



Academy magazine

Volume 5 Number 3 Summer 2016

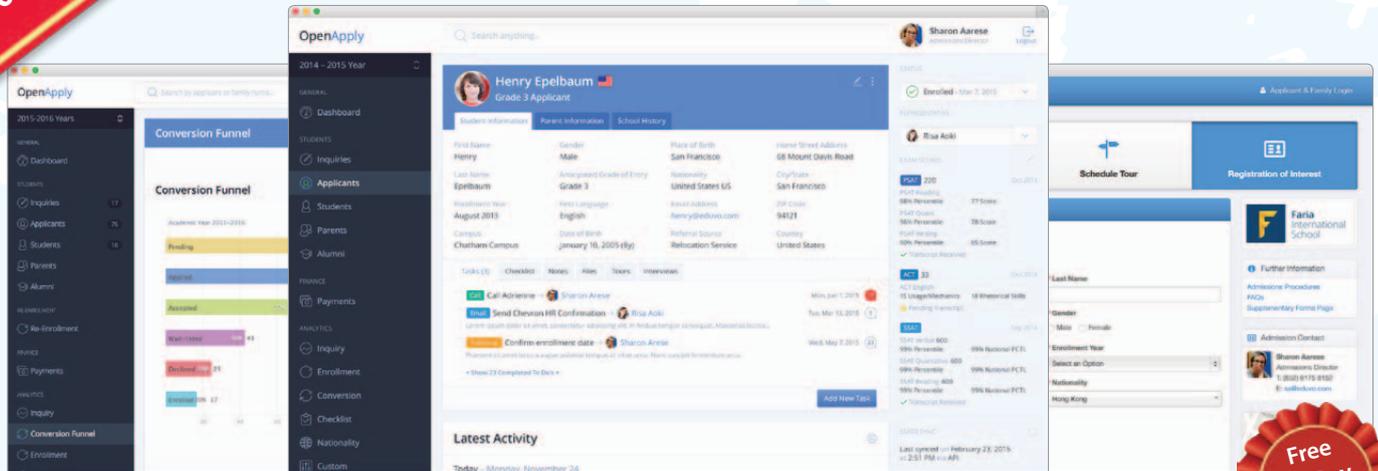


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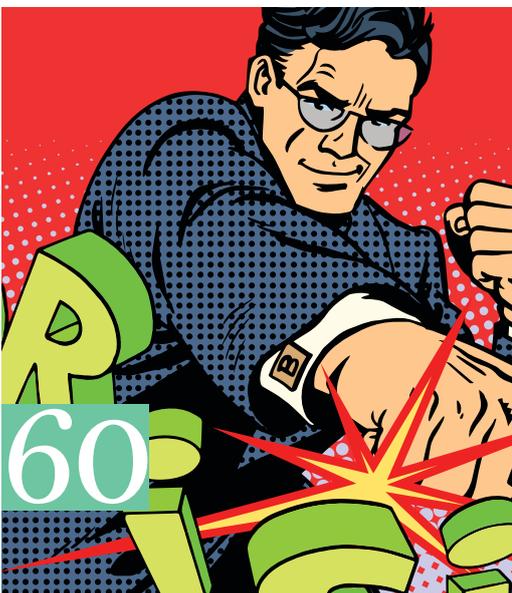
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I am delighted to be taking over as editor of *Academy Magazine* from Peter Beaven. Peter has skilfully presided over this publication for the last 3yrs and I would like to take the opportunity to thank him for the perspective that he has brought to the magazine. My perspective will undoubtedly be different, essentially one of a business woman at heart who has spent the last 12 years working in state education within the academies' sector.

So in introducing my first edition, let's reflect on what has happened to influence and shape its content, since the circulation of our last magazine at the beginning of last term. All quiet on the western front? I think not. Amongst everything else that is going on, the Government has launched its long awaited first stage consultation on the move towards National Fair Funding for which FASNA has campaigned hard. FASNA members were fortunate to hear the government's perspective first hand from Sam Gyima, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Childcare and Education, at the launch of this consultation at their Spring National Conference in London in March. There will, as we know, be winners and losers in this move, and fairness in funding has to be the right way forward, but unpicking

what has historically evolved is highly complex. As Lucy Powell, Shadow Secretary of State for Education said in her words of caution at the same FASNA event, 'the devil is in the detail'. This edition of the magazine allows us to hear more from the Minister about the government's perspective on school funding.

We have also had the announcement of the White Paper. Those that are pro-autonomy will applaud the general direction of travel and yet raise some concerns about the proposed rate of change and whether or not there is sufficient capacity in the system to achieve this ambitious timescale. We are fortunate to have the new National Schools Commissioner Sir David Carter's response to some of those key questions together with the views of Tom Clark, FASNA Chair on the implications of this move. We also hear from Lucy Powell, who takes the opportunity to express the opposition's views on some of the flaws that they believe are inherent within the government's proposed move to full academisation.

What I have learnt about the world of state education over the years is that things are constantly changing. Whilst we would all support the national raising of the bar, such



The FASNA Spring Conference in London

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apparently relentless high levels of very challenging change, puts both the system and those leading it under significant pressure and this includes those at the front line in the classroom. In a Utopian world, change would be sensibly phased to enable school leaders to focus on implementing and embedding change, taking staff, young people and their parents with them on the journey. However, as we know all too well, real life is not like this and the title of Tom Clark's insightful piece about what's coming down the track. 'Transformation on speed', just says it all.

There is no doubt that an essential addition to the traditional skill set of the successful school leader is now a high level of expertise in the circus art of juggling the multiple challenges they now face; teacher shortages, curriculum and assessment changes and seeking to achieve more with less money to name but a few.

However, it is important to keep the optimistic and

positive glass 'half- full' perspective front and centre and this edition features some great examples of schools finding positive ways to achieve wonderful outcomes for children despite the challenges. My sincere thanks to all those who have shared their stories with us and, importantly, shared what they have learned along the way.

The profession, having never been one for the faint hearted, thankfully has resilience and persistence in abundance, just those strong character traits that Nicky Morgan has been advocating that we should be teaching children in school. The very best of our school leaders, on whom the success of achieving the aims of the White Paper strongly relies, are the embodiment of the 'Character Nation'. Let's hope that this character strength equips them to play their key role in moving us towards the world class state education system that we need, one which is both successfully led and managed by the profession.

Caroline Whitty, the new editor of *Academy*, has been working in education within the academies sector for 12 years. Initially working on behalf of one of the early academy sponsors, she managed the setup and build of three academies, and more recently fulfilled the role of Executive Director of the Independent Academy Association (IAA). Caroline now works for FASNA, is also a consultant and Company Secretary of The National Induction Panel for Teachers (NIPT).



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TRANSFORMATION ON SPEED

Tom Clark, Chair of FASNA, offers his view on the government White Paper

FASNA entertained a delegation of American 'educators' from Kentucky and Georgia shortly after Michael Gove introduced the concept of 'converter academies'. Their view was that what was going on in the UK was the equivalent of 'transformation on speed'. Imagine their response to Nicky Morgan's consultation on a National Funding Formula and her White Paper 'Education Excellence Everywhere' – my guess is that it would bring about their collective nervous breakdown which seems to be the case with some teacher unions in this country.

FASNA has campaigned for a national funding formula for 24 years and is of the view that the wait is nearly over. These proposals constitute a paradigm shift which properly changes the landscape for school funding for the first time since the introduction of LMS in 1988/89, when the length and thickness of grass in Bolton schools helped determine their funding, as did the depth and width of ditches in Norfolk. FASNA has engaged with Ministers and their 'shadows' over this period and has heard them declare that the present arrangements for school funding are indefensible – this Secretary of State has acted and deserves our support. The first part of the consultation is a 'hearts and minds' exercise which seeks to end the gross unfairness whereby schools in similar circumstances and size with the same factors, for instance in relation to deprivation, can be differentially funded by literally millions of pounds – nobody can justifiably argue for the status quo.

The consultation is presented as three papers – 'The case for change', 'The principles re 'schools national funding formula', and 'High needs funding formula and other reforms'. This consultation will be followed by a second consultation putting monetary values to these principles – that's when the fun will start.

It is planned that there will be a 'soft landing' in 2017 and a 'hard landing' in 2019 but that even from 2017, LAs must pass on all of their schools block funding to schools and LAs will not be able to move money around the blocks. FASNA welcomes these moves.

In the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget statement he suggested that 90% of schools could be on their new budgets by 2019/2020. This would be welcome if appropriate transitional arrangements can be made. The fact is that all schools are 'losing' budget during this parliament of the order of up to 10% in real terms. To introduce a new arrangement at a time of austerity is very ambitious but it is the case that if you are an underfunded school, and have been for generations, the rising national cost pressures compound the difficulties these 'underfunded' schools face. Action is needed.

I do caution against the continuing use of 'lump sums' for 'small schools' and for 'sparsity' and any over-reliance on 'historic funding' patterns by LAs for some aspects of the consultation proposals, and in particular with reference to 'High Needs' funding. This reliance could render fair funding

intentions unfair. High needs funding is the most complex and if anything the most inequitable. Progress will depend upon the active and reliable co-operation of LAs in order for the DfE to try to make coherent their diverse spending patterns. This, it is suggested, may take up to 5 years.

I also caution against over complicating variables around 'deprivation', which can lead to double funding and the laws of unintended consequences, and I have the same concerns in relation to 'exceptional premises circumstances' which are in danger of becoming 'unexceptional'.

Where LA 'historic funding patterns' are used for factors such as 'growth', we must demand that the figures are both accurate and transparent.

FASNA is wary about giving LAs the flexibility to set a minimum funding guarantee. Given the cost pressures on schools, exacerbated by further employers' contributions to 'support staff' pensions announced in the budget, any money retained by LAs from the DSG whether or not agreed by the schools forum, should be set at an irreducible minimum. FASNA would not mourn the loss of school forums when a national formula is established.

In the White Paper – 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' – a landscape is described in which there is a requirement for all schools to become academies by the end of the parliament in 2020, or for there to be plans in place for conversion to academy status by 2022. The speed and



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We also have concerns about the assumption in the White Paper that ‘to retain expertise in the system’ Local Authority employees might re-invent themselves as academy sponsors and set up new trusts, possibly within LAs themselves

determination of government policy is a little surprising and there are concerns about schools’ capacity to lead the system on this scale and timeline – however the policy is clear and ambitious. It places huge reliance on NLEs, NLGs, SLEs and Teaching School Alliances and the accountability framework for trustees of MATs.

We also have concerns about the assumption in the White Paper that ‘to retain expertise in the system’ Local Authority employees might re-invent themselves as academy sponsors and set up new trusts, possibly within LAs themselves. We have to question whether there are the skill sets and capacity to do this bearing in mind that there is no overwhelming body of evidence which suggests that LAs were effective in raising standards in the first place or that they

have been supportive of academies. There may also be a ‘conflict of interest’ in any such LA-wide arrangements. Elsewhere in the White Paper there are clear statements that Local Authorities will ‘step back’ from school improvement.

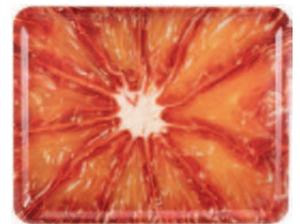
We support the concept and relevance of system leadership in the Multi Academy Trust structures but caution that it may need more time to grow and to mature if it is to be effective. It’s a ‘big ask’ of even established system leaders to provide this leadership effectively on this time scale, with the risk that it could compromise the very best of intentions of government policy, if they are too impatient.

In addition we are told that the government will be more focused on ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘methods’ adopted in the classroom. Three cheers for that!!!

It’s interesting that there will be a more rigorous system of ITT at a time when it is very challenging to recruit teachers, though there will be help with the recruitment of teachers and the cost of recruiting teachers. It is also planned that there be a programme of CPD for school leaders, which will be established for every level of school leadership including governors; greater powers of intervention for RSCs; and a different kind of Ofsted, which is essentially more data driven and more focused on underperforming schools.

These are exciting times, or simply overwhelming, according to your perspective. FASNA will continue to support schools in this landscape and counsel against any sense of schools feeling that they are victims – if you think you are, you will be.

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NATIONAL FAIR FUNDING: 'COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT'

Sam Gyimah, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Childcare and Education, says the Government are committed to targeting resources directly to pupils who need it most



*Sam Gyimah at the
FASNA Spring Conference*

Last month, I had the pleasure of speaking at the FASNA Spring conference about education funding reform. It was a great opportunity to engage with academy leaders to hear their views, questions and concerns about our proposed changes to school funding following the publication of our first stage consultation in March. I was pleased to see that the majority of your members were supportive of our proposals and understood the need to create a fair funding system. However, I recognise this is a complex and difficult issue and I look forward to seeing your responses to the first, and then second stage consultations, before we finalise and publish the changes later in the year.

Education remains at the heart of this

government's social justice agenda. It is no surprise that the budget last month had a central focus on education and putting the next generation first which will support our bold vision published in the Schools White Paper.

The title of our White Paper was "Educational Excellence, Everywhere" but the current system of funding is holding us back. It is out of date, arbitrary and unfair.

If we are to be fully committed to spreading excellence to every area of the country, then the funding system should be wide-eyed to the multitude of factors that impact educational success such as special educational needs, disability and other forms of disadvantage.

The funding system as it stands today allocates money to different local areas based on spending decisions that were made more than a decade ago. We know, from living in our local communities, that over the last decade many circumstances have changed significantly, but the funding system has not adapted to these changes. More simply – the current funding system allocates money to year 7 pupils based on their local area circumstances before they were even born.

This fact results in significantly different funding rates in similar areas, even areas that border each other. Despite being just a few miles apart, the per pupil funding that Hackney receives is almost £1,000 more than Haringey's. When we also consider that local authorities can spend their allocations in hundreds

of different ways, we see that there are countless examples of funding variations that can exist for the same child with the same educational needs. It is clear that the funding system as it stands today is a result of history rather than a product of pupils needs.

This impact was made clear following an IFS review of school funding which acknowledges that some local authorities in the current system are less good at targeting their funding towards factors that influence educational needs. This government is committed to targeting resources, when appropriate, directly to pupils who need it the most – ensuring it has a concentrated impact on their educational achievement. The pupil premium shows our commitment to that approach and our approach to funding reform will be centred on ensuring funding is linked to pupils' educational needs.

The process for funding reform started in the previous parliament. £390 million was added to the funding of the least fairly funded areas. Schools in areas as varied as Devon, Sutton, Bolton, Barnsley, Bromley and Medway all benefited. Previous governments have all accepted that the funding system is unfair, but have been hesitant or unwilling to make the necessary changes. I am proud to be part of a Conservative Government who will boldly address this issue – as a matter of fairness for pupils, parents and teachers.

Funding reform is more than just a structure and system change. It directly influences the money in the hands of

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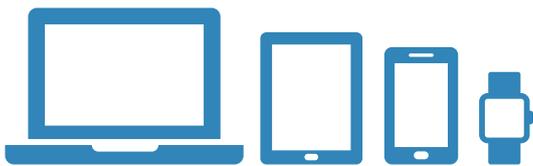


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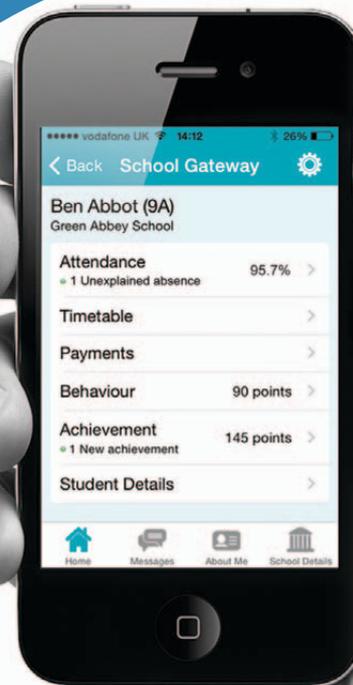
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school leaders and other frontline staff. It will ensure the right resources are in the right hands for the promotion of high educational attainment for all pupils. It is also a policy that is recommended by the OECD who showed that a well-designed funding formula can be the most efficient, stable and transparent method of funding schools. But, more importantly, one of its central recommendations is that funding must be responsive to students' needs.

We know that in areas such as York, which is one of the most poorly funded areas in the country, they have been resolute in their push for excellence with 87% of schools considered "good" or "outstanding". This is proof enough that excellence will be able to be achieved everywhere in a fairly funded system – but they are doing an excellent job despite the funding system, not because of it.

FASNA has always been a supporter of funding reform – and it is with great credit to your members that you have continued to promote school autonomy. Part of that commitment to autonomy is also based on your well-founded belief that school-leaders are best placed to drive innovation and improve the educational attainment of their students. It is for

that reason that it is this Government's intention to move toward a formula where we fund schools directly. We want to remove the local authority middle-man and place funding directly in the hands of outstanding school leaders who know how to use it best.

Our consultation also proposes changes to funding for high needs – which is a more difficult area than the schools budget. We are committed to ensuring those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the additional funding they need to help them achieve their potential. However, much like the schools budget, there is currently only a weak link between pupil need and the total amount of funding the local authority receives

The Department worked with the Isos partnership and looked carefully at their research, which identified a wide variation in the funding between areas, pointing to significant inequity: at one end of the spectrum a local authority received over £15,000 in high needs funding for every pupil with a statement or on school action plus, and at the other end of the range an authority received less than £4,500. A child's type of care and support should not be determined on geography alone.

The pupil who requires a speech therapist in Surrey is no different to the pupil who needs that support in Liverpool.

Funding reform will help underfunded local authorities implement the SEND reforms of the Children and Families Act introduced in 2014.

However, we should be realistic and understand that local authorities continue to have important duties and responsibilities for children and young people with SEN and disabilities, and they need to be able to exercise discretion in discharging those. Therefore, we are proposing that funding is distributed at the local authority level and they can determine the pattern of provision in their area, consistent with their approach and statutory responsibilities.

We think the case for change in both schools and high needs funding is very clear and will be the foundation of this government achieving educational excellence everywhere. The first stage of our consultation remains open until the 17th April and I look forward to hearing your views – so we can together design a funding system that places our nation's young people and their educational needs front and centre.



AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW NATIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

Academy speaks to Sir David Carter about the impending changes to the educational landscape following the White Paper

The Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan has just published a White Paper, what is the main impact for existing academies?

I think the significance of the White Paper is that it brings together many strands of educational policy into one place. It unifies into one White Paper a range of strategies that have sometimes looked unconnected to the system. It makes it very clear that we want to see every school in the country convert to become an academy, or at least to be en route, by 2020. The majority of schools will be part of a multi academy trust (MAT), and existing academies now have six years to grow and extend their influence. So in terms of the academies sector this is both a significant statement and a reform that builds upon both the practice of the original pre-2010 academies and the 5,500 academies that since 2010 have chosen to convert, many as part of a MAT. For those who are working in academies this is about learning from their experiences

to create a new system, where the performance and outcomes for children are paramount. The White Paper provides the opportunity for the best academies to have a positive impact across the system. When the White Paper talks about educational excellence everywhere, this is no longer just about creating structures, this is about supporting autonomy and creating the best structures to underpin a new dynamic system which will deliver better outcomes. Having been a CEO I know that the best decisions are taken by those teachers and leaders working closest to where the impact will be felt the most.

What do you think the main opportunities are for existing multi-academy trusts?

I think there are three opportunities for existing multi-academy trusts. The first one is around the potential for growing those trusts and making them more sustainable and more diverse. This means creating better opportunities for staff and students alike and creating a richer pool of staff. Expansion can certainly be

a positive feature for MATs, their staff and pupils. The potential for good and outstanding schools to join existing MATs to provide school improvement capacity is huge.

The second is that it enables people who are ready to step into leadership roles and move up to the next level, to have more opportunities to do so. I think in five to ten years' time we will be looking at people who are in their mid-to-late thirties who will never have worked in anything other than a MAT environment. So, very quickly, there will be a whole cadre of people who have only ever worked in collaborations. Those people who have been appointed to MATs who are now middle leaders will have an expectation that their next career role, whether an assistant principal or a vice-principal or even a headship, will come about through that trust.

The third benefit is that the strongest MATs are those that take collective responsibility for children in their communities, reinforced by the White Paper commitment that every academy

trust put in place arrangements for meaningful engagement with all parents. This is good for parents as they will only have one relationship with the trust, whether they have a four year old, an eleven year old or a sixteen year old or all three. The potential now exists for a child's primary and secondary school to be within the same organisation. I think that's really powerful because it means you have a new relationship with that family and parents in terms of the educational quality that you can deliver to their sons and daughters.

For chief executives and executive heads who are thinking about where to go from here and what this means for them, what do you consider to be the main challenges?

I don't think the challenges for people who are leading trusts have changed. The core priorities are still about outcomes for children and standards; this has always been and will always continue to be the case. Our best leaders will need to close the performance gaps within their trusts, within their schools and also within their regions as well. There is a continuing level of challenge for CEOs and executive heads in terms of how they get their schools to perform.

Leaders should look to create the best structures to enable their most talented teachers and leaders to have a bigger impact, whilst at the same time identifying those teachers who are not yet consistently good, and supporting and developing them to become good teachers. I think the responsibility that sits on the shoulders of executive leaders is to create a framework that outlines clearly how you develop staff in the trust to give those children better and stronger outcomes.

Leaders must also think about how they anticipate and manage risk in the system being created. One risk concerns my fear that we create a system where MATs become too inward facing. One of the challenges going forward is that trusts

must develop effective partnerships with other trusts. These partnerships could be as simple as just sharing training or sharing CPD, but it could also be about sharing staff between trusts, or about joint appointments between trusts. It could be about joining up strategies for teacher training, or about procurement opportunities for back office functions. An important part of the next phase will involve leaders looking beyond their own trusts.

As part of that, what is the role of businesses and sponsors?

We need our strongest business leaders, particularly when their organisation dominates the economy of a particular community, to become sponsors. The major local employer as the sponsor of education in the community is a very powerful idea in terms of social cohesion. When I was CEO of the Cabot Learning Federation, one of our co-sponsors was Rolls Royce PLC. For me the support and challenge around the delivery of the trust's strategic plan, the monitoring of performance, the holding to account of the senior leaders and the industry standard approaches to managing risk were all examples of the values that I saw first hand working with a strong business sponsor.

Alongside employers we want to find more individuals who understand how to run a successful business to step forward and found new academy trusts as sponsors. The challenge for the system will be that business leaders are most effective when they work in partnership with a great CEO or great head teachers; an outstanding school operating as a sponsor will already have networks to recruit strong leaders but a business sponsor will need to source from scratch someone with the educational expertise to match their business acumen.

The second point is about utilising people from the corporate sector to bring their skills and strategies to strengthen governance in the education system. The Academy Ambassadors programme has

already introduced over 150 company executives to academy trust boards as non-executive directors. As all schools now move to become academies, we want to expand this programme and there is a need for many more high-calibre individuals to volunteer at board level. The core role of the non-executive director is always driving performance, financial stewardship and strategy.

What are the main everyday challenges facing the move to a fully academised system?

The main challenge is the tension between pace and quality. Quality being predicated on the view that the best people to make decisions on education are those that work in the schools, and one of the benefits of academies policy, i.e. that you don't have to follow the national curriculum, is that it frees up leaders, governors and teachers to make decisions about what they teach that is right for their school. Challenge can also bring opportunity with it. This is especially true for primaries, and the large number that will have the opportunity to become part of the move towards full academisation, and to choose to strengthen their links with other local primaries and secondaries, as part of MATs.

The new landscape is breeding people who are autonomous thinkers, who have responsibility devolved to them to make decisions. A generation of leaders is developing for whom decision making is not a challenge; they don't look for permission to do things, instead they just get on with it and make rapid decisions. It is important not to lose sight of this, to ensure we don't move towards an academised system where all academies look the same. It's important to preserve what makes each individual academy unique, be it an area of specialism, their curriculum, the way they organise their day, or the way they plan support staff structures to mentor their children – all these things should extend to the MAT level.



“THE RHETORIC DOESN’T MATCH THE REALITY”

The government’s plans to forcibly academise all schools will not deliver greater freedom or autonomy for head teachers, says Shadow Secretary of State for Education Lucy Powell

Four years ago, the then Education Secretary Michael Gove addressed head teachers at FASNA's 20th anniversary conference and said he had delivered "greater freedom and autonomy for schools". He said he had freed school leaders to raise standards, cut back bureaucracy and would do everything possible to enhance the professional status of teaching.

Since taking on my role as the Shadow Education Secretary six months ago I have noticed many things in the Government's rhetoric on education and schools that frankly do not match up to the reality on the ground.

The reality is that Ministers are simply using language such as 'freedom' and 'autonomy' as a fig leaf. Whilst they claim they are setting head teachers free, instead they are going about imposing their own, often narrow, views on the education system, without a shred of evidence to back them up, and removing the right of school leaders, and even parents, to have a voice in decisions made about local schools.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the latest Schools White Paper. In this paper, the Government announced plans to force every school in the country to become an academy by 2022. I am clear: Labour is not against academies. We support academy status as one option for turning around failing schools. Our sponsored academy programme devoted significant resources and impetus to turning around a small number of failing schools and we're proud of it.

But the Tories' policy is plainly not about school improvement. The vast majority of non-academies affected by the Government's plan will be primary schools, over 80 per cent of which are already good and outstanding. 'Academisation' in and of itself is not a panacea and a whole host of other factors, including strong leadership, the quality of teaching and the right collaboration and partnership working are all key. Just as there are some wonderful academies, there are some

excellent community schools, and also extremely poor examples of both. This Government should be channelling all their efforts into driving up standards across all types of schools.

Nor is this policy about more autonomy for schools. As many school leaders will be well aware, once a head teacher joins a multi-academy chain of schools they cede many decision-making powers over to the trustees and directors. Local governing bodies can suddenly discover they have become merely 'ceremonial', transferring most of their responsibilities to an executive board at the top of the chain. The chief executive of England's largest multi-academy trust, AET, has even admitted that there

want to engage and work with heads to change this. I want school freedom and autonomy, alongside a transparent and fair system of local oversight to support school leaders with any challenges that might arise, to be meaningful. Head teachers should be enabled to use this freedom to make a lasting and genuine impact on raising standards for all pupils in their school.

The next four years poses huge challenges for education and head teachers face extremely difficult choices. There are chronic shortages of teachers in key subjects in parts of the country, after four years of the Government missing recruitment targets and demoralising the profession to such an extent that between 2011 and 2014

As many school leaders will be well aware, once a head teacher joins a multi-academy chain of schools they cede many decision-making powers over to the trustees and directors

is in fact less autonomy for schools in academy trusts, than there is for schools that are maintained by local authorities. And once part of a multi-academy trust, there is no mechanism whatsoever for a head teacher or governors to opt for their school to leave, even if they don't think the approach taken or ethos is the right fit for their school.

We know from international evidence that freedom and autonomy for school leaders is an essential part of successful education systems. But the "autonomy" the Tories try to say they are spreading in the system just does not exist. I

the number of teachers quitting increased by 11 per cent. Class sizes continue to rise and the gap in attainment between disadvantaged children and their peers is now wider than it was when David Cameron came to office.

The Tories' plan to force all schools to become academies won't solve these serious problems.

The full version of this article can be found on the FASNA website, fasna.org.uk



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, QUESTIONABLE ASSUMPTIONS, AND INADEQUATE INCENTIVES

James Croft, Executive Director, Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education, on the White Paper

There's much to be welcomed in the government's new Schools White Paper. From the rationalisation and professionalization of governance; to the development of proper performance measures for Multi-Academy Trusts; to a significant shift in the accountability framework enabling parents to demand more from their schools, it's clear that the government is seeking to bring coherence to features of the reforming school system that have been in need of attention. But on perhaps the central tenet of the reform package – the requirement for all remaining LA schools to take Academy status, and its implications – concerns have been expressed from some unexpected quarters.

The nature of these objections, as my own, is not about the broad direction of travel, but rather the risks that forced conversion, and conversion on the scale and timescale proposed, pose to the efficacy of the reforms, and to the reform agenda itself. On the evidence, the case for increasing school autonomy is generally

convincing and gaining strength, but it's not a panacea, and if it's not done in the right way, and not properly supported by the right incentives, it may not be as effective as it might be for generating the outcomes we want to see, if it achieves them at all.

It's worth reminding ourselves that though modelled on US Charter schools and Swedish Free Schools, Academies are a particular form of government-licensed and funded independent school, evidence of the effectiveness of which is only emerging. This is also true of the different types of Academies, principally 'Sponsored' or 'Convertors', the circumstances of the creation of which are very different. While Sponsored Academies are generally previously underperforming schools that became Academies in order to improve their performance from a very low baseline, Converter Academies don't have sponsors and are schools previously assessed as 'performing well'. Although there's convincing evidence for a marked

positive improvement in outcomes for the former type (pre-2010), it's too early to gauge what the impact has been of those established later and those of the latter type – the Converter Academies. Indeed, researchers are just now getting underway with this project.

It's also important to note that any 'academy effect' is an aggregate effect of a number of features of both the process of take-over/conversion and the new governance, leadership, and management practices introduced as a result, the relative influence of which we don't yet fully understand. For a government supposedly committed to discovery of what works, acceleration of the programme is a missed opportunity to get clear on these issues.

For example, central to the government's structural reform agenda is the conviction that the most important factor for the success of academy reforms is the way they release leadership capital. The majority of Academy heads would probably concur with this view.

Delivery of the White Paper's ambition depends on identifying system leaders at the school-level, and then preparing them and incentivising them to tackle underperformance in the neediest of schools. But despite the confidence with which many leaders speak of the characteristics of effective leaders and of how to identify potential, a survey of the literature suggests that effective leadership practices have to be learned and are embedded in context, and may not be as transferable as is typically proposed. (Consider independent schools' efforts to turnaround failing schools to date – it's a chequered track record at best, but it appears little has been learned to temper optimism on this point.) This being the case, those at the coalface of school improvement estimate there's only a 'shallow pool' of schools with leadership capability and capacity that could be useful in providing support to others.

It's also not at all clear that we have achieved the right balance between autonomy and accountability, with many of those responsible for the system's architecture and leaders in the academy sector now openly questioning the reality of their supposed autonomy. Surveys of the extent to which they're using their freedoms have found mixed results, which many have put down to wider constraining influences. Academies receive conflicting messages from the various oversight bodies to which they are responsible on the circumstances in which it is appropriate to trial new interventions, the results to be expected from them, and to what timescale. Though the White Paper, as Ofsted also, is full of good intentions in respect of supporting innovation, there is nonetheless a pressure to stick with that works and a lack of incentives (and research support) to adopt more radical strategies for improvement. And the benchmarks against which performance is judged, focused as they have been on final attainment rather than educational progression, are both unrealistic and unhelpful for many more challenging

contexts, in which gains are likely to incremental and take time to emerge. If we haven't got the balance right between accountability and autonomy (most concur that the scales are tipped too far in favour of the former), this will continue to discredit the autonomy reform agenda, and to deter development of the sustainable growth strategies that both the Commissioners and the EFA want to see.

There are some welcome proposals for addressing these issues in the White Paper – 'breathing space' from Ofsted inspection following takeover of struggling schools; a Multi-Academy

of promise for the future. The lifting of the requirement for academies to have parent governors in all schools and the addition of the skills test, together with plans to rationalise governance by having smaller schools join chains, addresses one of the most significant impediments to wholesale subcontracting of the business of running schools to education management organisations under the OJEU tendering framework. After an early unsuccessful experiment with this model, the DfE have discouraged other Trusts from trying it, largely for this reason. This may be the government's answer to the challenges of attracting

It's worth reminding ourselves that though modelled on US Charter schools and Swedish Free Schools, Academies are a particular form of government-licensed and funded independent school

Trust Growth Fund, which ought to deter chains from expanding mainly due to the need to achieve scale efficiencies; the promise of joined-up thinking in the development of proper performance measures for MATs – but little has been offered, excepting the promise of seed funding for providers to develop innovative approaches to addressing regional supply shortages, in the way of incentives to encourage excellence as such. These measures are addressed more to basic viability, which makes the plan look half-baked.

A parting thought might offer a ray

the new sponsors that will be required to achieve its ambition of full academisation by 2022. It would diversify supply, increase competition, and be a good and workable compromise (one already favoured by the Charity Commission in the independent sector) on the issue of how schools can be run both profitably and in the public interest. It might also provide the pressure valve schools need to get on top of the many challenges they face in implementing the last round of reforms on what are by any estimation lean resources. If they haven't considered it, they should.

DEVELOPING YOUR MAT DURING THE MARCH TO FULL ACADEMISATION



The Government's intention to deliver full academisation is set to enter its final phase with the publication of the new education White Paper. Nick MacKenzie, a partner in Browne Jacobson's education team explores a number of issues every developing MAT will want to consider

The march to full academisation looks to continue apace. At FASNA's spring conference Sam Gyimah MP, the Education Childcare Minister, confirmed the government's commitment to "moving towards full academisation during this Parliament". The Chancellor announced in Budget 2016 that every maintained school will be expected to have either become an academy by 2020, or be in the process to become one by 2022. At the time of writing, the Secretary of State for Education had just published a new White Paper setting out further details of the next phase of the academy programme.

With somewhere in the region of 15,000 maintained schools left to convert (many of them small schools) and a track record of achieving something in the order of 5,000 academies during the 2010-15 Parliament, there are clearly significant challenges to achieving this aspiration. When you consider that currently there are approximately 900 multi-academy trusts, of which less than 20 have 21 or more academies in them and over 200 are so called "empty MATs" (comprising of only one academy but ready for growth), the size of the challenge becomes clearer.

Whilst the Regional School Commissioners have been busy since the beginning of this Parliament, trying to build capacity in the system by encouraging schools to expand their trust, adopt multi-academy trust status or to become formally approved as academy sponsors, there is clearly some way to go.

So what does this mean for school

leaders looking to develop MATs, or leading growing MATs? One thing is clear, successful MATs of all shapes and sizes are going to be asked to step up and expand their trust. That clearly brings exciting opportunities but trusts will want to take a very considered approach to preparing for and delivering any expansion.

Centralisation of services

Much is made of the economies of scale and savings that can be delivered by working together in a multi-academy trust. Whilst this is true, the reality is that it can be harder to achieve in practice. It is likely that you will need to take a very planned and determined approach to realising significant gains. One issue that can be easily overlooked is making sure that any changes are followed through into your governance structure, particularly your local governance. You can easily undo the good work of getting academy staff to buy in to a change of approach if you forget to update your scheme of delegation and explain the change to your local governors.

Succession planning

The challenge of recruiting head teachers, particularly at primary level has been well-documented over the years. It is likely to become increasingly challenging for MATs to plan for and recruit at the most senior level in the MAT. One key area to consider is how you identify, support, develop and mentor your middle leaders so that they are poised to be the



senior leaders of the future. This is likely to be a strategic issue that will be of genuine interest to your Board. As a starting point you will want to identify what core competencies are important to your MAT and how these should develop as your middle leaders grow into senior leaders. You will then need to consider how your professional development and training programme will support the evolution of your middle and senior leaders.

Setting your strategy and sticking to it

It is important that trusts have clearly documented expansion plans that support the MAT's strategies. With the drive towards full academisation, it will be important that you robustly test potential projects against this plan. Jim Collins promoted in his book "Good to Great" the concept that not doing lists is as important as doing lists. With the changing landscape it is very likely that saying no to potential projects because they do not fit with

your strategy will be just as important as saying yes.

Collaborating in a competing world

A key part of the academy programme is the principle that schools will work and support other schools. This is within the wider context of a range of reforms and initiatives delivered under the philosophy of a self-improving school system (for example the Teaching School programme).

The tighter fiscal climate with the building funding pressures for schools, combined with the enhanced intervention powers for the DfE and the introduction of the coasting schools agenda in the Education and Adoption Bill which will soon receive Royal Assent, undoubtedly add to the challenge.

The current direction of travel in DfE policy is that MATs should grow in a sustained way and ideally operate in a reasonably tight area. This means

that the successful MATs are going to need to be outward facing, developing effective networks of trusted partners that readily provide effective support when asked.

Managing tighter budgets under fairer funding

With the announcement of part one of the Government's consultation on delivering fairer funding, it will be interesting to see how MATs react to the new funding arrangements as they are introduced. Whilst many MATs will operate within the same administrative area with all their schools receiving the same per pupil funding under the current arrangements, there will also be many MATs that operate across a number of different areas, where their academies fair differently.

This will present an interesting



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MATs will want to make sure that they can adapt quickly to circumstances whilst making sure they stay aligned with their long term strategy

challenge for MATs as to how they respond to the introduction of the new funding formula. For example, if MATs simply pass on the per pupil funding to their academies, how will MATs look to use centrally held funds to provide additional support to those academies that need further support to meet desired outcomes (e.g. this could be through providing additional support from central cost centres or providing additional monies to the individual academy's budget). This is a particularly interesting issue when you consider that the consultation has been undertaken on the basis that the government want to develop a system "that is fair and transparent, with resources matched to pupils' and schools' needs consistently across the country". Will MATs and their Boards take the same view as the DfE on this issue where academies are at risk of coasting? The questions this raises could also open up wider issues for MATs as to how they utilise their existing reserves. Trust Boards will undoubtedly want to have in place a clear rationale that underpins its reserves policy and the circumstances when academies will and will not be able to access the MAT's reserves.

Delivering whilst growing

Trusts will need to make sure they find the right balance between growth and delivering at their existing academies. Three recent developments underpin the importance of ensuring that you grow whilst delivering for your existing pupils.

In early 2015 Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education and Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector came to an agreement as to how Ofsted can support holding MATs properly to account for their performance in high quality education in their academies. The 'focused inspection' was born.

In February Sir David Carter, the new National Schools Commissioner announced his plans to introduce rigour into the growth of MATs with a new hierarchical system. Under his plans, there will be a four tier system with MATs having to satisfy assessments before they can move onto the next tier and grow further. The very largest academy chains will be directly responsible to Sir David Carter.

Finally, in March, Michael Carmichael MP and Chair of the Education Select Committee announced a committee inquiry into the performance, accountability and governance of MATs.

In early March, Sir Michael Wilshaw published a letter to the Secretary of State turning up the heat on academy chains drawing on Ofsted's focussed inspections. Looking back at the published focused inspection letters which have been carried out in the first year of its operation (in respect of a number of the largest MATs), there are a number of common areas of focus that any MAT will want to consider:

- what progress have the MAT's academies made?
- the achievement of pupils (particularly disadvantaged pupils).

- how does the MAT collect and review data about its academies' performance?
- how does the MAT review the performance of its academies at an academy by academy level?
- how does the MAT use the information it collects to deploy resources, support and training across the MAT?
- the effectiveness of the MAT's leadership model and its leaders?
- the effectiveness of the MAT's model of governance and its link to securing progress and achievement?
- how realistic the leadership's assessment of the MAT's current position is (strengths & weaknesses) and how well this informs the MAT's strategic plan?

When considering the challenges ahead, the first line of Rudyard Kipling's poem "If ..." comes to mind; If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs ... MATs will want to make sure that they can adapt quickly to circumstances whilst making sure they stay aligned with their long term strategy.

Nick MacKenzie is a partner in Browne Jacobson's leading education team. He has extensive experience of helping schools establish and develop MATs, providing strategic advice and guidance to their leadership teams and Boards

DELIVERING ECONOMIES OF SCALE TO THE BENEFIT OF OUR STUDENTS

Mike Antoniou, Finance Director at the Harris Federation, shares the lessons learned from running a chain of 37 academies

Despite a challenging financial context for schools, the opportunities for Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to deliver economies of scale are increasing.

As providers of state education, we are operating in an environment in which schools are obliged to make significant savings. The question of how to achieve savings without lowering standards for pupils is hugely important to all of us in the sector.

So far, the Harris Federation has been able to protect teacher numbers in all 37 academies we operate in and around London. This has been due, in part; to a series of simple and highly logical initiatives we have put in place to drive economies of scale for our academies.

Last year, we returned over £3 million to our academies, driven by efficiencies in contracts and procurement. Our Principals have ploughed this back into teaching to help offset reduced funding from central government.

Perhaps because of the business background of our sponsor, Lord Harris of Peckham, driving efficiencies has been part of the culture of the Federation since day one of our existence. Although our size certainly helps boost our purchasing power, even when we were just a small handful of academies, we were able to deliver significant savings. The methods we have used are relevant to MATs of all sizes.

How does this work in practice? From procuring school meals to buying stationery, negotiating recruitment agency rates and bringing in IT equipment and infrastructure, having one central contract which suppliers can tender for means we obtain a better deal for our academies. This is not just in terms of cost but also quality, as suppliers seek to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

For example, by having a central catering contract, we are well on the way to delivering a saving of more than £3.5m across a five year period whilst also providing quality food to our pupils.

Similarly, reprographics represent a significant cost for all schools. But through careful negotiation we have made savings that would surprise many in our sector. Prior to joining Harris, some secondary schools were paying in excess of £60k per annum for the leasing of reprographics equipment. As a result of joining the central Harris contract this has reduced to £20k and the cost for individual photocopies is also significantly less.

By bulk buying our IT equipment – including LED boards, laptops, servers and telephone systems – we have obtained even greater discounts for our schools as well as better terms and conditions for maintenance and repair.

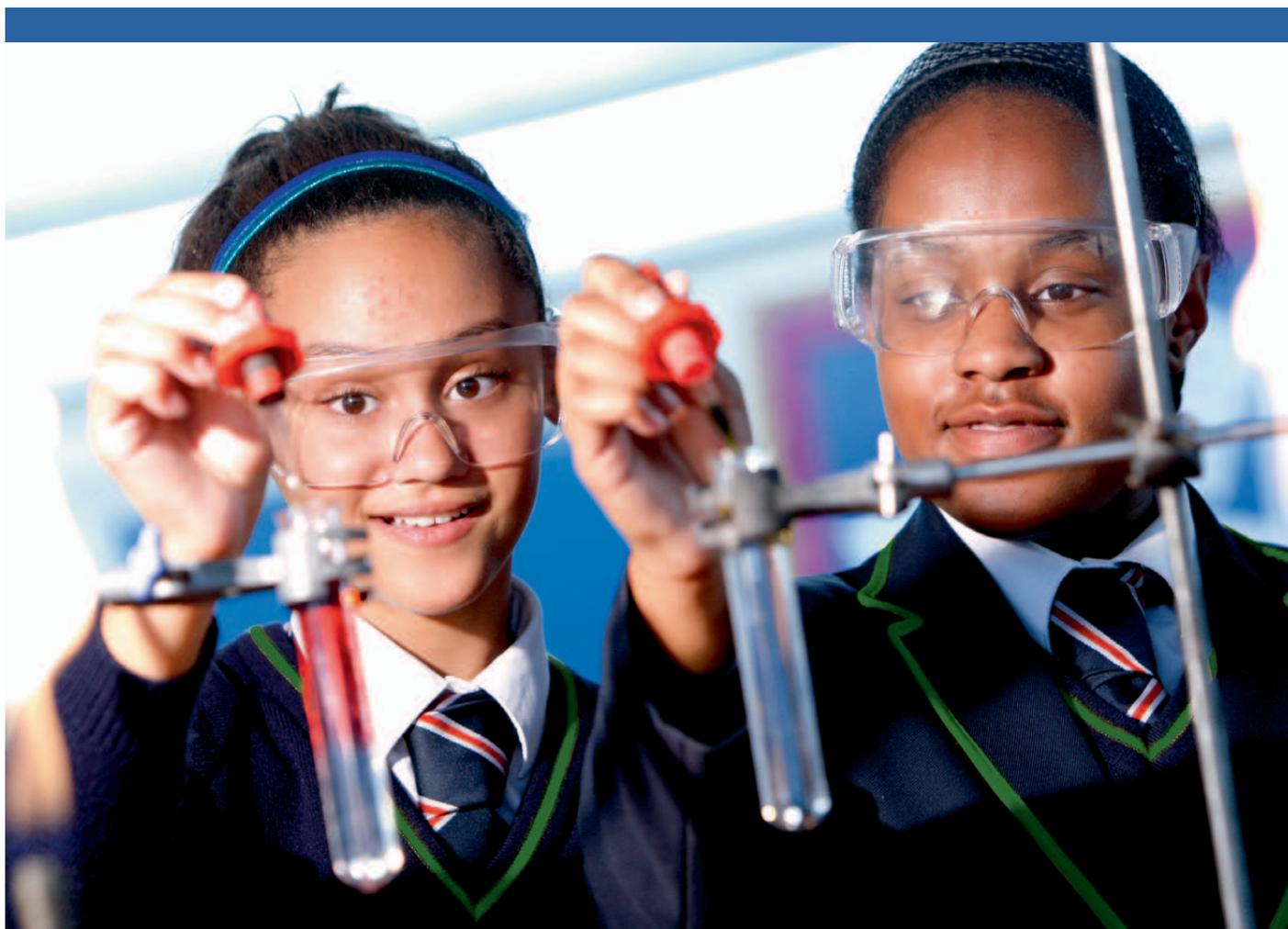
All Harris academies are within 90 minutes of each other. Geographical

proximity has been key to our success, not just in terms of academic standards but also in driving efficiencies. Just as with our central contracts, the savings mean more funds are spent directly on pupils.

For MATs small and large alike, the chance to create geographical clusters of schools is of real importance because it enables the sharing of skilled support staff. IT support is a good example of this. A standalone secondary school might typically employ between two and five IT technicians and staff. But small groups of Harris academies pool their resources to make use of centrally-employed, shared IT Service Managers, meaning a secondary academy can run highly effectively with just one in-house technician.

As Harris grows, we are in a better position to drive efficiencies. For example, from 2013 to 2015 we almost doubled in size from 19 to 37 academies, but we only increased the size of the IT teams across the entire Federation by a third (from 27 to 36 staff).

Our academies make significant savings each year by having shared Finance Business Partners; usually one for every three schools. This removes the need to have a Bursar or Finance Director at each school. All qualified accountants; they provide high-quality support and advice to our academies and in particular our Principals. Our secondary academies therefore require just one Finance Officer with no need for additional finance staff.



For smaller and mid-size MATs wondering where to start or how to streamline their approach, here is my advice:

- The right state of mind is more important than the number of academies in your group. There needs to be an organisational culture that treats the funding available as being for the pupils in your schools. Over time, the idea that the centre of a MAT is key to driving the necessary efficiency becomes part of its DNA, permeates every decision and often raises the question ‘do we really need this?’ Similarly, all suppliers are used to us asking them ‘is this the best you can do in terms of price?’
- Single providers outdo frameworks. Conventional logic might dictate that a framework of providers will deliver the most significant savings. However, we have found that appointing a single provider for services such as catering, payroll, photocopying, Health and Safety, Student MIS etc. is substantially more effective and more economical.
- Serve your Principals and academies. For MAT finance teams like mine, building a good relationship with Principals is vital. Really getting to know and becoming part of their school is the only way to offer sufficiently personalised and high-quality support to them. Our Finance Business Partners meet with Principals on a weekly basis and work closely with them on all financial matters. They prepare monthly management accounts and often we find our governors are interested in receiving them on a monthly basis.
- People are paramount. Aim to hire high-quality, commercially minded central finance, procurement and IT staff. They may not know the schools environment well from day one and so will need a period of acclimatisation. However, we have found that Principals appreciate a business-like approach and the savings it can provide.

Our motto at the Harris Federation is ‘more than the sum of our parts’. Just as my colleagues involved in teaching and learning work together to ensure what they offer is outstanding, all of us in the finance team are committed to ensuring that more is spent on the education of pupils than would be possible as standalone schools.

The initiatives and ideas in this article may seem quite simple, but they have delivered millions of pounds of benefits to our students.

FILLING THE FINANCIAL GAP

Russell Dalton, Finance Director at Pershore High School, on the importance of generating 'other income'

'Education, Education, Education', the famed 2001 speech is now a dim and distant memory and has been replaced in more recent years by 'Austerity, Austerity, Austerity'. But no matter how much we dislike the reduction in public spending to aid the deficit recovery plan, it is here to stay for the foreseeable future and therefore our efforts need to be focussed on how we can help to close the financial gap ourselves.

When we think about income generation, the first thing that comes to mind is the huge amount of time involved in writing funding bids. On occasion, this endeavour can reap rewards, however, how many bids have we written that have not been fruitful? Would our time have been better spent thinking entrepreneurially and looking at how we can use the resources at our disposal, to generate much needed additional income.

To give some context, when I joined the school, some 11 years ago, the budget was in deficit as a result of having to run an ageing school in one of the poorest funded authorities in the country. On arrival, the 'other income' that the school generated was less than £9,000 per annum. I therefore suggested that one

of my initial performance management targets should be to raise half of my salary, and since then I have not looked back. Now our 'Trading Arm' turns over in excess of £600,000 a year and is well on the way to turning over £1,000,000. However, it is important to make clear that this additional income is not there for the luxuries, far from it, it is merely giving us the ability to maintain the status quo, whilst financially keeping our heads above the water.

This level of supplementary income would not have been achieved without an element of risk taking and indeed some investment. However, I have never yet come across a successful business that has not had to do both these things. That being said, I never jump into any



new venture without taking time to write a business plan. These plans have two benefits. Firstly they allow us to analyse whether the ideas will bring the rewards that we expect. Secondly you will need approval from Governors and there is no better way of achieving this than by presenting them with a robust plan where you have anticipated the likely questions. Remember that when projecting likely income you need to be clear about the all-important profit element. When considering a venture, the first thing I look at is ensuring that any related staffing is cost neutral. Once this is achieved, I plan in a 15% profit margin, although in reality, the profit we actually achieve is now nearer to 20%.

Let's look at some of the ways schools can successfully generate income by using their resources cleverly. Firstly there are the facilities that we are blessed with whether new or old. I have been into many schools where I have been

confronted with the statement "our school is too small and we have nothing to offer that anyone would want" and yet I have never found a school where this comment is true. For example, if a school has a grassed area big enough to play football on, then there will be a team that will want to utilise it. A bit of money spent getting the grounds staff to put some lines down will suffice; junior teams will even bring their own goals! Then there is your indoor space. We will all have some space big enough to hold meetings so find out what other local venues charge for this and see if you can be competitive.

However, probably the most untapped resource is the specialist areas that many schools have. Why not have discussions with a local college about your facilities being an 'outreach' or an extension of the college for night school, or summer school sessions. This is a 'no brainer' as all you have to do is provide the facility, the college finds the tutors and recruits the

students and pays you for the privilege! I appreciate that this may be more lucrative for larger schools, however all schools can I'm sure offer their facilities for some activity outside of the school day. We must remember the school is used for its main purpose on 195 days of the year and probably for a maximum of 9 hours a day so consider how you can utilise the rest of the time?

We all know that our best, and most costly, resource is our staff. We have a highly qualified, multi-skilled workforce who could also generate valuable income. As an example, I have introduced Service Level Agreements (SLA's) to provide local schools with business management, IT support, careers guidance, caretaking provision, marketing support, prospectus photography and design and training. The income from this alone generates six figure sums. We are looking at increasing these services to include HR management, payroll, Health and Safety

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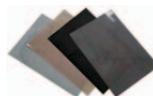
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and property management and are currently in discussions with providers of Education Welfare support and Education Psychologists on how we can procure these services to sell on. Many schools will have some element of their human resource that they could potentially 'sell out', however there may need to be some extra investment in up skilling and even increasing the workforce to enable this to happen. However this 'speculation' brings with it 'accumulation' both in terms of income and a more knowledgeable and motivated staff to work within the school as well as outside it.

If you have school kitchen facilities, you may want to consider taking catering 'in house'. However, be aware that whilst you will probably improve the quality of the provision in your own school, you will only start to realise profits if you begin

to provide meals for other schools. The economies of scale can soon show a good return and with the announcement of free meals for all Key Stage 1 pupils, there has never been a better time to provide meals. For this venture, you may again have to speculate to accumulate, but this can result in an improved resource that is also utilised outside of school hours to generate further income.

Finally, we all have fond memories of our school days and with the rise of Facebook Groups there is growing popularity in school reunions. Why not take advantage of this and form an alumni group and ask ex-students to donate funds to support the school? It is even better if this is done via direct debit and you have set up a charity to receive the donations so that you can also gain gift aid. By setting up a charitable

trust, you will also stand a better chance of being successful with those grant applications that you do submit!

In summary, there is much revenue that can be generated by schools by just looking around us and seeing what we have available. You can involve your staff body in this process as you do not have the monopoly on good ideas. Remember that a good business plan will be critical to whether the idea will succeed or not. Schools are businesses after all and it will be the entrepreneur in us that will prove just how much extra revenue we can generate to assist in managing our dwindling budgets and importantly providing the children with the great education they deserve! So in Alan Sugar's immortal words, 'Give it a try!'

No matter how much we dislike the reduction in public spending to aid the deficit recovery plan, it is here to stay for the foreseeable future

HOW CAN GOVERNANCE IN A MAT DELIVER IMPROVED VALUE FOR MONEY?

Lee Miller, Finance and HR Director at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust

As a Business Manager/Finance Director, at some point you will be asked to show how you are improving value for money within the Trust. As a starting point, when thinking about this, you should consider how value for money is defined. Within my organisation we consider this to be captured in the following statement: “Doing the right things in the right way

for the right cost”. This phrase has come from breaking down value for money into three basic principles:

- Effectiveness – Are you doing the right things?
- Efficiency – Are you doing them in the right way?
- Economy – Are you paying the best price for them?

This structure can be applied to all

situations and recently we made a decision to look at our governance model in the same way.

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) is a Multi-Academy Trust that is based in both Medway and Portsmouth and sponsors both Primary and Secondary Academies. Over the past 2 ½ years the Trust has grown to 10 schools and is hoping to continue an expansion



plan to support further schools. During 2015 the leadership of all academies was under review and Executive Heads were appointed to oversee a group of schools within a geographic cluster (or hub). TSAT had a model that reflected a Trust Board that was supported by 10 Local Governing Bodies made up of various stakeholders that each had decision-making powers linked to their own academy's performance.

Effectiveness

A review highlighted three issues. Firstly, the governance structure no longer mirrored the management structure of the organisation. Secondly, each local governing body was making decisions that focused on what was right for that Academy and had little regard for the wider Trust's requirements. Finally, having stakeholders making the decisions did not always mean that the right skill sets were available to make informed decisions.

Efficiency

The review of the structure identified some inefficient practices. They included: a number of duplications within the structure with each Local Governing Body looking at similar items; evidence of communication failures that existed between the Trust and the Governing Body; and a n over reliance on volunteers. Each Governing Body needed at least 10 members which meant that the Trust needed at least 100 good volunteers to run its governance model (or ask good governors to serve on more than one board).

Economy

With any governance system you have direct and indirect costs. Direct costs associated with governance include the cost of clerking and administrating the various governors' meetings. Indirect costs include the time that senior leaders in the organisation have to give to prepare and attend meetings.

Recognising the above areas, it was important for the Board to agree to review the structure with an aim to improve its value for money.

It was agreed mid-way through 2015 that the Board had ambitions of change before the end of the year and decided on the following timetable:

- June 2015 - Set up Governance Working Group internally
- July 2015 - Commissioned an independent review of current structures
- Sept 2015 - Working Group identified key challenges and discussed options with consultant
- Oct 2015 - Preferred option agreed
- Nov/Dec 2015 - Consultation with current governors
- Jan 2016 - Implementation

The new model

Members (meet once a year): Five independent individuals who have the power to appoint the majority of the Board members within the Board of Directors.

Board of Directors (meet three times a year): The group that oversees the organisation and is the accountable body. Made up of 11 members: six appointed by Members; three appointed by Regional

Governing Bodies; two appointed by their role (CEO and CFO)

Board committees (meet three times a year): The Board of Directors have delegated some decision-making powers to the following committees: Audit, overseeing audit and risk; Finance and Operations, overseeing finance, HR, site and legal; Remuneration, looking after pay and performance management for executive staff; Governance and Ethics , overseeing the self-evaluation of governance.

Working groups (meet twice a year): The Board also appoints working groups that have a mixed membership of directors and staff that advise the board on the following areas:

- Curriculum and standards
- Quality assurance
- Strategic and Development
- Teaching and Leadership development

Regional Governing Bodies (meet three times a year): Three Regional Governing Bodies that mirror the Executive Head structure (linked by geography). They are made up of eight individuals appointed on a skill basis that cover the following areas:

- Education experience x 2
- Finance
- HR
- Estates Management
- IT and communication
- Legal
- Executive Head

A clear scheme of delegation exists

Every school in the trust has improved Ofsted rating and attainment results year on year, but the Trust's governance has ensured that it is in a position to continuously improve efficiencies



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detailing levels of decision making power that exist at this level and those decisions that are retained by the Board of Directors.

Academy Advisory Boards (meet three times a year): Each academy then has an Advisory Board that acts as the critical friend to the Head/Principal. They are made up of interested stakeholders including staff, parents and community members.

The impact

The right governance is central to the wider impact of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust: every school in the trust has improved Ofsted rating and attainment results year on year, but the Trust's governance has ensured that it is in a position to continuously improve efficiencies.

The budget plans for the next year have included the following:

- Savings for clerking costs estimated at

£15k per annum now that a decision has been made that clerking should only be at Board and RGB level. Notes and actions from Advisory Boards are produced by Head's PA.

- Savings for CEO/EHT/FD/Principal's time estimated at £35k per annum due to reduced number of meetings that require attendance.
- Creation of hub based staffing models for some roles are estimated to save £150k per annum. This has been possible as schools now work across a regional group and they are able to share the costs of some leadership posts.
- Creation of hub based back offices will save £200k per annum as each hub now agree to pool resources to support all schools within their hub.
- Efficiency savings from Trust led contracts and savings target for £100k for 16/17 budget will be achievable due to the ability for the Trust to

negotiate contracts at either regional or trust level without having to seek agreement with all Local Governing Bodies.

TSAT has spent significant time and resources in developing this new model of governance and I look on with pride at an organisational structure that I believe is fit for purpose and with the ability to use every opportunity to improve value for money and ultimately divert more resources into transforming life chances for the pupils within our schools.

As Peter Martin, Chair of The TSAT Board, says: 'It was not an easy decision to completely change the way we govern, but it was a logical move, and the outcomes for the life chances of our children and young people have improved because of it. Our Governors realised that change was necessary and embraced the process and I believe that we now have the sustainable governance arrangements in place that our Trust needs.'

THE CREATION OF THE OAKWOOD FOUNDATION VILLAGE

Sam Attwater, Director of Nurseries at the Aurora Academies Trust, talks about the importance of a smooth transition through the Early Years

There is a great deal of evidence that shows the foundations for a child's development are laid in the first years of life. If these years are weak it can have a permanent and damaging effect on a child's longer term development. Their future social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and resilience for learning and achieving are overwhelmingly affected by the quality of encouragement, love and care they receive during this time. Evidence shows that good quality Early Years provision has a hugely positive impact on children's development and longer term outcomes.

Oakwood Primary School joined Aurora Academies Trust (AAT) in 2012 as a result of poor performance, being in the lowest 1% of attaining schools consecutively for 5 years. The Senior Leadership at AAT place high regard and emphasis on the Early Years as a crucial time in a child's education; with this in mind and thinking about the expansion of delivering provision for 2 year olds, alongside the idea of bringing 2 year olds into school, the need for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage working together became more apparent. At that time the Nursery and Reception-aged children were in two different buildings. Our Foundation Stage team had a wealth of expertise and outstanding practice which we wanted to share in a more 'hands on' approach. We were aware that children benefit from a wider variety of experiences so therefore we started to look at how we could achieve this and place all the Early Years in one location.

The opportunity came to take on a Children's Centre enabling us to create a 'Foundation Village.'

Following negotiations with the LA it was agreed that a rent would be paid for the Children's Centre and AAT secured a grant from the LA to develop a Foundation Village (FV) which included expansion of the 2 year old provision. Plans were drawn up to redevelop office accommodation into a suitable environment to house the FV and work was completed by October 2015. The village accommodates 122 children aged from six months to the end of reception class. Senior Leaders gave very careful consideration to the detail and overall quality of all aspects of the village environment. The physical space is designed to be 'home-like' and

calming. There is a sensory room, which is a magical place filled with soothing sounds, moving colours and shapes, bubble tubes and fairy lights you can touch, feel and explore to stimulate the senses. We have a construction room which inspires children's imaginative play and supports all the personal, social and emotional development that will enable them to deal with life's many challenges. The construction room allows children to begin to make sense of their world through creative exploration and to connect with others through collaborative play. We have an investigation room where many different kinds of investigation take place from sliding toy cars down ramps to see how far they go, to building igloos out of plastic milk bottles. These activities can

Great care and attention is taken to monitor and assess progress in a language-rich, bespoke environment that fully engages with the primary school



be left in situ for the children to return to time and again, should they wish to and if their interest remains. All of these areas inspire children to use their imagination and encourage language. All indoor areas lead to the outdoors where the children can explore natural and living things and have freedom for adventure, risk taking and endless opportunities for discovery through grassed areas, woodland and safety-surfaced spaces.

The staff are trained to allow child-initiated learning and groups of children work with their keyworkers or teachers, developing language and cooperation. The recent report, *Lighting Up Young Brains*, published by Save The Children recommended that all nurseries should be led by a qualified early years teacher by 2020. Our FV allows qualified teachers and early years practitioners to work together and to share best practice across age groups. For us, the crucial thing is that all staff are properly trained

to build on child initiated learning at every opportunity. This is particularly important for the 0-36 month age group.

Positive transition is a very important part of village life whether this is home to nursery or nursery to reception class, as we know that 'When small changes are supported by responsive, knowledgeable adults, children will gradually discover that their world is a safe and predictable place. As strong and competent learners, this will stand them in good stead when faced with the challenge of experiencing the bigger changes that will inevitably come their way'. (*Seamless Transitions – supporting continuity for young children's learning – National Strategies 2006*)

Positive transition, of course, relies on us having good relationships with our parents/carers. If they have positive experiences with us and are involved with all areas of their children's time at the village then outcomes for the children

will continue to improve. When parents are involved in their children's education all round attainment is higher, behaviour is better and children have higher self-esteem and improved self-confidence. Building relationships with our more vulnerable families is particularly crucial. Since the 2 year old funding started we have realised that often these families need a lot of support and can be cautious. It is vital that these families trust us with their children and know that we are also here to support them.

Play underpins the delivery of all we do within the village. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Progression in play is reflected through observations, assessment and professional judgement; we have valuable understanding on how each child learns best and support this through child-initiated activities and it is through these

WILL YOUR SCHOOL FLOOD?

AS WE'VE SEEN OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS THE RISK FROM FLOODING IS ONE BEING FACED BY SEVERAL SCHOOLS IN THE UK. WHETHER FROM RAIN AND STORMS, OR FROM MORE UNPREDICTABLE SURFACE WATER, FLOODS CAN CAUSE LARGE SCALE DAMAGE, STRESS AND DISRUPTION FOR SCHOOLS.



In a flooding crisis, the government advises that schools should be kept open for as many pupils as possible, unless there is a risk of injury.

The results of flooding can be shocking – causing significant disruption to pupils and teachers, as well as long-term damage to buildings forcing schools to close, sometimes for many months.

In the past, flooding was perceived to be less of an issue for schools, however weather patterns have changed and more establishments are becoming vulnerable to climate problems. December 2015 was recorded as the wettest month ever on record in the UK, with almost double the amount of rain fall than average, according to data released by the Met Office.

Assessing your flood risk

There are a number of complex factors that can impact your degree of flood risk, and the vulnerability of your school. Knowing how to assess your risk of flooding is very important.

Some indicators of risk include whether:

- Your school is near the sea, river or stream
- Your school is in a valley, or at the bottom of a hill where floodwater could collect
- Neighbouring properties drains have overflowed or been blocked recently.

Whether and to what extent flood protection measures are necessary will depend on the degree of flood risk, and the vulnerability of your property and its occupants.

As a minimum you should investigate the degree of risk to your property using the

Environment Agency's flood map. If your property lies within a blue shaded area the flood map will show the likelihood of flooding as 'low risk', 'moderate risk' or 'significant risk'. If your property does not lie in a blue shaded area, it is very important to note that this does not mean there is no flood risk. There may still be risk of flooding from surface or ground water or a raised body of water not shown on the Environment Agency's flood map. You can access the Environment Agency's flood map at environment-agency.gov.uk

Advance planning

There is no substitute for being prepared. Having a major incident response plan and the support from a risk and insurance partner with the right capabilities is fundamental in helping to manage the effects of flooding.

Flood warnings should act as a vital trigger to this plan. Warnings will vary in severity and organisations need to know how they will react to each scenario.

Anticipating the situation, knowing the actions to be taken, and specifying who will undertake them, will ensure a coordinated and effective response.

Supporting our customers

During the recent floods in Cumbria, Zurich Municipal deployed intensive drying techniques that work much faster than standard dehumidifiers. As a result repairs were less disruptive and the education establishments affected by the floods were re-instated much quicker – minimising the impact on students and teaching.

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that a child's emotional development is supported because they are able to make their own choices. This information informs our planning to meet the needs of each individual child and individual next steps are shared with parents.

Data shows the difference the village has made at Oakwood: GLD is up 43% from 2013-2015. Our data also shows that we have overcome the gap between the most deprived and the most advantaged, as we know the gap can sometimes be as much as 18 months, and tends to become embedded once children start school. Early engagement has helped this outcome. We build strong engagement with our families; we share information

across all services and use this to note early identification and response to a child's areas of vulnerability. We encourage good levels of take-up of the 2 year old places and effective use of Early Years Pupil Premium. We have well-qualified professionals who have high aspirations and expectations for all children and a strong and effective leadership resulting in children's rapid progress to close the gap and ensure school readiness.

The Foundation Village offers opportunities for children to 'work out of year group' and we regularly have children of different age groups working on the same investigation/activity. The

children learn from each other under the skilful direction of the staff, in a non-threatening, purposeful environment, where the child's interest forms the basis of learning. Great care and attention is taken to monitor and assess progress in a language-rich, bespoke environment that fully engages with the primary school. Children 'flow' between the nursery and reception classes in an organised and developmental programme, supporting their needs and learning requirements. All staff and parents are fully aware of each child's progress and 'next steps' on their path to success.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE: WHICH SHOULD COME FIRST?

How would I feel if I was a Deputy again considering applying for a Headship, asks Dame Kathy August



Thirty years in educational leadership has resulted in me being routinised into analysing and setting priorities. However, a recent unexpected health issue has necessitated a break from work and I have therefore had to reorder those priorities! I have chosen to view this as a challenge which also presents opportunity, that of at last having sufficient time to reflect on current education policy. I had no idea how useful this would be. Having recently heard the Chancellor outlining the proposed changes to education, I asked myself, how would I feel if I was a Deputy Head again considering applying for a Headship. Would I do it in the light of these Budget proposals? I eventually decided that yes, I would, because of other musings which I will explain.

The first of these musings was strangely triggered by seeing the film, *Dad's Army*. The film's characters individually display a range of characteristics, none of which would instill confidence that anything they did would be successful. They present as deeply flawed but at each plot denouement, they somehow manage to achieve some sort of success and the

audience is left wondering, how did they do it? The answer is that despite their many frailties, there was complete unity of moral purpose in facing a common enemy. The culture of their Home Guard detachment was one of relentless perseverance and endeavour. The individual leadership of its Captain could be questionable without destroying its vision because the culture was a given.

The second prompt was the article 'Shut up and sit down' (*The New Yorker*, February 29 2016). Its author, Joshua Rothman, describes the evolving theories about leadership since the 1990s. He cites a range of researchers and commentators who attempt to define the characteristics of effective leadership and the relationship between leaders and the led. He posits that people sometimes get the leaders they think they want but soon fall out of love with them. 'People who fetishize leadership sometimes find themselves longing for a crisis'. Certainly this helps explain the Trump phenomenon in the USA. 'By making America's moment of crisis seem as big as possible, Trump makes himself seem more consequential'.

Leadership is big business. Research, qualifications, books, training and coaching have proliferated in education, particularly since the turn of the century and succession planning almost always appears as a top priority for organisations. This is despite a continuing vagueness about what the word leadership actually means. There are as many definitions as there are people writing about it and to an extent, it has become all things to all people. Trait leadership, process leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, heroic

leaders, football manager classification of leaders.... all of these and more have been written about.

Some successful Heads who have written about their own leadership tend to claim that it is their courage in being rule breakers and mavericks which has been responsible for their success.

Charismatic leaders are attractive to those responsible for governance, as it can feel that making the appointment is the job done when of course it is not, it is just the beginning. It is the culture of the organisation which will determine the longevity of its success and not the ability of the leaders to turn a memorable phrase. It is governance that should be the guardians of this.

The version of school leadership which has seen a resurgence and is beginning to dominate, is that of the strong, macho, controlling figure. The outgoing HMCI was quoted when taking up post as recommending that Heads should emulate Clint Eastwood when he was playing the poncho wearing, gun toting, avenging hero figure. On leaving office he has said that Heads need to be 'Bruisers, battlers and battle axes'. This may go some way to explain why the Secretary of State has felt it necessary to launch an initiative to attract more women into Headship. The executive leadership of existing Multi Academy Trusts is in danger of reproducing the pattern of male domination, as was the case twenty years ago with LEAs.

I believe that the charismatic Clint Eastwood figure cannot be relied upon as a system leader. There are enough examples of failure of the heroic leader highlighted by the media to recognise this. Too often it seems, some leaders

forget that hubris is always accompanied, eventually, by nemesis. However, if the culture of an organisation is owned by all and protected by governance, such failure is less likely.

My own experience in education has shown me that successful leadership comes in many forms and guises. I have met many excellent nascent leaders who decide against applying for posts because they believe the narratives of those who wish to promote themselves and the role as shrouded in mystique.

There will always be challenges in public service and each generation of Head teachers will feel that the challenges they face are unprecedented. Rather than focus on the burden of change, I believe the most effective leaders focus on the importance of what doesn't change; the importance of the role of educators, the potential of young people, the value of public service and the satisfaction of bringing on the next generation. Culture and the vigilant governance required to protect it, should be permanent whilst individual leaders and governors come and go. This approach has served the independent sector well and the dominant culture of those schools is palpable as you walk in through the doors. A new Head

teacher in such schools, who chooses to operate counter culturally, tends to have a short tenure. As Henry Ford said 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast'.

But often those who sit around the Board table are alumni or parents who also happen to be professionals whose skills are of value to the governance of the school. Will this be permitted with the changes listed in "Educational Excellence Everywhere"? It seems odd that parents can demand a new Free School but they won't be able to be parent governors.

Making the leadership of the most challenging schools more secure and so, more attractive, is very welcome. However, many National Leaders of Education lead Teaching Schools which do not match the nomenclature of challenging, so how are these leaders sufficiently informed and experienced to support, monitor and check progress in the hardest to run schools? Teaching Hospitals, on which the Teaching School model is based, treat the most complex and challenging medical conditions. This is very different to TSAs.

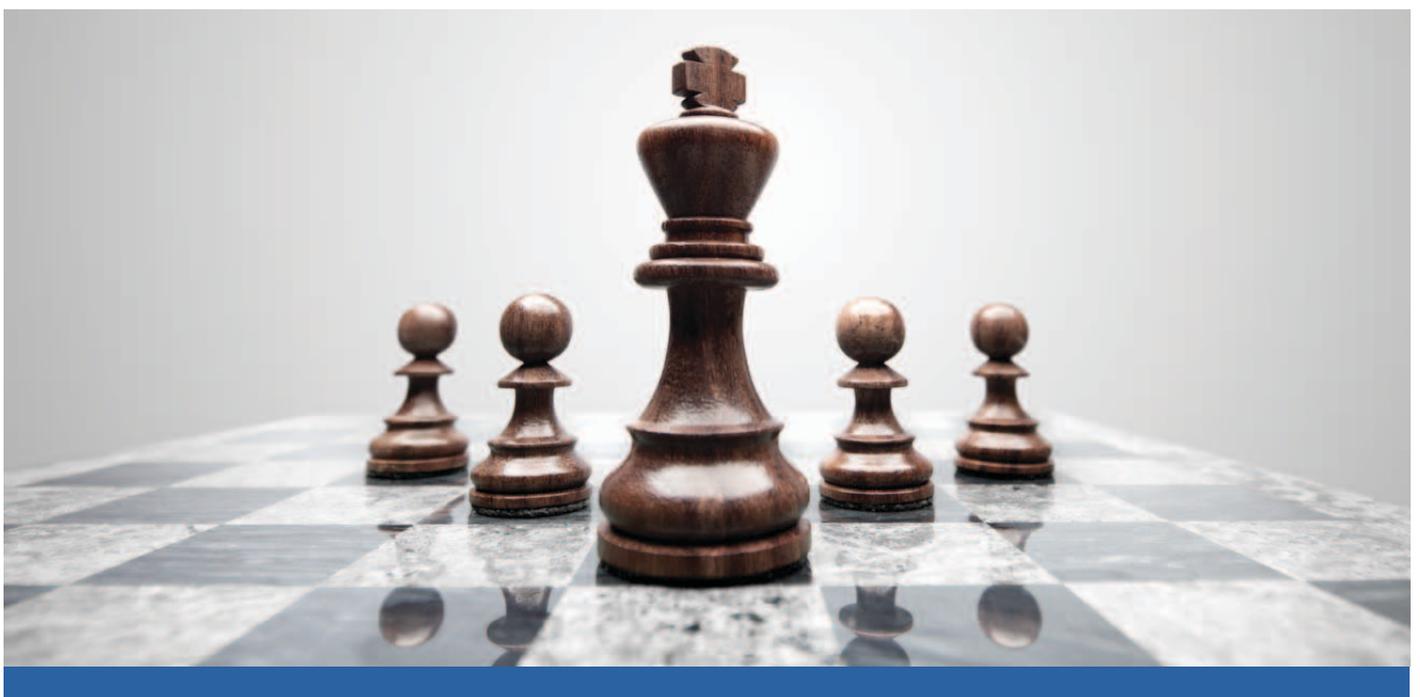
In the state sector, many newly arrived Head teachers give little thought to the importance of the school culture, its symbols and traditions. Even when no

immediate change takes place, there is a need for a new leader to demonstrate care and attention to the culture so that when change happens, it is seen as a strengthening rather than a dilution of what has gone before. In the original City Academies, what had gone before needed to be forgotten but that is not the case with academies now and when all schools have been converted.

'Show me a school where instructional leaders constantly examine the school's culture and work to transform it into one hospitable to sustained human learning, and I'll show you students who do just fine on those standardised tests' (Roland Bartes -*The Culture Builder*).

So, for all those aspiring and newly appointed School Leaders, as well as this battle weary one, I return to an earlier reference and urge 'don't panic' as public education is not 'doomed' although it can often feel that it is under attack.

In a 30-year career in education, Kathy August has been a Head, CEO of a Local Authority, Ofsted inspector, Senior Education Advisor at the DfE and CEO of an academy trust



THE DEATH OF THE HERO-LEADER

In this extract from her new book *High Challenge, Low Threat*, Mary Myatt argues that the best school leaders shun the limelight to allow others to shine

There is a fundamental flaw with the idea of a hero leader and it is this: when they are gone, they are gone. They are often parachuted in to save failing organisations and are expected to have superhuman powers to fix everything. But while exceptional leaders are able to galvanise, refocus and get everyone moving on the right lines, they cannot do it alone. Something important happens when top leaders recognise this. They regularly ask themselves, 'If I weren't here to do this work, what would happen? How would the organisation continue to thrive? What happens if I go away? How strong are the systems for continuing improvement?'

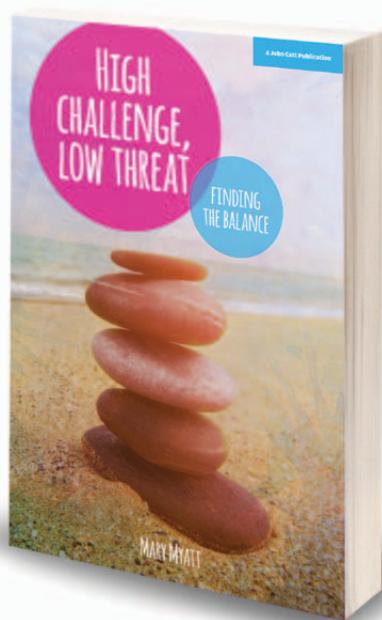
Sensible leaders do not play into the myth of hero leadership, because they recognise that this can create an environment of high challenge and high threat. They know that an organisation is bigger than them. And they treat as high priority that everyone working in that organisation has a sense of agency and purpose. While they take the lead in clarifying values and mission statements, they don't just leave them as words concocted by themselves and a small team. They offer a draft of a vision and ask for it to be commented on. They ask, 'How does this ring true for you? What do you think needs to be in the statement? How easy or difficult is it going to be to live this day in and day out? Even when the going is tough? What happens when we fall short? How comfortable are you with telling me that I have fallen short? To what extent are we all leaders?'

Conversations like these open up the territory of leadership to a new space, one which is owned by everyone, one which is articulated by everyone in their own words. One that says we are all prepared to be held to account. The expectation here is that the mystique of leadership becomes broken down so that it is meaningful and owned by everyone. Thoughtful leaders make a point of doing this at key points in the year, often at the start of the year and revisited briefly on professional development days. And questions again are asked: 'To what extent are we living and working out our values? Where have we got this right? What are our students saying about our values? Can they talk about them in their own words? Can everyone in this setting talk about the values?'. That includes all adults

who work with young people, the support staff and it includes the lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff, caretakers and cleaners. Because all are involved in this community, and everyone's voice counts.

Such leaders understand that the quickest, deepest way to begin to break down the myth of hero leadership is by talking and unpacking the school's values. They know that in many settings these are delivered from on high, written into the prospectus and on a website. But the deep work of making sure that these resonate with every individual is not done. The investment of a small amount of time to get this right pays dividends because it begins to distribute the leadership across all areas of school life.

What are the things that remain on the agenda for top leaders who want to shed the hero label. Well, the tough work of prioritising a school's work, particularly that of improving outcomes for students, is theirs. And their job is to refine this, make it as simple as possible and to make it concrete. The overview of the performance of a school is the leader's work and their analysis. And effective leaders translate this into concrete, manageable pieces of work to be addressed. They know that it is important to give the overall picture, but they are careful not to overload with detail, unless requested. So, the headlines of the school self-evaluation form are shared with all staff. It is made explicit what the priorities are for their work. They make it clear that while these are the headlines, they are welcome to ask for more detail. But





most people want to know what are the priorities and what do these mean for my work? My daily practice? The clarity which comes from concrete examples is very powerful. It means that staff know what they have to do, that they can report and reflect on how well that is going and that they know it will be checked when leaders are going in to classrooms.

The third thing which top leaders do to move away from the notion of hero leadership is that they make a conscious effort to move away from fear. Fear inhibits high quality performance. When people are acting from fear, their higher level cognitive functioning and clear thinking are clouded. This relates back to the early days of our history when

physical threats meant that we had to close down certain parts of our brain in order to escape and survive.

The legacy of that remains when we are afraid that we are going to be unfairly judged, that a small part of our performance is going to be taken as the whole, that we are going to be hauled up and humiliated over something. When we are in this space, we are not able to think clearly and purposefully. So the key things we are meant to be working on, the school priorities which are going to make a difference to outcomes for students, get lost because self-preservation trumps. This is not unreasonable. Thoughtful leaders realise that this can happen and work to create the conditions where fear takes a

back seat and where true flourishing can take place. This means that it is OK to make mistakes and to keep trying because no one is going to be humiliated.

To get to this space, top leaders talk openly about their own struggles, the fact that they don't have all the answers. When the fear factor goes, the hero leader steps out of the way to allow colleagues to become leaders in their own right.

Mary Myatt has been teaching, advising and inspecting in schools for 20 years. Her new book *High Challenge, Low Threat* is out now, published by John Catt Educational

LEARNING THE ART OF COLLABORATION: CREATING AN EFFECTIVE ESTATE STRATEGY

Claire Maclean, Executive Principal, explains the Tudor Grange Academies Trust approach to estate management

Tudor Grange Academies Trust operates two primary, one all-through and three secondary academies in Leicester, Solihull, Warwickshire and Worcestershire giving an estate totalling over 41,000m². The academies have a combined pupil capacity of 4,950 and employ a team of over 400 teachers and management and support administrators.

The Trust's vision is to be the provider of choice in the communities they serve with a high quality educational experience for each child in its care. Its ambition is to be recognised as one of the three highest performing MATs (Multi Academy Trusts) in the country. The estate is inextricably linked to this ambition.

Being part of an academy trust has

meant that leaders in schools have had to learn new skills to manage activities that were historically the responsibility of the local authority. When it comes to estate management, it is easy to forget that teachers are not planners or architects or facilities management professionals, and neither do they have experience in those areas.

Tudor Grange Academies Trust is no different to other trusts in that regard. Like other trusts, it has inherited buildings that are not always fit for purpose either from a condition perspective, or in relation to the needs of the curriculum. The estate management regimes themselves were disjointed with variable standards of service performance and cost depending on the local authority that previously managed them. The

combination of a skills gap in the leadership of the Trust, inefficiencies in service delivery and the condition of the buildings, have brought the importance of understanding the impact of the estate for effective learning, into sharp focus.

Plugging the skills gap

The Trust recognised the need to work with experts in the field of estate management: not least because the scale of the task to improve teaching and learning environments was significant. Take one failing secondary that was integrated in to the Trust's portfolio where only 16% of students were achieving five A* – C GCSE grades (including English and maths). The estate was just one aspect that would have to be addressed in order to align this academy

Creating an estates strategy was essential to ensure that not only is the SCA spent on aspects that have the most impact on the Trust's vision for the organisation, but that there is a coherent approach to managing the estate

The Trust managed a new build project on the Worcester site, as pictured, with Kier. Its own design team created the design principles for the school and they now work across all sites. Creating an estates strategy for the Trust provides the means by which high standards can be maintained in all the schools



to the Trust’s vision of excellence.

Working with Bellrock to create an estate strategy has been a vital step in the process. Due to its size, the Trust is eligible for school condition allocation (SCA) awarded on a three year cycle to enable the Trust to take a long term view of condition improvement. All funds must be spent within the allocated funding year with any surplus being returned to the EFA. Of course with 55 trusts receiving funding in 2015 and 84 in 2016, there will be inevitably increased competition; not least since the government released its plan to expand the academy programme across the existing local authority portfolios.

Creating an estates strategy was essential to ensure that not only is the SCA spent on aspects that have the most

impact on the Trust’s vision for the organisation, but that there is a coherent approach to managing the estate. The strategy is designed to determine the priorities for the next five years, moving from a piecemeal and reactive approach to a pro-active, transformational plan aligning the environment to support the ambition of students, teachers and the Trust’s leadership.

Bellrock has put the educational requirements of the Trust at the heart of the estates strategy. Using technical expertise and insight to plan the changes required, the Trust is planning for a modern, fit-for-purpose estate that supports the delivery of a high quality educational experience, including creating a solid foundation for future development.

Buildings old and new

The Trust strongly believes that there is a direct correlation between successful outcomes for students and the environment. The condition of the estate has been determined by a five-facet land and property appraisal, conducted during the summer of last year by the Bellrock team. The appraisal determines the fit- for- purpose nature of buildings in terms of use, condition and compliance measured against the following five facets;

- Physical condition
- Curriculum suitability
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standards; akin to brand guidelines for buildings. Aspects for consideration range from designing an environment to provide a mature, professional and aspirational setting which ensure students always feel special, to enhancing the existing building stock and inspiring pride within the academy and the wider community, considering the use of daylight and creating inspirational, appropriate, flexible and adaptable spaces to suit the current and future needs.

The use of experts in this field, such as Bellrock, has helped the Trust to review the estate with clarity and to challenge convention. An exercise in analysing the flow of students in one school, resulted in a plan to relocate the art and design departments, improving cohesion with the rest of the learning environments. Other projects include the creation of lead-lesson suites, particularly useful to maximise the use of outstanding teachers,

as well as creating a masterplan for an outstanding school with a requirement to increase pupil capacity by over 15%.

Maintenance and compliance

The Trust inherited over 30 maintenance and service contractors that had historically managed the buildings. These ranged from CCTV operators to grounds maintenance and maintenance of fire alarm systems. The estates strategy outlines how the Trust could rationalise contracts so that service level agreements and costs, compliance and a preventative maintenance plan, could be managed more efficiently.

Part of the maintenance regime is, of course, to review the opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint and energy costs. Comparison with industry benchmarks demonstrated that significant improvements can be made to how energy is used, particularly

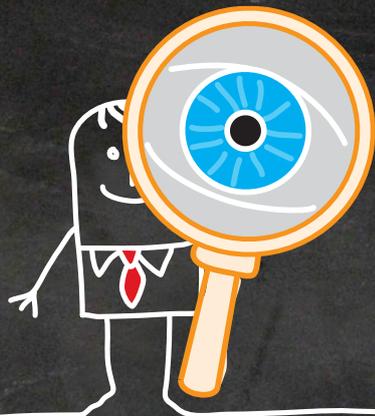
electricity, as this equates to 53% of all energy spend across the Trust.

As the academies programme expands across the UK, clear expectations are being set by Government and parents. Improve teaching standards, accommodate fluctuating student demographics, reduce financial deficits and integrate changing curriculum guidelines. The task is a tall order and so making the most of tangible assets to support all of these goals is unquestionably essential.

We have to be brave and mature enough to call on experts to think how that might be done and help execute the plan to create outstanding environments to educate and inspire our children.

**Claire Maclean – Executive
Principal, The Tudor
Grange Academies Trust**

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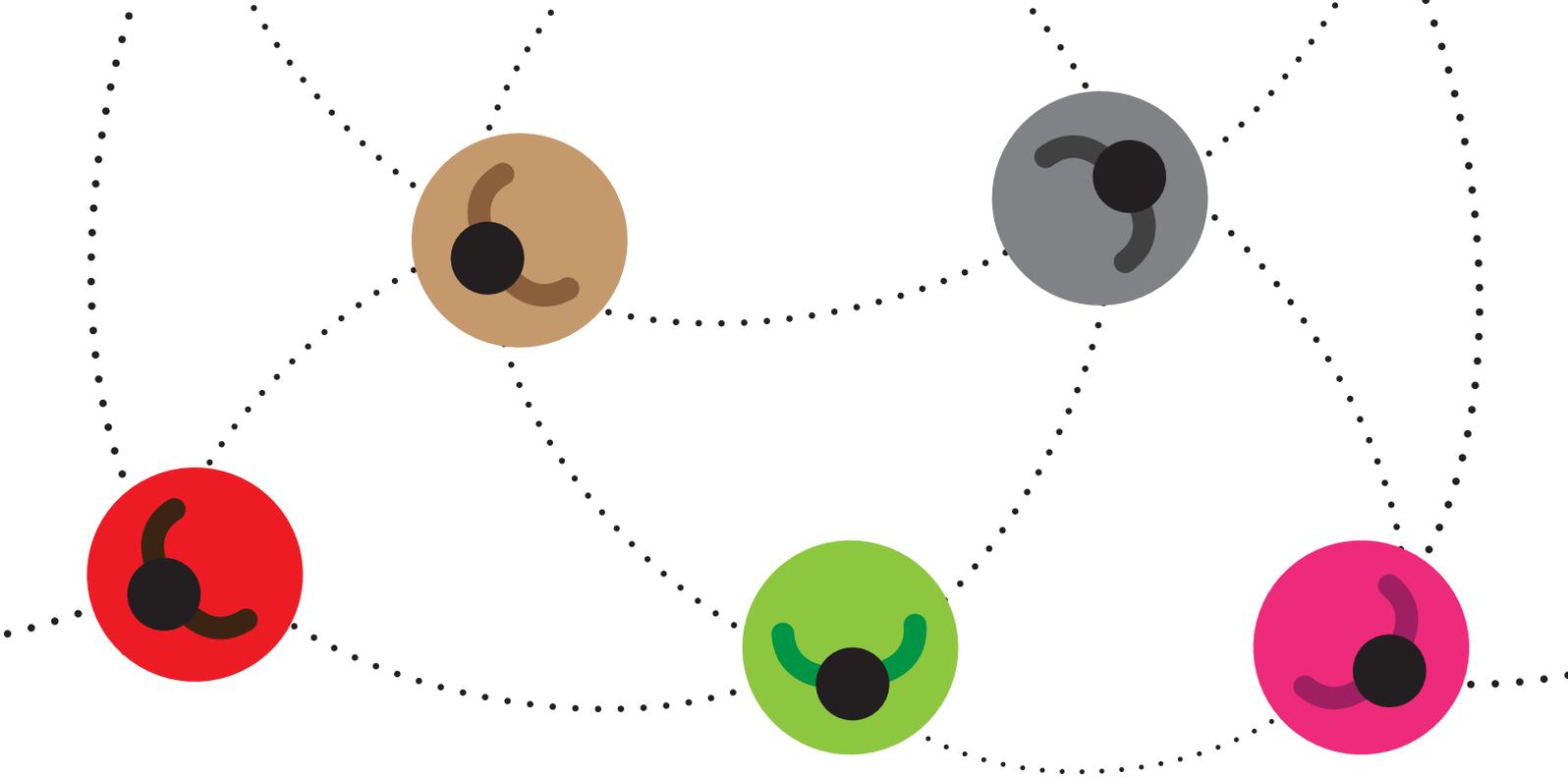
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‘IMAGINING THE FUTURE IS A KIND OF NOSTALGIA’

Rebecca Clark, South West Regional Schools Commissioner, urges school leaders to seize the ‘unparalleled opportunity’ to redefine education and to create meaningful collaborations between schools of all shapes and size

Education leadership is a club where moral imperative provides an energy for continual improvement. The very best leaders in education do it differently; they are restless and relentless. Our wisest leaders know that the pursuit of excellence is as futile as the pursuit of an outstanding Ofsted judgement but still it drives them; they are engaged in the pursuit of chasing perfection.

As information and certainty have become available at the click of a key, the ability to ask powerful and provocative questions has never been more essential. The best questions lead to tangible results and change, they anticipate the future and shine a light on the ‘road less travelled’. How much space is protected within the wider education agenda to deeply consider some of the big questions we face today? It is not easy to ask good questions.

Ken Robinson once spoke about Death Valley, one of the most inhospitable places on earth where the conditions are so

harsh that very little can survive. Every now and then the conditions change and Death Valley, with all its dormant beauty, comes into bloom. Is the greatest responsibility of our education system, and those organisations and networks within it: how we create the conditions where the latent potential in our schools can be released so that they thrive and our children flourish?

Instead of focusing on these fundamental questions, too often the reaction to change and reform in the education system has generated distractions and false dichotomies. These compete for the headspace and emotions of excellent school leaders. Popular rhetoric would lead us to believe that it would take a very confident school leader to decide not to pursue an EBAC led curriculum, or indeed to abandon GCSEs altogether. Instead, we should be confident that as this current phase of reform matures the system will learn how

to cope with these outliers.

Whereas advancement into new frontiers is a common feature of most sectors, there are relatively few new ideas circulating in education. The far greater number have simply been remembered, reconfigured and recycled. This is partly because the system does not afford schools the space to think and create, to exist in the medium and longer term, or to consider global trends of the near and far future. A curriculum can no longer simply convey the best of what has been thought and said - it needs to anticipate the demands of the world our children will inhabit twenty years from now.

There can be absolutely no doubt that the current diversification (some would say fracturing) of the English schooling system presents us with an unparalleled opportunity which we are probably only just beginning to understand. Of great significance is how we seize the opportunity to reflect

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deeply on the purpose and possibility in collaboration. A school-led system, the middle tier, school to school support, system leaders..... these names and labels are littered throughout literature and conversation in education, but have we really come close to defining them or understanding their different and complementary roles?

This understanding is vital if we are to secure impact, avoid mission creep and develop clarity about our individual and collective contributions. Certainly, all schools need to think about how to embrace autonomy within an infrastructure that supports collaboration. If we are to hold an ambitious entitlement for every child at the heart of a school-led system, there can be no sacred corners of knowledge. Collaboration can be a powerful antidote to complexity but should not be promoted as an end in itself, nor should it exist

simply for the benefit and improvement of teachers.

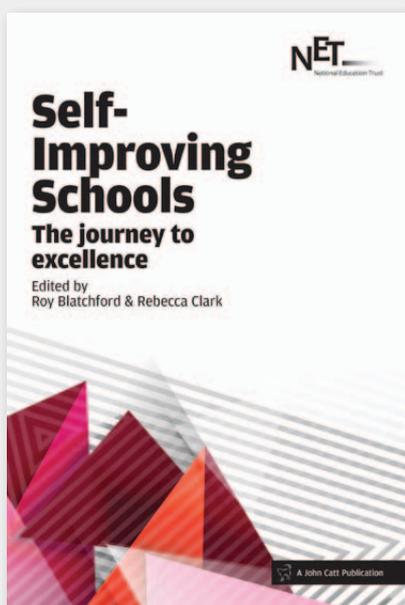
As we move into the future we need to be explicit about the need to consider carefully the design and infrastructure of collaboration. As a system we need to be organised to maintain performance through traditional hierarchies and accountabilities and also redefine the parameters of performance through newly established, agile and nimble networks.

What type of leadership does the education system in 2016 require? What better place than to start than at the beginning, with a simple question - what is the purpose of a school? It is a different question from - what is the purpose of education? School leaders need to think about their answers to both of these questions if they are to act with a clarity of purpose. Self-improving systems build networks which are focused first

on establishing what works, and second think carefully about how they will structure and facilitate learning at scale and across different contexts.

We will only achieve greatness if we work together; if we take all of our knowledge and expertise and turn it into experience; if networks of schools are given the space to develop collective strength, shared responsibility and a global perspective which doesn't look to tomorrow but projects itself forward to the class of 2030.

This article is an extract from *Self-Improving Schools: The journey to excellence*, edited by Roy Blatchford and Rebecca Clark and published by John Catt Educational, £12.99



Self-Improving Schools The journey to excellence

Edited by Roy Blatchford & Rebecca Clark

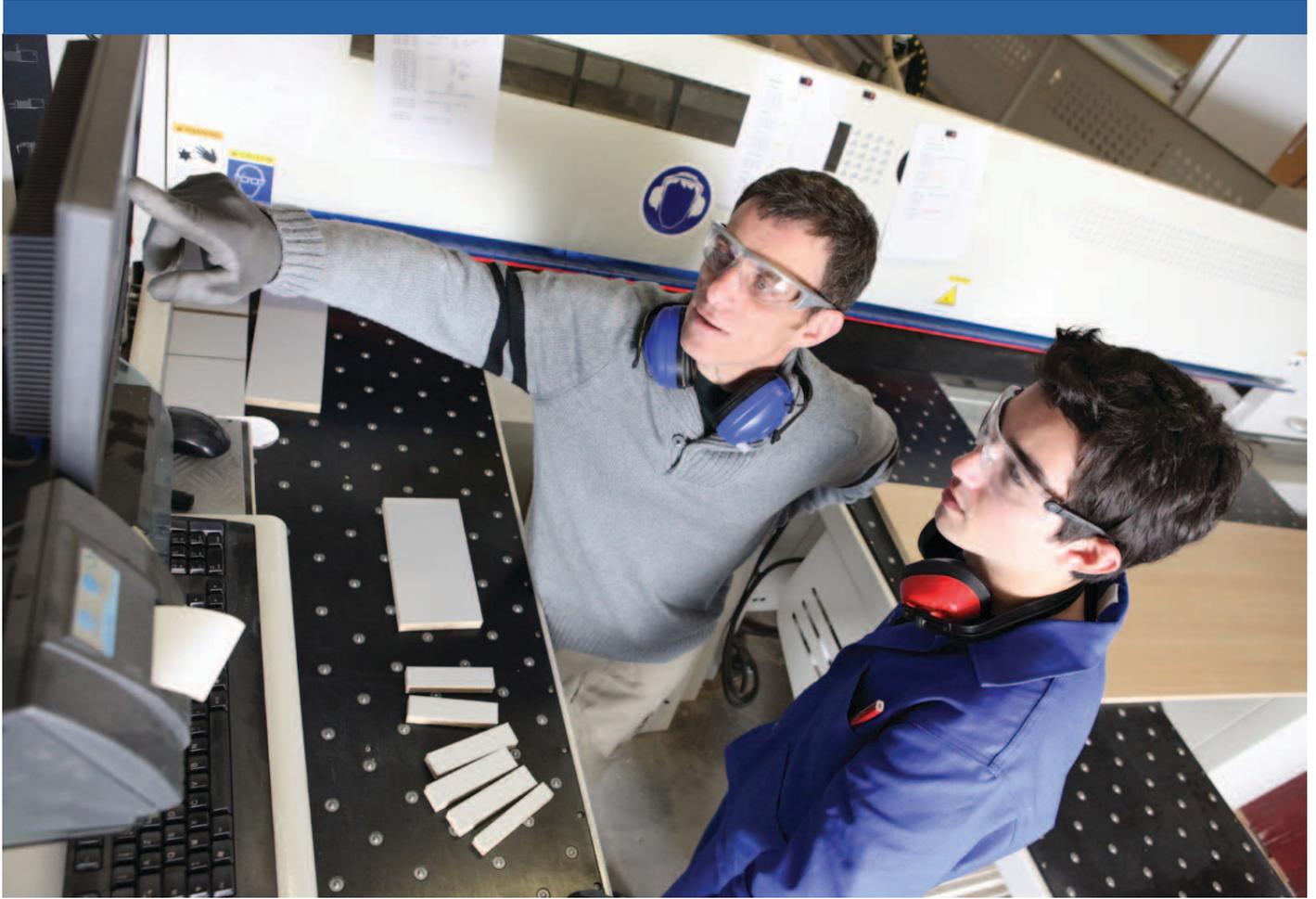
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ALTERNATIVE PROVISION – A POTENTIAL LIFELINE TO A BETTER FUTURE

Lisa Capper Executive Director Schools for North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and the Midland Academies Trust

Alternative Provision has been under the spotlight again recently as Ofsted published its latest report this February following a three year survey commissioned by DfE. It is an area of the education landscape that is the poor relation, but one which is a much needed support for schools, particularly those that are on a journey to rapidly improve. For students, when delivered

well, it can be a lifeline to a better future.

It is refreshing to hear that many schools are now making a more conscious effort to evaluate the provision they utilise, that there is more joint commissioning of the education programme and that section 5's will include a greater emphasis on quality of this provision. But, the report notes some continuing under performance and

many schools are reverting to trying to provide this demanding and specialist provision in house, driven by a lack of good quality local providers and current budgetary pressures.

Further Education Colleges, which for years have been picking up the pieces of those students who have not flourished at school and who land on the doorstep of the local College aged 16, may well form

“I learnt a lot of new things about car production. It was a great opportunity for us to see what careers we could go into and all the different levels. It really made us all think about the future and what that future could be.”

part of the answer to this issue.

In North Warwickshire, the North Warwickshire and Hinckley College has been providing an Alternative Provision at Key Stage 4, serving local schools since the closure of the Warwickshire PRU in 2011. The provision, called ‘Inspire’, aims to be both inclusive and inspiring. It re-motivates young people through a vocationally geared curriculum, personal coaching and a solid core of the basics including science. It is one of the rare provisions that offer full time places (currently 32), as well as offering flexible options and part time study. The programme has an induction period which enables staff and young people to get to know each other and gives time for a more individualised programme development. The students are supported by both coaching staff and teaching assistants and are taught by qualified and often industry trained curriculum staff at the College and the core Inspire team.

The young people are encouraged to take responsibility from day one in finding their way around their timetable and the campus and of course, they are interacting in an environment that is more like the workplace than school. They are treated as young adults who are on a journey to a successful future in a pathway of their choosing with the full support of

the team around them to keep them on course. It is sometimes a bumpy road but the strong policy framework of behaviour management and meaningful rewards, and relationships with parents/carers and other agencies, is effective for most and last year there were zero NEETS.

Access to English and maths GCSEs is a given and students also complete a vocational qualification and other enrichment programmes. Performance is systematically tracked and reported on backed up with tutorials. Attendance is a focus in the early stages and is often quickly improved from levels at the predecessor school. The provision is regularly inspected by the local authority with good outcomes, which was positively acknowledged in a recent Ofsted visit. There is an effective partnership with the local authority, good leadership of the Area Behaviour Partnership, and a network of supportive local schools who have contributed to enabling Inspire to go from strength to strength, acting as critical friends as well as customers and co-producing plans for students.

The College is in a unique position to be able to offer links with employers. Recently, students have experienced learning at Jaguar Landrover which has developed their perspective on their future prospects:

“I learnt a lot of new things about car production. It was a great opportunity for us to see what careers we could go into and all the different levels. It really made us all think about the future and what that future could be.” (Year 10 student)

The College also offers HE provision and students have had the opportunity to visit a local University to get a taste of what could be on offer if they pass their exams. For some students, Inspire has provided the opportunity to make that breakthrough to learning, a year 11 male student, who had never settled in school and had a troubled family background told the Inspectors-

“You get more support in College for 1 year... than all the time [I spent..] in school”

There are many success stories supported by the various departments within the College: the Inspire student who, impeccably spoken and dressed, waits on the tables at the College restaurant and has progressed at 16 to level 2 in Catering. A female student, who had nearly lost her place at Inspire, recovered herself with support and is now studying level 2 hairdressing. Another, excelled at the Performing Arts and Media and again, has progressed to a further course at post 16. Others have progressed

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The College has a strong commitment to skills competitions as a way of re-motivating students and raising standards and is a founder College of the UK Skills Show. Students attend every year at the NEC to have a go at a skill, meet employers and to see the best in class in their chosen vocation. Inspire has seen some of its students win competitions such as a year 10 student, who has communication and specific learning needs but who excelled and has won the Regional Industry championships. Through the College links with the local media, another student won a local media award for personal achievement.

The Inspire students are also taught to be enterprising and are challenged to raise funds for charity through selling gifts and cards they have created themselves, whilst turning a profit. The Inspire stalls are now renowned and students have raised £700 pa for local and national causes close

to their hearts.

There are many back stories to the young people who attend Inspire and not all of their own making; pregnancy, homelessness, looked after children, abuse at age 14-16, still vulnerable to the effects of their past. Alternative provision can be the last safety net to keep young people in education and is both demanding and rewarding for the staff who work tirelessly to support them. At Inspire, through a range of opportunities, practical and academic learning and personal coaching including the College's no faith/all faith chaplaincy, they have the opportunity for a transformational experience and our aim is to encourage them to take it. Fortunately, we also have the evidence of the success stories coming out the other side.

In the report, Ofsted has perhaps missed an opportunity to state how Alternative Provision might be taken forward and secured strategically at a

local level working with Area Behaviour Partnerships and groups of schools, and has at least missed an opportunity to talk about the need to retain diversity of provision. Do local systems for managing behaviour have the impact and funding that is required? Can schools really deliver it all? FE may not be the flavour of the month with the Ofsted leader of the moment, but it does have an understanding and an ethos of transformational learning and local partnerships that support it. It could also play a role in co-ordinating local Alternative Provision and ensuring progression pathways for young learners, where other providers struggle. Its role in 14-16 education should not be forgotten in the up and coming post 16 area reviews.

Lisa Capper is Executive Director Schools for North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and the Midlands Academies Trust

FASNA EVENTS 2016

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Wednesday 8 June 2016

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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.

Following feedback from our members, FASNA's key priorities for the current Parliament are:

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STUDENT EFFORT: THE HOLY GRAIL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?

Stephen Adcock, deputy director of academies for United Learning, says the biggest determinant of students' success will be the effort they are willing to commit to it

I'm drawn to school improvement strategies that have a multiplier effect – strategies that continue to have a positive impact long after the initial stimulus has been withdrawn. Into this category I would put a challenging curriculum, exemplary student behaviour and a clear assessment system. Perhaps there's something else that we can throw into this mix: high levels of student effort.

At the risk of stating the obvious, imagine how much easier our jobs would be if students worked just a little bit harder. Getting students to work harder would help us meet two of the biggest challenges facing schools leaders today: raising student outcomes and retaining staff.

Finding ways to boost student effort would also help us to deal with the rise of tougher terminal exams. These exams mean that there is simply less that teachers can do to ensure that students succeed.

In the world of coursework, modular assessment and repeated entry, teachers were often expected to do whatever was needed to get students over the line. Now we watch them cross the threshold of the exam hall alone.

Given these changing dynamics, how can we get kids to work harder?

We can start with a whole school culture founded on practice and perseverance. It's easy to pay lip service to growth mindset and the 10,000 hour rule, but we need to weave effort and responsibility into the fabric of our schools. I remember an assembly in which a headteacher demonstrated his juggling skills in front of the whole school. He had never juggled before and the balls landed in a heap on the polished floor. 1 month later he juggled with 3 balls, then returned again the following month with 5. The message of course, was that we improve through practice. Teachers and

form tutors can constantly reinforce this message and we must urge parents to do the same.

From the assembly hall students should file through to classrooms in which hard thinking and hard work is prized. This means challenging, open tasks, which require students to work independently for extended periods of time. It means teachers gradually removing the scaffolding and allowing students to experience the discomfort, the pain, the anguish of real learning. It means brief but punchy feedback which prompts students to improve their work.

It's when leaving the classroom that our high effort culture is most at risk, particularly as exam season approaches. We tell students that we expect them to revise, but we betray our good intentions by herding students into intervention sessions which seek to do the heavy cognitive lifting on their behalf. If our

At the risk of stating the obvious, imagine how much easier our jobs would be if students worked just a little bit harder. Getting students to work harder would help us meet two of the biggest challenges facing schools leaders today: raising student outcomes and retaining staff

words tell students that the ball is in their court, our actions tell them that as long as they turn up for extra sessions, they will be fine. The evenings, weekends and holidays of our teachers take the hit.

A solution to this is supervised study. In one school I work with – Paddington Academy - Year 11 students attend an after-school study session three times a week. The session is supervised by members of SLT but students must bring their own work with them. If they don't, they sit in silence. Carter Community School in Poole has found ways of making Year 11 students accountable for their maths revision. Students are given a maths DVD and are directed towards the areas in which they are less secure. Sanctions and support await students who fail to address their shortcomings and show progress in their assessments.

Homework is another area in which we can improve student effort, perhaps by issuing pupils with homework packs at the start of the year. Students work through the packs, and progress is checked by their form tutors. Non-completion is met with after-school detentions, managed centrally by the senior leadership team.

Similarly, I'm convinced that there is great power in issuing students with the content that they cover in all of their lessons. These course guides, distributed on a termly or annual basis, enable students to preview and review their lessons. The assessment schedule is mapped on to these guides, meaning that students are effectively given revision guides for each subject at the start of the year. Where I've seen this work best, schools publish this information on their websites, with guidance on how students and parents can explore issues covered in the curriculum. Quick quizzes at the start of lessons help to hold

students to account for the knowledge they need to acquire and retain as they go through the year.

Finally, we need to be clear and honest about how far we expect teachers to go to support their students. It's too easy to expect teachers to stop at nothing to secure positive student outcomes, but there are better ways of showing our commitment to our students than by giving them endless opportunities to submit coursework and show up for intervention. Asking a teacher to sit down with a student to complete coursework long after the published deadline might help secure a pass for that student, but it's a Pyrrhic victory if that teacher loses faith in the school, and in the profession, due to the weight of expectation placed on them.

Marginal gains are all the rage in education as schools strive for the 1% improvements that might make a difference over time, but let's not ignore the richer rewards before our eyes. Imagine the time and effort we can save for our teachers over the five years of secondary school if we can get students in Year 7 to realise that the biggest determinant of their success will be the effort they are willing to commit to it.

The vast majority of teachers I know are working at full capacity. I look forward to the day that we can say the same of our students. Now is the time to search for the holy grail of student effort.



“GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING NEED TO BE CLOSED...”

The National Audit Office perspective on training new teachers

There are growing signs of teacher shortages in particular parts of the country and particular subjects, and there has been much, and increasing, public discussion of this. We reported in February about the value for money of the arrangements in place for training new teachers, and concluded that there was more for the Department to do particularly when it came to involving schools in its planning.

A steady supply of new teachers is vital to the Department for Education’s overall objectives. To have enough teachers and raise the quality of teaching – both of which the Department wants to do – means attracting large numbers of new people into the profession each year, particularly with pupil numbers on the rise. Of the 44,870 entrants to state-funded schools in 2014, 23,930 (53%) were newly qualified.

The starting point for any value for money examination is the amount being spent and whether or not policy is being implemented in a way that allows the Government to meet its objectives. For the £700m invested each year we were unable to conclude that the arrangements for training new teachers are currently value for money. The Department has for the last 4 years missed its recruitment target for individuals to start training to be teachers. It does not yet have the information it needs to understand how different routes into teaching affect schools’ ability to recruit and retain good quality teachers longer term. And, similarly, it has more to do to demonstrate that its bursaries have a long-term positive

impact, beyond just encouraging people to apply to start training.

These performance issues and knowledge gaps are all areas where we think deeper engagement with schools can help. The Department needs good evidence to inform its approach to attracting people to teach, identifying the schemes that work well – and therefore might be expanded – and being clear when things don’t work and need to be changed or stopped. The Department told us that it plans to link information about trainees with information about the retention and performance of teachers; we think this will help. Combined with targeted research about what motivates people to become teachers and better information about the long-term costs of different routes into teaching, the Department and the wider sector could soon be in a much better position to meet future targets. We are not, by the way, advocating a new bureaucratic data collection exercise. As far as possible, existing data should be used, and where this isn’t possible the Department’s aim should be to talk to school leaders rather than have them fill in more forms.

The Department has taken a national approach to trainee recruitment in recent years and, allied to this, has a weak understanding of whether teacher shortages are greater in some parts of the country than others. We found – and some of you may have direct experience of this – that the Department mostly leaves the resolution of local shortages up to individual schools. Nationally, the number of teachers has kept pace with

changing pupil numbers and overall pupil-teacher ratios have been fairly stable. But the recorded rate of vacancies and temporarily-filled positions doubled between 2011 and 2014 from 0.5% to 1.2% - a figure which is still fairly low but which may well understate the real scale of recruitment difficulties. When they cannot find the right teacher to work on a permanent basis, head teachers are faced with a range of suboptimal choices. In secondary schools, one option is to put non-specialist teachers in front of classes. We found that more classes are being taught by teachers without relevant post-A-level qualifications. For English Baccalaureate subjects the proportion rose from 14% in 2010 to 18% in 2014.

The Department’s teacher training system has a part to play here, since many newly qualified teachers choose to work close to where they train. We found very different numbers of trainees being trained in the different regions of England: as few as 294 per 100,000 pupils in the East of England and as many as 547 per 100,000 pupils in the North West. Once the Department understands more about where the need for teachers is greatest, it may well have to rebalance its allocation of training places.

Again an expanded dialogue with schools is going to play a major part in improving the state of the Department’s knowledge. The intelligence that local leaders develop about the demand for and supply of teachers in their areas is something the Department needs to know more about.

A key feature of the last few years has

been the growth of School Direct and SCITTs. The Department has created more of these types of providers because it wants to give teachers and head teachers greater autonomy and responsibility for recruiting and training. We have welcomed the energy that the Department has put into these innovations and we spoke to many providers around the country (both in universities and in schools) who were positive about the changes. But we do have concerns.

For the new marketplace of teacher training to work well, good information is needed. Potential trainee teachers need to be able to reach a decision and make an application as easily as possible. But we found that the new arrangements were confusing for potential trainees and have recommended that the Department work together with the sector to address this confusion and make it easier to apply.

There is also more that the Department can do to help training providers. We have reported a number of times in the past about the problems created by uncertainty over funding, or when funding is made available to organisations only for short periods of time. This makes it difficult to plan and invest with confidence. And this is the case with the allocation of training places. If school-led training is to grow, and if more opportunities to train are needed in particular parts of the country, then current and potential providers need a greater level of certainty than they have at present. To date, the Department for Education has changed the way it allocates teacher training places annually. We have recommended that it should give greater certainty to training providers so they can plan for the long term. This includes more detail about market size and structure, when and how the Department is likely to intervene, and likely future patterns of demand.

The Public Accounts Committee, the commons select committee which scrutinises value for money and holds departments to account for their spending, discussed our findings at a hearing on 7th March. The hearing started with a panel of witnesses drawn from across the sector, including a primary school head and representatives from a university, a SCITT and Russell Hobby of the NAHT. This provided good evidence of how teacher training policy is being implemented from a local perspective. MPs on the committee also brought evidence from head teachers in their constituencies. The committee questioned the Department on why its recruitment targets had been missed. The PAC was particularly concerned about the extent to which children are being taught by teachers without relevant post-A-level qualifications and whether the Department has the information it needs to be aware of problems and fix them.

The committee asked for better evidence of the cost-effectiveness of different routes into teaching and the significant sums spent on tax-free bursaries. It will publish its report once parliament returns after the Easter holiday and the department must respond to its recommendations.

There are important roles for the Department, schools and training providers to resolve the problems we have identified. Gaps in understanding of what works need to be closed. Areas of

significant spend, such as bursaries, need to be better understood and adjusted in future on the basis of better evidence. Meg Hillier MP, who chairs the Public Accounts Committee, said that the committee plans to return to these issues at a later date.

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Education Value
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TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING: A PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

Martin Shevill, CEO of Consilium Academies, on the difficulties of attracting and appointing teachers

As a recent principal of a large comprehensive school and now CEO of a small Multi-Academy Trust, I have seen first-hand in recent years the increasing difficulty of teacher recruitment at all levels, with the possible exception of senior leadership. Speaking with colleagues from across the country this, as we know, is now a very worrying national trend giving many school leaders even more reason for sleepless nights. There may be differences between regions in that the subject shortages may vary a little. Some regions do not have the supply of young teachers because of universities closing courses or there being a limited number of local SCITT providers. There are further geographical variations, with rural and coastal areas for example, finding recruitment more difficult than the cities.

During the last few years we have also seen changes in the traditional protocols for recruiting teachers. The traditional process of advert, shortlisting and interview now happens less frequently than it did. An excellent ITT student from whatever source may find themselves being offered a job without going through a recruitment process. Pay scales are becoming more flexible as incentives are provided, despite the financial pressures that we now face. The concept of a young colleague being offered a job and then beginning to negotiate salary would have been unheard of several years ago.

In my experience, in recent years only

History and PE are subjects that tend to have a 'field' of applicants. In other subjects it can be common to have only one or two applicants or sadly sometimes none at all. This can also often apply to middle leadership positions and indeed particularly primary headship.

Schools, academies and MATs will now therefore need to both think more creatively and work more collaboratively to address this problem. Those schools that work closely with SCITT providers for example, are in an advantageous position. One way forward would be for a MAT to have a school within it that was a SCITT provider. Smaller MATs could collaborate with other smaller MATs to support teacher supply. This is not only a structural step forward in addressing the recruitment issues but also a way of ensuring good quality professional development for teachers.

However the problem is not simply about attracting and appointing teachers, it is also about inducting, training and professionally developing them and retaining their talent within the organisation. This is particularly important in the case of NQT's of which there is also a worrying shortage particularly in key subject areas, with government recruitment targets sadly still not being met.

The National Induction Panel for Teachers (NIPT) an organisation with which I am now working, is an organisation that can help schools with

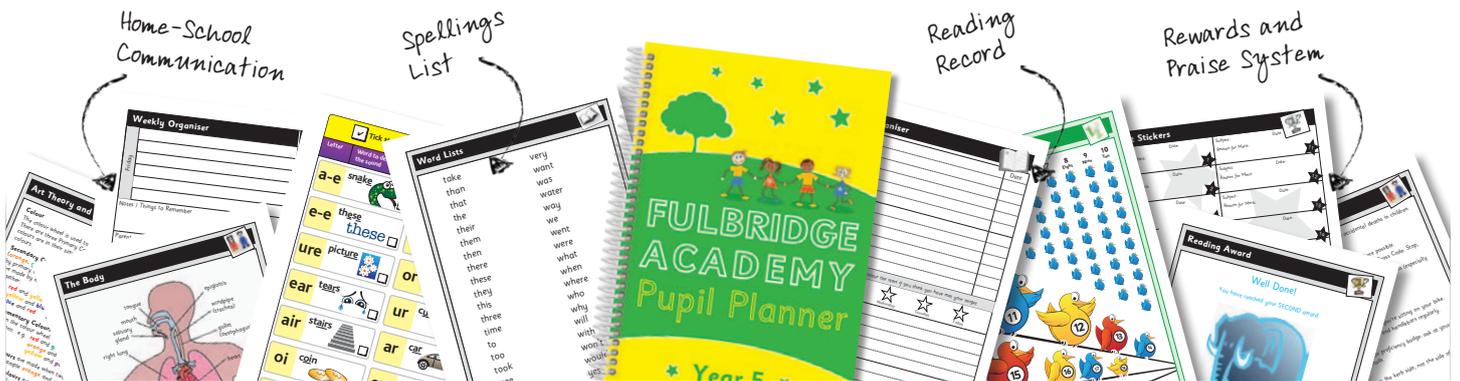
this very time hungry yet absolutely critical process of guiding and supporting NQT's through their induction year. NIPT provides both high quality support for host schools and their trainees and high quality robust assessment. This is a growing national, sector led initiative managed by FASNA, covering both primary and secondary education. It was set up in 2013 at the request of the DfE to offer an alternative to Local Authority provision which experience tells us can be variable in quality and inflexible to the needs of schools.

While NIPT won't solve all our recruitment problems and is not a panacea, it does have a number of potential advantages which are well worth considering. Let us consider an example of a mixed phase MAT of ten schools. The trust could have at least one primary and secondary within its academies leading ITT through the NIPT route. Colleagues with expertise as induction tutors/co-ordinators (NIPT also provides training for this key role) could operate across the MAT rather than just within one school, to support the training process.

NIPT can also provide a consistent framework for NQT induction across a MAT whose schools are more geographically disparate, avoiding the potential risk of variation in quality and robustness of assessment and support linked with using the NQT accreditation service of a number of different Local Authorities. Ark, acknowledged for its

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The problem is not simply about attracting and appointing teachers, it is also about inducting, training and professionally developing them and retaining their talent within the organisation

high quality teacher training offer, is amongst a growing number of MATs now working with NIPT.

For the increasing number of schools now having to think more creatively and who are recruiting young teachers from abroad with recognised qualifications, NIPT can also be used as a useful belt and braces way of inducting and supporting teachers from overseas into our system and checking performance against our national standards.

For those schools that also take the opportunity to talent spot amongst young graduates who apply to fulfil roles as Teaching Assistants/Learning mentors, to experience the school environment and see if it 'is for them', the NIPT programme can provide an easy transition into a formal training programme. In a climate such as this, all opportunities to invest in and develop raw talent should be ceased upon.

NIPT also plays a key role in the drive to maintain high standards of teaching. The service has robust quality assurance systems and although the process clearly provides for the support of young teachers that are finding the profession challenging, importantly it is a system that will ultimately fail those that underperform.

Some other good practice examples of how the MAT structure can and indeed is being used positively to enhance the teacher training experience include:

- Providing opportunities for young teachers to experience more than one school as part of their professional training. This could be across phases with a view to specialisation at a later

stage. With Sixth Form Colleges likely to be forming or joining MATs in the future, training opportunities across all age ranges will be possible.

- Facilitating placements for young teachers in other schools or academies could be easily facilitated. Part of the professional development could be working in schools or at least experiencing schools with different socio-economic or cultural characteristics.
- Offering a ready-made peer support structure would be in place either within or between academies.
- Offer the opportunity for joint professional training courses. This could include the generic basic training on issues such as child protection through to subject specific pedagogic development.
- Developing links with other specialist providers in joint ventures for young teachers. These may include working with professional subject associations to develop courses or conferences. These could be advertised beyond the MAT. This should support retention with young teachers appreciating the investment in them. Organisations such as The Prince's Teaching Institute are also excellent vehicles for professional development.
- Transparently providing opportunities for middle leaders to access courses such as the National Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) or the equivalent for senior leadership (NPQSL) to send an important message to young teachers about the Trust being committed to

investing in their careers.

- Ensuring that all young teachers have the chance to join with an educational visit in their first year of teaching (in their own school or within the MAT) will also provide interesting professional experiences.

The freedom and autonomy that the current system is encouraging could work to our collective advantage. We need, however, to ensure that Initial Teacher Training does not lead to a concentration of talent in a limited number of institutions and areas. Freedom and autonomy needs to bring equity to the system and recognition of the collective responsibility we all have if the profession is to truly lead a self-improving, self-managing system.

It seems clear that schools, academies and academy trusts need to be as proactive as possible when managing the challenging issue of teacher recruitment and retention. The NIPT programme and SCITT programmes, in my view, provide excellent vehicles to help support the training of young teachers. MATs could also forge close and fruitful links with Higher Education providers. Our job as school leaders is to ensure we have genuine collaboration within the system enabling all schools to have access to good young teachers. Our ability to provide the right environment along with innovative and interesting professional development opportunities will be better if we work together. The whole experience will be greater than the sum of the parts.

Martin Shevill, CEO
Consilium Academies



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THE NATIONAL INDUCTION PANEL FOR TEACHERS



National Induction Panel for Teachers



What is NIPT?

NIPT was established in 2013, at the request of the DfE, as a sector led alternative to the LA provided NQT accreditation service. Operated by FASNA, it provides robust, high quality assessment and support for the induction of NQTs. The use of on-line resources means that academies and MATs have a more cost effective alternative to traditional training, avoiding the expense and disruption of staff being out of school. The bank

of online resources can be accessed by academies and MATs and integrated into their own bespoke training schedules. The cost paid by schools for each NQT is an inclusive cost with no hidden extras.

Assessments are completed on line and there is a direct link to the National Database. All assessments are reviewed by our experienced Quality Assurance Team and feedback is provided. Routine Quality Assurance visits are conducted annually for 33% of registered schools

to ensure the required systems and processes are in place to support decisions about NQTs. Additional visits are also arranged where trainees are experiencing difficulties and require more support.

To find out more please visit the NIPT website: www.nqtinduction.co.uk where you can complete the registration form or contact the NIPT office on admin@nqtinduction.co.uk for more information.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Ark Schools: “NIPT provide us with a great service”

Ark

We are delighted that Ark Schools – arguably one of the best providers of Teacher training in the country, is one of the growing number of MATs now working in partnership with NIPT.

Ark, whose Teacher training programme is significantly over subscribed, is currently in its second year of working with NIPT. Their group is now made up of 34 mixed phase academies across 4 geographical hubs (London, Birmingham, Hastings and Portsmouth) and they currently have 110 NQT’s registered with the NIPT programme.

Adam Thorpe, Ark’s NQT Programme Lead talks about his experience of the NIPT service and why it works so well for this highly respected, successful group of academies.

What made Ark decide to use NIPT?

Working with NIPT was attractive to us as we had big ambitions for providing an innovative and supportive NQT programme, but we needed help from NIPT to ensure we were meeting statutory requirements.

Our collaboration means we have been able to use NIPT’s core processes and procedures as a foundation on which to layer our own, tailored, Ark programme of support.

For example, throughout the Ark network we use a framework called the ‘Great Teacher Rubric’ to promote the use of shared language about what makes excellent teaching across all our schools. The rubric includes descriptors

for what we believe makes for great teaching. This supports our NQTs in not only meeting the national Teachers’ Standards but in working to exceed them. NIPT have been incredibly supportive in incorporating this tool into our NQT assessment processes.

Whilst NIPT ultimately act to quality assure what we do, we have a good range of freedom to innovate.

What are the advantages of having one standard framework and a consistent service across the group of schools?

An important part of our NQT programme is to provide a consistent experience to developing teachers and to ensure they have training and support that matches the context of the school and the academy network as a whole.

For example, all our schools promote the same ‘6 pillars’:

- High expectations
- Exemplary behavior
- Excellent Teaching
- Depth before breadth
- More time for learning
- Knowing every child

We found that when using local authorities, the context of other schools going through the LA training was sometimes very different from what our own trainees were experiencing.

Creating a programme with NIPT has allowed us to work across all four of our geographical hubs in a consistent and standardised way. We have one central point of communication through which we can funnel all our queries, and one dedicated Quality Assurance Officer (QAO) for all our schools. We’ve been able to build relationships with NIPT so that they understand the distinct Ark context. Not only is this time efficient, but having a detailed understanding of

our context allows Justine (our QAO) to provide particularly pertinent and useful feedback for the schools she visits.

The alternative to NIPT would be to communicate and negotiate our preferred approach with multiple LAs, each of whom have their own, differing, assessment processes and procedures. Managing this process would be a far more complicated logistical challenge. For example, with NIPT we can register all NQTs through the same system, train all our school leads at the same time knowing that the processes are identical for each school, and receive assessment data on all 110 NQTs on one spreadsheet.

What are the key benefits?

From an organisational perspective, using NIPT allows us to track and analyse the performance and assessment data across our whole cohort of NQTs. We believe that this leads to better support which results in better teachers. Fundamentally, this leads to better outcomes for our children and young people.

From the NQTs’ point of view, they feel part of a cohesive, joined up network-wide programme. It also gives them an opportunity for shared experience, which we believe results in increased morale and motivation.

NIPT provide us with a great professional service, accessible data, and clear advice. We receive excellent and efficient administrative support from Helen, who has been fantastic in responding to the range of queries that having 110 NQTs generates. My job would be a whole lot harder without Helen and Justine from NIPT!

I would certainly recommend the service to other academies and especially to other MATs, particularly as supporting NQTs is NIPT’s sole focus.

ERSHIP WITH NIPT

Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust: “Beneficial in many ways”

Working with NIPT this year has proven to be beneficial across the Trust in many ways. One in particular is the opportunity to support overseas teachers who have previously trained and qualified abroad. Although we acknowledge that our overseas teachers are fully qualified we and the teachers themselves recognised the benefits of having this additional induction period in order to fully integrate them into the English education system.

This has been particularly beneficial in supporting our overseas trained NQTs due to all the curriculum and assessment changes, which all teachers have had to adjust to. An individual programme of monitoring and support, which includes sustained and relevant professional development opportunities, is fully devised for our overseas teachers just as it is for our NQTs and this is accredited by NIPT.

As one overseas trainee says: “The NIPT induction support programme has not only made a significant impact on my teaching practice, but also made my transition to this country less stressful. Being trained for this profession in Canada, my studies were deeply rooted in the Ontario curriculum. Therefore, it quickly became apparent that because I was coming to work as a first year teacher, in a new country, with a brand new curriculum, I would need some

additional support.

“I was already recognised as a qualified teacher in the UK, however the senior management team thought it would be best for me to do the NQT programme to ensure an easy transition and allow me to have additional support within the school. I was hesitant to take on any added workload, but decided that, as a teacher, my own development and progression is life long and that added support would be more beneficial.

“I am so thankful that I made that decision for a number of reasons. For instance, the 10% release time enabled me to continue a reflective practice by observing other teachers, reflecting on my own lessons, and sorting through my work to evidence teaching standards. Having the time to reflect on your teaching habits and practices enables you to continuously improve, change and develop your professional skills which, ultimately, benefit your students. The part of the induction programme that I found benefitted me the most was having a mentor. I was able to share any questions, thoughts, opinions, and suggestions with this mentor during our regular meetings and received valuable support and advice.”

The support and assessment of our overseas teachers has been and will continue to be as rigorous as for our NQTs. We have found that investing the time, money and additional resources



in supporting our overseas teachers invaluable, as they have developed their practice into becoming outstanding practitioners who are nurtured and supported. At the end of the induction period our overseas trained teachers will gain a certificate which states they have been fully inducted into the English system. In the current climate of teacher shortage, as a Trust we strongly believe that investing in all of our teacher’s development is paramount and through working with NIPT as our accreditor, it has enabled us to tailor our training to not only benefit the teachers but ultimately to benefit the children in our Trust.

Florinda Shamolli
Deputy Headteacher and
NQT coordinator
Cuckoo Hall Academies
Trust

It quickly became apparent that because I was coming to work as a first year teacher, in a new country, with a brand new curriculum, I would need some additional support



EXCELLENCE IN IT

Clacton Coastal Academy reveal how they are improving the digital literacy of their students

Clacton Coastal Academy is a large secondary school in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, and serves one of Western Europe's most deprived areas, Jaywick. The academy was given a 'good' rating from Ofsted in 2014 and more than half of their 1500 students are eligible for pupil premium funding. Staff at CCA have embraced Google Apps for Education (GAFE) and Chromebooks to radically transform pedagogical practices and provide students with the tools to improve their digital literacy and prepare them for the 21st century workplace.

The first step was to migrate to

GAFE as part of the wider Academies Enterprise Trust strategy; the tools that this migration offered facilitated key priorities in the Academy Improvement Plan, including improving student independence, tightening the marking and feedback loop and providing more opportunities for students to access learning materials outside of school.

Our vision was not just about devices, but about creating digital equality for the students of Clacton and Jaywick. 57% of our students qualify for pupil premium funding, and it is our duty to ensure that they have the broadest range of learning

technologies to access, improve and innovate within their educational context.

GAFE was the perfect platform to rapidly implement change in our pedagogical practices. It is device agnostic, working on Chromebooks, iPads, tablets and all legacy equipment. Students can access the powerful suite of apps on any device with a browser. Access to expensive software is no longer a barrier to students completing independent study at home. The availability of devices, coupled with a broad range of apps, kick-started a significant buy-in from staff and students.



As a result, widespread, innovative practice is plain to see around the Academy, with students taking a more proactive role in how they learn. Students are asking for Kahoot quizzes to recap prior knowledge, to collaborate on projects via Google docs and for homework and resources to be shared via Google Classroom.

A member of SLT was appointed to support the migration and drive sharing and embedding innovative practices. To support the project, this member of staff became both a Google Educator and Google Certified Teacher, attending the prestigious Google Teacher Academy in October 2014. This role has been pivotal to implementing successful change management and they have since gone on to document this action research project as part of their NPQSL accreditation.

Regular drop-in for staff, new, training

and existing, as well as a half-termly innovation newsletter has also ensured that the innovative practices are fully embedded. There have been specific training opportunities for using Google Classroom, creating self-marking tests and using different video apps in the classroom.

Google Classroom was launched in September 2014 and its impact was instant and acknowledged in our Ofsted inspection report from November 2014: "A new system of online learning is developing rapidly at the academy. This allows teachers to comment on what students are writing as they work in the classroom or give them feedback while they are actually working at home. Students speak of the positive effect this is having on their learning as they get advice on how to improve more quickly." This system has ensured students receive

real-time, formative feedback to improve their learning outcomes. We were also name-checked by Liz Sproat, Head of Google Education in Europe, during her presentation at BETT 2015 for our rapid embedding and impact of Google Classroom.

The collaborative nature of the tools now embedded has allowed us to consider innovative approaches to system leadership, including moving our Academy Improvement Plan to a collaborative Google Sheet to track our progress towards our long and short-term goals.

In recognition of the extensive embedding and rapid impact of GAFE at Clacton Coastal Academy, Assistant Vice Principal for Innovation Laura Leatherby has been awarded an Inspirational Educator Award by The Worshipful Company of Educators.

EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Neston high School on how they are ensuring their students become future citizens, not just learners

Neston High School is a large 11-18 rural comprehensive school of over 1700 students. Based in Cheshire they are now oversubscribed attracting students from a wide area including Chester, Wales, and The Wirral. They became an Academy in 2012 and at their last inspection in 2013 were judged by Ofsted to be a good school. Learning outside the classroom, an area of provision which is firmly at the heart of Neston High School, was recognised by Ofsted as 'best practice'.

Learning Outside the Classroom provision is not additional to what we do at Neston, it is central to what we do and a true part of the culture and ethos of the school. To ensure this, a multi-stranded approach has been adopted.

Perhaps most importantly, the language around LOTC has been changed. We have moved away from using phrases like 'extra-curricular' and 'trips' which implies they are simply additional activities to 'Learning Outside the Classroom' or 'Excel' activities which is more suitable as this suggests trips and clubs are essential to curriculum success. We feel it more successfully reflects a positive attitude that we see these activities as central to improving the student experience at Neston High School.

To ensure LOTC has an appropriate profile, strategically it has been placed at the heart of the school. It is embedded in the school development plan and is recognised in the Leadership Structure with a member of the Senior Leadership Team responsible for leading the development of it in the curriculum. Policy has been changed and the school, at SLT level has developed a new independent learning policy where LOTC is a key feature of the learning programme.

Inspiring departments to view LOTC as central to the work of the school has been an important drive for us. To make getting outside the classroom fundamental to the work of departments, we have asked them to view LOTC not just as activities after school but to think about it as essential to lessons inside the school day. This is part of our recognition that it is essential to the curriculum success of students at Neston High School that everyone has regular opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom. To this end, schemes of work have been re-written and staff incorporate LOTC as a strand at all key stages in their programmes of study.

Students in their first year now have the opportunity to

experience two whole year group activities, a one day visit and a three day residential. This has a pastoral focus and finishes off a two year transition programme starting in year 6. It is not just about recruitment, Neston is an oversubscribed school, but it is about ensuring that even before they come to us, every individual learner's experience of our school is already positive. We feel that this promotes a good attitude from the moment our pupils step inside the school on that special first day.

As students move through the years at Neston, they can build on LOTC experience that they gained in their first year. In Art and Design, for example, all students participate in a drawing outside the classroom activity and Y9 students undertake an architecture project where students learn skills for documentary drawing through surveying the school site. This project has been particularly interesting as we are going through an exciting phase with the impending beginning of our new school building journey.

Students have opportunities to take charge of learning outside the classroom in many curriculum areas. Multi-day expeditions are planned in BTEC Sport, BTEC Public Services and by Duke of Edinburgh students; practical projects are planned in Art and Design Food and Nutrition and Environmental Science. In Geography all Year 8 students undertake a field study on the regeneration of the Anfield area in Liverpool, they bring back their research to complete a project in class.

This positive approach to independent LOTC has also helped strengthen our vital links with the wider school community. During LOTC projects, students often work with groups outside school, such as the Rotary club, primary school students or members of the business community. We have worked with high profile partners, such as Neil Clough (*The Apprentice*), inspirational Olympic athletes like Beth Tweddle and local politicians.

Our school's ethos in every aspect now encourages learning outside the classroom to help our students become not just learners, but future citizens. Students apply their learning in different and real contexts and it helps them broaden their horizons and aspirations for their future lives. We at Neston are absolutely convinced that the culture in the school has been vastly enhanced by the high level of participation on the part of all sectors of our school community.



“AN EFFICIENT, COLLABORATIVE APPROACH”

How the Greenshaw Learning Trust explain they are achieving savings of 26% through Pelican Procurement

The Greenshaw Learning Trust is currently responsible for three schools; Greenshaw High School in Sutton, Green Wrythe Primary School in Carshalton and Edenham High School in Croydon. Two further schools are joining the Trust in April 2016; the Victor Seymour Infants School in Carshalton and The Brakenhale School in Bracknell, Berkshire, with a further school in September 2016, Tweeddale Primary School in Carshalton. In all, the Trust will be responsible for almost 5,000 students and employs over 500 staff.

On top of this, the Trust has been given approval by the Department for Education (DfE) to open two new free schools in Sutton, an ASD special school and a secondary school, and is awaiting approval for a new primary school, also in Sutton. All of which will support a further 2,000 students. The ASD special school is planned to open in September 2017 with the secondary, which incorporates a sixth form, later in September 2018. The primary, subject to approval, is also planned to open in 2018.

The main aim of the Trust is that it “seeks to build a ‘family’ of like-minded schools that share essential values and a common ethos and vision for education and learning, while collaborating to provide mutual support, share best practice and learn from each other”. It is fair to say that this ethos is not just related to education and learning, but also in the way the schools are led, resourced and managed from an operational perspective.

One example of this is the way the Trust manages its significant catering function. We talked to Stephen Bradford, Executive Head of Resources of the

Trust, and Luis De Abreu, Head of Catering, to understand just how they have been able to implement consistent systems and processes across all schools, while identifying financial savings of over 26% and, importantly, without compromising quality.

Consistency is key

Stephen explains how an efficient, collaborative approach to its procurement is benefiting the growing Trust:

“When I joined Greenshaw High School three years ago, one of my objectives was to transform the food offering so all of our students could eat a healthy meal every day. Not only were we looking to improve the choice and quality, but we wanted to review our suppliers to see whether we could make any savings. I appointed Luis De Abreu as the Head of Catering and together we wanted to look at the support that was available to help us get more from our suppliers. We were able to build on our relationship with Pelican when forming the Trust and taking on additional schools. This has really helped us operate in a more consistent way across all schools.”

At the time, The Greenshaw Trust had been working with Pelican Procurement Services which was managing a central billing service, however the team were aware that with their expertise in the food procurement space, they were well placed to be able to help the Trust in realising greater efficiencies, savings and financial control.

“For me,” Stephen says, “I’m very interested in consistency across all schools in terms of the way our catering functions are managed. This was very important for me, particularly as we have more

schools joining us soon, new sites being built, plus we also support four other schools with a delivered meals service as they don’t have their own facilities. Having a consistent approach to food purchasing, budgeting, ordering, allergen compliance, food standards compliance, supplier management, and more, is very important.”

Luis embarked on arranging a briefing meeting with the team at Pelican to identify ways in which a centralised purchasing approach could be implemented.

“When I came on board at Greenshaw three years ago,” says Luis, “the first task was to look at ways in which we could improve the overall food service function – quality and choice was cited as key areas to look at, in addition to putting a best practice approach in place for managing suppliers, food purchasing across all schools. I turned to Pelican for advice and it was recommended that the first step was to go out to tender, in order to review prices, food quality and to consolidate suppliers.”

With Pelican’s support, the Trust went to tender and straight away it was clear that better pricing could be achieved by pooling together the power of the collective Trust’s spend. Pelican managed the tender process and was able to retain better prices for the products specified by Luis within the categories of wholesale, fruit and vegetables and sandwiches.

“The overall financial savings were impressive – in fact a total saving of 26% was achieved, which calculates to just under £50,000!” says Luis. “This is an excellent achievement, particularly given the fact the savings are not based on procuring lesser quality products. We



have not had to compromise yet have been able to achieve real savings. We've been able to work together to meet our needs, and not adapt our approach to suit the supplier's needs."

Contracts were devised and awarded to Bidvest for wholesale, Sherringham's for fruit and vegetables and Anchor for sandwiches. As part of this, Pelican arranged for the Trust to move to a disciplined list of agreed products to not only manage budgets, but to ensure that the products being ordered by all the kitchens had been assessed from a School Food Standards point of view.

In addition to this, the Trust is also using Pelican's Pi system, which is an online portal that provides complete transparency of all food purchasing transactions, agreed product lists, stock management, invoicing and more. Luis confirms that he uses the Pi system on

a daily basis to review what has been ordered by the schools: "As head of catering, I am able to get a big picture view on what's happening across the schools, from stock to sales reports and purchasing. This saves me a lot of time."

Value added services

The team at Greenshaw has also taken advantage of a number of value added services provided by Pelican. For example, the team is currently working on reviewing the layout of the dining hall, and Pelican has been able to provide input on furnishings, as well as support the team in procuring new equipment for the kitchens.

Reflecting on success

With over 950 meals served every school day across the Trust, and this number set to dramatically increase as new schools

come online, undertaking the review of the catering function now has been a beneficial exercise for both Luis and Stephen, for a number of reasons.

"Before we undertook the procurement review," Luis explains, "I was having to do all the supplier analysis, pricing negotiations, contract discussions myself. Now, having Pelican on board, not only do we have better pricing, but there's a lot more expertise and support available that I can tap into. I can concentrate on other areas and this saves me a huge amount of time. To add to this, the support systems in place via Pelican mean we are on top of our compliance requirements, for example we can provide proof that our menus fully comply with the School Food Standards. This is very reassuring."

Reflecting on his original aims of a consistent service for all schools in the Trust, Stephen confirms: "As I said at the outset, consistency across all of the schools is what is important to me. Having systems in place across the Trust means we are all looking at the same data sources, which improves accuracy. Now, every school is ordering the same quality products and the pricing for each is agreed and in a fixed price-hold – this is important. Menus are agreed, training is organised, allergen compliance has been arranged; Luis has been the driving force in making all of this happen and so now, when new schools come on board, we will be in a prime position to simply and quickly apply all the processes we now have in place."

Stephen concludes: "We have a great partnership with Pelican and I commend Luis for making this happen. For me, I am proud that we now have a service that has not only saved the schools almost £50,000, but is giving the children and staff quality food and improved choice that they didn't necessarily have before. It's a real success story."

www.pelicanprocurement.co.uk



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SPONSORSHIP AND FINANCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

Fiona Hotston Moore, Forensics Partner, Ensors Chartered Accountants

If the Government has its way, over 15,000 schools will need to convert to academy status over the next ten years.

Existing MATs and existing single Academies which are asked to become a MAT and to sponsor a failing school must conduct due diligence prior to agreeing to the sponsorship in order to assess exactly what they are taking on. Irrespective of the academic position of the school all MATs must conduct some financial and operational due diligence. A thorough due diligence exercise will cover such crucial areas as academic performance, pupil numbers and capacity, legal matters, an assessment of the premises and financial due diligence. This will ensure there is a good fit between the school and the Sponsoring entity. The risk of not undertaking adequate due diligence could be to leave the MAT on the hook for substantial unforeseen educational or financial liabilities impacting adversely on the sponsoring academy or MAT. I would also advise all governing bodies to engage a firm of specialist legal advisers early in the process and to agree a fixed fee with them for the process from the initial discussions through to completion of the transfer.

In terms of the financial due diligence (FDD) this can be undertaken by the sponsoring in-house finance team if adequate resource exists. However, it can be helpful to engage independent accountants with sector experience to conduct the FDD and to report to the governing body on their findings on both the financial position and the existing financial systems and controls. Government guidance also suggests that

trusts consider the use of independent accountants. Inevitably, the extraction of reliable historical financial information and preparation of financial projections is often a more challenging task in schools which are under performing and where accounting and management resource is typically weaker. There is a delicate balance to be struck between the need for the Sponsor to obtain sufficient reliable information to reach an informed judgement whilst allaying the inevitable concerns within the “target” school about the implications and process of becoming a sponsored academy.

As a minimum we suggest financial due diligence should cover the following:

- Review of financial performance for the previous three years in terms of income and expenditure as well as capital projects.
- Review of financial projections and stress testing these against historical and sector-specific information. Ideally future projections will cover three years.
- Consideration of financial commitments including any capital expenditure required such as boilers, roofs, asbestos removal. It may be possible to defer transfer until capital projects which are already approved are completed.
- Analysis of existing and ongoing staff costs including consideration of the implications of the TUPE regulations, pension costs and anticipated salary increases.
- Review of existing financial processes, the finance team and financial controls.

- Review of the tax and VAT implications of any additional income.
- Review of insurance provision and any historic insurance claims.
- Consideration of existing loans and how these will be dealt with on transfer.
- Consideration of revenue surpluses and deficits. Surpluses need to be agreed with DfE and will normally be paid to the trust post conversion. Deficits would normally be repayable however the DfE is open to discussion about a waiver of the deficit and also may consider funding restructuring costs particularly where this might be an obstacle to conversion.
- The FDD checklist should be considered alongside the legal due diligence to ensure no areas fall through the gaps and that the financial implications of matters arising in legal due diligence are quantified.

MATs and academies should also look out for the funding opportunities which are open to academies as a result of their charitable status. Grants, awards and sponsorships are made by various science and technology bodies, Sports England and other local and national charities and benefactors.

Ensors experienced corporate finance and forensics team can assist you with financial due diligence giving you peace of mind that there will be no nasty financial surprises down the road. Several of our Ensors partners are themselves members of MAT and academy governing bodies.

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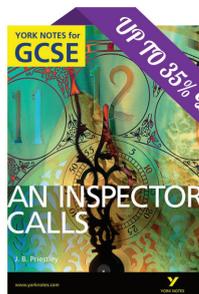
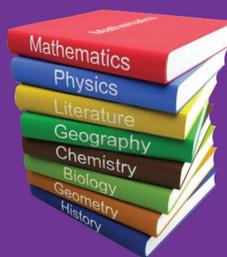
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“IT WON’T BE BUILT IN A DAY...”

Multi-academy trust CEOs share their experience and advice on leadership in a MAT

Dame Dana Ross-Wawrzynski – CEO, Bright Futures Educational Trust

- When we look at growing our MAT it always goes back to our values, our vision and what we want to achieve as a MAT.
- None of us are ‘hero heads.’ Remember that we’re all in the relatively early stages as trusts and none of us have a magic wand.
- A robust due diligence process is key. If you’re taking a school on, you have an obligation to bring value to it and ensure the other schools in your MAT are not put at risk.
- MATs in the early growth stage shouldn’t punish themselves by taking the most difficult schools on board immediately. They will affect your reputation, drain your resources and you haven’t yet been able to demonstrate your ability to make and sustain improvement in a struggling school.
- Finances impact on every part of our trust. As a MAT we’re thinking about what we can market in such a way that in time we’re bringing a substantial amount of money into our organisation.

Stephen Tierney - Executive Director, Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust

- Don’t forget the children and young people’s learning and well-being. Improving their provision should be the core reason you are establishing the trust.
- You’ll need to build a small team of professionals at the centre. Business professionals such as a qualified accountant and a person with significant premises knowledge and experience are invaluable.
- Think about school improvement and how you will monitor and support the development journey of each of the academies. There are important decisions to make about the balance between autonomy at academy level and coming together to work as a trust.
- More than anything realise that the trust won’t be built in a day. Your role as CEO or Executive Director is to have a long term plan to build a really great MAT.

Maura Regan OBE – CEO, Carmel Education Trust

- Change for the better can happen and does happen but it is not a smooth ride.

- I came into teaching to improve life chances of children and that hasn’t changed....it’s just they aren’t all at a single school now.
- Education is ever-changing. You do not want people that just do the job well. You need to have highly skilled staff who get the vision and can be flexible to meet the changing horizon.
- It is all about having a strong backroom team: governance, HR and finance.

Mark Lacey – CEO, Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust

- Partnerships need to constantly reflect on their position and the ways in which they should develop structures and strategies, especially given the current pace of system-wide change in schools.
- Relationships based on trust, commitment and shared moral purpose are key to ensuring that collaboration can work.
- The importance of engaging suitable partners and collaborators is a vital part of effective improvement in order to secure strong collaboration and improved outcomes.
- Getting the moral purpose and the structure right (which again may vary from context to context), setting up an accountability and improvement framework, whilst maintaining a sharp focus on outcomes for pupils should ensure that collaboration is able to triumph over competition.
- Successful leaders should constantly re-evaluate to ensure that they are working for the good of the system and not just themselves.
- Be prepared to give and reap the benefits of what you can learn from others, in the true spirit of being involved in the leadership of school-to-school support.

Expansion of multi-academy trusts is inevitable but how can you be sure your MAT will grow successfully and sustainably? Optimus Education have gathered a range of advice from high-profile figures and experts in the field, including CEOs, lawyers and finance directors in our ‘Multi-academy trusts: achieving successful and sustainable growth’ report.

To access the report, simply visit try.optimus-education.com/MATsreport and fill in your name and email.

THE ASSET INVENTORY AND THE ACADEMIES FINANCIAL HANDBOOK

Making the move from the spreadsheet to database software

Academies must take full control of their financial affairs and apply the letter and the spirit of the Academies Financial Handbook as governed by the EFA (Education Funding Agency). The 2015 Handbook gives clear guidance on the way a trust is expected to manage school assets to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in using public funds. Can introducing a dedicated asset management system help academies achieve these aims?

Making a move to an asset database can save both time and money meaning more available budget. A database system makes it easier for schools to know the location, usage and value of all of their assets, across classrooms, buildings, campuses and even trusts so business managers can allocate resources where they are needed and avoid the pitfalls of purchasing new equipment when there is undocumented spare resource already available. For example, many schools purchase software using a concurrent licence for a defined number of users, accurately tracking actual use takes the guess work out of licence renewals so you are not paying for spare capacity. Being able to track licence usage also makes it easier to negotiate volume deals across affiliated schools and educational bodies.

Savings in manpower

An automated asset management system can dramatically free up time across the board for a school's IT, finance and admin staff. Manual asset counts usually fall to the ICT department which is responsible for managing a portfolio of high value

equipment. Eliminating the repetitive task of locating and tracking software, laptops etc will save an ICT technician significant man hours. Additionally the time saved in managing capital depreciation, insurance claims, procurement planning and budget forecasting lets the whole management team focus resources where they really count.

Insurance

Insurance is a product that we all buy hoping we'll never have to use it. It's hardly surprising that many people don't pay it too much attention until the worst does happen - when it's too late. Schools and academies have their own specialist insurance requirements. Arson is the largest cause of school fires and a well-appointed IT department or ICT lab can be a tempting target for thieves.

While it's easy enough to buy insurance, if the cover isn't right, a cheap deal can turn out to be very expensive and take a long time to settle. One of the most important questions to ask as part of an insurance review is, "what is the value at risk?" Establishing the correct sum insured is the foundation of good insurance and can avoid a shortfall in a claims settlement. Setting the amount insured for contents can be tricky unless the school has an accurate asset register with each and every item included. A dedicated asset management system will ensure a school has:

- An up-to-date record showing proof of purchase and photographic evidence
- An automated depreciation calculator

to ensure insurance premiums accurately reflect the real value of your assets. For example within two years after purchase, the price of a used computer falls to one-third of its price when new (Source: National Bureau of Economic Research)

- Off-site, secure data hosting meaning your asset register is held safely off-site if you ever needed to make a major claim

Too many spreadsheets but not enough useful information?

There are a number of different school departments who can benefit from the information contained in an asset register, information such as licence usage, warranties, capital depreciation, PAT testing schedules, even power consumption. Each department will be looking for a different set of data presented in a specific way and often asset spreadsheets multiply across departments, each showing a different information set – too many spreadsheets but not enough useful information. An asset management system is designed to easily record any supporting asset information and output that information in the form of automated reports giving different users the information they need in the format they want – often as a one-click operation.

Even assuming everyone who needs to touch the asset spreadsheet has the advanced computer skills necessary to generate the figures they require, just like with any manual process, creating and updating spreadsheet reports by hand is error prone: it is easy to cut and



paste the data into the wrong cells, over-select the cells when defining a formula, mistype an expression, *etc.* Spreadsheets also lack a data audit trail. An asset management system will keep all your asset information in one place, with a structured data entry format. User logins can also be used to give staff access to just the information they need protecting data from inadvertent or intentional data corruption.

A spreadsheet is a very useful tool but can't always give the complete picture – costs and basic descriptions work well but useful supporting information such as photographs, purchase receipts and warranties are difficult to accommodate in a spreadsheet format.

Making the move

Often a school appreciates the benefits of making the move to an asset management system and wants to make it happen but it looks like a daunting task. Additionally most asset management software will include features which make it easy to input asset data information, csv imports for existing datasheets, bar code scanning applications for mobile phones and a

user friendly interface all helping with a smooth transition. Some providers also offer an asset auditing service option alongside their software, coming onsite to perform the asset inventory and showing staff the ropes.

SG World provides schools and academies with AudIT - hosted asset management software alongside an asset inventory service. "New customers are usually making the move from a spreadsheet to a dedicated system," said Luke Warren, SGW IT Sales Manager. "A good example is Keswick School for really demonstrating it doesn't have to be difficult. We spoke to Ghislain Smithson, School Finance Manager and Dawn Boyes, School Business Director."

"Getting an overall picture of the school assets proved very difficult, information was kept in two places – spreadsheet and the Corero system; unfortunately the end figures weren't adding up so we didn't have much confidence in the values we were working with for things like capital depreciation and disposals. Setting the insurance premium felt a bit like a stab in the dark."

"We now have absolute confidence

in our inventory. We've re-aligned our insurance premium and re-structured our accounts. AudIT has saved us so much time and probably our sanity. Every holiday we were playing catch up with the inventory and not getting the results we needed. We honestly dreaded the school audit."

Keswick School runs AudIT side by side with Corero, inputting the figures from AudIT into the accounts, to work out capital depreciation and produce write-off reports for governors meetings.

"What I would say to new academies is that with AudIT you don't have to keep putting off sorting out asset management. I know working through an academy conversion is a very busy period, potentially there are new capital builds and it's very tempting to put off the inventory until things have settled down. However getting AudIT on board is so easy and puts down a great foundation for you to go forward. You free up so much time and effort to concentrate on other areas."

Lisa Robinson, SG World



EDUCATION: THE ROCK AND ROLL YEARS

Ageing rocker Les Walton reminisces

1964

In 1964, preparations began around raising the school leaving age (ROSLA) to 16.

The preparations for ROSLA were delayed in 1968, and the decision was reached in 1971 that the new upper age limit would be enforced from September 1972 onwards.

I had the 'good luck' to be head of 5th Year (Year 11), the year when around 60% of the pupils were required to stay an extra year. The two new 'ROSLA' posts were taken by the head of woodwork and metalwork and the head of home economics. There was a clear message in these appointments.

Of course, as usual, the 'O' Level pupils continued their studies in the normal way. This was to become, and remains, a prevailing theme of secondary education: pupils with the most stable and supportive background had the most constant and secure education pathways, whereas those with the most unsettled backgrounds were subject to the most change and disruption.

So to address the requirements of ROSLA, the answer was simply to

increase the amount of time given over to 'practical subjects'. Thus the 'ROSLA Kids' as they were known, received a timetable which was filled up with extra PE and woodwork and metalwork, for the boys and cooking and textiles for the girls

As head of 5th Year I arranged an 'extended studies' programme for the ROSLA children. This consisted of a year-long programme involving work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and a personal and social education programme.

Looking back this was a period of educational innovation and creativity.

At the end of the year the head of ROSLA retired. During the year we had become friends. Bill eventually shared with me his quite shocking experiences of being a prisoner of war in the Second World War. One day he took his shirt off to show me the patterns burnt with lit cigarettes on his back by his prison warders.

To Bill there was a moral purpose behind the raising of the school leaving age. It was not raised to simply ensure the children could get better

qualifications and subsequently go on to higher education or jobs. Bill's clear view was that the core purpose of education was to develop a society in which people would behave in a 'civilised way' to each other; that they would understand and empathise with other people from different backgrounds and different cultures.

To put it simply, the more educated people are, there will be less likelihood of war and the atrocities sometimes associated with war.

Bill's views very much contrasted with the modern thinking that if we increase the amount and level of education we can better compete with countries such as Japan and Germany.

When Bill eventually retired it was hard to persuade him to even attend a little staff celebration on his last day, but eventually, he reluctantly attended and accepted his gift. He then asked the staff to wave goodbye to him from the staff room. As he drove his Ford Prefect out of the school he gave a 'V Sign' from the window. I miss him.

He took his shirt off to show me the patterns burnt with lit cigarettes on his back



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