget gets passed on to schools?". It is FASNA's belief that one way to alleviate the problem of schools losing funding because of increases in Pension and National Insurance, is to cut spending on non-school items in favour of schools.

Figures from HM Treasury break down spending by sector as follows:

2013-14 Education Spending (£ billion 2013-14 prices)

Pre- Primary	5.2
Primary	27.1
Secondary	36.0
Tertiary	15.4
Subsidiary Services	3.7

Source: HM Treasury, PESA 2014, Table 5.2

But this does not answer our question. We know that not all spending goes to Local Authorities, and we know that not all spending given to Local Authorities goes to schools.

However, there are some figures which are available: Eye-watering millions is spent on the National College; £0.3 billion is earmarked for administration spending for the running of the central Department for Education in 2014-15 and so on.

Hard questions need to be asked, such as "Do we spend too much on:

- Ofsted?
- on unnecessary research which aims to justify policy?
- on Regional School Commissioners?
- on quangos such as Ofqual, SGOSS? *etc etc*”

It is FASNA’s view that spending which is not directly given to schools should be made transparent and more of it vired directly to schools. FASNA will campaign for this.

Fourthly, there is the issue of Heads, Governors and leadership teams who refuse to face problems over funding and seem to expect to be bailed out by central or local government no matter what decisions they make at school level. There seems to be a wish to be funded from a historic point of view so that they can do what they have always done without any great consideration of whether this has been successful and cost effective.

This may be especially true of smaller schools which find the old model of the free-standing school with its own Headteacher, caretaker, support staff *etc* no longer economically viable and not able to provide an entitlement curriculum without further financial support.

Governing Bodies and Headteachers need to understand that old structures may no longer be adequate and that schools need to seek economies of scale by collaborating – as well as wider benefits from working with others.

Local Authorities collude in maintaining existing structures and use the school forum to do so. They do this in order to maintain control over as many of their schools as possible. But it should not be a question of what is good for schools, or for the Local Authorities power base, but what is good for children.

FASNA will argue that school organisation needs to best reflect the needs of children, rather than existing structures, and will only do so if structures are cost-effective and fair.

Fifthly, there is the issue of how we fund deprivation and special needs. There is no doubt that recognising deprivation and wanting to address it has been a major plus for the government. But we might want to ask about the amount spent on deprivation. Does the Pupil Premium duplicate what the Local Formula does when it uses a deprivation factor? Does this funding improve pupil outcomes? The research by Deloitte (commissioned by the DfE but little known called Quality Counts (2012) seems to imply that it does not.)

Nevertheless, we recognise that deprivation needs to be addressed, and extra funding is required. However, this needs to be streamlined and the DfE needs to clarify what this funding is for and to ensure it is spent effectively (*ie* that it has an impact on standards). If you want disadvantaged children to learn

better, you make the staff better at what they do perhaps via in-house coaching and mentoring.

High Needs Funding (HNF) is more technical, but is a major area which has never been addressed satisfactorily throughout this parliament. FASNA has worked extensively with the EFA around this issue and it must be accepted that it is particularly difficult to sort out until we have a national approach. The complexities of funding across LAs alongside the huge variation in needs identification will never solve this problem.

With many HNF students crossing LA boundaries for their provision, it is clear we need a national approach to needs identification and a national formula to fund those needs, as well as a coordinated system for payments.

FASNA will campaign for a national system for identifying and funding students with high needs.

What is certain though is that if we are looking for these changes around NFFF at a time when there is going to be less money in the system, schools must approach budgeting with a greater touch of reality. No matter how ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ a school may be, every single school can get better. There is still a reluctance of so many schools to address the issue of evaluating themselves and then asking the question whether they would be even better by structuring themselves much more effectively and further improve standards and what they offer their children.

So simply if we are to push for NFF and we are clear on the streamlining of education funding we must also be clear what we are doing to use funding as effectively as possible. It may be an exciting time, it may be a time of restricted funding but it is clear that we need heads and governors with imagination and strength of character to ensure our schools provide what we know should be taking place and not be driven by whatever political fashions the next government, whatever its colour(s) may have.



School Admissions

By Rob McDonough, FASNA Executive Board Member, Headteacher of West Bridgford School, Nottingham

Those well versed in admissions codes chronology will know that this is the first change to the Admissions code of practice in almost three years.

This represents a period of relative stability given that there had previously been three new codes in as many years. But in 2012 ministers promised there would be no more changes for the duration of this parliament. True to form they could not resist a slight tinker and consequently we now have new amendments which came into force on the 19th December 2014.

Having said that, these changes have been broadly welcomed and can be best summarised as addressing three main areas.

1. Extending priority for all children attracting the Pupil or Service Premium.
2. Changes to the admissions timetable
3. Changes to the admission of summer born children

Extending priority for all children, including nursery children, eligible for the Pupil or Service Premium

Previously only academies and free schools could offer priority in their admissions for these children but this has now been extended to all admission authorities. This change, we are told, is part of 'the government's policy to support fair access, and will provide all schools who wish to use it with a practical means to support the most disadvantaged in society'. It is stressed that no school will be required to adopt this but LA

maintained schools would have no choice if the LA, as their admissions authority, chose to use it.

Whilst most agreed with the principle, one can see how it might be possible, depending upon how this is used, for local children to fail to access their local school if, for example, it was widely adopted by local authorities in reasonably affluent areas. Equally, if priority for a pupil premium child was linked to other criteria to limit its impact, such as to those living within catchment, it is possible to see how priority could more fairly be offered to achieve the stated goal of supporting the most disadvantaged but without disproportionately disadvantaging other groups.

This priority is also extended to primary schools who would like to prioritise Pupil Premium children from their nursery provision. Again, there is

no requirement to offer this and care needs to be exercised with this criteria to ensure that other local parents are not disadvantaged.

Changes to the admissions timetable

This again was widely welcomed and is something schools need to be mindful of. The time for consulting on changes has been shortened, from six to eight weeks, and brought forward. Governors would now need to end their formal consultation and determine their arrangements by the 28th February in 2016 instead of the present 15th April in 2015.

The purpose of these changes is to address two issues. Firstly to ensure that objections can be considered earlier and to avoid the silly situation of having



adjudication rulings made during the school summer holidays when governors and heads are unable to respond to them. The second is to facilitate the introduction of a two month rolling deadline for compliance with a determination of the schools adjudicator. This would ensure that all adjudication rulings are acted upon in time for parents to consider their choice of school.

Changes to the admission of summer-born children

These changes will affect children who were born between 1st April and 31st August. Admission authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. Parents may then

defer entry into school if they feel their child is not ready until the age of five, the compulsory school age. Children born in the summer term, however, are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could have been first admitted. Should the parent wish their child to be admitted to reception, rather than year one, at this point, they may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group.

The new code now places three new requirements on schools for summer born children. Crucially admission authorities need to be aware that these new requirements apply to all schools including secondaries and not just those admitting children into year one.

Firstly, upon receiving a request from

a parent for deferred entry, admission authorities must make their decisions in the child's best interests and must take into account the views of the head teacher. Second, admission authorities have to make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal year group. Thirdly, the Local Authority and the admissions authority are now required to process the application as part of the main admissions round and may not give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group.

Parents who are refused a deferred entry place have the right of appeal to an independent admissions panel. However, this is not the case if the parent



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It is worth bringing to the attention of the reader that any admissions authorities who want to implement any of the new changes to the code will need to get their skates on

has been offered a place but it is not to their preferred year group. Under these circumstances parents can make a complaint to the admissions authority under the schools complaints procedure. If a parent remains unhappy about how their complaint has been managed by the school they can refer the complaint to, in the case of a maintained school, the Local Government Ombudsman or the Education Funding Agency for academies.

There are a number of myths surrounding children who are outside of their normal chronological age group in relation to funding and performance tables. Primary and secondary schools are funded for the number of pupils they have on roll regardless of their age. Children are assessed when they reach the end of a Key Stage, not when they reach a particular age. There are no age requirements when children must take their GCSE's or other assessments even though the child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the school year they become 16.

In addition to these key changes to the code there were other minor wording changes relating to definitions in light of, for instance, changes to the new SEN code.

Consulting

It remains a requirement for all admission authorities to consult every seven years if there have been no changes to their policies but to consult if they do change. In a recent adjudication ruling an admissions authority was found not to have consulted in the manner prescribed in the code. In this instance the school had consulted with neighbouring authorities and diocese and, as a secondary school, their parents. They had even placed the details on their website. However, given the code requires admissions authorities to consult with parents of children aged between two and 18 they were found to be in breach of the code because they had not directly contacted all parents with children of this age in the relevant area, in particular children of primary, infant and nursery school age.

It is worth bringing to the attention of the reader that any admissions authorities who want to implement any of the new changes to the code will need to get their skates on. Any consultation for September 2016 must be for eight weeks and must conclude on 15th March 2015 and be determined by 15th April 2016. Realistically these new changes have come too late for 2016 and are more likely to be considered by schools in 2017.

OSA referrals

The publication of annual office of the schools adjudicator report has been delayed and is not expected to be published until early in 2015. It has been delayed because the OSA have received their highest ever number of referrals. It is perhaps no coincidence that this rise in referrals comes at a time when the code changed and permitted anyone to lodge a complaint. As a result some fair access campaign groups have, perhaps for questionable reasons, begun to swamp the system.

Inconsistencies amongst LAs

Some issues of concern have been raised by FASNA members who are reporting wide variations in the admissions service being offered to academies. Some schools are reporting that LA's are, for instance, charging for measuring the distance between the home and school when proving the application information through the coordination process. The DfE have promised to publish guidance on exactly what LA's are required to provide to academies and what they can charge for.

And finally.....

There remains concern that some providers of post 16 education are exempt from the admissions code whilst schools offering post 16 provision are not. It is likely that will be addressed after the next election when, wait for it, yes you've guessed it, we are promised a new code. FASNA will campaign for a fair and transparent Admissions Code



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Making tomorrow a better place



Parents want good local schools – and academies are a vital part of this

Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan

Like millions of other parents around the country, I want nothing but the best for my child. This includes a happy and fulfilled time at school that will set them on a confident path for the future.

For most parents, the type of school doesn't matter as much as what it does - whether there is a good standard of teaching, of behaviour and discipline and an overall spirit that supports and inspires their children to aspire and achieve.

It is my job to ensure that all schools reach this standard and offer families the best possible education, regardless of where they live or how much they earn. This is our plan for education.

Looking at the evidence, it's clear that encouraging more academies is helping to make this plan a reality. And it's a plan with a proven track record.

City Technology Colleges, first established in the late 1980s, showed that freedom from local authority control makes a real difference to how well children do. And the first sponsored academies that emerged in the early 2000s showed that such innovation and responsibility can have a dramatic effect on underperforming schools in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods.

Today's academies have built on these models of success. Now, sponsored primary academies open for just two years have seen results rise by a remarkable nine percentage points on average. Sponsored secondaries open for four years have seen

their results rise by an average of five percentage points – compared to just half a point in Local Authority schools.

And take the example of converter academies. With their unashamedly high standards, converters are more likely to improve from 'good' to 'outstanding' than other schools. This is hardly surprising when you consider that almost two-thirds of their pupils achieve five good GCSE's, including English and maths, and more than eight in every 10 of their primary pupils achieve at least the expected level in their reading, writing and maths tests.

And, with more than 3000 converters, we can see parents voting with their feet in response to these terrific results. We also know that a third of converters reported an increase in first-choice applications since becoming an academy. Academies have now opened in all but two small Local Authorities, giving more parents than ever before this choice.

But it's not just the pupils in these schools who are benefiting. A recent survey shows that more than nine out of every 10 converter academies are supporting other local schools. As a result, thousands of the very best schools in the country are sharing their expertise, supporting others to improve and creating a self-improving system led not by politicians or bureaucrats, but by schools themselves.

This, ultimately, is the real key, to giving parents choice.

It is striking that most of these academies are collaborating with schools that they didn't support until they became academies. You only have to look at trusts like the Williamson Trust in Medway, Kent, to see the impact this is having across the schools system. The trust is led by Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, an excellent secondary school that became an academy in 2012. Since then it has supported a local primary school and helped drive up the number of children doing well in reading, writing and maths tests from 58% to 81%.

The trust's contribution to this remarkable progress has been commended by Ofsted, which praised the trust for the "range of high quality" support available to staff and hailed it as "central in securing rapid improvement" in the school.

This is just one incredible example. There are countless others, across the country, of academies not just delivering for their pupils, but for those in other schools. They are driven, first and last, by the best interests of all our children. In doing so, they are providing parents with many more of the good local schools that we all want to see and ensuring our plan for education works for everyone.

In helping to raise standards for all, academies – as well as free schools and others – are helping to give more parents than ever before the choice of a good local school.

What do we want from our next government?

Les Walton, chair of the Northern Education Trust, puts together his wish-list

My personal wishes for the next government can be summarised as:

1. Constancy of purpose maintained by those who are responsible for education within a constantly changing environment.
2. Consensus with regard to education policy supported by the various political parties
3. Clarity on the direction education takes and clarity on how the education system should operate
4. Consistency with regard to what we expect from our schools
5. Cohesion within a system which involves all stakeholders in improving the life chances of our children

Constancy of Purpose

Benjamin Disraeli said ‘The secret to success is constancy of purpose’. Edward Deming the guru of total quality management considered we need to ‘create constancy of purpose for continual improvement of product and service’. The purpose of education has been argued over for thousands of years by philosophers from Plato to Bertrand Russell. I know it is a big ask but all I would like is some agreement regarding the purpose of education which may last more than one parliament. So is the purpose of education to focus on the needs of the developing child or to serve the requirements of wider society and the economy? Of course it is both.

So what do we expect from our schools – knowledge, know-how, wisdom, character? How much we should concentrate on the theoretical or practical aspects of learning? What is the emphasis we place on developing young people’s attitudes or skills? Of course we should focus on both.

Surely we should be able to come to some agreement on these important aspects of education? Many employers will say too many young people come to work with the wrong attitude and limited social skills. Schools will say we partly agree but unfortunately all late 20th and 21st century governments mainly judge schools and pupils on the theoretical aspect of their learning: practical knowhow and the development of attitudes and skills receive less attention.

Consensus

In every decade since I was a child in the 1940s a limited consensus has been achieved.

Unfortunately, in education once we have come to some agreement, a new government comes along and undermines the previous consensus and seeks to create a new one. For example:

- 1950s – Local democratic government was considered to be the ideal way to deliver a high quality education system
- 1960s - Comprehensive education growth created the same kind of excitement and buzz that the

academies programme is achieving today

- 1970s – Curriculum areas of experience (HMI 5-16) which emphasised a broad and balanced curriculum rather than a subject framed curriculum received tremendous support.
- 1980s – Local Financial Management which allowed schools greater control over their budgets was mostly supported by schools
- 1990s – Self managing autonomous schools were generally supported though people had different views of the amount of freedom schools should have
- 2000 – Every child matters led to a focus on children’s well being. The majority of schools welcomed this focus as it seemed to chime with the moral purpose of putting the child at the centre of everything they do
- 2010 – The academy strategy is certainly developing a new consensus, though there are a variety of approaches within and across the primary and secondary sectors.
- 2020 – Regional devolution is of course future gazing. However both the conservative and labour governments are promoting regional solutions

I would like to suggest that we should seek to retain the consensus partly achieved every decade and build on the thinking of previous years rather than reject the old and constantly bring in the new. Thus



I do believe that we can support high quality local democratic government oversight, comprehensive education and school autonomy. It just takes a little creative thinking.

Clarity

There are two forms of clarity.....clarity of direction and clarity of how things work. Too often in education we are unclear about both.

With regard to clarity of direction we are often unclear about what is expected of teachers and school leaders, Education Trusts and Local Authorities. We are also unclear how each of us collaboratively contributes to the national educational mission. The continual changes in how things work, policies, procedures and lines of authority, mean that those who operate within the system are confused or at least find difficulty in keeping up to date.

It is therefore essential that all key stakeholders within the public and private sectors agree on the long-term direction or vision for UK education. Such an agreement would then inform how we design the structures and systems which would deliver such a vision. Policies and procedures should follow vision, not drive the direction of education within this country.

Consistency

Of course if we cannot agree on the purpose of education it is difficult to agree on how and what we teach.

How we teach

Because this debate about the purpose of education is never settled then the debate about how we teach and learn is unresolved. When I first started teaching the focus was on pupil engagement in learning and ‘the joy of learning’.

Today the arguments are pretty basic - teaching facts, instruction, transferable skills and projects are labelled good or bad depending on your own experience of education and your political point of view.

We have now got to the point when lessons are dissected and analysed like dead bodies in a mortuary. An example is Professor David Hargreaves who later became Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. In the 1980s he divided lessons up into five phases:

1. The entry phase
2. The settling down or preparation phase
3. The lesson proper phase
4. The clearing up phase
5. The exit phase

(Hargreaves *et al.* (1984))

I know teachers are not entertainers but imagine if these professors and inspectors gave advice to Monty Python,

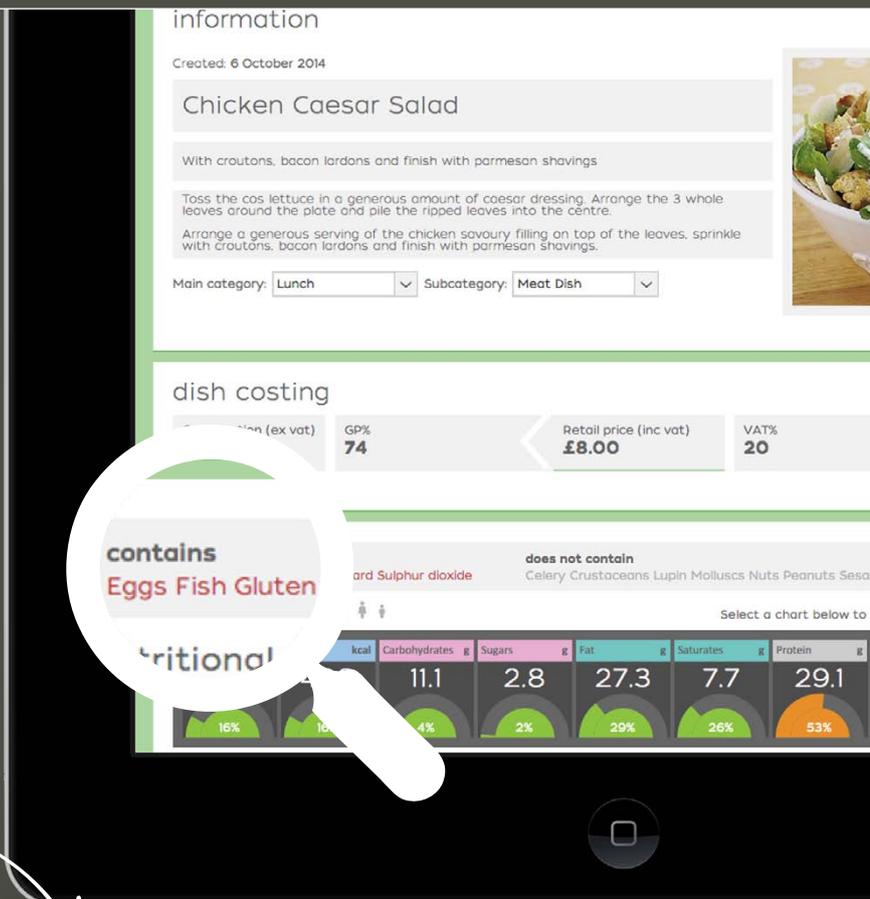
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information
Created: 6 October 2014

Chicken Caesar Salad

With croutons, bacon lardons and finish with parmesan shavings

Toss the cos lettuce in a generous amount of caesar dressing. Arrange the 3 whole leaves around the plate and pile the ripped leaves into the centre.

Arrange a generous serving of the chicken savoury filling on top of the leaves, sprinkle with croutons, bacon lardons and finish with parmesan shavings.

Main category: Subcategory:

dish costing

Cost (ex vat) **GP% 74** Retail price (inc vat) **£8.00** VAT% **20**

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Eggs Fish Gluten

does not contain
Celery Sulphur dioxide Celery Crustaceans Lupin Molluscs Nuts Peanuts Sesame seeds Soybeans Sulphur dioxide

Select a chart below to

	kcal	Carbohydrates g	Sugars g	Fat g	Saturates g	Protein g
	11.1	2.8	27.3	7.7	29.1	
	16%	16%	4%	2%	29%	53%

piranha Menu Item Allergen Matrix

Menu item	Celery	Crustaceans	Egg	Fish	Gluten	Lupin	Milk	Molluscs	Mustard	Nuts	Peanuts	Sesame seeds	Soybeans	Sulphur dioxide
Chicken Caesar Salad	?	?	✓	✓	✓ Oats Rye Spelt	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	?	?	✓
Creamy Fish Pie	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Gourmet Toad in the Hole	×	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×	✓

For more information or to arrange a short demonstration please call **01252 705 222** or email piranha@pelicanprocurement.co.uk

The purpose of education has been argued over for thousands of years by philosophers from Plato to Bertrand Russell. I know it is a big ask but all I would like is some agreement regarding the purpose of education which may last more than one parliament. So is the purpose of education to focus on the needs of the developing child or to serve the requirements of wider society and the economy? Of course it is both

Tommy Cooper, Groucho Marx and the other greats on how to deliver a comedy routine. The creativity and interaction with the audience would be the first to go.

What we teach

The 'What We Teach' for too long has been a result of individual Secretaries of State promoting their own prejudices.

If we had a shared vision for education we would design a curriculum which has a shared view regarding the right balance between theoretical, practical, attitudes and skills.

This leads me more and more to support the idea that curriculum design and assessment should be removed from direct political control. Government needs to step back into a more strategic role. We should pull back the increasing central government involvement in what is taught, how things are taught and how schools are led.

The teaching profession has to have the capacity to step forward and fill this space. We need collectively to consider the ways in which we rebuild professional capacity to do this.

Cohesion

Whenever Education Ministers talk about 'systems leaderships' they mean the

schooling system. We need to understand that the schooling system is part of a wider system which involves local government and the private sector. We therefore need a whole system solution.

Of course education is a complex adaptive system and therefore we may wish to view education as an eco-system. Schools as complex adaptive systems will also exhibit interdependence, collaborate and managed by a loosely organised management structure. The self organising school system most Headteachers want is not ordered by a tight management structure nor is it chaotic.

A good start to improving the system is to break down the entrenched divisions within education. These divisions can often be traced back to the divisions that exist between the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. It is in the interest of everybody that all sectors, schools, FE Colleges, and Local Authorities are thriving. The health of the economy and local government is important to the health of all schools and academies.

We need an increased understanding of the relationship between wealth creation and the public services. A truly cohesive education system is able

to respond to economic, social and demographic change and see this as part of their moral purpose.

In conclusion let us all agree on what a compelling educational offer looks like to student teachers, parents, businesses, politicians. A compelling educational experience that encourages young people to participate in education for its intrinsic value.

We need a Royal Commission involving all key stakeholders, which will have a long term sustainable impact and which delivers a shared vision of educational transformation. It must not become a taxonomy of conflicting vested interests exercising tribalism within the tent. Of course we don't need to wait for a Royal Commission- let's seize the opportunity ourselves.

And finally let us not encourage TV presenters to tell us how to teach maths, run school dinners and present education as a soap opera. I am still waiting for the first celebrity surgeon to say 'cut here'.

I don't want much – just constancy, consensus, clarity, consistency and cohesion.

Les Walton CBE
Chair Northern Education Trust



FASNA seminars 2015

Academy Conversion and MATs

'Exploring academy conversion or joining a MAT?'

Trusted impartial advice from practitioners

Thursday 22 January 2015 - Wistaston Academy, Crewe

Tuesday 27 January 2015 - The Academy at Shotton Hall,

Peterlee, County Durham

Friday 27 February 2015 - Central London

These seminars will provide your leadership team with the educational context for considering academy conversion and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), an excellent overview of the legal process and academy structures, governance decisions and responsibilities, key changes to financial procedures and practices, the opportunity to hear 'my conversion story' and 'top tips' on conversion.

Some of these seminars are free of charge

Governance

Induction for new Governors/Refresher for existing Governors

Learn about your key responsibilities and statutory duties

Half day seminar Wednesday 25 March 2015 Central London

10.00 registration – 10.30 start – 15.00 close

Our programme, with a workshop format, introduces the FASNA Effective Governance Book and will enable delegates to learn, refresh and focus their thinking about raising standards through effective governance

£200 + VAT for FASNA members

£300 + VAT for non-members

Admissions

Are you considering setting up your own appeals panel? Do you need to understand the appeals process more fully? Are you confident in presenting the school's case to panels?

Tuesday 24 March 2015 – Central London

9.30 registration – 10.00 start – 16.00 close

Our programme will provide mandatory training for clerks and panel members in the latest Admission Appeals Code. It will enable delegates to gain an understanding of the appeal procedure and how to conduct the hearing, to gain an understanding of the role of the clerk, panel members and the school perspective, to learn how to prepare and present the school's case and to take part in decision making exercises.

£250 + VAT for FASNA members

£350 + VAT for non-members

We also run seminars on:

- School Admissions - The Law, the Code and Good Practice
- Building your capacity in HR Management & Employment Law
- The Role and Responsibilities of the Clerk to Governors
- Academy Sponsor Events
- The Role of the Academy Company Secretary
- Buying For Your School: A Guide to the Public Procurement Regime

Bespoke Training

FASNA also offers bespoke training for schools and Governing Bodies on a wide range of issues

Join FASNA now!

FASNA was established by successful school leaders to promote autonomy with accountability and evidence its success. Membership benefits include:

- *Effective Governance guide* (free for all members, RRP £10)
- *Effective Financial Management guide* (free for all members, RRP £13)
- *Online legal resources* through our legal partner, Stone King LLP
- *The National Induction Panel for Teachers*, providing high-quality support for the induction of your NQTs
- *Member rates for national conferences* to debate key issues with leaders of education
- *School-lead specialist workshops*
- *DKMY Architects Ltd:* one day's free consultation.
- *Free publications and resources*, such as regular FASNA newsletters and briefings, and Academy magazine FREE each term
- *Meaningful networks:* member links to other schools

Membership fees:

Primary & Special Schools £125 + VAT (£150) Direct Debit or £175 + VAT (£210) BACS or cheque

Secondary Schools £250 + VAT (£300) Direct Debit or £300 + VAT (£360) BACS or cheque

FASNA Spring Conference

Thursday 19 March 2015, The British Library, London

ELECTION SPECIAL: ‘Where does education reform go next and what will be the future for school autonomy?’



*The Hon Dr Tristram Hunt MP,
Shadow Secretary of State
for Education (confirmed)*



*The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP,
Secretary of State for Education
(confirmed)*



*The Rt Hon David Laws MP,
Minister of State for Schools,
(to be confirmed)*

In what is likely to be the week before the election is called the The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools and the Hon Dr Tristram Hunt MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education will speak about the future of education in the context of their election manifesto.

Brian Lightman, General Secretary, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL); Russell Hobby, General Secretary, National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Stephen Morales, Executive Director, National Association of School Business Management (NASBM) will join with FASNA members to give their verdict on the politicians’ manifesto promises.

AND practitioner-led workshops to include:

- The challenges of Executive Headship
- Performance related pay
- School funding update
- A ‘perfect financial storm’ will hit schools this year – how do we deal with it?
- Legal briefing from Stone King

The cost per place is £150 + VAT for FASNA members for the 1st delegate, with a reduced charge of £125 + VAT for any additional delegates from the same school;
£200 + VAT for non-members

To make your booking please e-mail the following information to admin@fasna.org.uk

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

The journey out of special measures (or ‘how to reinvent your school’)

Debra Murphy, Principal, The Ferns Primary Academy, Bolton and Shirley Davison, Principal, Hilton Primary Academy, Blakelaw, Newcastle

When a school requires special measures, it is because Ofsted considers it to have failed to supply an acceptable level of education and lacks the capacity necessary to secure improvements.

At such times, leadership and vision are critical qualities in the person at the top who must make the tough decisions necessary to rapidly raise standards.

This is the story about how Debra Murphy, principal of The Ferns Primary Academy in Bolton and Shirley Davison, principal at Hilton Primary Academy in Blakelaw, Newcastle, are reinventing their schools which are 150 miles apart, but share the same challenges. Both schools are located in areas of high deprivation.

Debra: When I came to The Ferns in September 2012 it had been in and out of special measures for nine years. The systems that had been in place had been left to deteriorate. The staff had begun to doubt their teaching abilities. It was chaos.

Shirley: I started working at Hilton Primary in June 2008 on secondment, so I partially knew what to expect when I accepted the role of Headteacher, starting in September that year. A good way of describing it is like peeling the skin away from an onion - every layer removed revealed another problem lurking below. There was not even a child protection cabinet at the school - yet there were some seriously vulnerable children on roll. A large number of staff were newly

qualified and the work sheet culture was unfortunately well established.

So what did they do? Here is their five point plan:

1. Environment - Get the school safe and clean

On this they both agree. There was so much chaos and ingrained dirt at both schools that getting the teaching environment clean was an absolute priority.

Shirley: I spent the whole of August 2008 throwing away rubbish and old books. I was shocked by the condition of the buildings and classrooms. It was at this stage I felt the school needed to

go into special measures. The Local Authority agreed. It enabled me to tackle the health and safety issues and get it safe.

Debra: I had to get new locks fitted so that nobody could get through without permission – which had not been the case formerly. The children and teaching staff must feel safe and secure. Making the inside special was also a priority for me. There are now fairy lights in every classroom. The impact of the twinkling lights has been transformative. Now the children see it as a safe, magical place - the right environment for learning.

Shirley: Review what is in your cupboards regularly. Be prepared to throw things away. It is disrespectful to



The Ferns Primary Academy, Bolton

Opened: 1st September 2012

Roll: 377 pupils

Pupil profile:

58% pupils are known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium

57.6% are FSM

26% of pupils speak English as an additional language

18 languages are spoken by pupils at the school

22% of children are SEN

Hilton Primary Academy, Blakelaw, Newcastle

Opened: 1st December 2012

Roll: Just under 400 pupils

Pupil profile:

65% of children are entitled to free school meals

70% are Ever 6 FSM

The majority of children on roll are white British

15% of pupils speak English as an additional language

20% children are SEN

Leadership and vision are critical qualities in the person at the top who must make the tough decisions necessary to rapidly raise standards



the children if they are expected to use old, dirty books and materials.

New uniforms (resulting from converting to academies) have also been a unifying element and helped to bring about a change in expectation and environment at both schools.

2. Expectations

Debra: The children need to know you have high expectations - give them systems and consistency. Give them boundaries for acceptable behaviour. There must be consequences for bad behaviour.

Shirley: It's also about self-control. They must know they cannot step over the line. Behaviour was an issue here too and children were not engaged in their learning. We had children with some

very challenging behaviours. We also implemented a framework of progression so everyone knew where they were on their learning journey.

3. Teaching

As a new principal, you must get to know your staff quickly and empower them. You also need to get the right team in place – this sometimes takes longer than expected.

There is a consistent approach throughout both schools. At The Ferns each classroom is similar which ensures a smooth transition from one year to the next. At Hilton, the development of the school mission statement 'Enjoy, Achieve, Inspire for Life' and the school's vision statement, provide a very visible framework for progress.

Debra: We have target cards for literacy and writing and children all know the stage they are at and their next steps. They embrace this type of structure and eagerly look forward to reaching the next milestone.

Shirley: The whole school approach for reviewing books is also important and promotes accountability. We put all the books out in the big hall so teaching and support staff can review them all. I also recommend a quality assurance timetable so everyone knows your expectations.

4. Create a climate for learning

Debra believes it is essential for the children to start the day in an air of calmness and routine, while afternoons can be more light-hearted. The Ferns is a flagship school for the Music Service.



Realistically, from special measures to outstanding takes about three to five years

At Hilton there is a school garden where children are encouraged to plant and grow vegetables which are then used to make school lunches.

Shirley: We have a high number of complex child protection cases with some very difficult home backgrounds so we undertake a lot of after school sports including rock climbing, canoeing, judo and trampolining. We also operate a 'buddying-up' system for Years two to six and run a breakfast club, sponsored by Greggs.

5. Chocolate, coffee, smiles and exercise

Debra and Shirley both exemplify good humour, a common purpose, a determination to succeed and above all, a love of children.

Debra: It is really hard work turning a school around and you need lots of energy, passion and dare I say, chocolate! You need absolute determination to keep moving forward to remain focused on your goals. You work long hours and take a lot of thoughts home with you each day but you must keep smiling.

There have been some incredible situations with parents - you could not even write the script for some of the dramas that have taken place here.

Shirley: "I did a 'wordle' once about my journey and *coffee* was definitely in there somewhere ... you must learn to switch off. I bought a puppy (Rofl) and take it out for walks: that helps. Rofl also comes into school with me sometimes, which the children love."

The next chapter

The Ferns is progressing towards being a good school. It is currently benefiting from a construction programme to provide a new nursery, improved dining area and larger classrooms.

Hilton Primary Academy was recently judged outstanding on every single measure of performance.

Shirley has the final word: "Realistically, from special measures to outstanding takes about three to five years. At Hilton Academy, we are a little further down the road than The Ferns - Debra has only been in post two years.

"You have to change the mindset of both children and parents so that they start to see a brighter future - one that is full of possibilities."

Supporting teachers at KS2 and KS3 through government funding for CPD

In April 2014 the Department for Education (DfE) advertised an initiative for local or regional organisations such as teaching school alliances, other groups of schools, or bodies such as regional groupings of national organisations to bid for funding from the Department, specifically to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in modern foreign languages to primary and/or secondary school teachers. The aim of the initiative is to support the changes in the National Curriculum and improve the quality of teaching in the subject.

Bids were expected to show clearly how they addressed one or more specific requirements of the new programme of study for languages at KS 2 and/or 3.

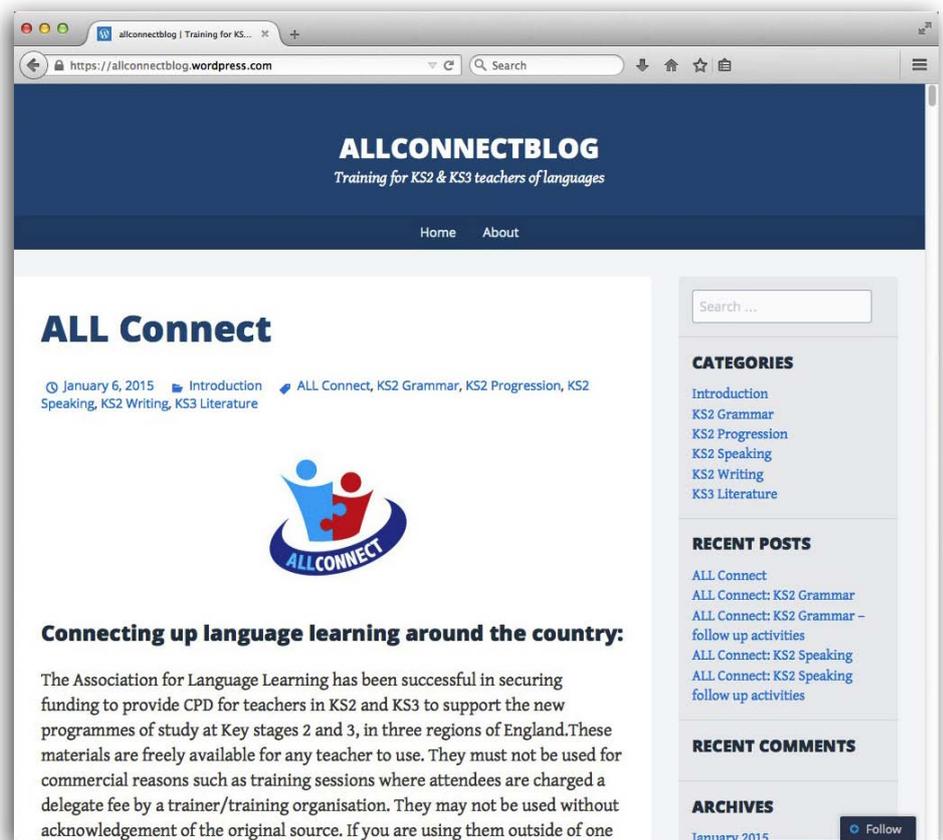
The DfE indicated the following areas of focus were considered a priority:

Key Stage 2: speaking skills; pronunciation and intonation skills; written skills; use of basic grammar

Key Stage 3: spontaneous speaking skills; use and manipulation of grammar; extended writing; translation skills both from the target language into English and from English into the target language; reading literary texts

The expectation was that bids would focus on the main languages that schools currently teach, *ie* French, German and Spanish, to enable the initiative to affect the language learning of the greatest number of pupils and also aid in transition between primary and secondary phases.

The bid from the Association for Language Learning (ALL), known as ALL Connect, was submitted to the DfE in May 2014, and in July 2014 we received confirmation that the bid had been



successful.

ALL is the national subject association for teachers of languages, with a membership of over 4000 teachers. It has six regional branches, 17 local networks and 27 Primary Languages Hubs around the country.

ALL has played an active role in developing the new National Curriculum, meeting with government officials and sitting on various committees which have advised on the new curriculum, including the Ministerial Steering Group and Languages Expert Panel.

ALL already has a reputation for delivering CPD to teachers at local and regional level, and its infrastructure supports delivery of training by teachers

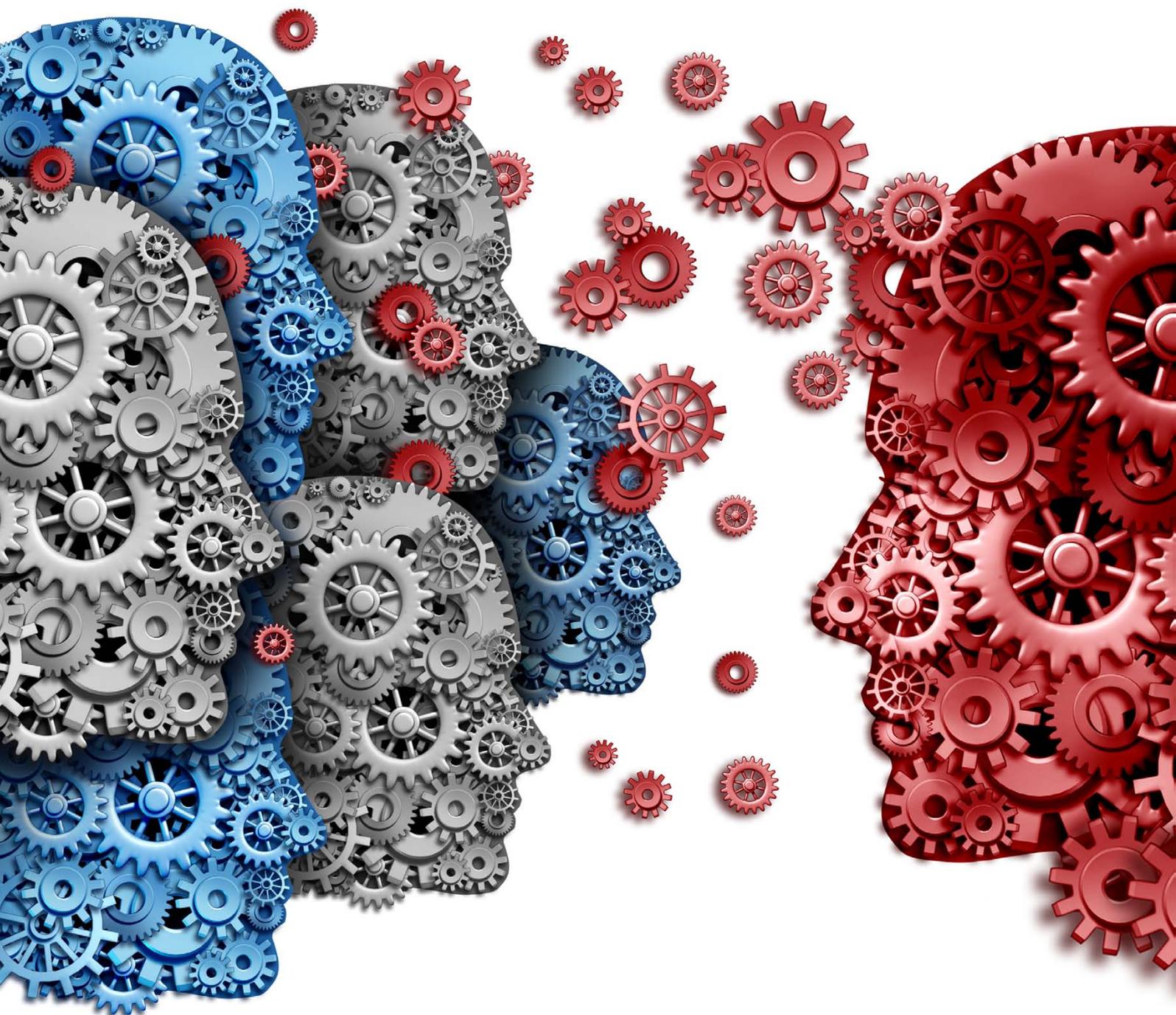
to fellow teachers.

ALL is particularly interested in the successful transition of learners across Key Stages, and believes that there needs to be mutual understanding of pedagogy, progression and outcomes between KS2 and KS3 teachers to ensure positive change.

ALL Connect

Through the ALL Connect initiative ALL aims to train a minimum of 750 teachers (500 at KS2, 250 at KS3).

To date we are in the middle of our KS2 training programme in the three English regions, East, North East and North Midlands. These are the regions we targeted as part of our bid and will be the main area



of focus for the taught CPD programme during the first year pilot phase.

For teachers of KS2 languages we have to date created four separate modules: Grammar, Speaking, Writing and Progression. These materials are available to view by any teachers interested in looking at the programme, at www.allconnectblog.wordpress.com. The materials can be used by anyone, with the provision that if trainers are running sessions they must not be paid sessions or for commercial gain in any way. We are very interested to know if

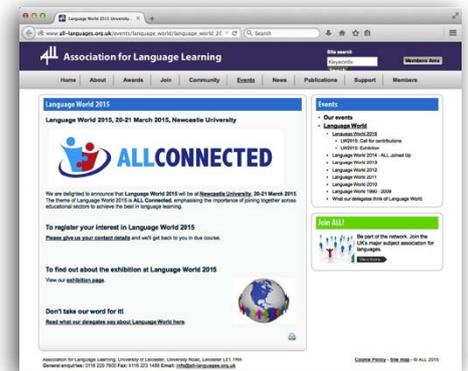
colleagues outside of the three regions which have been actively participating in the ALL Connect initiative are using the materials. If this is the case then do please let us know, as this is a good way to measure the broader success of the programme.

Colleagues are encouraged to keep looking at the content on this site as content for KS3 continues to be developed and will be posted here over the coming months. Our KS3 programme begins in January 2015 and will last through to the end of the summer term.

How has ALL Connect been implemented?

Our CPD model has been a 'train the trainer' model. Our three Regional Coordinators have delivered the face to face training to their Lead Teachers in their locale. These Lead Teachers have subsequently delivered the face to face training sessions to teachers from their local area, in classes of 25 upwards. Why did we choose this approach? We wanted to utilise the funds available to benefit the largest possible cohort of teachers and to ensure our model was teacher-

We wanted to utilise the funds available to benefit the largest possible cohort of teachers and to ensure our model was teacher-led



led. We have not only sought to develop the knowledge and skills of our trainees who have participated in this project, but we have offered opportunities to Lead Teachers as part of their own CPD, to train other teachers on ALL Connect materials, and to foster a collaborative approach to supporting colleagues, post-training, across their locale.

Have there been any particular challenges for ALL?

Using materials to deliver training which are not your own!

Anyone who has been a teacher will probably say that they prefer to deliver their own work rather than someone else's. We have recognised that teachers are great 'magpies' - they see an example and instantly think about how they could tailor it for their pupils' needs. The module writers, all of whom are teachers, have therefore created modules which highlight accessible resources to use with classes of pupils, but additionally they have suggested ways in which the activities or learning might be amended or extended.

We have been determined to offer three languages of example across the taught and follow-up modules which teachers pursue independently between workshops. The languages covered have been French, German and Spanish.

We have asked Lead Teachers to deliver all of the core programme, but wherever they feel appropriate, to enhance it with tried and tested examples of their own work with pupils. In this way we have broadened the sense of ownership and passion for ALL Connect and teachers

have a sense that they can make the materials their own as they apply them to their own schools.

Our assumptions and values about KS2 language teachers

We have recognised that teachers participating in the KS2 training will have a broad range of linguistic ability and we have worked hard to ensure we have pitched the material at a level which will not frighten a novice, but can add value to the skills of a teacher with a higher level of fluency in the language they are teaching. We have also been absolutely committed to recognising that KS2 teachers naturally have a cross-curricular approach when they deliver content every day to their pupils. Additionally primary teachers have a holistic view of children's potential and they use varied ways of assessing their progress.

Ensuring adequate geographical spread

Given the tight timeframe to ensure training has been delivered this academic year, our Regional Co-ordinators have worked very hard to offer as broad as possible coverage across their region. One such challenge has been in the Eastern region, where travel times to training sessions, many of which are along rural roads, have necessitated a re-think about offering accessible locations which can benefit the many rather than the few.

How has ALL approached training for KS3 teachers?

For the KS3 programme we have pitched the training at specialist subject teachers.

We have seen our role as one which develops and builds on established good practice, highlighting the areas of focus which are new to the Programmes of Study, and signposting teachers on to sources of support and resources. We have had less of a focus on pedagogical approaches which specifically support language learning than in our KS2 programme, as we have assumed that these are already embedded.

Again we have chosen a themed approach focusing on the following modules and with the aim of delivering these in this order: Literature, Spontaneous speaking, Grammar, Translation skills, and Extended writing.

We have encouraged KS3 colleagues to participate in the KS2 training programme wherever possible, to support local primary colleagues and to foster collaborative approaches to handling pupil transition across the two key stages.

Rachel Middleton,
 Director, Association for
 Language Learning.
 To hear more about ALL
 Connect as well as many
 other interesting topics, why
 not join us at our annual
 conference, Language
 World 2015, taking place at
 Newcastle University from
 20-21 March?
<http://tiny.cc/LW2015>

Bringing the school community together through fundraising

Becky Duffy, from the Comic Relief Schools and Youth team, explains how CTC Kingshurst Academy in Birmingham sees Red Nose Day as an integral part of students' moral and social development, and the perfect opportunity to bring the whole school community together

CTC Kingshurst Academy is a unique institution, pioneering new educational initiatives and providing a blueprint for developments in education. The Academy's values focus on providing a stimulating educational environment combined with a challenging curriculum.

As teacher John Kennedy explains 'we inspire, support and develop our students to become life-long learners. Events like Red Nose Day create the perfect opportunity for our students to work together and realise their potential, both academically and personally. Through highlighting the reasons why we fundraise, we aim to develop inquisitive and caring young people who will help to create a better world.'

Planning early

Over the years Red Nose Day has become an integral part of the school calendar and a day that everyone looks forward to. Staff make sure they have ordered their Free Schools Resource Pack and start planning as soon they have received it. Staff briefings are also used to discuss ways to get the whole school involved, as well as tying learning activities into the curriculum before the big day.

As an academy, CTC Kingshurst have the flexibility to use Red Nose Day as a means of enriching the curriculum through fun and engaging events. So the school timetable is suspended for the day to make way for a full day of fundraising activities, led by both the Senior Leadership Team and students.

The fun bit

Red Nose Day 2013 saw a huge array of activities taking place all over the school. Each tutor group had a fun-filled day of activities, making full use of all the schools fantastic facilities. Staff got together to perform the Harlem Shake, which proved one of the most entertaining events of the day. It was recorded by staff and held to ransom, not being posted on the school website until £500 had been raised on the school's Red Nose Day giving page. The day concluded with the highly popular 'Gunge a teacher', this is always a highlight for students who vote with their pockets to gunge the teacher of their choice. Students also set up a broadcast link so the event could be streamed live to every classroom so that no-one missed out on the action!

Students organised bake sales, bouncy castles and video gaming competitions. The Heads of year also got in on the fun

with an ever-entertaining 'gunge the teacher' event.

In total CTC Kingshurst Academy raised a staggering £7,026.24 for Red Nose Day 2013.

The serious bit

Whilst fundraising activities provide lots of laughs, and great fun on Red Nose Day, CTC Kingshurst are also committed to supporting students in understanding their place in society, and the difference that they can make.

CTC Kingshurst are an innovative school, and enjoy the opportunity to approach learning from a fresh perspective. This means that during the week of Red Nose Day, the issues raised by Red Nose Day 2013 were covered in geography, history, and RE lessons, and learning about issues such as children living in urban slums. This gave new meaning to the school's fundraising efforts and really motivated everyone to get involved.

Make sure your pupils don't miss out and order your FREE Schools Fundraising Resource Pack here www.rednoseday.com/schools/Academy



Assessment without levels

Di Marshall gives a primary perspective

As part of the reforms to the national curriculum, the system of ‘levels’, used to report children’s attainment and progress, are being removed. The Department for Education want schools to use their freedoms to develop their own assessment systems which should trace the lines of development through key areas of subjects. Secure principles, policies and practices need to be developed with rigour, in order to check what pupils have learned and whether they are on track to meet the expectations at the end of each Key Stage.

Key nations of the world, eg Singapore and Hong Kong, do not use levels but are securing sustained improvement in educational outcomes, through the use of end-loaded expectations. The opportunities currently being afforded to schools in England are many. The new National Curriculum is intentionally vague within Foundation subjects’ descriptors and assessment measures are also free from direction. As an outcome of this many assessment systems are being developed from a range of sources. Commercial options are tempting but, in addition to cost, they may not replicate the curricular which schools have developed over recent years.

The broad fit of a child to a level descriptor has led to serious gaps in knowledge and understanding. Target-setting has led to schools moving children on rapidly which in turn has led to insecure grasps of key areas of a subject. Engagement with the detail of learning is now to be a focus for improvement. Children need to work with the detail in many and varied situations.



The DfE wants systems that support pupil attainment and progression, but there is significant concern in schools surrounding the lack of a common means of judging pupil performance and progress. The removal of this common language of levels according to Lord Sutherland, former chief inspector of schools, is causing ‘widespread consternation’ among teachers. As pupils move between and onto other schools, how meaningful will an individual school’s data be to the receiving school? This may well lead to schools re-assessing children according to their own system.

The following suggestions assimilate current guidance which, for so long, has been highly prescriptive in terms of what, when, how to teach and assess it.

AIM: Focus on deep and secure understanding and ensure all children have access to the content of the curriculum

- Retain the use of levels whilst considering a new system which reflects your curriculum and performance descriptors
- Link the formative assessment to your curriculum at the planning stage.
- Work together with other schools to develop a consistent system for assessing children. Collaborate!
- Children must be judged against objective criteria, rather than being ranked against each other or being given a number *ie* pupil achievement to be descriptive in nature. Grasp the chance to determine more of the curriculum in line with assessment opportunities.
- Consider the document, launched 23.10.14 by the DfE; “Performance descriptors for use in KS1 and 2 statutory assessment for 2015/16”.
- Be mindful that Ofsted will want to see evidence of rigour in the measurement of progress and attainment.
- Take confident ownership of your new system and instil it across all stakeholders.
- Remain innovative and consider the understanding of stakeholders in explaining “next steps”.
- NAHT has prepared a helpful practical set of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) which colleagues can match against their own curriculum planning . The KPIs to be covered can be documented at the planning stage.
- Ensure parents, in particular, have the detail of their child’s strengths and weakness, as opposed to a level.
- Challenge pupils by not moving on

rapidly but by applying new ideas to what is already known. Probe understanding with challenging questioning.

- Be aware of commercial schemes. The key content links may not reflect your thoroughly developed curriculum. Select and design your own questioning. Take control.
- Practice of new skills and understanding needs to be engaging, rich and varied.
- Maintain pupils work and build up an exemplification portfolio of performance across the school.

Academy freedoms are being replicated across all primary schools, and the time is opportune to secure meaningful learning and accompanying, formative assessments. It's a cyclical world we inhabit in education, and so we can expect a return to didactic measures should the profession 'fail' at this hurdle. Networking at both local and national levels will be key to the successes we can secure, and the sharing of best practice will enable the profession to gain a new confidence into the future.

**Di Marshall is Headteacher
of Violet Way Academy in
Burton on Trent**



**Focus on deep and secure
understanding and ensure all children have
access to the content of the curriculum**

“We need to be respectful - but confident enough to intervene”

Jenny Bexon-Smith, Regional Schools Commissioner of the East Midlands and Humber

I am, and always have been, committed to the maximum autonomy for schools.

As would be expected from a Regional Schools Commissioner I am also committed to the academies programme. I see it as a crucial part of the development of a world class education system which in turn is crucial to our economic and social success as a nation. I believe in the potential of every single child and therefore the potential of every school and every academy. In this sense I see the academies in the East Midlands and Humber region as a large flock of swans. We are now four months on and the Regional Schools Commissioner concept has begun to take shape. Perhaps in evolutionary terms some of our academies are still at the ugly duckling stage but there is no doubt that with the appropriate challenge and support (much of this from fellow academies) we can see all the regions academies develop into beautiful swans.

As with any new position there are always new systems, processes and procedures to digest and understand and of course as a RSC rather than Executive Principal there is, rather ironically, a significant loss of autonomy. The cultural transformation from Principal to a public servant on a civil service contract (I don't quite see my role as that of a traditional civil servant) is enormous. The temptation to challenge, ignore or just stamp your feet in order to get things done is an everyday issue. This would perhaps suggest that I feel negative about the role. Not in the slightest! The move to a regional structure is a genuine move forward and if we implement it successfully, and make the concept work, we will make a significant contribution towards achieving a genuinely self-improving, self-led world-class system which is the real prize.

The region of East Midlands and Humber is an interesting one geographically with significant numbers

of academies, both converters and sponsors. I believe that every child is entitled to attend a school that is at least good, that will in due course become outstanding. Unfortunately in some areas within the region children have a less than 50% chance of attending a secondary school that is either good or outstanding. This has got to change quickly. Our young people deserve better and so a key priority for the region is to raise performance in underperforming academies. Educational outcomes are a key driver for intervention together with Ofsted grading's. Where academies are identified as being a serious concern we deploy an educational advisor to the academy to establish what is happening on the ground. These educational visit reports are fed back to the Headteacher board and are used to inform the next course of action. Professional Headteachers play a real and active role in determining that action.

I recently attended an event where RSC's were described as 'yet another tier

My heart remains firmly in doing what is right for young people, to secure them the highest possible educational outcomes and to prepare them to have successful lives that will secure the economic and social well-being of our country

Board membership

Chris Beckett	Leadership consultant; Retired Headteacher Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust; The Deepings School	
Hugh Howe	Executive principal	Beauchamp College
Christine Linnitt	Headteacher	Holywell Primary School
Geoff Lloyd	Retired Principal	Tuxford Academy
Andy Burns	Principal	Redhill Academy
Christine Abbott	Executive Principal	South Hunsley School & Sixth Form College

also been out to find out additional information relating to significant changes such as change of age range. These visits have been well received by principals and they have valued the time spent but have also been positive about the level of professional dialogue that has taken place. Indeed we are currently considering using the HTB members to operate in a coaching capacity with individual academy heads who are either new in post or have particularly challenging issues to deal with. The board are also putting together events for sponsors, teaching schools and schools wishing to convert to academy status. Chris Abbott said at a recent board meeting, ‘This is about making informed decisions with local knowledge that lead to the best outcomes for young people. I can see the green shoots of genuine system leadership happening before my very eyes.’ For me this encapsulates what the HTB is and should be about.

During the autumn term I have met with or visited over 65 organisations including sponsors, Local Authorities, dioceses and academies. We have held six HTB meetings and I have spoken at a range of national and regional events. It has been a fast moving term and as always I have learnt an enormous amount. There is a great deal to accomplish to fulfil the vision for the region. As an executive principal my role was to improve the educational outcomes for the children in my care, my role as RSC is to play a part in achieving this for the youngsters attending the academies within our region. I may be one step removed but my heart remains firmly in doing what is right for young people, to secure them the highest possible educational outcomes and to prepare them to have successful lives that will secure the economic and social well-being of our country. When this aspiration is achieved all the beautiful swans will have emerged.

of accountability’. If this is the reality then in my view we have failed and we will fail. Yes we have a responsibility to challenge underperformance and hold people to account but we also have to facilitate and coordinate resources to ensure that improvements happen, that academies can improve performance and become good and outstanding in Ofsted terms. We can have autonomy and freedom and duck our accountability responsibilities. In a data rich world we should carefully identify the indicators that suggest an academy is moving in the wrong direction, loss of parental confidence affecting applications for places, increased rates of absenteeism for staff and pupils, staff turnover are some possible early signs that all is not as it should be. If we are to prevent the car crash then we need to be much sharper at recognising the signs and be actively brokering support much earlier point. Waiting for an Ofsted report can be much too late for the children being educated now. We need to respect the autonomy of academies but we also need to have the confidence to intervene when the evidence is not good.

We need to draw on the expertise and outstanding practice within the region provided by teaching schools’, together with the support of NLE’s, LLE’s and SLE’s to share best practice. As a region we need to increase the number of high quality sponsors in key areas where we have an imbalance in terms of demand and supply. The system needs all strong outstanding and good schools to step up

to the plate and really contribute to the wider educational system by supporting other schools. The academies movement is about increased autonomy it is not about isolation. The best schools in the country know this and do something about it. We always need to remember ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’ There is much to be gained by individual academies and the system as a whole from effective purposeful collaboration. We must always be crystal clear that effective collaboration leads to quickly improving outcomes. If we can achieve this then we are making progress towards our self-improving system.

A crucial part of this is the effectiveness of the Head Teacher Board. In the East Midlands and Humber region the board is made up of six Headteachers who have extensive experience of leading outstanding academies. They bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to our discussions about academy conversion, academy presumption and also sponsors. There is a genuine commitment to trying to provide local solutions to local problems and to provide myself as Regional Commissioner with high quality advice and guidance. Ultimately the decision rests with myself but the level of challenge provided by these educationalists is significant and leads to robust discussions and will lead to better informed local decision making.

Members of the HTB have been out visiting academies where we have concerns and reporting back. They have

Growing small and ‘free’

Sonia Case updates on the ‘positive but demanding’ experience of opening a free school in Peckham

As you read this we will be at the point when we are only two terms away from opening up a much needed and much wanted new primary school in Peckham, an area of south London which has seen considerable change and growth in the last few years. Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust submitted a free school application back on January 6th 2014, and much has happened since then to bring us to this point when staff are about to be recruited and a uniform colour is about to be agreed.

So how did we get here? We started small – Dulwich Hamlet Junior School was a single convertor back in 2011, with no expansion plans, but a simple desire to steer our ship through educational waters at our speed, making our decisions, independently of the sometimes burdensome bureaucracy of Local Authorities.

We are also in an educational area in which the larger academy chains dominate: Harris, Globe and Ark all have a strong presence, amongst the smaller church and maintained schools. But like so many urban areas, the demographic is on the rise, and the LA had developed

a permanent expansion strategy which was dependent on increasing numbers of full time places in the borough through permanent growth, rather than relying on temporary “bulge” solutions.

So when I spoke up at a Head Teachers Meeting back in April 2013, suggesting that maybe the local authority should speak to an Outstanding school in the borough irrespective of its status, they took note. Discussions began as to the process to follow which would allow Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust to open a new school. Initially we pursued the idea of applying to become a ‘sponsor academy’, and met with Dfe representatives to find out more, even going so far as to complete the required paperwork. But it became apparent, that the Local Authority would have to request an open competition for sponsors to open a new school on their behalf, and we would simply would not have our sponsorship approved by the Dfe in time. This would have resulted in only existing larger sponsors being able to compete, which was not an outcome either we, or the local community or the Local Authority, wanted.



Following meetings with the officers and the Leader of the Council it was decided that the only route forward was to apply to open a free school. Now free schools haven’t received the best press in the last couple of years, not served well by poor publicity and often a sense that they are opening up in areas where new places are not needed. Other factors that have tainted the free school image is that they do their own thing, can have a limited or peculiar curriculum offering, or are

One challenging meeting focused on the school’s proposed name (“The Belham – it sounds like Bedlam!”) and the fact that as part of the application we were obliged to compare ourselves and our results, to other local schools



run by groups of enthusiastic amateurs. From our point of view, all we wanted was be able to open a new school, knowing that we could bring our vision into a new setting, but we would have to contend with the many hoops to jump through in relation to completing the application – a 100 page document for a start.

Work got going in earnest in October 2013 when we publicised a public meeting held in the Faith Chapel in Bellenden Road and attended by over 100 interested parents. The meeting couldn't have gone better in terms of us feeling confident we were wanted and welcomed, and parents actively signing up on “expressions of interest” sheets with the skills and time that they were prepared to give. From this we identified about 30 potential people who might join us as the Core Applicant Group and after several phone calls and emails, we whittled it down to about eight.

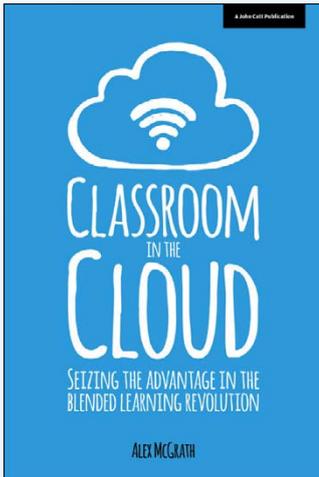
Our first meeting was a nervous one: myself, three key governors, my amazing project manager who is essential if you are going to keep your sanity, getting to know each other and decide what the next steps were going to be and who would take them. Inevitably the main bulk of writing the application fell to myself as the Head. But we were able to hand over key sections to members of the group who did a fantastic job. These were about the need for the school in that community and those involved mounted a thorough data mapping exercise, set up an online survey/consultation, leafleted and delivered information to nurseries, community centres and housing. As a result we were able to demonstrate beyond doubt a pressing demand, not just for a new school but for our new school.

The DfE is very keen to know about who is going to be running the school, and our sections on governance were key.

Quality CVs were vital to the application as was spelling out everything that the school would deliver.

And as part of all this, we worked in ‘relatively smooth’ partnership with the Local Authority. There was no doubt that some officers found the idea of working with an independent academy, a school that had left the fold, only two years previously, difficult to swallow. One challenging meeting focused on the school's proposed name (“The Belham – it sounds like Bedlam!”) and the fact that as part of the application we were obliged to compare ourselves and our results, to other local schools. We were taken to task for this as if we should have avoided pointing out what was already widely known and publically available. What was more frustrating was that the need to benchmark our school against others was a prerequisite of the application. If we were to be invited to interview, we had to

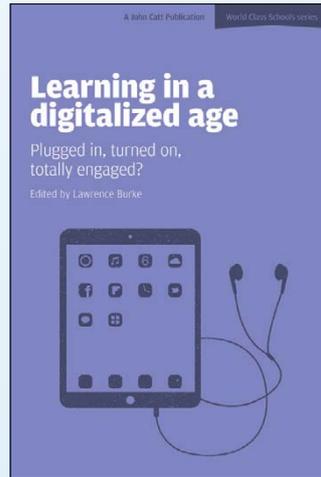
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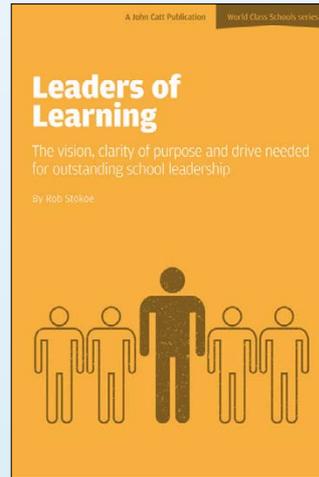
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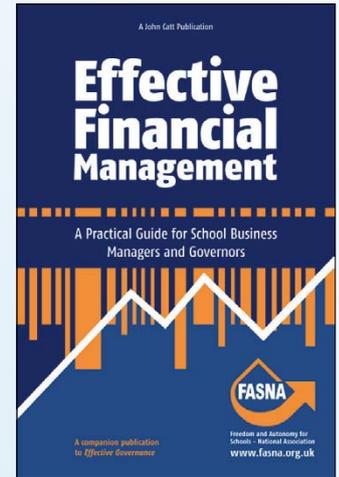
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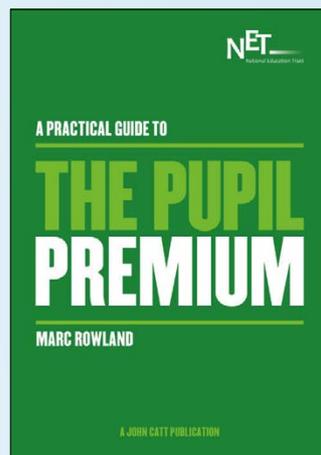
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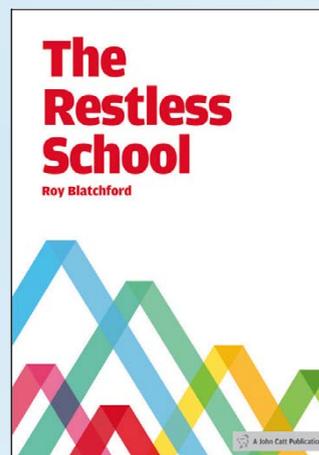
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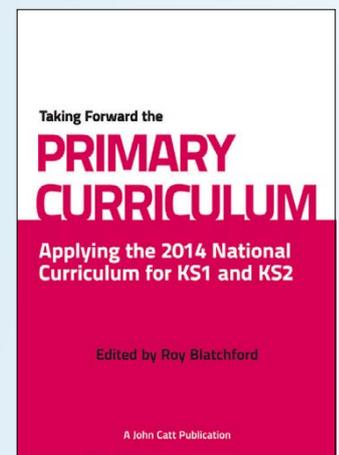
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We are receiving applications and responding on a daily basis to queries, from our ability to cater for special needs, to how we will cope with the limited play-space. And all this on top of running an existing outstanding school!

ensure that every part of our application met the criteria for an outstanding application, and the Local Authority simply had not understood the process.

I should say that the New Schools Network will provide considerable support to trusts who wish to submit a free school application, advising on all stages and even taking you through a mock interview. We missed our “slot” and weren’t able to use them, but looking back part of me feels glad that we managed to do it all entirely by ourselves with no help from any outside bodies.

The application was submitted with some relief in the first week back after

christmas, having been proof read several times by more than one member of the group. It was then a waiting game until March when we called for interview at the Dfe. We took along our financial advisor, one of the Core Applicant group to represent the community voice, two key governors who will be future trustees when we convert to multi academy status, and myself.

We were well prepared and I’d written a crib sheet for the panel on what to expect but nonetheless it was still a nerve wracking and surreal experience with some questions asked that none of us could have possibly predicted, including

the future partnerships we might make with independent (private) schools.

Another long wait followed and although we were constantly reassured that ours was a very strong application, it was a wonderful moment when we received the letter stating that we were going forward to pre-opening stage.

Since then, we have been working flat out with architects and project managers, solicitors, officers of the council, current governors, current parents, to bring a new school to life. We have held three consultation sessions, produced a prospectus, set up a website, leafleted over 2000 households, set up a statutory consultation, provided an Education Plan and written essential policies. We have created timelines, set up a recruitment strategy and developed a marketing and advertising strategy. We are receiving applications and responding on a daily basis to queries, from our ability to cater for special needs, to how we will cope with the limited play-space. And all this on top of running an existing outstanding school!

But the opportunity for the Dulwich Hamlet Educational Trust – not a Goliath but a David – to grow, to open a school with the full backing of the community and the Local Authority, and to work with the DfE and the EFA, is to realise a dream that most leaders in education would wish to do.

The free school route has been a positive, exciting and demanding experience and one which I would thoroughly recommend to those who are small but ambitious to grow.



Girls and maths

Tim Handley offers his advice to schools on how to increase attainment of girls in maths

At a recent speech at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC, Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan commented: “As well as my role as Secretary of State for Education, I am also Minister for Women and Equalities, and with both of these hats, I think it’s a disgrace that in Britain just 11% of girls who achieved the top grade in maths at age 16 go on to study mathematics up to 18, compared to 26% of boys”.

First, we need to address the crux of the problem: according to the national averages, girls’ attainment in maths is clearly lower than that of boys from Key Stage 1 to A’ Level. This is especially true at the higher end of the attainment spectrum. However, the issue and ‘solution’ is not something that is ‘girl specific’; the answer lies in the fact that approaches which have been shown to be successful in increasing the attainment of girls also represent ‘best practice’ for the teaching of maths generally.

The importance of understanding the ‘why’ and ‘how’

It is important that all children are taught maths in a way which develops their conceptual understanding. By this, I mean understanding why maths works rather than just being told that it simply does. In order to support students in their understanding, we must help them to make connections between mathematics and real life, rather than just doing maths because the teacher says so. The importance of conceptual understanding is, of course, nothing new, with researchers such as Richard Skemp and John Mason constantly stressing the importance of this.

Maths ‘stuff’

Physical representations are key to developing conceptual understanding. Aids are great learning tools, particularly to visual learners, so try to incorporate models, images and to use practical resources in the classroom wherever

possible. Resources such as bead strings, physical number lines, Numicon, base 10, 100 squares, thinking strips, and the ‘bar models’ are ideal physical representations that can be used to represent a large number of different mathematical concepts. In our classroom, we call these physical representations ‘maths stuff’ and I have a maths box on every table in my class full of these tools and resources which children use freely throughout our maths lessons.

Pictorial and abstract representations

After children have had the opportunity to explore maths and make connections using physical representations, they should then be supported in transitioning these representations into pictorial representations (numbers, lines *etc*) before moving to abstract representations. All maths teaching should follow this CPA approach; Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract - this helps to ensure that children are engaging with maths rather than just regurgitating it like maths robots.

Problem-solving and reasoning

As one of its core aims, the new curriculum puts problem solving and reasoning at the heart of mathematics teaching, and this should take place in every maths lesson. Problem solving and reasoning gives children the opportunity to discuss things together in class with their peers, helping to build their own and their peers’ confidence.

By ensuring all lessons include problem solving and reasoning, you will support all children, including girls, in

The focus should be on the explanation, reasoning and thinking rather than simply trying to guess the answer in the teachers head



seeing the reason behind mathematical concepts, helping them to make connections between different areas of maths. This approach also reduces the number of 'right or wrong' style questions asked in maths, which has been shown to particularly discourage girls.

The focus should be on the explanation, reasoning and thinking rather than simply trying to guess the answer in the teachers head.

It is a good idea to try to encourage children to make conjectures, spot patterns and help them understand the links between areas of maths and generalisations. There are resources available such as Rising Stars' Problem Solving and Reasoning to support teachers with the adoption of this way of approaching maths.

Address the perception of maths

In society, it seems to be more generally acceptable to say 'I can't do maths' or 'I hate fractions, division, algebra' *etc*, than it would be to say 'I can't do English' or 'I hate reading'. In order to help foster a positive attitude towards maths in adults,

schools should work to support parents so that they feel more confident about maths themselves, and are involved in the approaches and methods teachers are using in school.

This can be achieved in many ways; for example by holding maths evenings, issuing regular maths newsletters, or drop in sessions held by class teachers. By encouraging greater parental involvement with the maths curriculum, the parents can help their children to feel more confident in the subject, as well as enable them to see that even adults can keep learning.

It's important to help promote a positive attitude towards maths from primary level onwards, reminding your students that it's okay to be wrong, and it's more important to give it a go and learn from mistakes. To work out just a part of the route to solving the problem means the student is half way there, even if they don't get the right answer first time around. It's ok if mistakes are made, that is how we learn. Emphasising this with students will make them more willing to give things a try. This should instill

confidence in all your students, both boys and girls. By addressing these issues and focusing on the whole class you can help increase attainment across the board.

Tim Handley is the maths and ICT lead at Woodlands Primary Academy in Great Yarmouth, where he sits on the strategic leadership team. He is a qualified Maths Specialist Teacher (MaST) and is an accredited NCETM [National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics] Professional Development Lead (Primary). He is also the author of Rising Stars' Problem Solving and Reasoning resource. He can be contacted by email at mrh@mrhandley.co.uk and can be found on twitter @tomhenzley

Free schools: a parents' story

Natalie Evans, director of New Schools Network, discusses the growth of free schools and their increasing popularity amongst parents

Any parent will tell you that finding the right school for your child can not only be extremely difficult in terms of figuring out how to navigate the system, but immensely nerve-wracking. For many parents the struggle will be securing a place at a good local school that is already oversubscribed. For others, a lack of special educational provision in their locality which meets their child's needs or securing a place for a child who isn't thriving in mainstream education will be the problem. Too often, parents have to settle for a school that is not quite right for their child. This is slowly changing though.

Free schools are offering communities the opportunity to take matters into their own hands and respond directly to the needs of the pupils in their area, giving parents a greater choice in their child's education. Parents, teachers, community groups, charities and existing schools across England have seized the chance to set up good new schools which are proving extremely popular.

Any group looking to set up a free school has to have educational experts on board early so even parent-driven projects quickly involve senior educationalists. On the flipside, projects being driven by teachers or schools have to demonstrate that parents would send their children to the proposed school. This requirement to demonstrate demand means that parents are a driving force behind every school.

The other phenomenon we are increasingly seeing, and is a further proof of parent power in the system, is parents

approach existing outstanding schools to actively lobby them: requesting that they expand their provision by opening a new school to ensure more local children can get access to the high quality education they deserve.

Changing views

It has not always been plain sailing for either parents trying to make the case for a new school in their area, or for those trying to encourage parents to sign-up. The free school programme has suffered from a controversial reputation which has, at times, got in the way of what individual groups are trying to achieve. With 350 of these schools now open, views are definitely changing. The shift is happening fastest among parents who have a free school in their area with 87% saying they thought parents in their area would welcome a new free school. More broadly, our research has also shown that the biggest reason parents are interested in seeing new schools in their community is the lack of choice they have currently.

New Schools Network recently commissioned a nationally representative survey of parents, testing views on how they regard their local school, exploring what parents value in a good school and how their own school measures up to their expectations.

Carried out by opinion research company, Populus, the survey showed that one in four parents would have chosen a different school if they had a chance, representing 1.4 million families across the country. The survey asked



parents to rate the importance they attached to various aspects of a good school, and then to compare how they felt their own school performed on those same measures:

- 95% of parents say that the quality of lessons is important or very important, but only 74% rate their school as good or very good
- 93% of parents say that helping their child succeed in exams is important, but only 65% rate their schools as good or very good
- 92% of parents say that the school's role in helping their child secure a place at university and/or a good job is important, but 58% rate their school as good or very good.



Interestingly, parental response to free schools was overwhelmingly positive with 81% saying that they would welcome such a school in their community, and a further 73% saying that they would consider this school for their child. Of those who would have chosen a different school given the chance, 85% said they would consider a free school. Parents are also significantly more likely to support a longer school day, both through more time in formal learning and more after school clubs and activities. Parents who are aware of a free school in their area - and therefore have more knowledge about free schools - are considerably more likely to think a free school would be welcome in their area and consider sending their child to such a school. Black and other ethnic minority parents were even more supportive of free schools with 91% who expressed an opinion saying they thought a free school would be welcome in their area and 83% would consider sending their child to a free school.

Making it a reality: teacher parent partnerships

Against this backdrop of demand, the momentum of the programme continues to grow - last month almost 150 groups submitted applications to the Department for Education to set up a new school. A diverse range of groups and organisations have already come forward to embrace the opportunities offered by the free school programme. But it is the education profession itself is increasingly taking the lead - 66% of free schools have been started by groups led by teachers, existing successful schools, academy chains, or existing education providers.

The fact is that free schools are becoming an established presence in England's education system. We need more new schools, to deal with the shortage of places and, just as importantly, to deal with the shortage of good school places. Free schools give the chance for parents to get actively involved in the education they want for

their children and in turn free schools are rewarding the trust parents have shown them: Ofsted inspections to date have shown that free schools are more likely to be judged outstanding than other state schools.

New schools are being created by experts and existing excellent schools, so it is unsurprising that parents are increasingly supportive of them - realising the benefits and choices these new schools can offer. I can only hope that this growing support will give more schools, charities, and groups of teachers and parents the confidence to use the free school programme to bring their idea for a new school to life.

A snapshot: free school case studies

In 2012, Everton in the Community, the charity affiliated to Everton Football Club opened an alternative provision school in Liverpool for 14-19 year olds who are not in school or are at risk of exclusion

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opened in 2012. The school focuses on providing the skills needed for lifelong learning, with a specialism in sport, which is used to help young people re-engage in their education.

Perry Beeches in Birmingham are currently a family of three secondary schools built on traditional values, all of which are non-selective, mixed comprehensive schools with broad, balanced, dynamic curriculums. Perry Beeches has set a fantastic standard and has had record breaking success in its academic attainment. Students in 2013 achieved 80% A*-C at GCSE. The group will now be opening their first primary in 2015.

Lighthouse School Leeds is a special school in Leeds for 11-19 year olds with autistic spectrum disorders and related communication disorders. The school, which opened in 2012, was established by a group of local parents and teaches pupils key life skills and vocational subjects such as horticulture and animal care, as well as core subjects.

Details of our survey, conducted by Populus, can be found here: www.populus.co.uk/Poll/New-Schools-Network-Survey/

Further information can be found at www.newschoolsnetwork.org

For more information regarding setting up a free school, please contact: info@newschoolsnetwork.org



Natalie became director in January 2013 having previously been Chief Operating Officer at New Schools Network. Prior to joining NSN she was Deputy Director of Policy Exchange, responsible for the output and strategic direction of their research team. Her previous roles include Head of Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce and Deputy Director at the Conservative Research Department

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That is why Read On. Get On. was launched in September 2014 to create a national Mission on reading. Driven by a coalition of charities, communities, parents schools, businesspeople, media and politicians it aims to ensure every child born this year is reading well by the time they leave primary school aged 11 in 2025.

At the heart of Read On. Get On. is something that needs to become its basic bedrock of success: the language/literacy linkage. Too often, literacy and language development have existed in separate bubbles, with too little official recognition of what good educators know instinctively. This is that reading floats on a sea of talk.

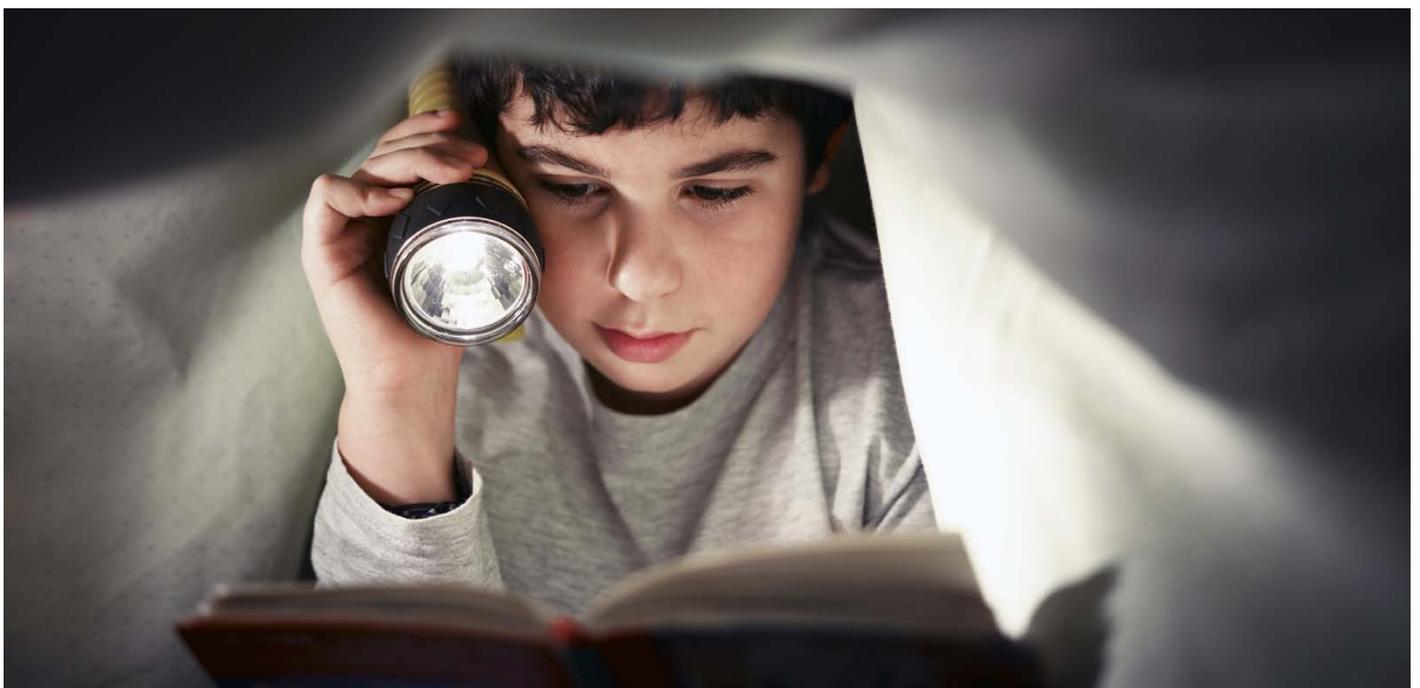
That's why Read On. Get On. has an 'intermediate' dated goal of having all 5 year olds with good language skills by 2020. Tackling the 2020 goal will be an early focus for the campaign. Good language skills are the critical springboard for children's reading. Language development in the early years predicts educational achievement right through to school leaving age.

Which is why it is so shocking that – right now, in the UK today - over a quarter of children are not reaching age-appropriate communication and language

levels by the time they are five years old. In areas of deprivation this rises to one in three children.

Before a child can read, they need good language skills which will have been developed from birth. New analysis by Newcastle University highlights an alarming gap of almost a year and a half in between the language skills of children from the best-off and poorest families by the age of three. Sadly this links with the fact that 40 - 50% of children growing up in socially disadvantaged areas are starting school with delayed language. Social disadvantage has an impact well before children start school.

Based on what we know about early language skills it is not a surprise that disadvantaged children are the worst readers, with four in ten not reading well by the age of 11 – almost double the rate of their better-off peers. But good





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schools make an enormous difference in children's ability to read. Schools have demonstrated that while poverty makes it harder for a child to learn and achieve, impressive results can be made in children's reading. We know that in schools that implement I CAN's Talk Boost language intervention, 90% of children with poor language skills make or exceed progress in reading, thanks to the combination of small group intervention and whole class activities.

As good language skills are a critical springboard to reading for children, adults in schools play a key role in supporting spoken language and the development of a classroom learning environment which fosters the language needed for thinking and learning. Ofsted recognises the importance of being able to being able to speak a sentence before you can read or write a sentence. Moving English forwards from Ofsted in 2012 noted that 'Speech comes before both reading and writing. The earlier that all children develop confidence in their speech, along with an extensive vocabulary, the more likely it is that they will be able to improve their overall competence in reading and writing'.

Children and young people who are confident in their communication skills are more likely to be above average readers and writers. National Literacy Trust research shows that almost twice as many children who are confident to join in class discussions read above the level expected for their age compared with their peers who lack confidence in joining in class discussions (17.2% vs. 9.6%). They are also more likely to be above average writers for their age (18.8% vs. 10.4%).

All children and young people will benefit from teachers placing language and communication skills – and their link with literacy – as central to teaching and learning.

Literacy should be interwoven in the fabric of everyday school life and involve all staff – only then will children be leaving primary and secondary education reading well.

Every school needs a rigorous whole-school literacy policy which is implemented systematically across the curriculum and all teachers should view themselves as teachers of literacy, regardless of their subject specialism. Embedding language for learning across the whole school can have a significant and positive effect on the educational attainment and lives of young learners.

Salma Rahman, Assistant Headteacher at Horton Park Primary School in Bradford shares her experience of introducing Talk for Learning both across the school and in her Year 1 classroom. "The development of speaking and listening skills was identified by staff at all levels as a school improvement priority. It was decided that the school would focus on developing Talk for Learning as a whole school project over a five year period. Talk rules, collaborative group discussion and use of video with learners to explore their own talk provide stimulating and successful strategies.

"In the first year, staff received termly training on dialogic talk strategies then completed gap tasks between sessions. The second year of Talk for Learning involved specific teachers collaborating to deepen their own and the learner's talk for learning skills. These teachers then became a model for others.

"We created 'talk rules' with the learners, which are reviewed and updated termly, and this has led to learners making the rules their own eg insisting on eye contact when they are speaking.

"The learners are also now able to build on each other's ideas, vote independently and also change their minds confidently, having listened to each other. It has also made me consider more carefully the learning styles of individuals."

In much the same way as Horton Park Primary School has done, schools can embed the Read On. Get On. goals within their own targets and set their own ambitious goals at a local level. Embedding language for learning aligns with the goals of the Read On. Get On.

campaign – focusing on the crucial role which language and communication skills play in supporting all children to read well by 2025.

The Read On. Get On. Campaign is an unprecedented opportunity to increase the literacy skills of a generation. Over the next decade schools, settings, charities and businesses will be mobilised to raise reading levels, improve literacy and create the communication skills from a child's earliest moments that will allow every child to fulfil their potential. Campaigns are being planned, new partnerships are being forged and celebrities are being recruited.

Embedding the message that the reading skills of 11 year olds are entirely dependent on the early development of speech, language and communication skills is central to the campaign's success. If the campaign's messages, programmes and promotions take this message to politicians, parents and teachers then we will not have got every UK child reading, we will have succeeded in redefining what it means to be literate.

The Read On Get On campaign believes that reading is the key to unlocking a child's full potential and the best route out of poverty for our poorest children. By working on language and literacy skills together we can achieve the best outcomes for children.

I CAN, the children's communication charity, and the National Literacy Trust are founding members of the Read On. Get On. coalition. For more information visit readongeton.org.uk

Virginia Beardshaw is Chief Executive of I CAN, the children's communication charity and Jonathan Douglas is Director of the National Literacy Trust

The new computing curriculum

Bill Mitchell, Director of Education at BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, talks about the new curriculum and how schools are approaching the challenge

The new computing curriculum includes computer science, information technology and digital literacy. It focuses on computational thinking whilst still embodying the most important aspects of digital literacy.

Computing is important for every child - everyone needs to have the digital literacy skills to use computers, smartphones or tablets in order to operate in our increasingly digital society, but they also need to understand the underpinning principles, concepts and ideas that explain how they work and the computational thinking skills needed to create software and digital technology for themselves. Those who lack these skills are unable to access government services or take advantage of the benefits of our information society and run the risk of being unemployable.

The new curriculum is taught in primary through to secondary schools. We know that young children in primary school enjoy learning computing, are good at it, and their learning ability in other subjects seems to improve as a result of being taught computing. Teaching computing to primary school aged pupils can help them develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Children as young as five are now learning about algorithms and computational thinking, as well as creating and debugging simple programs.

The curriculum has been designed to allow individual schools to be flexible in what and how they teach. They can choose the materials they use for teaching computational thinking to younger

children, as well as the programming languages and software they use in the classroom.

The challenge is to make sure all of our teachers are confident and enthusiastic about teaching the subject. They come from a variety of backgrounds, though few have a degree in computer science, so the majority of them are teaching a brand new subject - but help is at hand.

Training for teachers

Computing At School (CAS) provides teachers with a national network of other teachers who are enthusiastic and keen to support one another. Membership is free to everyone interested in computing, with a significant, but not exclusive focus on the computer science theme within the wider computing curriculum. Through its network of teachers, local hubs, master teachers and university partners CAS is providing workshops and resources to support local teachers, and build their confidence and skills for the new computing curriculum.

CAS is part of BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT and currently has 16000 members, including teachers, university academics, parents, school governors, members of professional societies, and IT professionals. CAS is supported by Microsoft, Google, Ensoft, Morgan Stanley, ARM and a range of other IT employers in the UK. It also has funding from the DfE for various grants.

CAS Online is a community website to help teachers to deliver computing. It supports both secondary and primary



teachers with resources, details of events, and a place to ask questions and meet other similarly minded teachers.

Network of excellence

BCS and CAS have received Department for Education funding to develop the Network of Teaching Excellence in Computer science (NoE). This large-scale CPD initiative provides teachers with the training they need to deliver the new curriculum. The programme aims to train and develop a significant number of CAS Master Teachers who, in turn, train and support their local teachers. CAS Master Teachers have been (and are still being) recruited and trained to offer CPD to their local schools. These teachers are experienced teachers, with good subject knowledge of computer science, and with the skills needed to support other

teachers. The emphasis is very much on local face-to-face support, training and networking, backed up by an active website of resources and discussions. There are a range of professional development courses now being offered around the country in all aspects of the new curriculum. Courses take place in schools, universities and other venues and are organised at various times of day to suit local needs – one-day courses, twilight sessions, evening classes, holiday courses – to be as convenient to teachers as possible.

Scholarships

BCS also administers, on behalf of the Department for Education, a scholarship scheme to encourage more teachers into computing. This is the third year and 120 scholarships - each worth £25,000 - will be available this year to find the very best potential trainee computing teachers.

The scheme has the backing of Goldman Sachs, Citrix, Morgan Stanley, Microsoft, IBM, BT, Google, Metaswitch Networks, Compare the Market, HP, Toshiba and Ocado among other major industry names.

Barefoot and quickstart

Schemes such as BCS' Barefoot Computing (for primary school teachers), funded by DfE and partnered by BT and our QuickStart Computing (for secondary school teachers), funded by DfE and Microsoft, provide materials and training to teachers.

The Barefoot Computing project is running 800 in-school computing workshops across the country up to May 2015. It provides cross-curricular computer science resources aimed at primary schoolteachers who have no previous computer science knowledge. The program helps teachers by providing them with computing classroom activities that at the same time support learning in other subjects, such as literacy, numeracy, science and history. They help teaching ideas and concepts such as algorithms, abstraction and data structures, and how

Useful resources for teachers:

- Join Computing At School (it's free) by going to www.community.computingatschool.org.uk and adding your name and school address. This will give you access to all Computing At School events, resources, and discussion groups.
- Sign your school up to the Network of Excellence. Membership of the Network of Excellence is open to all schools and means that you will be connected to your local CAS master teacher and CAS regional coordinator. Some schools in the Network of Excellence are Lead Schools, which means that they will also be able to help other local schools that need support with their planning for delivering Computing.
- Join your local Computing hub. There are over 70 hubs around the country enabling teachers to meet each other and share ideas. Most hubs meet every term.
- Even if you feel your computing subject knowledge falls short of what you will need, you can still become a Computing At School Master Teacher. CAS is recruiting "Trainee Master Teachers" – excellent teachers to whom we will be able to offer specific and comprehensive subject knowledge training.

they support learning in other subjects, and how they can teach them to children starting from age five.

QuickStart Computing is a CPD toolkit that allows teachers to easily put together a bespoke CPD course on computing which can be run by teachers in school with their colleagues. It provides teachers with the tools to help them design, develop, and deliver the full computing curriculum in a form that fits the needs of their school.

All of the Barefoot and QuickStart resources are completely free online.

New National Curriculum for computing outline

The new National Curriculum for Computing outlines what students should be learning in computing. There is a useful document published by the Teaching Agency - academy.bcs.org/sites/academy.bcs.org/files/CSSubjectKnowledgeRequirements.pdf - which outlines what a computing teacher should know. Courses offered within the Network of Excellence are cross-referenced against this. All courses offered through this CPD initiative

are delivered by trained and approved providers and are evaluated fully to ensure quality.

CS Unplugged

New skills can be introduced to students without being at a computer screen a lot of the time. Many examples of "off-computer" activities are given in the CS Unplugged series of materials which can be freely downloaded and are an excellent starting point. Several of these and several other resources inspired by CS Unplugged have been turned into full lesson plans for primary schools, which are available at the Barefoot website - barefootcas.org.uk. By teaching computer science we can start to stimulate the interest of students in abstracting from what they see in the world around them to reflect on how processes can be described (algorithms) and automated (programs), with the aim of being able to creatively design and develop their own solutions. Because of the problem solving involved, and the need to articulate the thinking process, computer science lends itself to working in pairs and groups and can be a very social subject to study.



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Get off my land!

Howard Dellar, of Lee Bolton Monier-Williams, on why trustee sites should not be treated as academy assets

About one third of all schools occupy sites that are private owned by trustees. Unless some exceptional local arrangement has been agreed, there is no lease and no written licence for these arrangements. The school simply occupies the site because the trustees day by day allow them to do so under the terms of the trust on which the trustees themselves own it. It is a “mere licence”.

When such a school becomes an academy the trustees’ land should normally be provided by a written licence called a supplemental agreement. A model for this appears on the DfE academies website for church academies and it can readily be adapted for non-church ones. It too is a mere licence. This was done deliberately to reflect “as is” in conversions.

While it is possible for trustees to provide the site by means of a lease this is very rarely done. If a lease has been provided, then the value of the lease will be an asset of the academy trust, though it should be noted that it is not a transferable asset. The model trustee lease dies when the Funding Agreement to which it attaches comes to an end. It cannot be novated to a new academy company or a new sponsor.

The model supplemental agreement on the other hand gives the academy no greater rights, control or security than is the case for maintained schools as described above. In consequence it too is a “mere licence”. It can be terminated without notice at will by the trustees, save that if they are terminating occupation of so much of their site as to make it impossible for the academy to continue to operate the trustees have to give at least two years’ notice.

Neither schools nor academies can sell any of the trustees’ site that they occupy, nor may they grant leases or licenses in respect of it. All occupation by third parties has to be by agreement with the trustees and all disposals are totally a matter for them. Schools and academies cannot use trustee land as security for loans or indeed as a means of seeming to balance their accounts and (for example) avoiding trading while technically insolvent.

Extensive discussions have gone on between the DfE/EFA, CIPFA, the Audit Commission and national trustee representatives. CIPFA guidance is imminent in respect of trustee maintained school sites and the principles set out in it will also provide a sound

basis for the treatment of trustee sites in academy accounts.

In consequence of these discussions, trustee national bodies and their legal advisers are clear that trustee sites in maintained schools do not meet the required tests to be treated as assets of the relevant Local Authority and (in the same way) those of academies cannot be treated as assets of the relevant academy trust. It may be that accountants will consider that the rolling two-year notice leads to a kind of “operating lease” position with some modest value. If so then they will advise on how this should be handled in accounts, usually we think with a counter entry showing that no rent is actually paid. If academies consider that they need valuations of trustee land they must themselves provide them and fund them and trustees should make it plain that it is their view that no valuation should be entered in academy accounts. It would be wise for trustees to challenge formally any accounts that purport to include the value of the site as an asset of the academy. This protects the trustees’ position and prevents anyone claiming that the trustees have allowed their site to be treated as someone else’s asset.

Sorry academies – but it’s just not your land and you can’t treat it as though it were!

It would be wise for trustees to challenge formally any accounts that purport to include the value of the site as an asset of the academy

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How would you mark your health and safety compliance regime?

There are high expectations of those in leadership and management positions of academies given the vital role they play in securing the health, safety and welfare of students. Effective guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has ensured increased vigilance whilst students are in school or on school trips. The less positive news is that when it comes to looking at the impact of the building on staff and student health, safety and welfare the level of awareness is much lower.

This relative lack of awareness is understandable. One explanation being that as far as responsibility is concerned there has been a blurred line between school governors or board of directors the Headteacher and the business management team, largely responsible for day to day issues and the Local Authority. In academies however the governors or board of directors are ultimately accountable for compliance. Budget allocation and controls need to ensure appropriate maintenance, reactive works and future replacements. Academy conversion is here to stay but with it can come a legacy of unresolved compliance issues.

Managing compliance

An emphasis on an effective and robust health, safety and risk management compliance system is essential. The system should take in to account actions that are appropriate and proportionate to the size, activities and identified risks of the school and by ensuring that those in a leadership position have appropriate levels

of knowledge and training

It is not surprising that many people, particularly those with a limited experience of maintenance and compliance regimes, find the subject somewhat overwhelming. Given the critical nature of this aspect of school management it is essential to understand just what the legal requirements are in terms of managing a building. Largely they relate to any aspect of the school that involves gas, mechanics, electricity, fire-alarm systems, and plumbing, as well as aspects of the construction that are proven to be unsafe.

In many respects managing compliance is as much about regular maintenance checks as it is about keeping records of that activity.

What should be checked?

- Fire alarms need to be tested and maintained, as do fire extinguishers.
- Less obvious might be the regular cleaning of shower heads and kitchen extractor fans. These should be done four times a year.
- Gas boilers and water heaters should be serviced twice a year, whereas PAT (portable appliance testing) should be undertaken once a year and tests on fixed wiring every five year.

The list is not exhaustive, as the schedule will be building dependent, but does reflect essential checks that are subject to audit.

When it comes to recording these maintenance checks and producing the relevant documentation at time of audit,

the responsibility is very much in the hands of the school business management team and the Headteacher.

IT systems can play a part in resolving the record keeping challenge. Scheduling maintenance, managing contractors and recording costs have long been allocated and managed by helpdesks backed by software programmes. This joined-up approach to maintenance management is aimed at tracking progress and improving the efficiency of the process. Our experience of working with schools has shown us how valuable this can be. Some of the schools we work with readily admit that in the past, although a boiler may have been serviced twice a year, record keeping was such that it made it impossible to prove.

Individual school requirements may vary depending on the size and complexities of the assets. For some schools compliance is made all the more complex because of on-site catering facilities and the sheer volume of equipment in gyms or science labs, and of course there is asbestos which is a subject all of its own. Any school, no matter its size, has a duty of care to its students and staff that extends to the impact of the building on health, safety and welfare.

Peter W Hall, Director Risk Management, Bellrock Property and Facilities Management

Controlling catering costs: a case study with Riddlesdown Collegiate

Managing costs within a school academy environment is an ongoing pressure that School Business Managers, Bursars and Senior Leadership Teams are facing each and every term. With academy finance growing in complexity, it is vital that all costs across the organisation are closely monitored and systems are put in place that not only improve efficiencies but also help control rising prices.

A particular example of a significant operational cost requiring ongoing review is the catering function. It is imperative to serve students a wide range of hot and cold meals, snack options and drinks throughout the school day which meets the needs of students of differing ages and tastes. Healthy, nutritional food aids learning, improves concentration and ultimately provides access to a balanced diet.

As such, food and beverage procurement is one of the most significant costs that academies face. Juggling the balance of budgetary spend and delivering the best nutritional options can be a difficult task to accomplish due to managing multiple suppliers, negotiating product pricing and co-ordinating the overall supply chain.

In order to do so effectively, many academies are turning to external procurement specialists who can remove the administrative burden from frontline staff and ultimately help schools reach a better balance of quality and choice versus expenditure.

By outsourcing in this way, the procurement specialists help manage rising costs by negotiating on your behalf, manage supplier tendering, oversee the day-to-day supplier liaison,



provide back-office support and much more. Simply, they enable you to concentrate on your primary focus – providing quality education to the students enrolled in your academy.

A Case in Point

Located in the London Borough of Croydon, Riddlesdown Collegiate is a secondary school with academy status. With over 1,900 students it is the largest school in Croydon in terms of pupil numbers and features six colleges, of which four are specifically for Years 7–11 students, in addition to a Creative Performing Arts college and a Sixth form college.

Led by the Principal, Gordon Smith, Riddlesdown Collegiate focuses on providing a first-rate environment for its students. With consistently high examination grades, the Collegiate's

motto is “Learners of today. Leaders of tomorrow” and emphasis is placed on developing personal and leadership qualities in all of its students, illustrating its focus on achieving and maintaining high standards.

This approach extends beyond the curriculum and is echoed in the operational management of the school, which includes the catering and student dining options. In June 2010, Luigi Mallozzi, Operations Director, was appointed to specifically bring catering back in-house to not only improve the quality, but to review and address the overheads related to the function.

Luigi Mallozzi explains: “When I first joined the Collegiate, our meal uptake was only 30% and we were actually losing about £70,000 a year in costs. This needed addressing and it was my objective to modernise the function, bring the catering back in-house to improve the quality, whilst adopting a procurement model that would enable us to take greater control of what we were spending.”

Luigi appointed Pelican Procurement Services to help support this process. Not only would Pelican help the school centralise and co-ordinate its food purchasing, but it also would establish improved pricing agreements and terms with suppliers, implement improved service level agreements and ultimately help the team keep a closer track on spending.

Luigi continues: “Having met the team from Pelican, it was clear from the first meeting that they would be able to really support us in working with suppliers to negotiate new pricing and to take better control of our costs. I could clearly see that working with a specialist would help

take away all the stress of bringing the catering function back in-house.”

As well as working with suppliers on a retendering programme, which has realised cost savings on food and non-food products, Pelican has also rolled out a centralised supplier payment management function, which provides a more streamlined way of working for Luigi, his catering teams as well as the finance department.

Luigi confirms: “The beauty of working with a company like Pelican is there is plenty of flexibility in the system, so although they set you on to contracts with suppliers, we are still in total control in terms of what products we can order. My last saving was about 7% on total, in spite of the fact that food costs are increasing; Pelican continues to negotiate our prices down for us, which means overall our business is in a lot healthier state.

The supplier invoice management function has certainly helped our finance department,” continues Luigi. “Every invoice that used to come through would be manually input by the catering manager. I would then need to authorise the invoice before it was passed to finance for processing. These days, we don’t need to do any of that – it is automatically paid so it has freed up my time, the catering manager’s time and the finance team’s time.”

The procurement team also monitor the college’s invoices to ensure that the agreed amounts have been invoiced. It is estimated that an average of 10% of all supplier invoices carry inaccuracies. Therefore having robust systems in place that check everything is accurate ensures the school is not unknowingly paying more for an item than it should be. This removes the need for manually reviewing every single invoice line item, as it has already been checked – and refunds were made where necessary.

Procurement Technology

In another step to improve visibility and control, the Collegiate has adopted the “Purchasing Intelligence (Pi)” online



portal. Pi ensures that purchasing expenditure is in line with set budgets, as invoices are being uploaded into the system automatically directly from suppliers. This means Luigi and his team do not have to input invoice purchase information manually, and have full visibility of their catering spend, stock control and other features.

Confirms Luigi: “Within Pi, we can track what we are spending with each supplier, plus it also gives the Bursar full access so they can see exactly what is happening with the catering department at any time.”

Finance and Resource Savings

Since adapting its approach to its catering procurement, Riddlesdown Collegiate has witnessed some excellent results. Meal up-take has jumped from 30% up to 85% and instead of losing

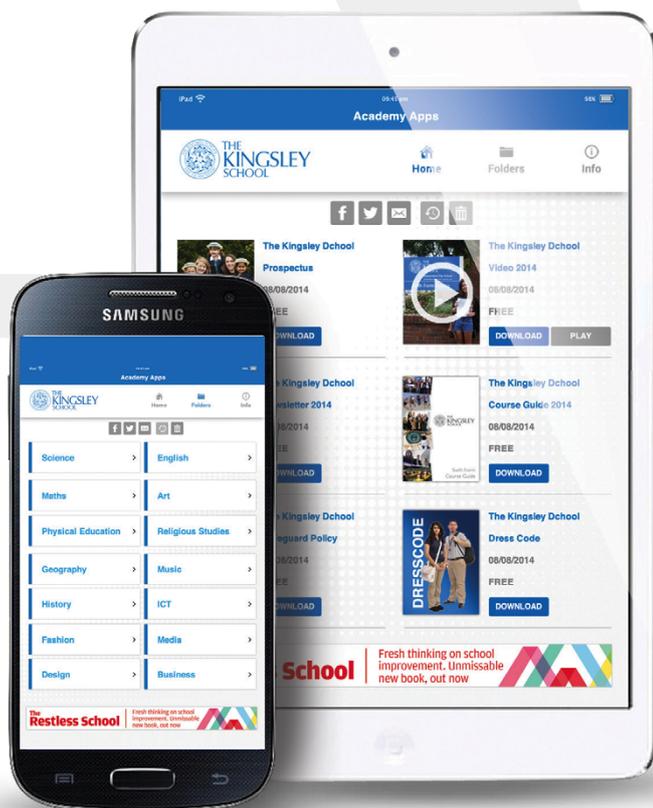
money the school is now making £60,000 surplus per year that can be reinvested.

Luigi concludes: “Why wouldn’t you want a procurement partner that’s going to negotiate much better deals than you could possibly achieve on a one-to-one level? Despite any negotiating skills you may have, it is all about buying power and what they can do for you. For me, it’s a ‘no brainer’. All the savings we realise, means we can reinvest into the canteen and making sure that we’re building better infrastructure to carry on growing as a business, and of course making sure the kids are getting the best food they can get.”

riddlesdown.org
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Not ‘just’ a teaching assistant

Abi Joachim on why she is proud of making a career out of her support staff role

Having graduated with a first class degree in psychology, I envisaged pursuing a high-powered career in forensics.

I only applied for a job as a teaching assistant as a stop gap while looking for opportunities, but once I started I was hooked. I spent two years in my new role before deciding that people would expect me to follow a path with prospects and I therefore reluctantly applied for my PGCE. When my acceptance letter arrived, I was supposed to be excited, but all I actually felt was sadness about leaving a job I loved. I lasted less than a term on the course, soon realising that it was not a career for me. I knew I loved working in a school with pupils, and enjoyed the more personal relationships I could develop as a teaching assistant. Luckily, I was able to return to the same position I had before, in the same school, and have been there for the last fourteen years.

When teaching assistants were first introduced into schools, they were viewed as ‘paint pot washers’ and the ‘mums’ army’, who were only working for pin money. Over the years, this situation has changed significantly, and those now applying for support staff roles in schools are often highly qualified and skilled individuals. It is true that a large proportion of these staff use the

experience to facilitate a career in the teaching profession, but many like myself choose to make a career out of being a teaching assistant. Unfortunately, it seems that while motivations to enter the profession appear to be changing, other aspects of the job are falling behind.

The public perception of teaching assistants, in my experience, is often still rooted in the early days of the profession. When I began the job after university, I often found myself justifying my career choice, or playing down the role with phrases like ‘I’m just a teaching assistant.’ As a graduate, people assumed I would naturally follow the teaching route, and would look sympathetically at me when they realised I had not achieved this. Initially, I lacked the confidence to counter these reactions with an explanation of the highly skilled, rewarding and demanding career path I had chosen.

Another inconsistency lies in the training opportunities and career prospects offered to classroom-based support staff. I have been extremely fortunate in my employment and have been offered many chances to develop and progress. However, I am aware that this is not always the case; a clear ladder to climb and the tools to do so are often elusive. A few years into my

job as a teaching assistant, government recognition of the importance to develop the skills of support staff led to a wave of funding. I was lucky enough to ride this wave and was offered my first significant chance to gain a job specific qualification. I began studying for my NVQ 3, which provided the theory to reinforce my practical experience and allowed me to improve the classroom-based skills I had already developed. Later, a second training opportunity arose, and this time the criteria were linked to the first set of professional standards I had been aware of since beginning work. I was able to prove my abilities against a specific set of competencies, in the same way that a trainee teacher would in order to gain entry into the teaching profession. With my HLTA qualification behind me, I was able to move up in my chosen profession, becoming the higher level teaching assistant for English in 2013. Amazingly, I also managed to gain a local council subsidised place on a masters course in education, allowing me to fulfill my own academic dreams, while gaining an in-depth insight into educational theory and practice.

I am acutely aware that my experience of the teaching assistant profession is not representative of all classroom support staff. My training success and career

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progression has been more a case of being in the right place at the right time than the result of a structured system. However, that might all be about to change. The Department for Education is currently reviewing the standards for teaching assistants, with some important aims in mind. (Editor: This review is being led by FASNA member Kate Detheridge) Primarily, the new set of standards is intended to be clearer and more suitable to the range of roles carried out in modern schools. This greater level of transparency will hopefully allow for clearer career development paths to become available, improving progression opportunities for teaching assistants. However, the most important objective of this review, in my opinion, is to raise the profile of support staff.

The review panel intends to create a set of standards which will ensure that the skills and expertise of teaching assistants are effectively utilised within schools. I believe this is an essential development, which will contribute to a positive change in attitudes towards support staff. In addition, the review highlights the need to focus on the professional relationship between teaching assistants and classroom teachers, which it identifies as a key to raising pupils' attainment. In my

experience, a positive working relationship definitely enhances the learning environment by creating a coordinated teaching approach. Collaborative planning and reviewing of lessons ensures that both professionals are able to progress the learning of pupils effectively.

Unlike some reviews, the members of this panel are actually representative of the group in question as they include both teaching assistants and HLTAs alongside teachers and Headteachers. The initial press release indicates how vital good teaching assistants are to improving educational standards within schools. It is clear that any changes to the standards will be made in order to develop and enhance this role and create a professional job image with real prospects for progression.

As a teaching assistant, I view these current developments optimistically and hope that the new standards will be the start of a move towards the teaching assistant role being viewed as a legitimate career choice. In the meantime, my academy has done its bit to raise the profile of our support staff by organising a UNISON 'Stars in our Schools' event on Friday 28th November.

Teachers and governors gathered with support staff over coffee and cake to

celebrate the achievements and dedication of this group of colleagues who carry out a wide range of essential roles within the school. This team not only includes teaching assistants, but encompasses admin, cleaning and caretaking staff to name just a few. This was an opportunity to highlight the contributions made by this often hidden group towards the successful running of the academy. All support staff were also given a badge to wear throughout the day, identifying them as 'Stars in our School'. This allowed pupils to ask questions and recognise the importance of a range of staff within their academy. The team spirit evoked by this event was amazing and created an atmosphere of equality and mutual appreciation, which will hopefully leave long-lasting positive effects.

I am excited to be working as a teaching assistant during this time of change, and hope that I am lucky enough to experience significant improvements within my chosen profession which will benefit staff and students alike.

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