



Academy magazine

Volume 5 Number 2 Spring 2016

The transformative power of MATs

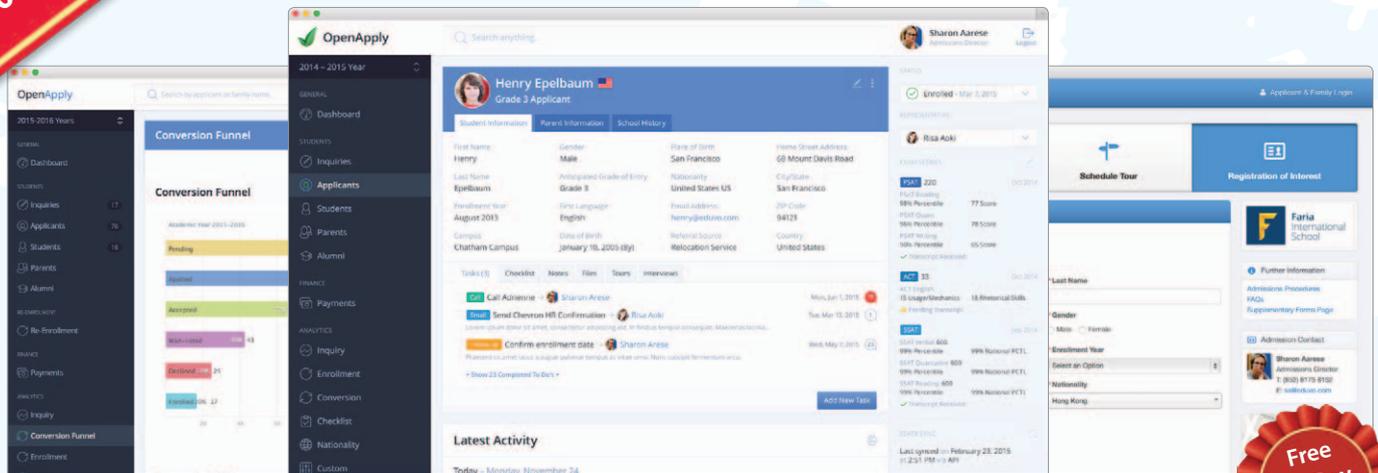


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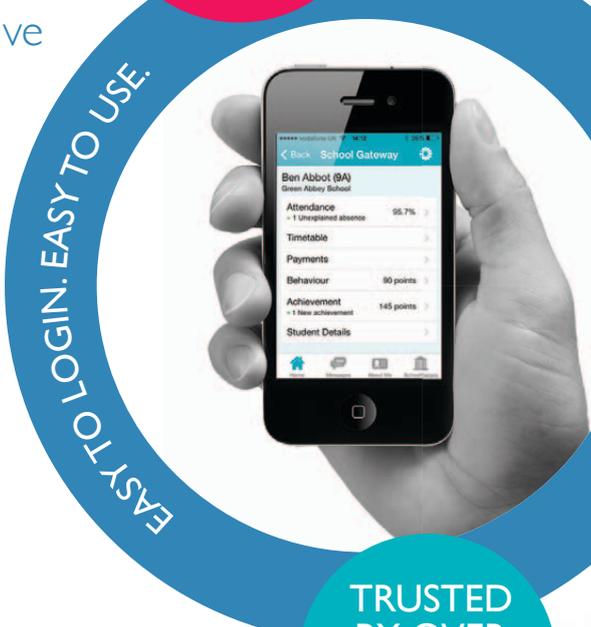
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From the editor

Pressures on schools are clearly mounting. The continued drive to raise standards is not surprising, indeed is to be expected and even welcomed. That the Government wants to tackle schools that underperform should not be a shock to anyone. For some time the consensus has been that greater autonomy is the way to achieve higher standards. Unleashing the power for good schools to innovate was seen as the way forward. The spread of academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools are the consequence.

The next step (and probably a logical one) was the concept of the self-improving system; using the expertise of strong schools to work with others to help them raise standards. Chains of schools developed – based on the idea that many thriving companies took a successful operation and replicated it across multiple sites. If Tesco could do this, why not schools? This concept, and this model, is less favoured now. It took a while, but the powers that be have come to accept that schools are not retail outlets and that if a key component of the self-improving system is school-to-school support, then geographical distance inhibits that support and reduces the chance of success.

Today, the favoured model is that of the locally-based Multi-Academy Trust, large enough to find the economies of scale and small enough to be close to the community it serves. Thus we see a huge growth in MATS with successful schools being the sponsors of members of the MAT. However, as I wrote in my editorial in September “Too many (Multi-Academy Trusts) are just groups of schools without a clear, shared ethos and philosophy; without clarity of delegated powers and a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the MAT as against the individual schools.” It is good to see the School’s Minister recognizing this in his article (and quoting from my editorial). It is even better to see in their Conference Report that FASNA are taking a lead in addressing this. The article by Andrew Burns from Redhill Academy (a long-standing member of FASNA) gives a good insight into how a small MAT can be developed.

But now there is huge pressure to ensure that these structures deliver the high-class education required. Good and improving results are required, as are ‘Good’ and ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted judgements. When these are not apparent swift intervention

is promised. The issue for schools is that there is not always complete confidence in inspection judgements. Neither is there a shared belief in the performance measures being used. However, the biggest issue is the blunt nature of the accountability measures and the harsh consequences of failure. There is a perception in government that schools can be turned around instantly, and if that does not happen the leadership must go. This leads to Headteachers having the same sort of security as managers of football teams. The difference is that football managers have higher rewards and can move onto other clubs after their dismissal. Headteachers have lower rewards and, by and large, are finished if dismissed. This is ironic when we see

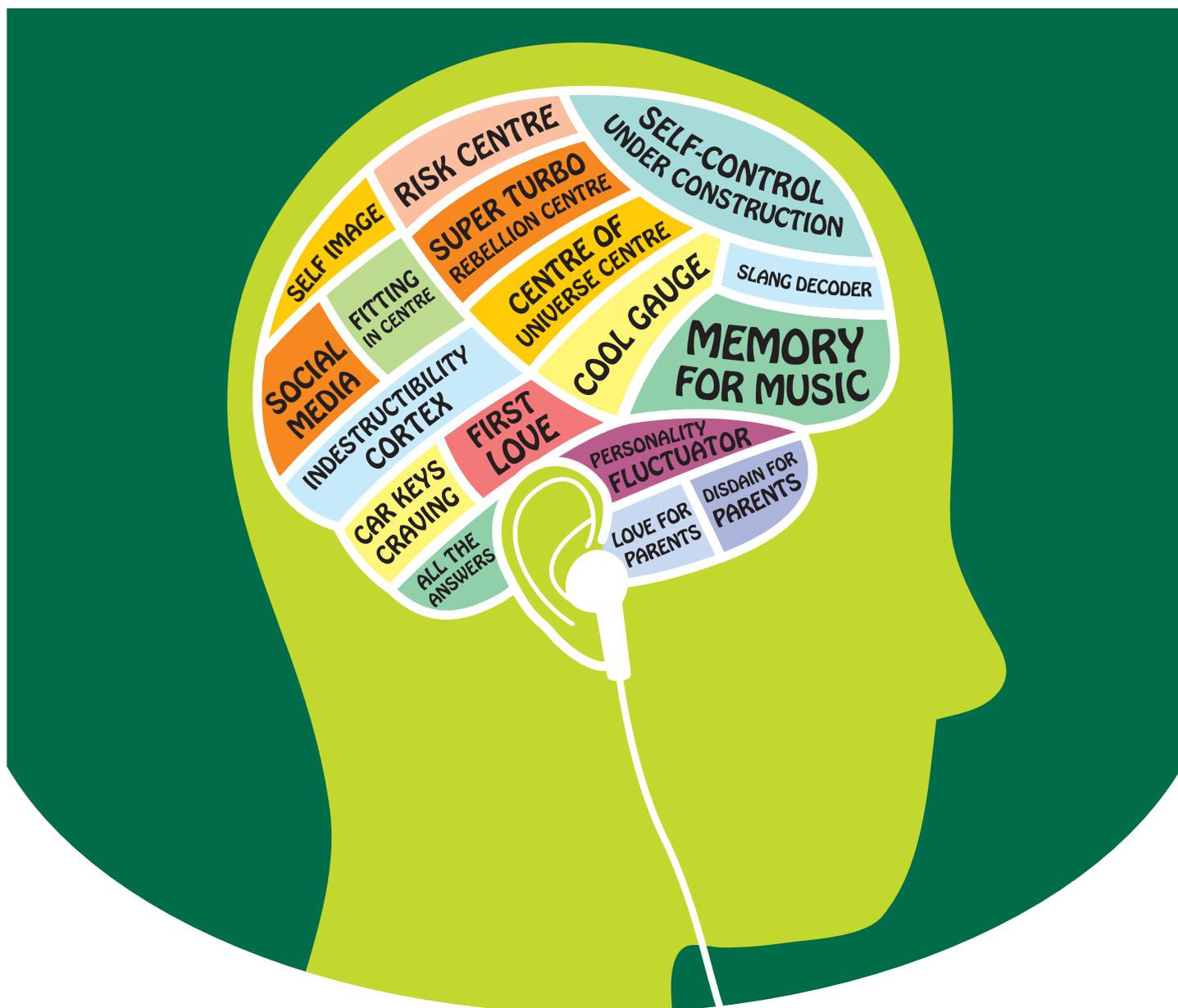
**Results in
 schools are better
 than ever; there
 are more good
 and outstanding
 schools than ever**

the chronic shortage of leaders in schools.

In his annual report Sir Michael Wilshaw bemoans the lack of leaders of the right calibre. Yet the pressures on Headteachers, and the insecurity of that post in the toughest schools, will obviously deter talented applicants. There must be a way found which allows Heads to step down but stay in the profession.

And now the ability to meet the accountability challenges is made even more difficult with a crisis in recruitment. Not only is there a lack of suitably qualified entrants to the profession, even worse, some of those who are suitably qualified are often not sufficiently talented.

In addition, school finances are being squeezed. Many school leaders have not faced the situation where they have to make cuts and they can easily fall into the trap of thinking it can’t be done. However, there are ways to analyse delivery and cut back on budgets. FASNA runs some good



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The International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC) is changing the way 11-14 year olds learn. It is a curriculum specifically designed around the needs of the maturing adolescent brain and, as such, provides challenging, engaging, connected and relevant learning. The IMYC inspires students during a time when many, overwhelmed by the transition from primary to secondary education on top of the changes in their bodies and brains, can become disengaged in their learning.

The adolescent brain is at a stage of specialising and pruning connections in a 'use it or lose it' fashion. It is crucial for students to make meaning of their learning to help strengthen new connections and to ensure that the existing knowledge and skills are not lost or pruned. We believe that rather than KS3 being 'the wasted years', these are years filled with fantastic potential and opportunity.

seminars on this and there are articles in this issue which will be of interest.

Nevertheless, the squeeze on school finances makes the job of leadership even more challenging. An ability to offer the rewards and incentives, to recruit and retain the best staff may not always be available. It will seem, in some places, that the tools to make the improvements being demanded are not available. No wonder then, that there are too few leaders wanting to take this on.

Advice on how to face some of these pressures is always welcome. For example, Excelsior Academy shows how deprivation need not be an obstacle to success. The articles on workload from Spire Academy and on Leadership Development by Colin McLean are welcome additions to our contents.

This may seem a rather gloomy picture, but we must not lose sight of how much our schools have improved. Results in schools are better than ever; there are more good and outstanding schools than ever (even with the bar being raised). Behaviour in schools is better than ever and there remains

parental confidence in their children's school.

Looking forward we await the news on how the Government will tackle the introduction of National Fair Funding. I believe that there will be a step taken in 2017 towards this, but it will probably be a limited first step. The key question will be "when will National Fair Funding be fully implemented". I know the fear of many will be that it will be deferred until the next Parliament and will remain in the "too difficult to do" drawer. Nevertheless, there is growing political will to see this implemented – making the funding of schools equitable and fair.

Other key issues will be how the teacher recruitment crisis will be managed and how the system will respond to Sir Michael Wilshaw's observation that pupils in the North and Midlands are more likely to be denied a good secondary education than pupils in the South.

Finally, I must inform readers that this will be my last edition as editor. Over the last eleven editions the magazine has established its reputation and I hope that my successor will build on this success.

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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New Government: strategic direction, emerging trends and challenges



Tom Clark, chair of FASNA, offers his view on the challenges facing the Conservative Government

Government expectations about the direction of travel were made clear in August when the Prime Minister spoke with determination about 'academisation for all' even though there are still some 16,000 schools which are not academies. Recently, the Schools Commissioner spoke of a plan for 'an outstanding Headteacher for every school' via a 'Multi-Academy Trust' with a 'central office' – so not much room for doubt there either.

The vision is of 'local' mixed phase academies in multi-academy trusts of some 10 to 15 schools with the hope that it will become easier for schools to move from one MAT to another. The days of any serious role for LAs in the business of 'school improvement' are numbered – intervention and school improvement will become the responsibility of the Regional School Commissioners.

With regards to a national funding formula – the Secretary of State appears resolute in addressing the intrinsic unfairness of the present arrangements

even though it is more difficult to deliver this change when financial resources are being squeezed. The Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed that the government intends to address the issue and the consultation document on school funding is due out early in the new year.

Nevertheless, there should be absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind: there will be no more money for education – and there may even be less than was anticipated.

Emerging challenges: cost pressures

Interesting recent data from the EFA shows that the best-funded schools do not always achieve the highest standards.

To deal with rising cost pressures we must take the opportunity to re-visit what we have always done to see if there are smarter ways of meeting the needs of students' needs. If we don't challenge our own orthodoxies then we'll get what we've always got, and today that means a deficit budget. We have been right to criticise

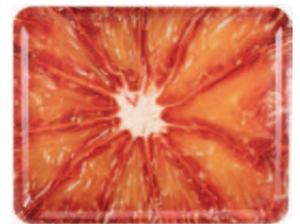
Local Authorities and government for a 'one year at a time' approach to budgets which starts with protecting what we did the last year – schools should consider taking a zero-budget approach.

At the time of LMS in 1988, school funding was predicated on preserving historic spending patterns and the years of the byzantine contortions of 152 LAs and then the schools forum to preserve these patterns must be challenged. In schools, management structures for teachers have been relatively unquestioned since the late 1990s and in secondary schools, structures can feel very top-heavy. The 'Curriculum-led funding' approach supported by FASNA and others, questions current, sometimes outdated practice, and points a way forwards

'Coasting' schools

The concept of 'coasting schools' is out to consultation and in a nutshell would be a view that some schools are not doing as well as they could do.

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A bigger challenge to schools may yet be for schools to determine how proactive they can be in shaping policy. Government usually welcomes answers to problems and the best remedies often come from schools themselves. If you take a 'solution' to government you can change the system and schools working with organisations like FASNA and its networks can do this

After the inevitable arguments around the definition of 'coasting schools', whatever emerges will be a significant challenge to schools which have previously been considered to be doing well or at least doing well-enough. We must resist the complications of the many armchair 'linguistic philosophers', with who knows what vested interests, who may want to add endless variables to the common sense definition of a coasting school based on 'progress 8' and 'floor-standards' data.

Recruitment

Schools in all parts of the country and in every phase and at every level, including and in particular at Headship level, are finding recruitment a problem. Government initiatives include promoting teaching as a career and the introduction of a National Teaching Service with the pledge that struggling schools in the countryside and coastal towns will be sent a "crack team" from 1500 super-teachers to drive improvement. They say that 'the best and brightest teachers will be offered two-year secondments in underperforming schools'.

FASNA is working with others to develop a different scheme to offer secondments in this country and internationally, particularly at school leadership level, which might also help retain teachers who might otherwise leave teaching.

Governance

The Government direction of travel is again clear – there should be fewer governors, and a movement away from the 'stakeholder' concept towards governors adding value to Trusts and governing bodies with well-developed professional skills. But, oh the confusion! Part of this confusion is generic. In maintained schools where, for example, there have been LA governors or parent governors the concept is that they should be first and foremost governors but with the experience and perspective of parents or the LA, not representatives of the LA or parents. Similarly where MATS have delegated Local Governing Bodies, some LGB chairs (but not all) may be trustees but not as representatives of the LGB. Bankers, accountants, HR specialists who may be on governing bodies do

not represent their banks or firms they are governors who can add a particular professional perspective.

And finally – whither the strategic direction?

A bigger challenge to schools may yet be for schools to determine how proactive they can be in shaping policy. Government usually welcomes answers to problems and the best remedies often come from schools themselves. If you take a 'solution' to government you can change the system and schools working with organisations like FASNA and its networks can do this. The risk to schools if they don't engage is that 'it' will be done to them (and the 'it' may not be the 'it' they want). We need to be confident that schools are using the freedoms available to them through academy status – for example in regards to pay and conditions or creating smarter management structures, and that they are providing strong governance as an integral part of outstanding sector-led leadership. It's a big ask.

Developing effective practices and high educational standards

Nick Gibb, Minister of State for Schools



The great Victorian constitutionalist Walter Bagehot once wrote that ‘policies must ‘grow’; they cannot be suddenly made’. Our academies policy has undoubtedly ‘grown’ out of the activities and intellectual drive of organisations such as FASNA.

Since its formation, FASNA’s story has mapped perfectly onto the wider story of increasing school autonomy in this country. Standing as we are in the process of mass-academisation, however, it is important not to lose sight of the reasons why we value autonomy in the first place. Granting schools more independence is not an inherent good. Such structural changes are only beneficial in so far as they drive up standards.

The fundamental premise for school autonomy has always been that the current mode of education, the orthodoxy that governs how schools are run and how lessons are taught – was not good enough. For decades, too many English schools had been tarrying in mediocrity. The only way to transform education in this country was innovation through autonomy.

And the academy movement has already given us some transformational stories. King Solomon Academy was founded as a ‘new academy’ in 2009. What this school has achieved in six years is nothing short of extraordinary. It sits in one of the most disadvantaged boroughs of London for child poverty, and 41% of its pupils are eligible for free school meals - almost 3 times the national average. Yet, according to provisional 2015 GCSE results, it is the best non-selective state school in the country. At King Solomon Academy, 93% of pupils gained five good GCSEs, and 75% of pupils passed the EBacc.

How King Solomon Academy achieved such results is not surprising - its founders explicitly modelled their school on the ‘no excuses’ approach of American charter schools, and the lessons of the inspiring American teacher Doug Lemov. I encourage anyone working

in education to visit King Solomon Academy. Walking around the school, you will see teachers who are deeply committed to the success and well-being of their pupils, but you will also see desks that are in rows, a behaviour policy which is clearly enforced, and adults who are unequivocally in charge.

There is a growing international evidence base that such a ‘no excuses’ approach is key to transforming the life chances of young children.

A fascinating article by three economists from MIT and the University of California appeared in the American Economic Journal two years ago. They surveyed 33 different Massachusetts Charter Schools about areas such as school philosophy, curriculum, policies and classroom practices. The results of the survey were then compared against ten years of historic data for the schools, to see which approaches were succeeding. Their conclusion was clear:

‘We show that urban and lottery-sample charter effectiveness can be explained by adherence to a No Excuses approach to urban education that emphasizes discipline and comportment, traditional reading and math skills, instruction time, and selective teacher hiring.’

They continued, ‘Conditional on No Excuses status, traditional inputs such

as time in school and per-pupil expenditure are not predictive of charter effectiveness.’

In terms of individual school practices, the practices with the strongest correlation with high achievement in mathematics were ‘math drills’ and ‘extended math instruction’. That with the weakest correlation was ‘group projects’.

Like the no excuses charter schools in the US, the highest performing academy chains in this country have a clear vision and a distinct model of teaching. I would encourage all new academy chains not to see themselves only in terms of being effective administrators, or competent managers. They should also be bound by a philosophical and pedagogical vision. As Peter Beaven wrote in his most recent editorial for this magazine, ‘too many [academy chains] are just groups of schools without a clear, shared ethos and philosophy.’

In previous decades, those who were critics of the prevailing trends of English education had to remain exactly that – critics. If you had a strong alternative vision for what English state schools should look like, there was no outlet for taking this vision from words on a page, to the bricks and mortar of a school. Today, with free schools and academies, the situation is entirely different. We now have an education sector that contains within it the source of its own improvement.

It is my great hope that over the next ten years, this country’s schools will transform from a sector defined by stagnation in terms of both outcomes and ideas, to one flourishing with effective practices and high educational standards. Only then will we have a school system where all children are given the chance to succeed irrespective of birth or background.



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Well planned journey... or runaway train?

Andrew Burns, CEO, Redhill Academy Trust, offers a personal view on how a smaller, developing MAT is meeting the current challenges of participating in the self-improving system

In October 2013, I received three phone calls enquiring about schools joining our MAT. The first call was from a Local Authority who had had concerns for a number of years about the performance of one of its special schools. The school had just been placed in special measures. They wanted to know whether we were interested in taking over the leadership of it. The second call was from the Chair of Governors of a local secondary school who were experiencing pressure from the DfE to find a sponsor, again due to a negative Ofsted outcome. The third call was from a representative of the DfE who was working with a primary school that was a feeder for one of our secondary academies. She asked would I be happy to meet with her Chair of Governors about possible sponsorship.

At this time, it became very plain to me that the Trust didn't have clear criteria about which projects to take on and which projects to reject. I knew that some of my colleagues as CEOs of quite rapidly growing MATs seemed to be taking on all-comers to quickly grow their organisations. Whilst this worked out for some I could see that others were quickly struggling to deploy leadership capacity to their schools in their rapidly growing MATs. I didn't want the Redhill Academy Trust to become this kind of 'runaway train', so I decided that we needed to find a way to properly plan the journey we wished to take.

Of course, at this time we were very clear that the core purpose of Redhill and our other academies was about raising student achievement and we had clear methods of achieving this. We also had experience of carrying out due diligence exercises on any school that came into scope. However, we hadn't yet developed an overall vision for how we wanted the Trust to develop. What did we want it to look like in five years' time? How many academies? Which type of academies? Local or spread over a wider area? I felt that these questions needed to be answered so that a secure plan for the development and growth of the Trust

could be made. The Trust badly needed to have a clear vision with clear ambitions that was shared and understood by the Executive Board, myself as CEO, leaders and staff throughout the Trust.

As we wanted to make this a shared vision, we organised two strategic workshops involving our Directors, Chairs of Governors, Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers. In this group we had a mix of business expertise, extensive educational experience and parental representation. Our Trust seems now to be quite unusual in that we think it important to involve parents at a strategic level, thereby ensuring an element of local accountability. After I laid out the national and political context, we discussed the key questions that would determine our future direction. I was tasked with going away and putting together a "blueprint" for our development. This was shared at a subsequent strategic meeting where a clear five year vision was formulated. The result was a plan for a smaller, slower growing local Trust with an initial aim of six to eight schools within three years. Great emphasis was put on the need to build the right capacity within the organisation before taking on new challenges.

As CEO I now had the equivalent of a route map which laid out the guidance on which type of schools to look to bring into the organisation. In other words, the Trust had decided the possible destinations for the organisation but it still gave me the responsibility to advise the Board where we should go and when.

The next part of our evolution as a Trust was to be clearer with potential sponsored schools of what the Trust's expectations were, particularly on how the school should be led and managed – our "non-negotiables". We had found that schools that were "shopping around" for a suitable sponsor started producing long lists of questions about governance, leadership, delegated powers and particular obsessions, such as uniform and the



holiday pattern. Interestingly, they were less inclined to ask about teaching, learning or achievement! Together with our Headteacher group and the Executive Board, we produced two documents to sit below the Terms of Reference that were already in place to inform leadership and governance across the Trust. We call these our Leadership Guiding Principles and the Trust Academy Mandatory Strategies (TAMS).

Our Leadership Guiding Principles outline our expectations of how our academies should be led and managed, the key elements of these are; simplicity, positivity, intelligent accountability, communication, teamwork and trust.

Each element gives guidance on the leadership culture we expect to be in place within all our schools. They are particularly relevant as a guide for senior and middle managers,

Our Trust Academy Mandatory Strategies (TAMS) outline the systems and procedures we expect to be implemented within each academy. They provide more detail of what a Redhill Trust academy “looks and feels like” so that prospective partners who are considering joining us have a clear picture of what will be expected and the support that they will receive. Over the last few years, we have had an on-going internal debate about getting the

balance right between a prescriptive or a consultative approach to academies joining our Trust. Our position on this has evolved more towards the prescriptive end of the spectrum than as it was at the start, as we have found this leads to a greater pace of improvement when schools are in difficulties. We are currently looking at how this approach would be altered if and when good or outstanding schools come into the Trust as strong partners.

With a clear route map, clear lines of delegation and leadership guidance in place, I felt that the Trust was more secure in understanding what it was about and what it actually wanted to achieve. I felt it was my job to make sure effective leadership structures were in place to deliver this vision.

Our Executive Leadership Group (ELG) meets every Friday morning and consists of myself, the four academy Headteachers, the Finance Officer and Project Officer. This group is the key driver for the educational development and improvement of the Trust. The regularity and structure of the meetings facilitate real, ongoing dialogue, whilst also offering opportunities to share the load of leadership. The honest sharing of data, difficulties and dilemmas has developed a teamwork ethos across the Trust academy leaders – with a small dose of healthy competitiveness!

We have already developed internal leadership programmes to encourage and train our own future educational leaders, and continue to provide opportunities for young, talented leaders to challenge and develop themselves



Growing a small MAT – five lessons we have learned that might help others

1. Get agreement on a clear vision and ‘route map’ from the Board
2. Establish the ‘non-negotiables’ early - for all academies in the Trust and those wishing to join
3. Plan ahead for growth by developing staffing ‘shadow structures’ for the different sizes of MAT you anticipate on your journey
4. Appoint the key staff needed to facilitate this growth as soon as you can (or you dare!)
5. Relentlessly build an ethos of teamwork across the leaders in the Trust, centred around your core purpose. You will need this when the going gets tough.



The group also helps me to maintain my own professional motivation and sanity by giving me a senior team of exceptional practitioners to lead and be challenged by. It also, crucially, brings our current Headteachers into the loop of how the Trust works, which will prove vital for future succession planning.

To bring cohesiveness to our provision in each academy across the Trust, we now mirror the responsibilities of senior leaders in each academy. These colleagues then meet half termly focusing on data and achievement, curriculum, teaching and learning and student support. Their agendas are a blend of development, implementation, monitoring and sharing best practice. Our plans now include the appointment of Directors with specific roles across all academies in the MAT. We have appointed a Director of Maths and a Director of Post 16, with English and Science to follow next year. As well as helping to implement consistent practice, these roles really add to the team culture of the Trust by bringing colleagues together from each academy in a common goal.

As mentioned earlier; our Board quite rightly is always concerned that the expansion of the MAT must be built on the foundations of a continual growth of leadership capacity. I consider that there are three key questions we need to be able to answer to secure the future leadership we will need. What will we need? When will we need it? How will we secure it?

I have come to realise that the first question of what we will need has too often been neglected by some of the pioneers of MATs - the drivers of those runaway trains. To make sure we do have a planned journey, we now have drawn up ‘shadow’ leadership and support structures for 6 - 8, 9 - 12 and 12 - 15 academy groups. Within these structures are some scarily expensive posts, for example additional executive heads and senior operations managers. This is where the management

of financial risk will come in. This is the ‘when?’ question. When should we spend the £100k or £200k needed to produce a structure that allows growth? What now seems obvious to me is that with the CEOs of growing Trusts nearly all being executive Headteachers, we lack the real expertise (never mind the time!) to fulfil the wide range of responsibilities needed in even a medium size MAT. And then, of course where will these leaders come from? Whilst we need to nurture our best already within the Trust, we will also need to recruit expertise from outside. We have already developed internal leadership programmes to encourage and train our own future educational leaders, and continue to provide opportunities for young, talented leaders to challenge and develop themselves. I feel we will also need to engage sources of good advice from the business world to help us recruit the right people into key the support roles as we grow.

In conclusion, we, like other currently growing MATs, find ourselves in the forefront of a revolution of how education is to be delivered in this country for years to come. We have the privilege of being pioneers of this new age, with all the opportunities for creativity, innovation and leadership that comes with it. However, alongside that I believe comes a responsibility to ensure that our legacy provides an educational system that delivers excellence to all students, whatever their location, background or wealth. This, I believe, will bring the next real challenge to MATs – true and honest collaboration.

Andrew Burns is Executive Principal (CEO) of the Redhill Academy Trust, based in Nottingham. He is a Headteacher Board member for the Regional Schools Commissioner (East Midlands and Humber)

The right fit

Hari Sivanesan, Business Development Manager, PS Financials, explains how the finances can work in different MAT Structures



With Multi-Academy Trusts in the UK currently ranging from 2 to 70+ in size, MATs work by many different finance process structures in line with their situation, needs and future objectives. The aim of this article is to highlight some common structures that exist within a modern day MAT finance operation.

It is predicted that funding cuts will be set around 8% during the term of our current government. This has forced MATs to reconsider their processes and

explore ways to improve efficiencies and savings. However, many CFO's are not asking themselves "should we revisit our finance structures and processes?" but rather "how quickly can we revise these?"

As much as applying changes to your finance procedures / structures can be a painful process, if implemented well, the efficiencies gained far outweigh the inflicted pain!

There are three models of finance structures commonly used by MATs:

- Cluster Structure

- Hub Structure
- Federation Structure

Cluster structure

This is seen in the large majority of MATs. With quick growth in the sector, you could argue that the cluster structure has been the popular model partly due to its easy implementation. Some Senior Leadership Teams may carry some resentment towards joining a MAT, this model is popular amongst Senior Leadership Teams as they 'feel' like they

have greater control of their finances whilst retaining some control in their school.

This model sees the individual schools within a MAT take as much financial responsibility as possible. All schools have separate bank accounts and perform payments, receipts, bank reconciliations, payroll and all the finance processing. This minimises the resources required at trust level to handle VAT returns and year end related process, such as statutory returns and Audit.

Adopting the cluster structure would require all finance staff across schools to learn and adapt to the duties which surround Academisation – even if the school has no experience in doing so. Month-end processes within set timetables and performing bank reconciliations are processes which have to be repeated by all schools under the cluster structure.

Federation structure

This is the reverse extreme of the cluster structure and is what many would deem as a central finance function across the MAT. In theory, when implemented correctly, savings should be achieved due to efficiency. The burden of the major financial processes is lifted from the individual schools and brought to a central team – freeing up time which can be better utilised elsewhere. Although having the central finance staff in one location may be handy, it is arguable that it is not a necessity; hence the term central finance function and not central finance office. With the correct software and processes in place, finance staff have the flexibility to work from different locations whilst retaining a centralised structure. Having a centralised finance team allows for benchmarking and central procurement to be handled with ease; meaning time and money savings for the Trust.

The model requires finance officers at individual schools to deal with the purchase ordering and goods receipting; plus deal with petty cash and charge cards. Some staff unfortunately view this

as a demotion whilst others see it as an opportunity to deal with other functions of an academy bursar and concentrate on income generation *etc.* This leaves the rest of the processes to be dealt by the central finance team; which includes VAT returns, year-end related processes (statutory returns and Audit), month end reconciliations, payment runs, payroll and bank reconciliations.

The main factors that prevent this model from being more popular is that it brings about more change compared to the cluster structure. There can be cases where implementation doesn't go to plan, although amending any issues are generally easy to do, there can be a drawback where staff lose faith in the concept and it takes time for the buy in to be bought back.

This model naturally warrants the MAT to adopt a single bank account (with associated bank accounts for individual schools if they so wish) and a single purchase ledger (It's a crazy statement to say in 2015, but do check that suppliers can cope with multiple delivery addresses!). Heads just need the reassurance that although 'their' money is sitting in a combined account; it doesn't mean that every penny hasn't been accounted for. Once this conversation has taken place, it's predominantly an easy buy in and starts a snow ball of efficiencies from single payment runs to easier bank reconciliations, easy procurement analysis and therefore economies of scale savings.

Hub structure

This model is midway between the two previously outlined. This structure adds a layer between the staff at schools and the Trust- this layer could be a team or a roaming business manager. However big or small, the benefits include localised support for the schools; hopefully strengthening relationships with hands on training and up-skilling of school staff. This reduces the day-to-day transactional involvement of the main Trust staff but still gives rise to an element of efficiency

and saving through localised (hub centred) bulk procurement.

Staff at the schools perform similar functions to that in a federation structure (PO's, GRNs, petty cash *etc.*). The MAT staff perform functions similar to the cluster structure (year end reporting, audit and VAT returns), leaving the hub staff to carry out month end reconciliations, payment runs and bank reconciliations.

It should be stressed that hub staff are required to adhere to identical procedures to ensure consistency throughout the organisation.

The model for you?

Finding the model best suited to your MAT is not as simple as you may think, there are several considerations to take into account to ensure you make a correct decision. Firstly, you should conduct a thorough skillset analysis across the MAT – understanding the resources within the finance team as a whole will be critical to your decision.

Furthermore, there are three areas to consider when choosing which model to adopt:

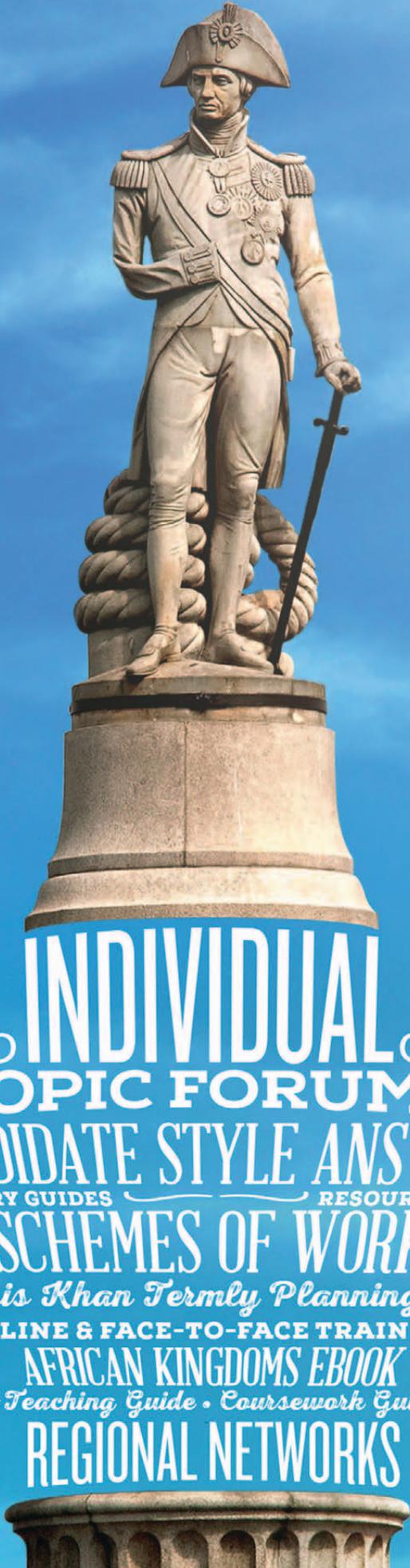
1. Buy-In - from all parties, from Heads to the individual staff members to suppliers and software. Things will change and half the battle is the acceptance of the change.
2. Training – the varied skillsets within the group may need hand holding to ensure that each cog in the machine is doing what is necessary and with ease.
3. Planning – Plan, plan and plan again. Put yourself in every persons shoes and ensure that the tiniest details has been covered and processes and procedures put in place, in writing and communicated well in advance.

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Two heads are better than one

Academy Ambassadors brings together senior business leaders and professionals with leading educationalists with the aim of strengthening corporate governance

They say that two heads are better than one and three are better than two.

The educationalists leading England's growing number of academy schools would certainly agree. Today, many more are joining together to form Multi-academy Trusts: sharing resources, staff and – most importantly - ideas.

Since the introduction of the Academies Act in 2010, we have seen a rapid growth in the number of academies across England, rising from just 200 in 2010 to over 5000 as of October 2015. And that number continues to grow.

Today, academies are a fundamental feature of our education system, amounting to 65% of all secondary schools and 17% of primary schools.

With this continuing growth, more and more academies are choosing to join Multi-Academy Trusts. In August 2012 almost three quarters of academies and free schools were working alone, but this has been reversed over the past three years, with two thirds of all academies now in a trust with other schools.

MATs are also growing in size; statistics show that a fifth of academy trusts now incorporate six or more schools, with some now managing annual budgets over £100 million. This is a dramatic transformation from 2012 when trusts would typically comprise two schools working in partnership.

The transformation in the academies landscape has, in turn, provoked a transformation in the role of the Head teacher, as many have shifted from being the head of a single school to a MAT CEO. Each academy taken on by a trust rapidly increases the trust's budget, staffing level, geographical spread and, of course, student numbers. Head teachers become accountable for student and staff well-being, performance and finances

across multiple sites and often in varying contexts. In many ways, it has never been such a challenging or interesting time to lead a successful academy.

To support academy trusts to adapt and develop sustainably, business professionals are joining the boards of academy trusts.

Academy Ambassadors, set up in 2013 by Lord Nash, Parliamentary undersecretary of state for schools, brings together senior business leaders and





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professionals with leading educationalists with the aim of strengthening corporate governance. These business leaders volunteer half a day per month to serve as non-executive directors or trustees, helping to ‘close the gap’ for students of all backgrounds. Skills built up over a successful career can be used to support MAT CEOs in areas such as legal and financial oversight, growth management and HR.

Last year Nikki King, honorary Chair and former Managing Director of Isuzu Trucks UK became Chair of Greenacre Academy Trust in Kent. Since joining, Nikki has developed a ‘Skills for Life’ programme, with the aim of preparing Greenacre’s school leavers for the workplace. Chief Executive of the Trust, Andy Reese, said:

“It’s obvious that there is a lot the business world can bring to education and as a result of that we’ve now got central services of HR, finance, and data. If we do take 3 or 4 schools into our trust, we’ve got the central services they’ll need which a year ago we didn’t have, and I think I would have struggled to put that together without Nikki’s involvement.”

Aside from sharing practical expertise, adding non-educationalists to a board brings something new. Business leaders can

offer a fresh pair of eyes, fresh ideas and fresh challenge. An extra layer of scrutiny is an extra push for the strongest outcomes possible: a drive towards outcomes in a professional setting translates into a drive to raise pupil attainment – the core of an academy’s work.

Amongst the non-executives placed by Academy Ambassadors is Ian Hancocks. In his professional life, Ian is Senior Leadership Manager at Kaplan Accountants and in October 2014 he joined the board of LEAD Academy Trust. Commenting on his role, Ian said:

“The trust have had someone observe and contribute to board discussions, often asking those basic questions which help them to pause and reflect. I am able to offer a degree of challenge with a fresh pair of eyes - luckily naivety is good in this situation!... The fact that [this work] indirectly helps LEAD help children to achieve their potential is a very warming position to be in.”

Finally, first-hand experience of employing school leavers enables non-executives from business to bring fresh insight. Not only can they act to raise aspirations, but they might also work to impart professional skills and enhance the employability of our young adults.

At the heart of the work is a drive to

support children and young people to reach their potential. Senior professionals who have had the opportunity and drive to succeed in their field are well placed to share their experience. As MATs continue to grow in size, many more academies and their students will benefit from collaboration: sharing excellence, resources, staff and ideas.

Kirsty Watt, Head of Academy Ambassadors

Academy Ambassadors has just appointed its 100th Non-Executive Director and is now working towards its next milestone. If you think your trust could benefit from bringing a business professional onto the board then please visit academyambassadors.org or contact academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org



Schools within a school

The story of Excelsior Academy

Excelsior was the first academy in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. It was one of the original sponsored academies and opened in new purpose built accommodation in September 2008 replacing a school that was deemed to be a failing. For years attendance had been below 85%, only 12% – 14% of pupils achieved 5+ A* - C with English and Mathematics and around 15% of pupils left at 16 with no qualifications.

The community Excelsior serves is predominately the multi cultural multi racial inner west end of the city, characterised by exceptionally high levels of poverty and deprivation resulting from generations of low employment and high levels of community turbulence. Poor general health, poor mental health, poor parenting and low aspirations are some of the many challenges that a high proportion of our community present.

The academic standards and deprivation profile on entry of Excelsior's cohorts have declined year on year since opening.

Excelsior has the lowest Average Points Score (APS) on entry and the most deprived, complex and challenging cohort of the 149 secondary school or academies from 12 Local Authorities in the whole of the North East region. However the performance of pupils in terms of progress and attainment at GCSE is in the top 20% of all secondary school/ academies in the region for most indicators when comparing pupils with similar starting points. (Source DFE performance tables 2014). It is not yet possible to make the same comparison for GCSE 2015 but Excelsior's GCSE results improved again for every attainment and progress indicator.

	2008 Predecessor School	2009 First year of Excelsior	2014	2015
C+ En	18%	22%	48%	53%
C+ Ma	21%	17%	65%	65%
5+ *- C EM	14%	12%	41%	45%
3 + LP En	25%	26%	64%	75%
3 + LP Ma	9%	15%	65%	68%

Results have improved year on year despite the APS and their deprivation profile on entry declining.

Excelsior Academy operates a Schools within a School Model which has been key to our success. While there are a number of interpretations and models of Schools within a School, at the time of opening our structure was unique nationally.

Originally an 11 – 18 provision, Excelsior became all through in September 2013. The original four 11 – 16 schools became three in order to accommodate a one form entry Primary phase. Reception and Y1 children joined in September 2013 and we are growing with a new Reception intake each year.

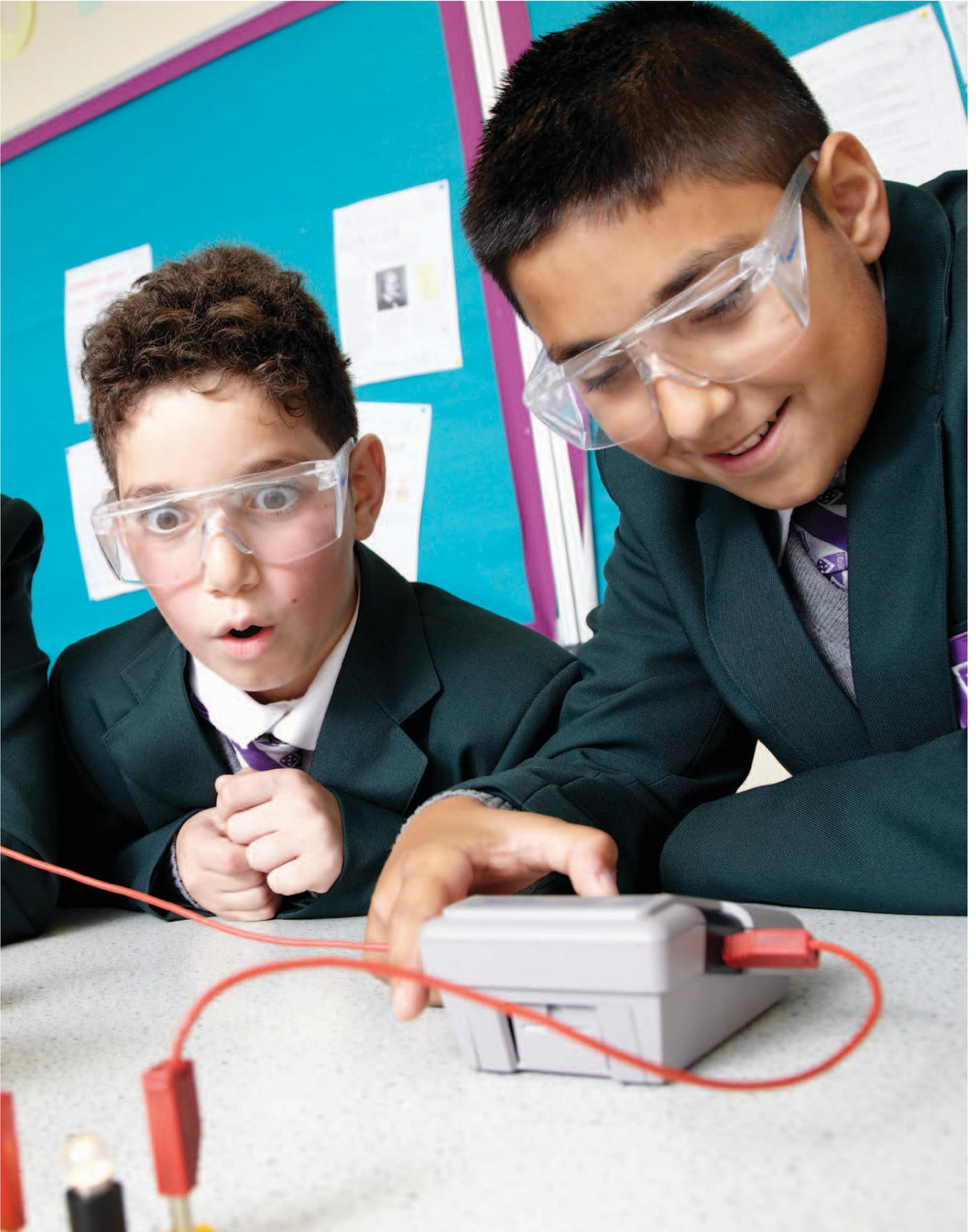
Excelsior Academy now comprises a primary school, three autonomous 11- 16 mixed ability and mixed gender secondary schools and Excelsior College sixth form. It is however one academy with one DFE number. Within the overall academy buildings and site each school has its own accommodation but all are linked.

Within the framework and parameters of the academy's vision, ethos, policies, systems and processes each school has a high degree of autonomy. Each of the five small Excelsior schools has its own School Principal, senior management team, staff, pupils and accommodation. The Principal is employed as a Headteacher with a Headteacher Contract. S/he is responsible for the development and operation of her/ his school with a unique school ethos. Pupils and staff are allocated to a school where most work almost exclusively.

Excelsior College has a dedicated management team and a small number of dedicated staff. Teachers from the three 11 – 16 schools teach in Excelsior College and increasingly work with the primary school

Regardless of their secondary school, all pupils in the three secondary schools have the same opportunities. Pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 in all academy schools study the same subjects. At Key stage 4 all option subjects are offered to all pupils regardless of their school and now some teaching groups in some subjects that have pupils from more than one school. Systems are in place to ensure consistency across the Academy in terms of pupil progress, quality teaching and schemes of work.

Every effort is made to try to ensure that the 11- 16 schools are equally balanced in terms of gender, ethnicity and academic





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STOP THE RAMPAGE OF TYPHON TO SAVE OLYMPUS - HIMSELF?

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB COLE
THE US ROWLING

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AND THE LIGHTNING THIEF



ability/ potential, however this is difficult due to the high level of pupil turbulence throughout each year.

Excelsior serves the area of the city that houses the majority of International New Arrival (INA) families. Around 48% of Excelsior pupils are from a BME community, and in recent years the increase in in the Czech Roma population means that they now represent around 20% of our cohort. The majority have limited or no prior education but are now included in the performance data for 5+ A* - C with English and mathematics at GCSE after being in the education system for two academic years.

During recent years in excess of 200 applications have been made each year for in year transfers or new admissions to Excelsior. During the first four weeks of the autumn term 2015 more than 120 applications had been received.

Excelsior was designed and continues to develop so that it can meet the complex needs of our community to help ensure that our children can achieve their academic and personal potential. The small secondary schools of up to 375 pupils (no more than 80 to a year group) and the correct balance of academic and pupil welfare expertise ensure that all pupils are well known to all staff within their school and that effective support enables them to learn.

Welfare support is integral to the learning and progress plans for every child and their social welfare and emotional needs are considered as an integral part of every academic progress review. Attendance has improved dramatically and for the last few years has been around national average. This is mainly because staff are employed to go to pupils' homes

(when necessary) every day to bring them in. Pupils' behaviour is good, described by one inspector as exemplary and social cohesion described as outstanding. Excelsior has a very low rate of fixed term exclusions, since opening no child has been permanently excluded.

In a typical secondary school teacher teams are formed around the predominant common interest of their academic subject and are grouped in departments or faculties. At Excelsior staff teams are formed around the common interest of the children. Within our secondary schools teachers of different subjects are neighbours and have easy daily access to teachers from all subjects as well as their own in order to collaborate in planning and sharing practice. This has resulted in high quality learning and sharing amongst teachers of all subjects both within their own school as well as across the academy.

The development of a primary school as our 5th Excelsior school means that teachers of all phases learn from each other and develop whole academy teaching and learning policies appropriate for pupils of all ages 3 – 18. This has served to improve curriculum progression between Years 5 and 8.

To conclude, our Schools within a School model and structure has been highly effective in creating a positive, welcoming and successful learning environment for pupils of all ages. Academic attainment and progress have improved dramatically, as has attendance. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

**Phil Marshall, Executive Principal,
Excelsior Academy**

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‘Do – or be done to...’

Caroline Whitty reports from the FASNA Autumn Conference, where delegates were urged to take control of their own destiny

I was delighted to be one of around 250 delegates at The Grand Connaught Rooms in central London on November 12th who participated in the FASNA Autumn Conference. A packed programme addressed some of the key challenges facing all school leaders.

FASNA Chair **Tom Clark** opened the event by considering the landscape under the new government and what this parliamentary term is likely to mean for schools. He highlighted the move towards ‘academisation for all’ and the need for many small schools to collaborate to remain viable. He referenced the tougher accountability frameworks and the need for more skilled and professional trustees and governors. He also talked about the importance of collaboration and the development of MATs and the many potential benefits of this to schools.

Tom introduced the programme designed to encourage debate about these challenges and how they might be tackled. His final message was to urge school leaders to have the confidence to take control of their own destiny and to take action rather than risking having things done to them.

Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for Schools, opened the first keynote address by recapping on the history of



school autonomy and stressing that policy is now guided by the idea that school autonomy should be an opportunity for all rather than being for a select group of schools. He acknowledged that FASNA has been campaigning for autonomy for the last 24 years. He emphasised that the direction of academies policy is towards firm collaboration through MATs, based on the premise that permanent and structured arrangements gives collaboration a solidity that informal, voluntary or temporary forms of collaboration cannot achieve.

He acknowledged that autonomy does present some challenges such as making school governance even more critical and stated that government reforms are therefore also targeting the professionalisation of governance. The Minister confirmed a commitment to making funding fairer but also stressed that MAT structures can provide considerable economies of scale allowing more to be spent on those people who really make the difference: teachers.

The Minister referenced the journey from structural reform to improved



teaching methods seen in the Charter Schools in America. He highlighted research findings that Charter School takeovers by schools with a 'no excuses' approach to urban education, showed substantial achievement gains for some highly disadvantaged students. He went on to say that here, although the level of academic research is not at the same stage, a similar pattern can be observed.

The Minister concluded by stating his hope that over the next ten years, we will see this country's education system transform into one flourishing with effective practices and high educational standards where all children are given the chance to succeed irrespective of birth or background.

Delegates questioned the minister and challenged him on issues of particular concern. The ensuing dialogue touched on the potential for redistribution of the 50% of the Education Budget that doesn't go to schools, the likely timescale around a move towards fairer funding and the implications of both the 90% EBAC target and the teacher recruitment crisis.

Toby Young, journalist and founder of West London Free School, then entertained delegates with a passionate account of his challenging two year journey setting up this free school. Prompted by his own mixed experience of the education system, he wanted his children to have a traditional, classical

education reflecting the very best of his own experience.

He explained that with local good schools being oversubscribed, he and his wife were faced with the choice of considering private education, moving house to access a suitable school or indeed considering the challenge of developing a new school. They ultimately took the brave decision to establish the school they wanted themselves. From the first public meeting and throughout the process, Toby described the 'tsunami' of opposition that they had to overcome. Despite this they were successful in being the first free school to sign with Michael Gove in 2011.

Describing the school as 'Hogwarts meets Grange Hill', Toby explained that it is now one of the top ten most oversubscribed schools in the country and was judged as a Good school by Ofsted in 2013. In closing, he described his experience as hugely frustrating and difficult and yet one of the most rewarding of his life.

The keynote contribution was delivered by **Peter Lauener, Chief Executive of the Education Funding Agency**, focussing on the fundamental question currently at the forefront of many school leaders' minds: 'Are we prepared for the financial challenges of the next five years?'

Despite the government's pledge to

maintain funding levels, Peter acknowledged the considerable financial challenges that schools are facing due to rising costs. He stated that Headteachers will have new challenges to meet over and above that of raising standards and that new thinking and behavioural change will be key to successfully managing these issues.

Peter acknowledged the huge historic disparity in school funding across the country and reiterated the intention to seek to distribute this more fairly. Delegates heard that more information regarding the move would be forthcoming in the New Year following the conclusion of the Spending Review.

In closing, Peter highlighted some of the characteristics of efficiently run schools such as: deploying the workforce effectively, achieving the right mix of teaching and support staff, using financial benchmarking information to inform spending decisions, using clusters to achieve economies of scale and ensuring strong leadership and governance to challenge spending.

Questions for Peter from the floor generated discussion on advice for schools facing deficit budgets and what lessons in efficiency savings can be learned from other sectors.

FASNA member business

Before the conference broke for lunch delegates were reminded about some of the most recent additions to the range of practical support available to FASNA members including open and bespoke workshops on curriculum-led financial planning and developing a MAT and bespoke external reviews of governance. Advanced notice of the spring and summer FASNA Conferences was also given, with the spring event taking place on March 10th and the summer event on June 21st. Finally members' attention was drawn to a number of DfE consultations and the importance of responding and taking the opportunity to help shape the way forward.

After lunch, **Schools Commissioner Frank Green CBE** addressed the conference. He outlined his key priorities of



efficiencies achieved in procurement whilst still delivering an effective curriculum.

Multi Academy Trusts

Run by **Carl Ward, Chief Executive of the City Learning Trust**, this workshop explored the MAT model with examples of structures and operational considerations.

Restructures

Run by **Browne Jacobson Solicitors**, this workshop explored how to efficiently manage the process of restructuring with minimum impact on morale.

MAT CEO forum

Facilitated by **Mark Woods, Executive Principle of Cambridge Meridian Trust**, this session examined the key issues facing MATs.

Finally delegates heard a useful legal update provided by Stone King Solicitors which included updates on whistleblowing, safeguarding, the Prevent Duty and the living wage

The feedback received from delegates on their departure confirmed that the various elements of the programme had combined with the experience around the room to generate exactly the level of professional debate that our self-improving system needs at this challenging point in time.

Details on future FASNA Conferences can be found via fasna.org.uk

promoting and developing the academies and free school programme. He explained the Department's vision 'to provide world class education and care that allows every child and young person to reach his or her potential, regardless of background'.

He updated delegates on progress stating that 65% of secondary schools and 18% of primary schools are now academies with academies now making up 23% of all schools and employing 40% of all education staff and educating 37% of children. He talked about the key benefits of the MAT Model including excellent leadership being spread across all schools and went on to outline the characteristics of successful MATs. Frank then summarised the aims of the Education and Adoption Bill and in particular how 'coasting schools' would be dealt with.

In conclusion Frank reiterated that the Academies programme remains one of the Government's priorities, allowing intervention with failing schools by replacing poor governance under the guidance of an expert sponsor, while protecting the freedoms of high performing schools.

He stressed the importance of the regional self-managing system which gives outstanding leaders freedoms to innovate and moves decision making and accountability to local experts. Finally Frank expressed his firm belief that a school system built on MATs and

overseen by the RSCs is the one most likely to achieve educational excellence for our children and young people.

There was a lively debate between Frank and the audience on topics including how the OSC is held to account, whether or not the RSC's will be involved in 'forced marriages' in the continued push towards MATs, who is taking a strategic overview of MATs and tips for MAT's developing their schemes of delegation.

The programme for the day concluded with delegates having a choice of four practical workshops:

Curriculum-led financial planning

Run by **Paul Sorby, Outwood Grange Academies Trust**, this workshop took a detailed look at a model which helps to evaluate how staff costs may be reduced and



Lightening the load



By Amanda Godfrey, Executive Head at Spiral Partnership Trust

The constant demands and administrative duties placed upon teachers is an ongoing concern for most academies today. Increased workload has become something of a 'norm' in the teaching profession suffice to say, that doesn't mean it should go unchallenged or unrecognised. On the contrary, it is the duty of the school and the head to ensure every teacher is adequately supported and that workload levels are managed appropriately.

Too many teachers seem to be marking class work and planning lessons in the evenings and at the weekend. Reports of 50-60 hours a week are certainly not uncommon amongst the profession.

The drivers for increased workload

Changes to the curriculum have also meant that it's no longer satisfactory for teachers to simply deliver the curriculum, they need to design it too along with the assessment framework. So you can see how a teacher's workload can easily spiral.

Aside from the greater numbers of children currently in mainstream education, there are a number of contributors to increased workloads on teachers today. Greater expectation from parents that children's needs are met to a high level, continual pressure on schools in terms of the diversity of issues they should be providing educationally, not to mention the increasing numbers of vulnerable pupils who need social and pastoral care.

The provision for children with special educational needs, the complexities of individual needs of children and the lack of funding for that provision, all have an impact on workload.

Pressures on other public sector services such as the NHS, social services *etc.* also mean that gaps in provision and meeting the needs of families often fall to schools and teachers to be filled. Where the academy school can flex to adapt to these trends, is through its decentralisation, because with that comes more freedom and more flexibility.

Although more freedom makes it easier to make changes it also brings with it more pressure. In particular Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) will have an additional layer of leadership to alleviate that pressure and to help provide clear structures, support and guidance as to what 'good teaching of mathematics' looks like, for example. There is also greater freedom to give clearer expectation and a framework to support teachers such as NQT 'clusters'.

The ability to exploit certain freedoms such as changing school hours, creating extended days, such as an extra hour at the end of the school day where specialist providers are brought in to deliver music, sport, dance *etc.* gives teachers more time to cover the curriculum within normal school hours.

Clearer expectations

Both maintained and academy schools struggle to meet the demands of the curriculum, and although academies at first sight might appear to have more freedoms, the constraints of narrow assessment measures in effect reduce the potential to respond to those freedoms. The issues that both types of schools face regarding increased workloads are very similar.

If we are to stand any chance of reducing workloads for teachers across the board and as a result, improve how we teach day-to-day, head teachers need to find a way to give much more support to teachers. Head teachers need to find ways of offering practical support with the planning and delivery of the curriculum. Many heads are rightly cautious about the quick-fix solutions of commercial schemes but carefully chosen resources used with skill can support teachers.

This is not an invitation to use endless worksheets or just open a text book but high quality resources, chosen because they support the schools pedagogy can free teachers to focus on the delivery and assessment of the lesson. Less experienced teachers in particular benefit from the support of a well-designed

curriculum and planned sequence of learning, allowing them to focus their energies on the delivery of the lesson.

Increasing productivity through delegation

Schools should be encouraging their teachers to think very carefully about what makes a difference to children's learning. For example, some tasks can, and should, be taken on by support staff and don't necessarily need a teacher's input. An exercise that compares the tasks that teachers do, the time they take and the impact they have on learning often provides interesting food for thought. What activities are window dressing and how long do they take? School websites and the plethora of policies every school generates are two just two areas well worth reviewing – what impact do they have on the outcomes for children and how long do they take?

The sharing of plans and previous experience is an important opportunity for teamwork that is often overlooked in schools, has someone done this project before? What were the best visits? Which resources did they use and where were they stored? What can we learn from previous experience? If we are going to improve workloads we must learn from previous experience and inherit the previous good practice rather than starting from scratch. This is an important area that leaders can provide support in, particularly for new teachers or staff new to the school. Schools have a wealth of data available to them, leadership isn't just about knowing what works its knowing how to make it easy to do it again.

We are working to provide teachers with more support on long term curriculum design so that they can focus their energies on planning the delivery of lessons rather than designing and re-designing what needs to be taught and how to fit it in. Revisiting marking, to focus on what makes a difference to pupils learning rather than feeling the need to leave an evidence trail for external scrutiny, are just two examples that could have a huge impact on reducing workloads

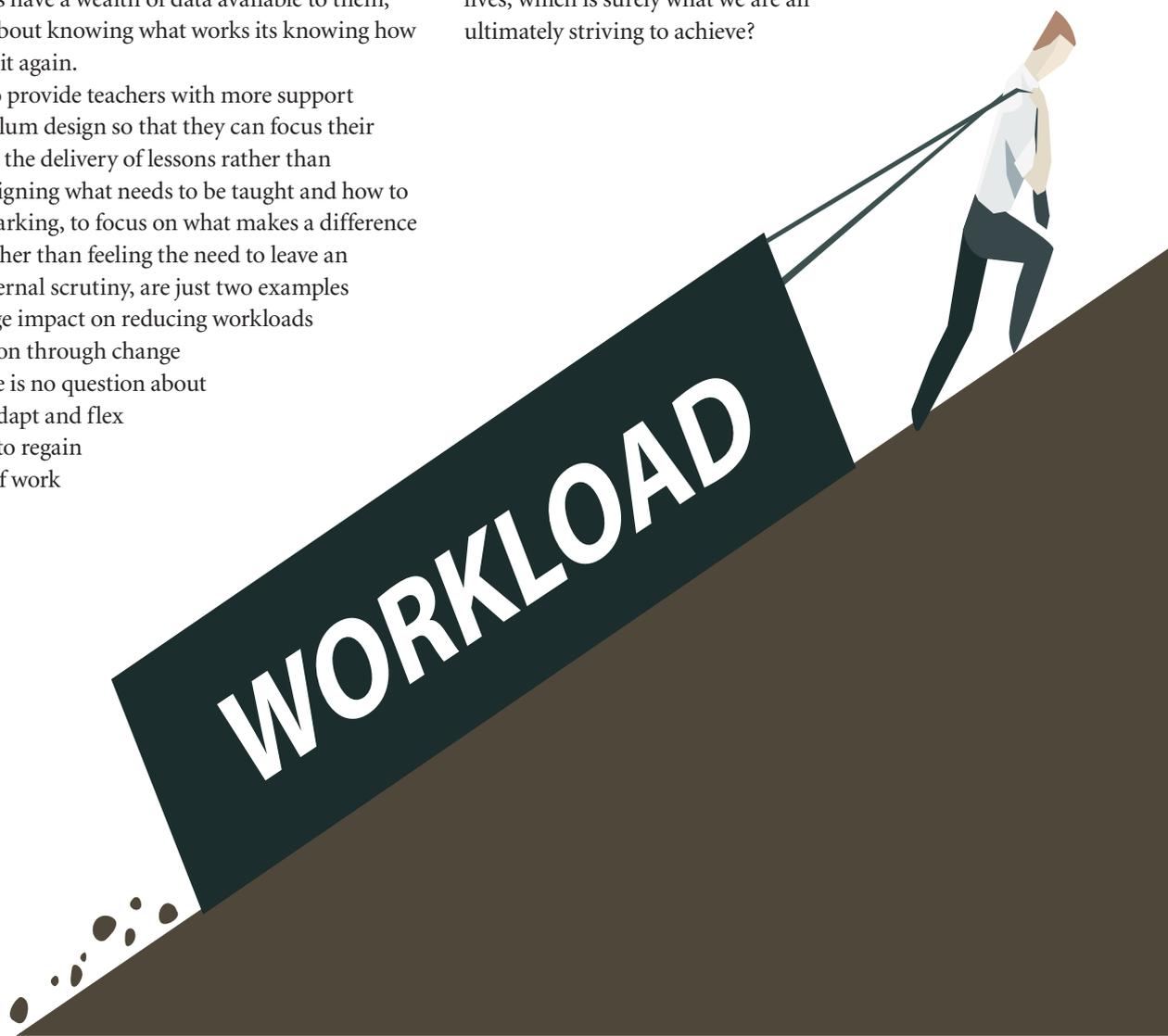
Finding the solution through change

In summary, there is no question about it – schools need to adapt and flex to change if they are to regain control on the level of work that is placed upon teachers on a daily basis. But that

change should also be about evolution, rather than sudden, impulsive activity. Whether that means extended school days, summer schools, creating new roles within the teaching profession to reduce the admin burden, or making changes to the current staffing structure, we need to be determined to improve workloads for teachers. Find out what is eating your teachers' time; making resources, photocopying, writing bids for grants, processing data, phoning parents... and then think carefully – does a teacher need to do this?

The burden of data gathering in schools is a challenging area. On one hand it doesn't need a teacher to gather the data but sometimes it's the process of recording the data that ensures it's really understood. Equally mistakes can easily be made when data is collected by someone who doesn't understand it, correcting them can take even more time. There are no easy one-size fits all answers, except to recognise the challenges, be prepared to think differently and avoid the default of automatically adding to a teacher's workload.

Making changes within our schools also means being creative, innovative and often brave. But if those changes result in finding new solutions to current challenges, it can only be a good thing for our schools and the quality of our teaching, not to mention the end goal: the difference we make to children's lives, which is surely what we are all ultimately striving to achieve?



It's time to get emotional

Leadership development providers need to better equip school leaders with the understanding and skills to handle the emotional consequences of major change, says Colin McLean of Best Practice Network

Academy leaders are champions at handling the practical side of major change. After all, they have been at the vanguard of major changes in the education system in recent years.

Their response to significant changes such as a conversion to academy status and all its implications is often to focus on the technical and operational tasks associated with that change. This might be setting up a new governance structure, recruiting new staff, organising a new uniform and consulting parents.

That's all vital and school leaders do this very well. However, feelings such as anxiety, loss of identity and uncertainty experienced during major change need to be recognised by schools and the wider system. The risk of not dealing with these powerful feelings is that change will be resisted and harder to embed and this might have serious implications for the morale and effectiveness of staff. Ultimately this may have a negative impact on teaching and learning.

So it is really important that we properly address this aspect of change. A starting point is to build strategies for coping with the emotional side of change into professional development programmes for aspiring and established school leaders.

Programmes such as NPQH, NPQML and NPQSL, which we deliver with our teaching school alliance partners around the country, are very good at helping leaders devise strategies and coping methods to manage change on that tangible, operational level. Leaders who have been on our programmes will already have an understanding of the issues surrounding major change and the strategies they can adopt to manage them. We signpost leaders to emotional aspects of change but recognise that leaders now need more support to focus more deeply on the psychological aspects of leadership, because they are so important to success.

School leaders have told us that they need this support. One - an academy director - suggested that helping people to handle change was about communicating the direction and destination and reason for the journey and allowing people to be part of a conversation around that.

The academy director added that it was also about how leaders managed the internal turmoil and confusion and concern sometimes caused by major change. "If those two were addressed a little more thoughtfully and systematically as components of the change process, change could be significantly less painful," he said.

We think that it's time to make sure that leaders are helped to handle all aspects of change, and that includes the emotional responses change can trigger. If we tackle it now through leadership development programmes and support then school leaders will be better equipped to handle major change - and make it work for their pupils, their teachers and their schools.

The emotional impact of change: what the research tells us

In a recent piece of research Mannie Burn, a consultant at Best Practice Network, explored school leaders' experiences of leading on the psychological aspect of the change process.

The research asked whether leaders felt sufficiently resourced to lead on this aspect and whether they thought the transition model devised by William Bridges could be of use.

The Bridges model makes a distinction between the operational aspect of the change process and the psychological aspect that accompanies all change. The research suggested that typically leaders focus on the operational and overlook or avoid the emotional and psychological.

For example, if a school is converting to become part of an academy chain there will be lots of operational matters to focus



on, such as a premises, new governors, new uniform and new staff as well as a clear vision and rationale.

Feelings that arise when change is welcome are familiar and easier to deal with. Some people for example will love the change and feel excited, and energised about it.

But the feelings that arise when change is unwelcome - feelings such as hostility and anxiety regarding identity or loss of meaning - are more complex, especially when they are often associated with weakness and shame which are hard emotions for all of us to face.

Bridges argues that leaders need to address both aspects experienced during change otherwise they run risk of simply rearranging the furniture rather than firmly embedding the change. Mannie's research suggested that even the most senior leaders struggled with this aspect. They felt under resourced and said that they had had very little input or training in psychology and that this was an important area for further study. The research also identified the complicated nature of dealing with the emotional aspect of change; it is a complex and multi layered subject.

Key points from the research included:

1. Working with the psychological aspect of change is vital, however it can lead us to unfamiliar territory. Much of our behaviour is driven by our subconscious, before we are even aware of it. It is important to get to grips with some of the basics of the psychology of change – aspects such as social defences, psychological habits as well as emotional literacy and self regulation. We need to acknowledge as leaders that

- we ourselves may need some training and practice to deal with our own emotions and then the emotions of others.
2. In terms of the change process, neuroscience tells us that any change, welcome or unwelcome leads to a disruption of the status quo and this can put the part of the brain which deals with survival into a state of alert and we may shut down to other matters - such as teaching - while we adjust. It is difficult for teachers to teach and maintain high standards and wellbeing if they are feeling these difficult, alarming and perhaps undermining feelings in response to change. Psychologist Michael Carroll urges leaders to do all they can to help people not to shut or close down during change. Otherwise the stress involved can lead to a downward spiral of sickness and absenteeism with obvious detrimental effects on students.
3. The leaders interviewed found it difficult to talk about their feelings. They all talked about some significant change they had been involved in and all were hard pushed to describe the feelings they experienced or how they had dealt with the emotional aspect because they had not really done so. All the leaders interviewed knew about Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy but a vocabulary of emotions is not always easy to call on. There is a need to develop this skill because it is one way to provide an all-important sense of 'holding' or managing feelings.

Reflecting on the research, we think it is crucial that leaders can deal with the feelings triggered by change in a positive and effective way; psychologist Marshall Rosenberg points out that our feelings are signposts to common human needs. If we feel hungry it is probably because we need food. If we feel afraid it may be that we need security or reassurance. These needs are part of being a human being and all are valid.

Gaining an understanding of the psychology of change and a high level of emotional literacy needs to become part of a school leader's repertoire of knowledge and skill. It is key to ensuring success. There is a wealth of practice and theory to draw on and we need to start using it.

Colin McLean is chief executive of Best Practice Network. For more information go to www.bestpracticenetwork.co.uk

Try this online exercise

Recognising the emotional responses of your team to change is a crucial first step on the way to managing change more effectively. Download this activity workbook at www.bestpracticenetwork.co.uk/feelingsactivity which is designed to help you get a sense of your own ability to identify and name emotions.

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WE are the next generation

By Andrew Moffat, WE Day and Free The Children



Being the middle child in a family of ten siblings had its difficulties: a strict bathroom schedule, a constant fight for the TV remote and a big squeeze at the dinner table. But, for 15-year-old Trae, it meant that he was able to develop the negotiation and peacekeeping skills he would need when taking part in the London Model UN. Even at school, Trae combined his “big-brother-skills” with his passions for sports and drama to mentor younger students and ensure that they have someone they can talk to when they join the school. Through this commitment to his community, Trae earned his ticket to join other students from his school at WE Day UK 2015.

On 5 March, Trae and his classmates jumped onto the London Underground and made their way to WE Day to join 12,000 other young social activists from around the UK for a day filled with

live music, inspirational speakers and international leaders. And the cause? Each of the students had gathered to celebrate their commitment to active citizenship in their local and global communities and, with the likes of Sir Richard Branson, Years & Years and Martin Sheen, launch their new year of social action.

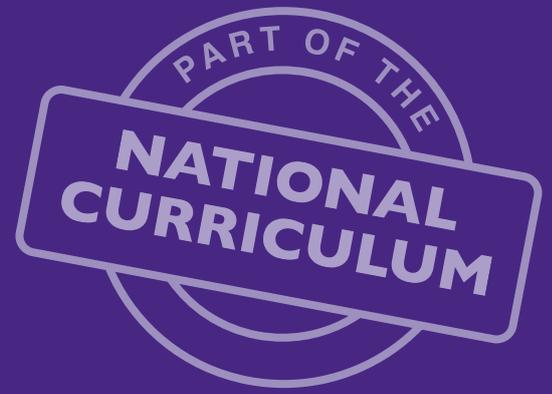
At WE Day, Trae learnt about an amazing opportunity: a chance to be part of a team of 30 young people to win a scholarship with Virgin Atlantic Airways to go to India with Free The Children. While there, the participants would work alongside developing communities to see the tangible effect of Free The Children’s sustainable development model, Adopt a Village. To gain a place on the trip, students would have to demonstrate their commitment to social action. As soon as Trae got home he began his application.

After reading about Trae’s passion for equality and social action, giving him

a place on the trip was a no-brainer for the judges. All that was left was to call him and give him the good news and he couldn’t have been happier. “I was jumping up and down, I was so excited – I phoned EVERYONE!” Trae recalls. Then Trae began to pack and prepare for a life-changing trip to Udaipur, India.

On 10 August, just like on WE Day, Trae made his way to the London Underground with his luggage and set off for Heathrow. As he walked through the airport, nervous but excited, he met the other 29 teenagers setting off for India and immediately felt relieved. Rarely shy, Trae quickly made friends and they boarded the plane together, ready to travel 4,000 miles and wake up on the other side of the world.

Stepping off the plane in India, two things struck Trae: the heat and the surprising calm of the airport contrasting with his idea of a hectic, crowded country.



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Now back at home, Trae has led his own workshops with staff and students at his school to encourage his peers to realise their own power. Together, they are using what Trae learnt in India to inspire their community to take action

Out of the airport they all squeezed into a minibus and set off for Udaipur, where the reality of being in a different continent started to set in. “I had my head out of the window, looking about and that’s when it hit me – I realised I was in India”.

With the smell of fresh monsoon rain filling his nostrils, Trae was amazed at how effortlessly the mini bus weaved in and out of not only the hundreds of motorbikes that filled the highway but also the cows wandering along the roads chewing grass. That night they finally reached Udaipur, their base for the next 20 days, and Trae collapsed into bed and readied himself for some of the most challenging yet rewarding days of his life.

Unlike his usual morning routine of TV, Twitter and Coco Pops, mornings in India started with yoga and meditation on the grass. Everyone, depending on how tired they were from the day before, gathered at 7am and began their day trying out their best downward dogs and sun salutations to the backdrop of the Aravalli mountains. Although originally a bit sceptical, Trae never shies away from a new experience so did his best to twist and extend his limbs to keep up with the instructor and was pleasantly surprised with how he got on. “I’ve never done yoga before so I didn’t know what to expect. It was actually really calming. It really relaxed you for the day ahead”.

Trae spent the rest of his days learning more about local people and customs and helping to build a secondary school in the local community, one of his favourite activities. From brick-making to removing crumbling walls, the students worked hard to undo the damage caused by the recent monsoon season and create a new, functional school so that local children could get the education they need. In India, half of students in rural communities can’t read at a basic level, which makes rebuilding schools so more children can go to school a crucial job. For the trip participants, working in the intense Indian sun brought its own challenges but thankfully, since meeting at the airport, the teenagers had bonded and supported each other along the way. “It was very testing at times but we all pulled through for each other”, Trae remembers.

Throughout the trip the students not only worked with each other but directly with the community too. Only by working in true partnership with local people can students get to know the community and learn about their needs. “We were immersed into the local culture”, says Trae. “It wasn’t like we were visiting their country – we were part of them, lived with them and experienced what their lives were like. It was a priceless experience”.

Visiting families and playing with

the children who would be attending the school had a massive impact on Trae, changing the way he saw himself. He understood that regardless of age, anyone can help create a better world. Empowered to make a difference, Trae was determined to tell his school about everything he’d learnt on his trip.

Now back at home, Trae has led his own workshops with staff and students at his school to encourage his peers to realise their own power. Together, they are using what Trae learnt in India to inspire their community to take action and support developing communities in India so that every child has the opportunity to get an education and break free from the cycle of poverty. For Trae, it’s important that the inspiration he found in India spreads throughout his school and everyone knows that they can make a difference in the world because, as Trae puts it, “WE are the next generation, the leaders of tomorrow”.

Empower your students to earn their way to WE Day by signing up for a free visit from one of our inspirational speakers and facilitators at ukyouth@freethechildren.com or by phoning 020 7978 5225

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The new landscape – the power of networking networks

By Caroline Whitty

Writing as a non-educationalist who has spent the last 11 years working in the evolving Academies sector, it is clear that the more testing the world of state funded education becomes, the more important it is for schools to stand together and work collaboratively. With all that lies ahead, there is no doubt that many school leaders will need to look for help if they are to successfully tackle the variety of challenges they now face.

Support for schools has always been there in various forms but the landscape has changed considerably in terms of the type of support needed, the courses of action available and what is affordable. If we look back to the beginning of the last parliamentary term, those good and outstanding schools choosing to pursue greater autonomy often found their experience a lonely and difficult one and welcomed the fellowship and support offered by school membership organisations.

However since then, there has been a huge shift away from standalone academies towards federations and Multi Academy Trusts with the many benefits this can bring. One of the implications of this change is that some of the support needs of individual schools can now be provided by the overarching trust. With over 60% of Academies now being part of a wider trust structure, this has impacted

on those who serve this market whether they be commercial players or third sector organisations. So this poses the important question; if we are to collectively enable the delivery of a self-managing system, what are the current needs of the diverse range of independent state schools and trusts and how will they be met?

Probably the biggest emerging need is to provide a network that allows the growing number of small and medium sized groupings, often regionally based, to network more widely. The self-improving system relies on those that are being successful not simply sharing their learning within their own network, but sharing it more widely.

With that in mind, there has arguably never been a greater need for an affordable membership organisation for schools offering a national support network to encourage and facilitate this 'bigger picture' networking. FASNA, is now the only independent, school-led, not-for-profit membership organisation left standing in this space and is therefore well placed to fulfil this important role. Amongst its other activities this Association's key focus is to continue its long history of working with government, helping to guide the policy makers to develop a sensible legislative framework for educators to work within. It is acknowledged that some of the leaders of larger MATs and

chains have their own direct route into ministers. However, standalone schools and smaller MAT's do not have this level of access and therefore need a voice and a channel through which to help shape those key messages being communicated to decision makers. In addition, on big issues there is no substitute for one strong, credible representative voice speaking on behalf of independent state schools, both big and small, to optimise their collective influence. Fair Funding, on which FASNA have been campaigning hard, is a perfect example.

If the profession is to take up the challenge of creating their own self-managing system, school leaders must embrace their role in making it happen and actively contribute to it. Simplistic though it may sound, the basic principle behind this route forward is a reciprocal model based on being open to sharing success and recognising the huge potential of learning from others. There is clearly a requirement for schools to invest time and resources for this to work but the returns are well worth it. Only when this becomes a way of life for the whole profession rather than just for the most forward thinking, will we see the power of a truly self-improving system and the real difference that it can make to our children and young people.

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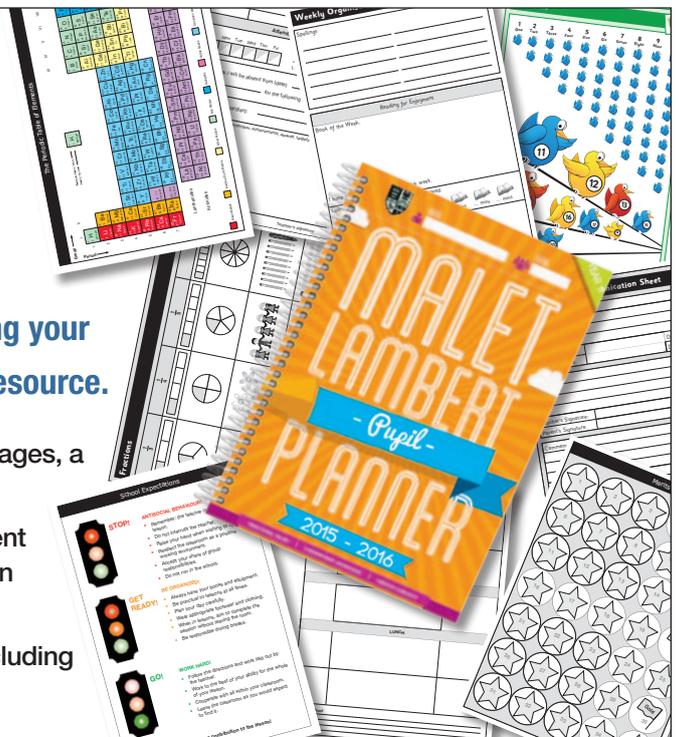
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Why English language skills are key in helping combat radicalisation

Fleur Sexton discusses the new statutory responsibilities for academies and shares her views on the best methods for progress

Following new legislation introduced in the UK this summer, academies now have a statutory responsibility for the active prevention and detection of radicalism amongst their pupils.

With Prime Minister David Cameron warning that Britain’s “generational struggle” against terrorism requires a ‘full spectrum response to extremism in our schools’, and protection of children from risk of radicalisation now another part of an academy’s wider safeguarding duties, it’s clear there’s a lot of work to be done in this area.

Under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, academies must have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This is known as the Prevent duty and in order for academies to fulfill it, staff must be able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation,

and know what to do when they are identified.

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is seen by the government as part of a academy’s wider safeguarding duties - similar in nature to protecting children from other harm such as drugs, gangs, neglect, or sexual exploitation, whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

But it’s a tall order. While greater minds than mine are working on these issues 24/7, I do have a few words of advice. I know that the best way to counter radicalisation and extremism is inclusion and integration from an early age. This is far more effective than trying to find and stop the activities of people who have already become radicalised and dangerous.

So in my view the single most important action we can take is to ensure

that when immigrant children join our schools, academies and communities we get them speaking English as soon as possible – within six weeks at the most.

Providing language skills

Without language skills we can’t truly integrate these children and their families into the UK.

They have to speak the language so that they don’t fall behind in lessons, which is where a sense of alienation can begin to take a hold.

Many UK academies are made up of pupils from many different countries – it’s not uncommon for 10s of different languages to be spoken in one school - so anything we can do to help them respect each other’s cultures and customs has got to be a good thing.

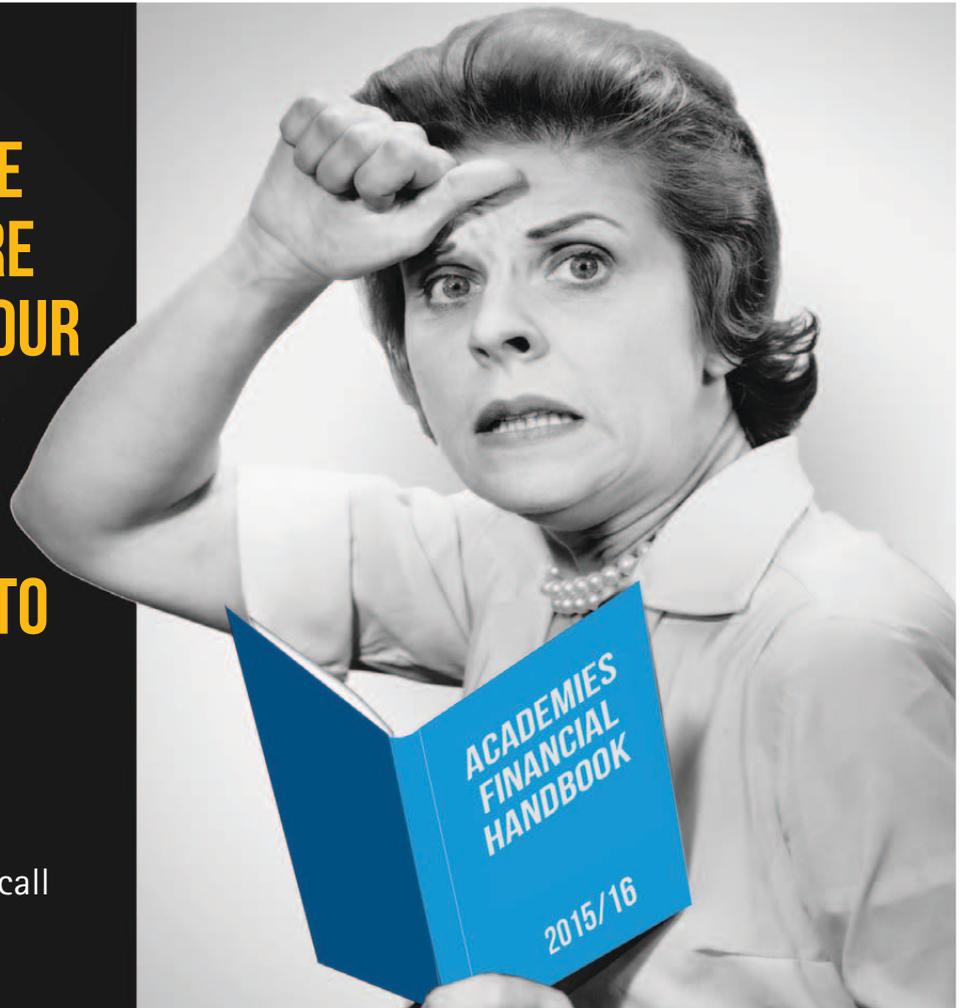
Speed is crucial – it’s vital to ensure that children gain linguistic skills and learn what is expected of them in the



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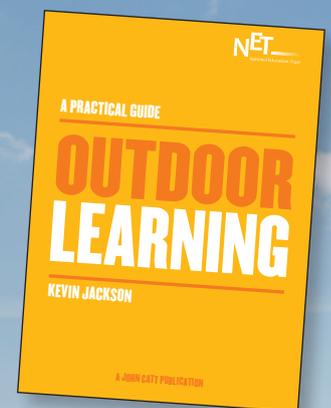
A PRACTICAL GUIDE: OUTDOOR LEARNING

Kevin Jackson

An informative, practical and authoritative guide, making the argument for undertaking outdoor and adventurous learning – and offering advice for how to organise trips to enable students and teachers to get the most from them.

Inspiring enthusiasm for real learning and growing, it provides opportunities for children, young people and their teachers to seek memorable experiences and develop life-long interests. Published in partnership with the National Education Trust.

Kevin Jackson is Executive Service Lead of the Outdoor Learning Service at Oxfordshire County Council.



To order

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UK culture as quickly as possible. It's hard to do this in a huge class, so EAL courses which take pupils out of the classroom and into small groups work most effectively in addressing this issue at the source.

Teaching approaches for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) need to take account of individual learning styles. We find that frequent changes of pace and activity ensure everyone stays focused and on-task and we recommend a variety of kinesthetic activities be used and group work encouraged to develop peer learning.

Additionally, strong English skills are essential for exam success, which also helps with integration. It's not only important in English exams themselves but in any sort of test situation where trigger and action words such as 'analyse', 'examine', 'explain' and 'describe' are commonly used. If pupils are not able to understand the, sometimes subtle, differences between such words they are at a huge disadvantage.

Involve families and the wider community

Like the old African proverb says; "It takes a village to raise a child". Academies do not operate in silos and are committed to reaching out to the parents of their pupils and the communities of which they are part.

By engaging with parents, academies and schools can work in partnership to teach British values and to respect and support immigrant families so that they are well integrated and feel the full benefit of being part of UK society. We can only come to a true understanding of each other when we have the right language in place.

This will reduce the threat of radicalisation – every child needs to find their place in the world and to feel that their values are properly respected. Children here in our schools and academies need to feel happy and confident that their place is with the UK.

Schools can also build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting

fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views. It is important to emphasise that the Prevent duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, academies should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.

Promote responsibility online

Due to the prolific social media campaigns from extremist groups and the far-right, it has never been more crucial that children act responsibly online. Academies and schools must play their part in educating children in e-safety and providing a counter-narrative to the propaganda of extremist organisations.

An open conversation about the danger of radicalisation between leadership teams and teachers is important. Leaders should find out what support teachers feel they need and strategically look at where e-safety could fit well into the curriculum. E-safety lessons should not be left to individual staff members in an ad-hoc way, but be consistent from teacher to teacher.

It can be difficult to provide a counter-narrative to ISIS for example and many teachers may feel uncomfortable or ill-informed. However, it is not necessary to become an expert in the intricacies of a particular faith – teachers can ask pupils general questions about, say, human rights, treatment of women or the use of violence in order to encourage the questioning of extremist practices.

Whole-school, cross-curricular approach

All pupils need to be well-educated on this issue, so a whole-school, cross-curricular approach is essential. The most effective way to get children acting responsibly on the internet is teaching them to question their sources and not to trust everything they see.

This thinking can be encouraged in

all subjects and at all ages. Ask questions like "is this fact, fiction or opinion?" and "what is the intention of the author of this article/video/picture?"

Everything online has been written with intent, especially propaganda from extremist organisations. To demonstrate this, English lessons can teach writing to persuade, drama can invite pupils to work out the motivations of others and history can demonstrate that there is always an alternative perspective.

It's also important to involve parents here too. Usually children cannot access harmful materials online during lessons due to robust filtering and monitoring processes, but at home the floodgates are often open. Parents need to be the first line of defence against children accessing inappropriate content online, but often need support to do so. Remind them to look out for warning signs such as a child suddenly using technology excessively, being secretive about what they are doing online, behaving or dressing differently, adopting new attitudes or friends, or receiving gifts or money from unknown sources.

If you suspect a child is being radicalised?

If you believe a child is in imminent danger, or you strongly suspect illegal or criminal activity, go straight to the police. Otherwise - follow your Child Protection procedures. Make sure you talk to the child and their parents too - only by addressing the issue will we be able to solve it.

It is absolutely critical that we support teachers in helping their pupils to navigate these difficult issues in order that our academies and schools produce responsible 21st century citizens.

Established in 1995, PET-Xi is a national education training provider working with hundreds of schools across the UK

Value for money in Pupil Premium procurement

By Daniel Sobel, Inclusion Expert

By bringing the issue of narrowing the gap to the top of the education agenda, the Pupil Premium can be viewed as a success. However, centrally provided guidance and training in spending Pupil Premium funds is lacking, as many schools would I'm sure agree. As a result, the gap continues to grow and, along with it, confusion about how to apply the many billions of pounds in the Pupil Premium pot.

In this article I will focus on the key factors schools might want to consider in managing their Pupil Premium budgets. I hope to show that some of the questions that I get asked in the schools where I work – ‘Can I spend this amount on a provision?’ ‘How do I measure the cost of this product?’ ‘Can this provision also be used for non-FSM students?’ – are less pressing than many other more strategic ones.

It isn't actually a budgetary issue

There is a statutory requirement for schools to account for how their Pupil Premium funds are spent. Obviously, this rule is there to ensure that the Pupil Premium budget is protected and only used for the purpose of narrowing the attainment gap, not for filling gaps in a school's budget. There isn't an agency with either the time or qualification to nit-pick through the budget itself to see if every detail and penny makes sense. Instead of schools worrying that their Pupil Premium budget accounting will be considered flawed because of an overspend on one item, or because of an inaccurate description of a provision, they might instead focus on whether each procurement actually makes sense.

How to demonstrate your procurement is sound

I recently worked with a school in receipt of over £1 million of Pupil Premium funding. Their first question to me was: ‘How should we spend it?’ It was a more than reasonable question considering the task of managing such a mammoth budget. However, stepping back and considering the whole very purpose of the Pupil Premium might be a better place to start. I suggested that the school might instead ask two key sets of questions:

First: ‘What are the needs of our students? Where is the gap? What causes this gap? What do we need to do to narrow that gap?’ In working through these questions, you should end up with a list of issues and appropriate solutions. Consider putting an additional column in your Pupil Premium budget table called ‘Identified Issue’, so that there is clarity around the reason behind any decision or activity:

Identified Issue	Action/Service/Product	Cost
FSM students come to school late, hungry and ill-prepared for learning	Breakfast Club	£40,000

You'll find, by scrolling through a few Pupil Premium pages on school websites, that the underlying issues are rarely articulated. Focus is only placed on the action and its cost. Instead, by demonstrating a clear and thought-through decision-making process, not only will the gap be most effectively narrowed, but you will demonstrate your reasoning to all stakeholders.

Second: ‘How can we measure and demonstrate success and impact through both hard and soft data?’

In answering this question, you'll need to add another column to your table as follows:

Identified Issue	Action/Service/Product	Hard and Soft Data Impact	Cost
FSM students come to school late, hungry and ill-prepared for learning	Breakfast Club	- 50% improvement in attendance from the bottom 15% of students with low attendance - Teachers said Pupil Premium students are more prepared for learning	£40,000

A short and simple measure of impact shows that not only do you understand the causes behind an effect or a behaviour, but that you have formulated a plan of action which is relevant and appropriate. You are also clearly measuring the outcomes of your actions, in the way that any business would seek to measure 'return on investment'.

These two new columns should soon eclipse the other two columns, and should end up holding the most vital information that your stakeholders or Ofsted will want to see.

Details and Nuance

Towards the end of an Inclusion Expert Pupil Premium Review, I make recommendations on next steps. One issue that recurs across many schools is the robustness and effectiveness of assessment and identification procedures. Of course, in a secondary school with over 1,000 students it's challenging to really know each student, manage this information efficiently and ensure that it is usefully shared across potentially 20+ members of staff.

It's vital for a school to diagnose and understand the true underlying issue when a problem emerges. An example that may resonate with many readers is the underperformance of a cohort of Year 9 boys in their maths work, where the students are unlikely to attain a pass at GCSE despite RaiseOnline suggesting they should. Three schools with whom I have worked chose to address the issue in differing ways, reflecting how they perceived the underlying root causes, and the particular expertise and experiences of staff:

School 1: gave students additional Maths classes after school and at one lunchtime per week

School 2: provided students with Speech and Language therapeutic intervention

School 3: took the students on a four-day holiday to the Lake District with the Maths Department

Why were these interventions chosen?

School 1: because this is a traditional, tried and tested method of raising achievement

School 2: because the SENCo was trained in higher level Speech and Language and she perceived that students struggled with the complexities of acquiring and recalling the language of maths

School 3: because the pastoral team was particularly imaginative, and felt that stronger positive bonds between students and teachers would enhance learning

Which one was right? Arguably all, depending on the context in which each school operates and the particular understanding of their students (though I would argue that School 1 chose the easiest but least targeted solution). The most important point is that each school sought to gain a nuanced understanding of the real student needs, and it was this understanding that generated the intervention to narrow the gap.

Schools need to develop the capacity to operate in this specific, effective way, so that interventions aren't just guesswork or off the shelf. Training and appropriate systems are key to allowing schools to develop this nuanced understanding of their students, if we are ever to truly narrow the gap in a way that schools can have a long-term effect on the socio-economics of the next generation. In this way, the government may well achieve true return on investment from its Pupil Premium policy.

Daniel Sobel is founder and lead consultant for Inclusion Expert who deliver Pupil Premium and SEN Reviews and support

Academies need to prepare for real-term cuts to budgets

Academies could face a significant decline in their budgets according to a member of the UK200Group of independent accountancy and law firms

The warning comes after a number of studies into the future of school spending indicated that managing finances will become a significant issue at academies over the next few years.

One of the studies to reveal the growing gap in budgets was a recent report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). It found that schools in England are likely to face an eight per cent real-term decline in per pupil spending (based on a school-specific measure of inflation) over the next five years.

The report by the IFS found that while schools budgets have been better protected in recent years compared to other government departments, an increase in costs could mean that schools could soon face the first real-terms reduction in their budget since 1990.

The IFS study looked at all the main cost factors affecting budgets and predicted that an increase in the average public-sector pay settlement of one per cent per year, a rise in National Insurance contributions from April 2016 and an increase in employer pension contributions over the next five years would place pressure on academies budgets.

It also points to an increase in pupil numbers as another major issue, as the baby boom of recent year's places additional pressure on already limited resources.

"Our recent meetings with schools indicate that this is an issue that is clearly exercising the minds of a number of

business managers at the moment. The annual budgeting process and auditors' questions around going concern have brought greater focus to the impact of what are widely seen as unfunded staff pay rises," said Andy Morris, a specialist in the finances of academies and a Partner at UK200Group member firm Dains LLP.

"The Department for Education (DfE) argue that sharing staff and services and working closely with other local academies either directly or indirectly offers a way forward in terms of cost savings and increasing value for money.

"In practice, a number of business managers are also actively planning for the redundancies of higher-earning staff and their replacement with newly qualified teachers. In situations where 75 per cent of costs (and rising) are staff costs, it's not surprising that this is a tempting target for savings."

The DfE has continued to pledge to protect schools' budgets, which they have estimated, will rise as pupil numbers increase and they have already made significant steps towards creating a fairer funding formula for schools.

However, there is still significant concern that this will not be sufficient to cover the gap between academy funding and spending.

A similar report from the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) found that almost two-thirds of school leaders are already being forced to make

significant cuts in their schools or dip into their reserves in order to balance their budgets.

The NAHT also found that 82 per cent of Headteachers believed that their current budget would have a negative impact on standards in schools.

The areas where schools leaders have already been forced to cut back include equipment (64 per cent), essential maintenance (50 per cent) and teaching assistant's hours (49 per cent), according to the survey.

More worryingly the school funding survey, of more than 1,000 school and academy leaders, showed that seven per cent of schools have already reached a deficit, while 64 per cent have only avoided it by making cuts or carrying over a surplus, while more than half (53 per cent) of the school leaders who had a surplus budget said it was because they were planning for a deficit in coming years.

Andy Morris added: "On the whole, budgets appear to be managed well. Schools shouldn't have significant reserves stored from the past to be used for a rainy day."

"This is counter-intuitive to how the school should operate and also adds weight to the fact that they have surplus funds anyway. Reserves should be, in the main used on modest capital projects, repair and enhancement rather than covering excessive costs in the year from poorly managed budgeting."

For academy conversion and on going support...



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

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

Nearest Forum member
www.uk200group.co.uk/Academy
 01252 401050 or 01252 350733

UK200Group members currently act for over 10.5% of the academy market



He feels that action needs to be taken to ensure that governors, business managers and Headteachers are aware of budget control, cash management and he adds that they should be challenged to find new ways of generating other income for schools.

“Even a move to Multi Academy Trusts will only generate so much economies of scale and schools will need to find new ways of sourcing “other income”. Schools should be better balanced from voluntary income and restricted income,” added Andy.

He goes on to say that “schools need to function more commercially.” He believes that everyone accepts that they are mainly funded by grant funding and their biggest cost is wages and salaries.

“A number of academy clients are starting to provide various services to other schools, whether this is a secondary supporting a primary or a primary supporting another primary,” said Andy.

“This can be in a number of areas not just teaching. My personal fear is that a number of the city centre schools will find this difficult moving forward due to the higher than average levels of funding they have become used to over the last few years.”

He says that in the majority of areas schools are often underfunded, but there is an underlying issue, which is not always down to being underfunded. This revolves around a vast difference in funding depending on a school's geographic location.

Even outside of central London, there can still be inconsistencies between areas of up to £2,500 per pupil, which when considering an average sized secondary school of say 900 pupils, could equal to a difference in funding of £2.25 million per annum, yet schools are still expected to achieve the same outcomes.

“If a lower funded school can achieve

the outcomes on a lower budget, why can't the city centre schools do the same on a lower budget? We need to move to a fair, national funding model that does not include region and deprivation factors,” concludes Andy.

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FASNA seminars 2016



FASNA Spring Conference 2016

National Funding: is it fair?

Join us at our Spring Conference on 10 March at The Grand Connaught Rooms in London.

Engage with the Minister and officials responsible for funding. Sam Gyimah MP will be speaking about national fair funding and Peter Lauener CEO of the EFA will be giving a funding update. Also invited Lucy Powell MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education. Due to popular demand, practitioner-led workshops will be repeated.

Cost - £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

New FASNA seminars to support our priorities for the new Parliament

Supporting schools in dealing with rising budget pressures

Curriculum-led financial planning

Thursday 28 January 2016 (Bristol), Tuesday 1 March 2016 (Central London), Wednesday 4 May 2016 (Central London), Tuesday 7 June 2016 (Central London)

Designed to give you the means to effectively analyse your school budget in the face of funding challenges, we will enable you to better understand the impact of staffing reductions on the curriculum, and the management structure. We will also explore the wider options available to you to save money by benchmarking schools' comparative spending on energy, maintenance, consumables *etc.*

Cost - £140 +VAT FASNA members; £200 +VAT non-members

Supporting schools in the formation and effectiveness of MATs

How to start and grow a Multi-Academy Trust

Tuesday 2 February 2016 (Central London), Thursday 19 May 2016 (Central London)

Bringing together decades of front line academy experience, FASNA, together with Stone King, will demonstrate how to start and grow a MAT into a thriving and sustainable collaboration. In an interactive and informative three hour session, this

seminar will cover the different aspects of setting up a MAT, becoming a medium MAT and then a larger MAT. Sessions will cover the different aspects of governance, sponsorship, changes to staffing, finance and central capacity, the speed and sequencing of growth, critical mass and constraints on growth. This programme may also be offered as a 'bespoke' service. **Cost - £115 +VAT FASNA members; £175 +VAT non-members**

Supporting schools in developing effective governance

Reviews of Governance – bespoke for your school

FASNA offers school-based reviews of governance for two different situations:

- Self-determined reviews will help you evidence that your governing body has appropriately skilled members, a suitable structure of activity and is engaging in self-evaluation and impact analysis.
- A post-Ofsted recommended review is a more bespoke and in-depth analysis to support your governing body in undertaking effective governance and planning for continuing professional development.

FASNA also runs seminars on Academy Conversion and MATS, The Role and Responsibilities of the Clerk to Governors, Admissions Appeals, Induction/Refresher Seminar for Governors, School Admissions - The Law, the Code and the Good Practice. Additionally, FASNA offers bespoke training for Schools and Governing Bodies on a wide range of issues
To book your places or to find out more, visit www.fasna.org.uk email admin@fasna.org.uk Call 0115 917 0142

About FASNA

FASNA is a national forum for self-governing primary, secondary and special schools, academies and multi-academy trusts. It is a charity and the only 'not for profit' national school membership organisation that expressly represents the interests and views of all self-governing schools.

FASNA promotes autonomy for schools enabling them to raise standards for students, believing that autonomous schools are the best vehicle to support creative leadership and school strategies that respond to the needs of the local community. It believes that this is the best way to raise standards.

FASNA represents the interests of members to Government Ministers, as well as to the Department for Education, and other educational groups and organisations. FASNA also makes contact with all the political parties to ensure that FASNA's views are understood as party policy is developed. FASNA is a-political.

FASNA's strategy for the new Parliament elected in 2015

In response to members' feedback, FASNA has developed a plan for addressing the key issues facing schools and has planned activities and support for members addressing these issues.

Our key priorities:

1. Supporting schools in dealing with rising budget pressures
2. Supporting schools in the formation and effectiveness of MATs
3. Supporting schools in developing effective governance
4. Campaigning for National Fair Funding

Whole School Membership

When your school becomes a FASNA member all your leaders benefit. FASNA provides support, training and resources for the whole of your Leadership Team - your Chief Executive Officer, Headteacher, School Business Manager, Governors, Clerk & Company Secretary

Join FASNA now!

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

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FASNA Voice: make your views heard in national debates and through FASNA conversations with Ministers, campaigns and consultation activity • Free Academy Magazine each term worth £30 pa • Free legal advice & resources from Stone King • Free one-day consultation from | <p>DKMY Architects Ltd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free resources: 'Effective Governance' and 'Effective Financial Management' worth £23 • Member networks through online forums and personal contacts • National conferences with distinguished speakers • Professional NIPT (National Induction Panel for Teachers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for the induction of your NQTs • Quality school-led support from FASNA experts • Quality training for all your leaders, that you can trust • Regular education news and policy updates • Trusted Academy conversion and MAT information and support |
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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

For MAT membership, please contact our office for details on admin@fasna.org.uk

Admissions Appeals

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?

Please contact the team to discuss your requirements

Visit www.fasna.org.uk, email admin@fasna.org.uk, Call 0115 917 0142

Face the financial storm with effective procurement

The government's Spending Review 2015 will task public sector organisations with delivering 'more for less' by driving greater efficiencies and delivering better value for money.

Although the government has reaffirmed its commitment to protect per-pupil funding, a recent report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned that spending per pupil in schools across England is likely to fall by 8% in real terms over the next five years. If the warning set out in the report is accurate, it would be the first time schools have faced real-term reductions in spending per pupil since the 1990s.



With this in mind, schools and academies are therefore being encouraged to improve productivity and maximise expenditure in order to improve young people's education.

So what can academies do to save money and deliver greater efficiencies?

Evidence shows that although many schools and academies are already successfully driving down costs, there is still significant scope to increase efficiency and productivity.

Increasingly, academies could look towards greater collaboration and shared services. This is already evident in the growing number of academy chains and collaborations. There are opportunities for more academies to explore options for shared staffing, procurement, back office and curriculum delivery as way of increasing efficiency and productivity.

Collaborative procurement

Collaborative procurement of resources and services such as using established procurement framework contracts to procure essential services such as building maintenance and insurance will help academies save both time and money.

Using a public sector framework ensures that schools are achieving the best contract value from the supplier base, whilst ensuring quality and delivery are not compromised.

There is no doubt that procurement is a time consuming process, regardless of the service requirements. It is not simply the case that the cheapest supplier should be the preferred supplier. Other factors must be carefully considered such as delivery and quality, but also that the service is fully compliant with procurement rules and regulations. Sourcing suppliers and undertaking a legally compliant tender process takes time and resource, both of which are in short supply for the majority of academies.

Using an existing framework to buy services ensures that suppliers are fully compliant with procurement legislation and fit for purpose.

It also means that those companies offering 'the best deal' in any competitive market have been thoroughly researched and properly vetted, examining their reputation, pricing and the quality of services that they deliver.

In addition, the negotiation and management of contracts can be a complicated and timely process. If done right, effective contract management can also deliver savings for schools.

For example, a degree of flexibility in a contract will be beneficial to both supplier and the school. The requirements of a school are unlikely to remain the same throughout the contract. The level of demand, the environment in which the contract is required, or the suppliers may change. If any of these occur, good contract management will ensure that the level of service delivery is not adversely affected. In fact, a flexible contract will give authorities the option to review the contract against current requirements and renegotiate on key deliverables and pricing.

As part of effective contract management, all contracts should be reviewed at least annually to guarantee customer satisfaction, and clauses should be included in the contract to enable regular service evaluation.

Saving energy, saving money

In advance of the Spending Review 2015, we recently visited 300 schools to find out more about their plans to save money and deliver improved efficiencies. Flexible contracts and bulk buying were identified as money saving measures but high on the list was reviewing energy contracts and exploring energy saving initiatives.

While government and large businesses are expected to lead by example with regards to energy efficiency, there are still opportunities for even the smallest schools to make energy savings. Indeed, switching off the lights and turning down thermostats are both commonplace practices in most schools now, but there are other, less obvious

steps that schools can implement to save energy, and importantly, reduce costs.

At YPO, we work with schools across the country to help them become more energy efficient. A good example is found in the classroom. Most schools are equipped with smart boards and projectors, but are these switched off after the last lesson? In our experience we've found that, although teachers are often conscientious about switching off PCs and lighting, the projectors are often left on.

With a typical lamp wattage of 150W, a projector lamp running for 24 hours a day, five days a week for 36 term-time weeks costs approximately £65 per year in electricity. Replicating this throughout every teaching space in a 40 classroom school, the annual cost is more than £2,500. Switching off at the end of the day could reduce this cost by more than two thirds and it also helps the lamp inside the projector last longer.

For more energy saving ideas, why not ask your students? Saving energy is part of the national curriculum so many students will be attuned to energy efficiency.

The next few years are likely to be a challenge for academies despite the reassurances about per-pupil funding but by continuing to explore ways to work smarter and in greater collaboration, there are opportunities to deliver better value and greater efficiencies, which will benefit teachers and pupils alike.

YPO is working with schools to generate ideas and recommendations for saving money and achieving maximum value for public money. Join the discussion by tweeting your ideas to @ypoinfo using #YPOPublicMoneyBox

Share and share alike

Caroline Whitty encourages schools to make the time to share exciting practice for the greater good

One of the many benefits of being part of a wide and strong professional network is the ability to share and celebrate examples of innovative practice. Letting others learn from your experience and adapt the learning to their own situation is absolutely critical if we are to achieve a self-improving and self-managing system. Autonomy and the freedom it gives to be creative and do things differently, is at the heart of what is important to FASNA and yet collecting the wealth of wonderful examples of cutting edge techniques, remains a real challenge.

This isn't because educators don't want to share the secrets of their success but purely the age old problem of the time and resource involved in writing up case studies. This presents us with something of a conundrum, the irony of which is clear. Never has this issue of lack of time and resource been truer as financial pressures become more challenging and yet this is just the time when we need to collaborate and share our success for the greater good. That crucial investment in time is hugely beneficial to others and we would urge all readers to consider areas of exciting practice within their schools and to share their learning so that other schools might benefit from this knowledge.

I am delighted that some schools are keen to share their examples of best practice with the *Academy* magazine readership.

Transformation - Maltings Academy

Maltings Academy is an "outstanding academy" providing for 11-19 year olds in Witham, Essex and is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. The school serves a mainly white working class community where aspirations have historically been low. The number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium is broadly in line with the national average.

The predecessor school, The John Bramston School, was placed in Special Measures in 2006, judged to be inadequate in all areas, and in 2008 the school converted to academy status as Maltings Academy. The journey from Special Measures to Outstanding in seven years has been driven by the strategic plan created, implemented and reviewed by the leadership of the academy with input from all staff and governors.

We adopted the 'Discipline with Dignity' approach to transform student behaviours, understanding that behaviour change takes time and were graded Outstanding for student behaviour and safety in 2013 and again in 2015.

Discipline with Dignity stripped back the existing nonsensical rules of the predecessor school and enabled us to engage students in three basic principles: look after yourselves, each other and the environment.

In 2008 we introduced Extended Enterprise Learning classes for Key Stage 3 students. Students are able to

choose a variety of engaging subjects on a termly basis learning skills including investigative science, go-kart building and theatrical make-up, amongst others.

In the same year we also introduced Accelerated Reader in order to raise literacy rates. Our daily 'drop everything and read' sessions along with 'quizzing' of students has led to huge improvements with students reading ages now often exceeding their chronological age. We have recently been made a Champion School.

Our Rapid Progress Group caters for students who join us not 'secondary ready' and they follow a curriculum designed to accelerate their progress in literacy and numeracy before joining the main classes whilst Pupil Premium funding has enabled us to employ 1:1 tutors and timetable ongoing interventions from Year 7 so that students close the gap.

We have embedded a culture of learning in the academy for all staff. This has been achieved by a whole school coaching programme where staff work together to share best practice. Leaders at all levels have visited outstanding schools to look at best practice and have adapted the best ideas for Maltings. Our lead practitioners support teachers in the classroom whilst visits from external speakers have raised standards and inspired staff.

As an academy, we are regularly asked to support other schools advising on behaviour management, Accelerated

Reader, Pupil Premium impact and more. Our staff have also led CPD sessions at other schools both on a whole school and department level.

In the last four years we have seen an improving trend in results culminating in us being the top of 55 similar schools in 2014 with 63% of students achieving 5 A* to C despite being below the national average in terms of prior attainment. In the core subjects, 81% of students achieved an A* to C grade in English, while 72% scored the top grades in maths. In English 89% made expected progress whilst 79% made expected progress in maths.

A procedural approach with empowered leaders at all levels has led to more efficient working practices, counterbalanced by work-life balance weeks to give something back to staff for their hard work.

Aspirations are also rising with numerous visits to and from a range of universities and employers. Our first student for some years gained a place studying Science at Cambridge University in September 2014. This has led to further applications this year.

Our aim continues to be to provide world-class outcomes through world-class working practices.

Internationalism – Neston High School, Cheshire

Neston High School is an 11-18 rural comprehensive school of over 1700 students. Based in Cheshire we are oversubscribed, attracting students from a wide area. We became an academy in 2012 and at their last inspection in 2013 were judged by Ofsted to be a good school.

We want our young people to grow and develop within the global community in which we now work, learn and live. Our aim is to equip them with the skills they will need, as individuals and as a student body, to thrive in the modern, changing digital world.

We have sustained partnerships of 10 years with Bergvliet, South Africa & Goldridge in Zimbabwe, and partnerships

of 40 years with Ludwig-Uhland-Schule, Baden Württemberg and 23 years with College Louis Pasteur, Toulouse. Our latest is a one-year partnership with Number 2 School in Wenzhou. We are further developing our links with Linköping University, Sweden, hosting Outstanding Teaching Conferences in partnership and shared learning visits. In addition, annual trips go to Italy (Geography), Madrid (Languages) and France (Languages & Humanities), Science trips to the LHC. The biannual ski trip runs to North America and the Sports Tour to South Africa. For the last three years, old textbooks have gone from every department in the school to charities to help them educate in the world's poorest countries.

Improved technology across the globe have made the partnerships more accessible and more 'instant'. Using Skype, or vodcasts, we are able to record stimulus material in one school and send it to the other schools to showcase work, set competitions or simply communicate. Using the technology has been a real break-through. Communication has greatly increased between schools and this has led to our students being increasingly used to the concept of international study. Using time with Curriculum Leaders we developed some accessible and challenging competitions for schools. We opened with a maths and geography challenge and Goldridge in Zimbabwe are currently compiling an anthology of poems from the three schools in our Afritwin partnership.

The Afritwin partnership is taking five students in October 2015; and, for the first time, these are students in lower school. Taking younger people will help to build the legacy of these trips, instil a global view in them from an early age and help to embed globalisation across the learners in our school.

Both in advance of, and following trips abroad, staff have to fund raise and promote their involvement and come up with some very creative ways of doing so! We have charity cricket matches,

student made soap, school scarves – all of these now stand on their own as ongoing fundraisers for the International work. Be it supporting staff and student visits overseas, hosting visiting delegations, or fund raising for projects we want to support in poorer parts of the world. The increase in staff involvement has been excellent, evidenced by our last application round to visit Bergvliet with a record number of staff applying to be involved.

The quotations from Ofsted below, show how far we have come from the outset of our International work which was first inspected in 2009:

“Recent developments in the Key Stage 3 Curriculum, such as the Year 8 “themed learning” on Africa, which combined geography, religious studies and art and design are proving to be exciting and interesting for students. The revisions in the programme of personal, social and health education is supporting students development well.” - Ofsted Report 2009

These grew rapidly over the next few years to promote the levels of day-to-day understanding and action with our students, prompting Ofsted to state:

“The many international links and experiences that the school offers, and sensitive and thoughtful discussion in lessons of the ‘amazing universe’ and the threats to the environment from modern life styles, promotes good spiritual and cultural understanding.” - Ofsted Report 2013

This is further supported by the British Council's comments in feedback to applications about the level both in terms of the quality and quantity of International Work we do.

“Neston High School demonstrates commitment to international education and to wishing to embed the international dimension into the curriculum. The innovative and imaginative work you have done ... is very impressive and provides a great opportunity for you to study some of the global themes you have selected in a relevant and contextual manner in order to bring your international learning to life.” - British Council 2014

Finance leases – the risks involved

By Tom Johnson, Stone King Solicitors

There have been a significant and growing number of schools entering into extortionate finance leases for the provision of (often unnecessary and/or substandard) equipment. These leases are often brokered via unscrupulous third-parties and covertly accompanied by eye watering monthly repayments far exceeding the value of the leased asset. Usually the finance company will not be involved in selecting the equipment or determining its value.

Take, for example, the story about a group of schools paying up to ten times the value for computers and photocopiers received under these types of arrangements. It is understood that head teachers were even suspended as a result.

Although many schools quickly realise their mistake soon after execution of the agreement, it is by then invariably too late to withdraw – the agreement is a valid contract and the school is bound by its terms. Failure to adhere to the strict payment plan can leave the school open to a claim for breach of contract. There may be a provision to facilitate early-termination however these types of clauses are often very onerous, to the point where it is cheaper to keep the arrangement in place than to terminate it.

We are approached by many educational institutions in this regard and the question is always this: Can we get out of this agreement?

Is there a basis for a challenge?

There may be – although it is worth noting most challenges in this regard have involved maintained schools, as opposed to academies, seeking to avoid liability.

One popular public law contention for maintained schools focuses on the premise that under the Education Act 2002, schools are prohibited from borrowing without certain authorisation, for example, consent from the Secretary of State. It allows a maintained school (but not an academy trust) to assert that the lease agreement was executed beyond its powers and void from the outset. Other challenges that have been explored by schools in this regard have involved saying that the sums payable under the lease are so inflated that no reasonable school would have entered into them and are therefore invalid.

Under private law, a school may be able to argue misrepresentation, or alternatively may be able to assert a lack of authority to enter into the lease. These would be fact sensitive.

Can academies use the same arguments as maintained schools?

The extent of the applicability of public law arguments to academies has not yet been established in the courts, although it is apparent that academies are treated as subject to some public law principles *eg* judicial review.

The provisions of the Education Act 2002 do not apply to academies, however, it may be that an academy's funding agreement has clauses relating to this issue.

Nonetheless, there may still be room to attempt to mitigate an academy's loss but such arguments are likely to be employed in private law as opposed to public.

Next steps

Once the existence of a finance agreement has been established you will need to seek specialist advice. Where a third-party has arranged the provision of equipment, it is generally up to the school - not the finance company - to make sure the asset is not being mis-sold and that the arrangement is legitimate.



Working with employment agencies – here are the pitfalls to avoid

By Sarah Eden, Stone King Solicitors

Schools often use recruitment agencies to fill a vacancy – when using an agency make sure you avoid the pitfalls involved, including the associated fees:

1. Identify the key terms and conditions for each recruitment agency before a candidate is introduced:

- a. When the introduction took place?
- b. Length of the introduction period?
- c. When the candidate was engaged?
- d. Length of the engagement?
- e. Checks to be completed?
- f. Fees due?

You should identify these key terms in advance so that you understand what the school is signing up to.

2. Watch out for when an agency puts forward their terms. This can be:

- a. As an attachment to an email;
- b. By reference within the email;
- c. Embedded within an email disclaimer, including that the school will need to request a copy; and
- d. By reference to their website.
- e. All of the above could bind your school to the agency's terms. You can simply accept terms through your conduct i.e. employing a candidate. You do not need to sign an agreement for the terms to apply.

3. If the agency finds out information about the un/suitability of a candidate, it is only required to provide this for a period of three months from the date of introduction.

4. Check the introduction period in the agency's terms. If a candidate approaches the school directly/through another agency, the school could end up responsible for paying two introduction fees.

5. Focus on having one point of contact within the school to ensure that they are fully versed with the procedure, preferred agencies, terms agreed and don't get caught out.

6. If there are any issues, raise these sooner rather than later. You should also keep records of correspondence in case you need to check back on what has happened.

7. If you do not think something has been completed correctly, query it from the outset, before a candidate has been put forward rather than waiting.

8. Make sure you obtain references and relevant documents to show suitable experience in advance of taking on a candidate.

9. Try and select two or three agencies you like working with and build up a good relationship to avoid the pitfalls above. This will also help to ensure the agencies are aware of how you work and to overcome issues early.

Building for the future

Opening a new school brings many rich rewards and exciting opportunities for the children and local community. But, as Carol Dewhurst reports, the journey can be challenging



Accounts of the battle of parents to secure a place for their child at their preferred school hit the press year after year. Shortages in school places, coupled with competition to get in to the most “popular schools” and growth in population, means that, in many areas, schools and Local Authorities face an annual challenge to manage demand and expectations.

Bradford is just one of many areas which has seen considerable growth with a population bulge filtering through primary and now impacting on secondary provision.

Back in 2013 Bradford Council set out to tackle this problem by successfully bidding for a new secondary school, to provide additional places for pupils in the City. The close partnership between Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

(BDAT) and the Council resulted in the opening of Bradford Forster Academy this September, but the journey to opening was not without challenge and required huge amounts of collaborative hard work.

Since 2010, Bradford Council has been keeping pace with rising primary pupil numbers through a programme of managed expansion. However, opening a brand new academy under the Department for Education (DfE) Targeted Basic Need scheme in partnership with an Academy Chain was a completely new type of project. It required trust between the LA and the sponsor and a joint determination to be ready for opening.

It was August 2013 before Bradford Council won the funding to open this £12.5 million secondary school in central Bradford. By December that year they had

recommended to the DfE their preferred Academy partner, the local Church of England Diocesan Trust, selected through a competitive tender. The remit was to develop a 1,050 place secondary school ready for opening in September 2015. The Academy would open with a year 7 cohort and grow to full capacity over 5 years. This was no small challenge - in less than 24 months, the school needed to be built, staff needed to be recruited and pupils needed to be ready and on roll.

During the project, fruitful partnerships developed between the Council, the Local Education Partnership (LEP), Wates Group (the main contractor) and BDAT. Further expert advice and support was also provided by the Diocese, and neighbouring secondary schools, Bradford Academy and Immanuel College helped in areas

such as recruiting the new Principal, ethos development and planning the curriculum. As the Diocesan Trust had only supported primary academies prior to the opening of Forster, the educational and operational expertise of Bradford Academy in particular provided critical additional support for the project.

The hard work, commitment and shared purpose of all those involved was the key success factor in getting the school ready for opening. Of Particular note was the strong relationship between the academy chain and the Local Authority – a relationship which sometimes, at least according to the national press, can be a source of contention. This project saw no such discord with all parties setting their potential differences aside to ensure the school was built and resourced to the very highest standards.

That is not to say the project was not without challenge, especially due to the tight timeline between the funding announcement and opening. From day one, significant decisions needed to be made very quickly and a number of hurdles had to overcome that threatened to delay or jeopardise the project. However one of the most animated early debates focussed on the name of the school. The Academy actually had three proposed names during the first quarter of 2014 with Bradford Forster Academy finally being the name that was settled on. The history behind this name is that William Forster who worked in Bradford and was elected as an MP in 1861, introduced the first Education Act which introduced the universal right

to education for all children between 5 and 13 and the requirement for religious education within schools. This choice reflects the importance of education, the Church and the community of Bradford.

The build process progressed quite smoothly, from the cutting of the first sod of earth and ground blessing in May 2014, through to July 2015 when the building was handed over to the Academy Trust who oversaw the ICT installation and delivery of furniture ready for opening. The build was completed on time and within the budgeted figure of £12.5 million – a price tag almost half that of other regional new school projects and certainly considerably less than schools set up under the PFI and BSF programmes.

Money was very carefully managed throughout to ensure the school was equipped and ready for opening and delivery. This approach remains critical to ensure that, by 2018, when year 10 students start to be accepted, the key stage 4 equipment requirements are met. Despite the funding limitations, the school is in a great position and boasts amongst other strengths, an impressive new indoor sports facility available for community use.

Ironically, the final challenge that the school faced was getting pupils signed up and on roll for the September 2015 opening. Asking parents to send their child to a new school without a proven track record or a finished building and without a full staff is a big ask when they need to make their decision twelve months before opening. The problem was

further exacerbated by not getting the funding agreement from the Secretary of State until spring 2015, which was after the admissions window had closed. This meant the Academy was not included in the local area admission publicity. The school did however attract a healthy year seven cohort, thanks largely to the collaboration with neighbouring primary schools and to the generosity of Bradford Academy again, who hosted and supported much of the admissions process.

On September 7th 2015, Bradford Forster Academy opened its doors for the first time to 140 year 7 students from over a dozen different Bradford primary schools. Filled with excitement and perhaps a few nerves, these young people were the first pupils to enrol at the new academy and the first cohort who will help to further shape its design, ethos and vision.

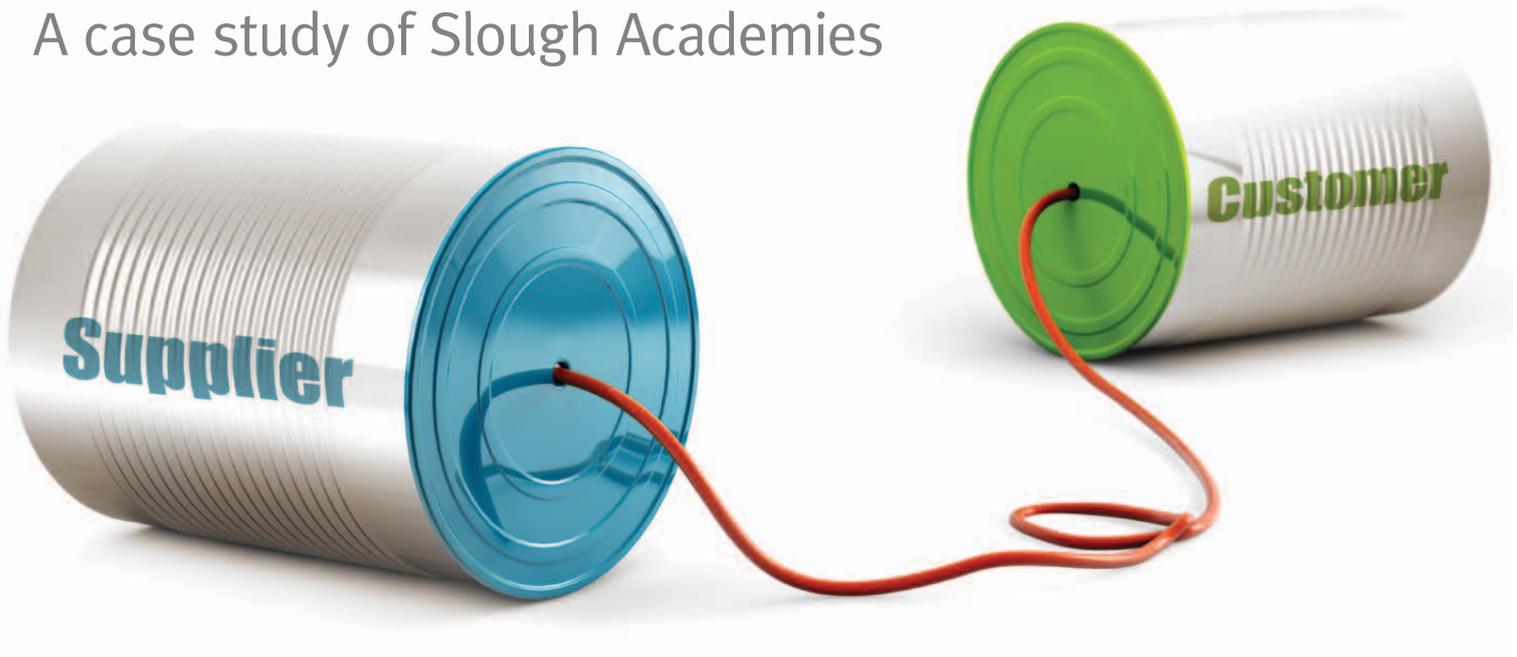
For those of you thinking of opening a new school, my advice would be not to underestimate the huge workload and the level of challenge involved. Collaboration and a shared common purpose is absolutely key to success. Bradford Forster Academy is a school set up to provide high quality education and all-round support for future generations of Bradford's children. The benefit that this school will bring to the children and the community is worth its weight in gold.

Carol Dewhurst, Chief Executive Officer
Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust
www.bdat-academies.org

Asking parents to send their child to a new school without a proven track record or a finished building and without a full staff is a big ask when they need to make their decision twelve months before opening

A collective approach to procurement

A case study of Slough Academies



When it comes to school business management, bursars, managers and senior leadership teams face the unenviable task of trying to find the right balance between delivering the very best educational experience to students, whilst at the same time closely controlling and monitoring budgets.

Although costs such as staff salaries remain fairly constant from term to term, the fluctuating prices of overheads such as utilities or food can become a difficult task to control, therefore placing additional pressure and management complexities onto the holder of the purse-strings.

For five schools located in Slough, Berkshire, this was an issue they were facing and wanting to address, as Angela Mellish, chair of the Slough Bursar's regional group explains:

"As chair of the Slough Bursar's group, a clear output from recent meetings was a desire between the five schools to find

ways of working smarter to save money and comply with EU procurement legislation. We had calculated that between the schools, there was a dry, chilled and frozen food budget of over £500,000 and between us, we felt that by working collectively we could make group savings."

The group consists of four secondary academies and one primary; Herschel Grammar School, Upton Court Grammar Academy, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar, Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College (Academy) and Ryvers Primary School Academy. With approximately 4,500 students across the group of schools, it was decided that a mutual approach would be beneficial.

Continues Angela: "Between the group, we had all dealt with the team at Pelican Procurement and were very impressed with their approach in co-ordinating food

purchasing, supplier invoicing and other centralised procurement services and so it made sense to contact them to see how they could help us as a collective in saving costs."

In February 2015, go ahead was provided to Pelican to liaise with each school with a view to managing an EU tender to identify a supplier that would be able to fulfil the requirements of each school.

Confirms Colin Bousher, Client Development Manager of Pelican Procurement Services: "The first step was to meet the individual schools to find out exactly what they were looking for from their food supplier. It was important for us to understand what each school's purchasing needs are and what service levels they require so we could start mapping out the tender agreement including all the appropriate service level agreements. The key to achieving

maximum savings is to fully understand what items made up their entire 'shopping baskets' so we could look to reduce costs on all products, not just some of them. Of course, each school has a different wish list of needs, so it was important we met each school to discuss these in full detail."

A group meeting between all schools and Pelican then took place, with each signing an individual tender document in order to get the process fully underway. Pelican then managed the process of liaising with a range of suppliers in order to obtain their formal feedback, pricing, and details relating to delivery logistics and Service Level Agreements, all of which had been drawn up by Pelican, as part of the tender process.

Confirms Angela: "Following the tendering process, Pelican presented the results to us and we were amazed to see that by undertaking the supplier retendering process across the five schools, we were set to realise savings of over £80,000; a substantial saving by anyone's reckoning."

The new supplier, Bidvest, was agreed and the supplier agreement went live in September 2015.

"The beauty of working with Pelican is that they remove so much administrative burden from us, and also deliver real peace of mind that we are meeting the EU procurement legislation and our costs are being monitored on an ongoing basis," confirms Angela. "I know, for example, that Pelican is checking the supplier invoicing and if any errors occur they arrange for a credit to be added to our

account, so there are no incorrect prices filtering through to us. They are also there to iron out any service issues, for example should deliveries turn up late, they will liaise with the supplier on our behalf."

Having completed the retendering for the chilled and frozen grocery products, there are plans to review the schools' fresh fruit and vegetables procurement in the New Year.

Adds Angela: "The whole process has been painless. Pelican has managed everything for us. Our kitchen teams have the flexibility to order the products they want; there are no restrictions in place. Pelican has automated systems in place to monitor our contract compliance ensuring we are buying products from the agreed list and, when there is a need to add new products; Pelican's team negotiates the best prices on our behalf. Pelican is consistent in ensuring that we are achieving the maximum savings for the duration of the contract.

We also have a choice on how orders are placed – so for example if one school wishes to order online, while another prefers to phone orders through, this is also fine. We are looking forward to embarking on further retendering in the New Year for other product lines, in order to recoup further savings that can be reinvested back into the running of the schools."

For added transparency, each school is able to fully track its purchasing expenditure, stock valuation and supplier invoices via Pelican's award-winning online portal, Pi. Pi helps improve visibility and control by providing a

complete view of what is being purchased and at what costs.

When talking about how Pi supports the group, Angela is positive in her praise: "The platform provides complete transparency of data. At any time, we have the option to log-in to assess the agreed pricing for products, see past invoices or orders, and review monthly statements or management reports. Pi is very easy to use and provides a wealth of financial information at the touch of a button, which is ideal when time isn't always in abundance."

With Pelican on board, the team manages the contact with the supplier, handles product price negotiations and ensures that when products are ordered, deliveries meet the agreed delivery KPIs.

If there are any problems, Pelican is just a phone call away, as Angela concludes: "The relationship we have with Pelican enables our group of schools to be able to work smarter. We are on track to realise savings of at least £80,000, with more to potentially follow in 2016 when we assess other areas of our budgets. I've said it before and I will say it again, having Pelican at my side to be able to negotiate supplier rates, coordinate invoices and manage the overall process is priceless. I'm always recommending Pelican to others who face similar predicaments - to me, it makes complete sense to let the specialists handle this for you in order to save you both time and money."

pelicanprocurement.co.uk

The key to achieving maximum savings is to fully understand what items made up their entire 'shopping baskets' so we could look to reduce costs on all products, not just some of them

Phonics – but fun!

The story of Phonic Books, who specialise in publishing for young children and older, struggling readers

Phonic Books is a small company that specialises in publishing decodable books. It is rapidly gaining a reputation for the quality and effectiveness of its reading books and resources. Now widely used in schools in the UK, the books are also used to teach children to read English in 40 countries worldwide.

The founders, Wendy Tweedie, Clair Baker and Tami Reis-Frankfort, are passionate about teaching all children to read. Using our expertise and experience whilst working as dyslexia-trained reading specialists, we set about developing phonic reading books for young children and older, struggling readers.

In the beginning, there were decodable stories

Some nine years ago, the three of us were teaching at the Bloomfield Learning Centre in London. The children referred to the centre had all failed to learn to read in school. We were using the very effective Sounds-Write phonics programme, but we didn't have books that allowed the children to practise what we had just taught them. Reading picture books or reading schemes meant that they would soon encounter words they could not decode and immediately resort to guessing or worse – failing – again! So we wrote little stories for each lesson, embedding the phonics we had just taught.

These decodable stories offered the children a 'safe practice zone' to consolidate what they had learned. It built their confidence as they could read independently and successfully at every stage. This newly-found confidence re-engaged them. Suddenly they began to see themselves as readers. Phonics and decodable texts worked!

We then thought, why not publish these stories for all children to use?

How to create a good phonics reading series

We wanted the books to be appealing and engaging with real stories. Learning to read should be exciting and fun. All too often, critics of phonic books claimed the stories were dull and the language limiting. Yes, the language had to be limited to the graphemes introduced in each book, but we could include unusual words that the children could decode and learn. The steps had to be small so all children could keep up. That is why our first books (Unit 1) have just five letters/sounds in them. Children need only five letters of the alphabet to launch into reading! We knew the books needed to be short so that children could experience success within a lesson. As remedial teachers, we were very aware that some children required more practice than others. These children would need to read more than one book at the early stages of learning to read. Practice, practice, practice! We also included a fun consolidation game within every book.

We decided to create a series specifically for catch-up pupils who had weak phonic knowledge. These books include solid phonic scaffolding, but at the same time spark the children's enthusiasm for reading



off on an exciting, action-packed quest. The Talisman has wonderful and obscure symbols. What will Zak transform into next? Children can't wait to find out and.... in the meantime, they are learning different ways to spell the sound /ae/: ai, ay, a-e, ea, ey, *etc...* Sneaky, but it works! We have received letters from children all over the UK telling us what Zak should do next and how his new talisman should look... Following on from the success of the Talisman series, we have now published the Magic Belt, Totem and Talisman 2 quest series.

Starting at the beginning

Next, we published the Moon Dogs Series for children who needed to start at the very beginning. Aware of the importance of the visual appeal to older readers, we enlisted the help of Asha, Clair's daughter, who created a 'cool', contemporary style for these books.

Don't forget the girls

Every year, we attend a number of education conferences to show our new products and to hear what teachers think about them. Our quests series were very well received but some teachers began asking for resources for girls. "My pupil doesn't like monsters and she doesn't like shape-shifting!" one said. It was true. Reading failure was often perceived as a 'boy' problem, but many girls have reading disabilities too – it's just that they are better at hiding it.

Clair and Drew set about creating the Alba and Rescue series. They share the same structures as the Totem and Talisman series. Fantastic illustrations and exciting stories in the series tell of two feisty, tenacious heroines who have hair-raising adventures. Will Alba and Erin succeed on their dangerous missions? Read on to find out...

For more information about
Phonic Books, visit
www.phonicbooks.co.uk
enquiries@phonicbooks.co.uk
01666 822543

Clair devised a stimulating combination of cartoon characters and photographic backgrounds. When we tested this style in schools, the children loved it! They wanted to talk about what they thought was real and what was drawn. Tami and Wendy set about writing stories trying to include a proper plot and a twist – which wasn't always easy, as we had only six pages of text in each booklet.

Dandelion Launchers and Dandelion Readers were born. Now there are 172 books in the Dandelion Launchers and Dandelion Readers range!

Decodables for catch-up readers

Many of the children referred to the Bloomfield Learning Centre were older. For these children, low self esteem had become an added obstacle to learning to read. Offering them books that were obviously created for young readers

exacerbated the problem. Baby books conveyed a message they had heard before: they were stupid as they were reading baby books!

We decided to create a series specifically for catch-up pupils who had weak phonic knowledge. These books include solid phonic scaffolding, but at the same time spark the children's enthusiasm for reading. We wanted to re-engage our readers and hook them - so that they 'stuck with the programme'.

With the help of Tami's 16-year-old son Adam, who was dyslexic and had struggled with reading himself, we developed a quest series. He knew what a 10-year-old would be happy to read! Drew Wilson, Clair's husband, created fantastic illustrations. The Talisman series was born. At the centre of the series was Zak, who lives with his grandfather. Grandpa gives Zak a strange talisman for his birthday. Within a few pages, he sets

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A guide to buying your minibus

There comes a time when the convenience of on site, reliable, group transport will inevitably lead to the search for a 'School Minibus' of your own. Hundreds of Academies across the UK already benefit from access to their own transport. Ford and Peugeot minibuses have for many years dominated the UK market. But the recent introduction of the new Ford Transit Minibus in 2015 and the seat limitations for the non-D1 licence holders has caused many organisations to now look at alternatives.

Indeed many of the major manufacturers offer a good choice of minibus options, all with three-year warranties as standard and are worth investigation when considering your purchase. Remember delivery times will vary greatly from supplier to supplier so be proactive and avoid looking at the very last minute. The availability of finance and contract hire plans has allowed budgets to be managed more easily and involve less of a need for fund raising and support activities prior to a large capital outlay. But before you start your quest there are some questions you need to consider and perhaps more importantly answers you need to know before you buy.

What is the best minibus to buy?

There is plenty of choice for the buyer but the answer is a little easier. Choose the minibus that is within your budget and best meets the needs of your organisation. Assess your transport requirements for today as well as in the future when considering your purchase. Seek advice from specialist independent minibus suppliers. They often offer the most flexible solutions providing tailor made minibuses for organisation including flexible seat systems that can be fixed or removable when storage or additional seat capacity is required. They can also

provide practical and impartial advice on the best size, type and manufacturer for your particular requirements.

Who will be able to drive it?

Driving licence rules changed in January 2013. Any person with a current driving licence showing a D1 category can, subject to insurance, drive a minibus with up to 16 passengers (on a voluntary basis not for hire or reward). Current licence holders showing B category can only drive a minibus up to 3,500kg in weight but must be over 21 and have had their driving licence for a minimum of 2 years. However, new licence holders passing their test after 19th January 2013 will only be allowed to drive a vehicle with up to 8 passenger seats and the vehicle must not weigh more than 3,500kg.

New or used?

If a new minibus is out of the budget then a used or pre-owned vehicle may be the only option. However, they can be exceptionally good value. Many specialist school minibus suppliers often contract their minibuses to schools and academies and at the end of the plan will take back the vehicle into stock. These vehicles often have low mileage and have full service histories with the supplier. The minibuses are then fully refurbished prior to sale and normally offered with 12-warranty. Some suppliers will even transport the vehicles for demonstration on site if required, prior to any decision being made, allowing you to try before you buy!

Mobility access?

For many organisations occasional wheelchair/mobility access will be part of their buying criteria. Today wheelchair kits are available with the most popular offering storage for the ramps within the minibus and quick release/removable seats to easily make way for a wheelchair

occupant when required. Specialist suppliers can offer custom build solutions; finished in colours and livery of your specification and depending on the supplier these new minibuses may even have the option of complete or a specified number of removable seats. Allowing even greater flexibility, providing multi wheelchair space or additional luggage areas as and when it is needed.

Finance

To assist with your purchase there are now available a wide choice of financial options to choose from including Lease and Purchase Plans as well as the traditional outright purchase. However Contract Hire is now a popular choice for many organisations, allowing a fixed monthly rental to be set aside and with the exception of fuel and insurance, no additional costs are required. Spreading the cost of your minibus over 3–5 years but at a manageable monthly figure, freeing up valuable budget. Depending on your supplier your minibus will normally be maintained and serviced by them for the period of the plan providing extra peace of mind.

Where is a good place to start?

Search online for minibus manufacturers or specialist school minibus suppliers to organise quotations and arrange a free demonstration for those who will eventually use the vehicle, so they can take a test drive. Take up third party references from potential suppliers customers, as these organisations have already been through the process and maybe able to offer time and money saving advice.

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Laying down the challenge

An insight into the unique approach adopted by The Challenger Multi Academy Trust

Since ‘character building’ appeared first on the agenda of Nicky Morgan, and now in the Ofsted framework, many MATS and Academies have taken steps to raise the profile of work to support the development of young people’s character.

None perhaps more than The Challenger Multi Academy Trust, sponsored by The Challenger Trust, under the stewardship of CEO Stephen Chamberlain, until recently Regional Director of Education for the East of England for a large academy trust, and as such leader of one of the highest performing groups of schools in the trust and the UK with three outstanding schools and two teaching schools within the group.

The Challenger Trust was spawned from the Tui-owned World Challenge, in its heyday market leader in leadership expedition programmes for 6th Formers. The previous owner of World Challenge, Charlie Rigby, CEO and Founder of The Challenger Trust, is a self-styled champion of pupil development outside the classroom. The Challenger Trust seeks to promote, commission and evaluate leadership programmes, primarily for children from challenging backgrounds; he states “the children stand a greater chance of success in life as a result of these new activities they have been able to experience. We believe they will achieve more than they ever thought possible and

may well outperform their middle-class counterparts, given half a chance”.

The first three ‘Challenger Academies’ have recently converted in Bedford, and more are expected to join the Trust, alongside others that are under independent Governance, but subscribe to the Challenger philosophy. These include Djanogly School in Nottingham, LEAD MAT, and CORE MAT (Birmingham).

All these schools subscribe to the ‘Challenger platform’, which responds to initiatives such as Framework for Character Development (University of Birmingham Centre for Character and Virtue) and Whole Education, but is more focused on systematic delivery than ideology. “Our aim”, says Chamberlain, “is to broaden and deepen activity levels in extra-curricular activities (such as sport and music), co-curricular activities (which supports the curriculum) and curricular activities (such as compulsory field trips).

Challenger Schools are supported by The Challenger Trust’s partner organisation, Contour Education, which procures better value in respect of both cost and educational content of these activities. This approach also reduces the logistical burden on school staff, enables schools to collaborate, programme joint activities such as sports leagues and share best practice.

All pupils follow an impact-measured Diploma, and The Challenger Trust is

working towards an entitlement of one-hour per day, two-days per term and one-week per year devoted to activities and programmes that develop attributes. The focus is on empowerment through pupil-to-pupil supervision, based on a model of ‘My Journey’. Individual targets are set, mapping out their ‘Journey’, and personal progress is updated and recorded as they progress from year to year within a secure, web-based impact measurement portal.

Although The Challenger Trust is always seeking to source best value for schools and keeping costs to a minimum, more activities would usually mean more total expense for schools. However, this is addressed within the programme as pupils complete the Enterprise Module, which gets them working as individuals and as groups to raise money for their activities, while also learning valuable skills for later life. In addition, The Challenger Trust works with schools to help tap into funding streams and will also selectively support schools financially that are committed to the programme.

CMAT CEO Stephen Chamberlain comments: “our strategy is to provide more for less, to embed enrichment deep into the curriculum and thus into the lives of our pupils. A quality education should be a given these days, we are aiming to go a step further and respond to Nicky Morgan’s call for character building by providing our pupils with the attributes and the skills to succeed.”



Education: the rock and roll years

Ageing rocker Les Walton reminisces



1965

'Teaching Practice' was a nervous time. What type of school would we get? Would we be welcomed by the staff and most of all would we have credibility with the children?

This was a period in which students were often seen as bringing in new teaching styles that were less authoritarian and hierarchical than the traditional teacher scribbling on a blackboard. Today, tastes have swung back, and it is fashionable to denigrate those alternatives as so much hippy nonsense.

However, traditional standards were still being maintained. We were given clear directions on how we should speak and behave in a school. In particular the male students were expected to wear a jacket and tie and the females were told to wear bright colourful dresses – to 'cheer up the child'. In most schools it was unacceptable for a female teacher to wear trousers.

A regional accent was unacceptable. Together with my good friend, John, the son of a Yorkshire hill farmer, I was required to attend elocution lessons. John had a strong Yorkshire accent and I was, as usual, spouting Geordie. After John had tried to defend his right to maintain his accent he was told to be bilingual and speak the 'Queen's English' when in schools. John argued he already was bilingual. 'Thou 'ast te hear me when am at yem'

was his defence. (translated as "You have to hear me when I'm at home"!)

I, of course, switched into a version of posh Geordie which was maintaining the same accent but injecting the occasional big words such as iconoclastic. Being considered the sensible one of the duo I was 'put in charge' of John and placed in the same school for teaching practice.

On the first day at school I arrived with my carefully prepared 'visual aids', which were mainly large sheets of paper with diagrams. John arrived with a sheep. I had never been up close to a fully grown sheep. This wasn't just any old sheep. It was a Swaledale. A thick coated, black faced, curled horned, off white, smelly, sticky, animal. John had succeeded in leading the sheep into the school and was waiting in the classroom excited to show the children his surprise. As I entered the building crowds of children were outside the classroom trying to get a glimpse of the sheep.

Unfortunately John's brilliant 'visual aid' did not go down to well with the Headteacher. Within ten minutes of arrival John and I were packed off back to College. I never saw the sheep again.

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