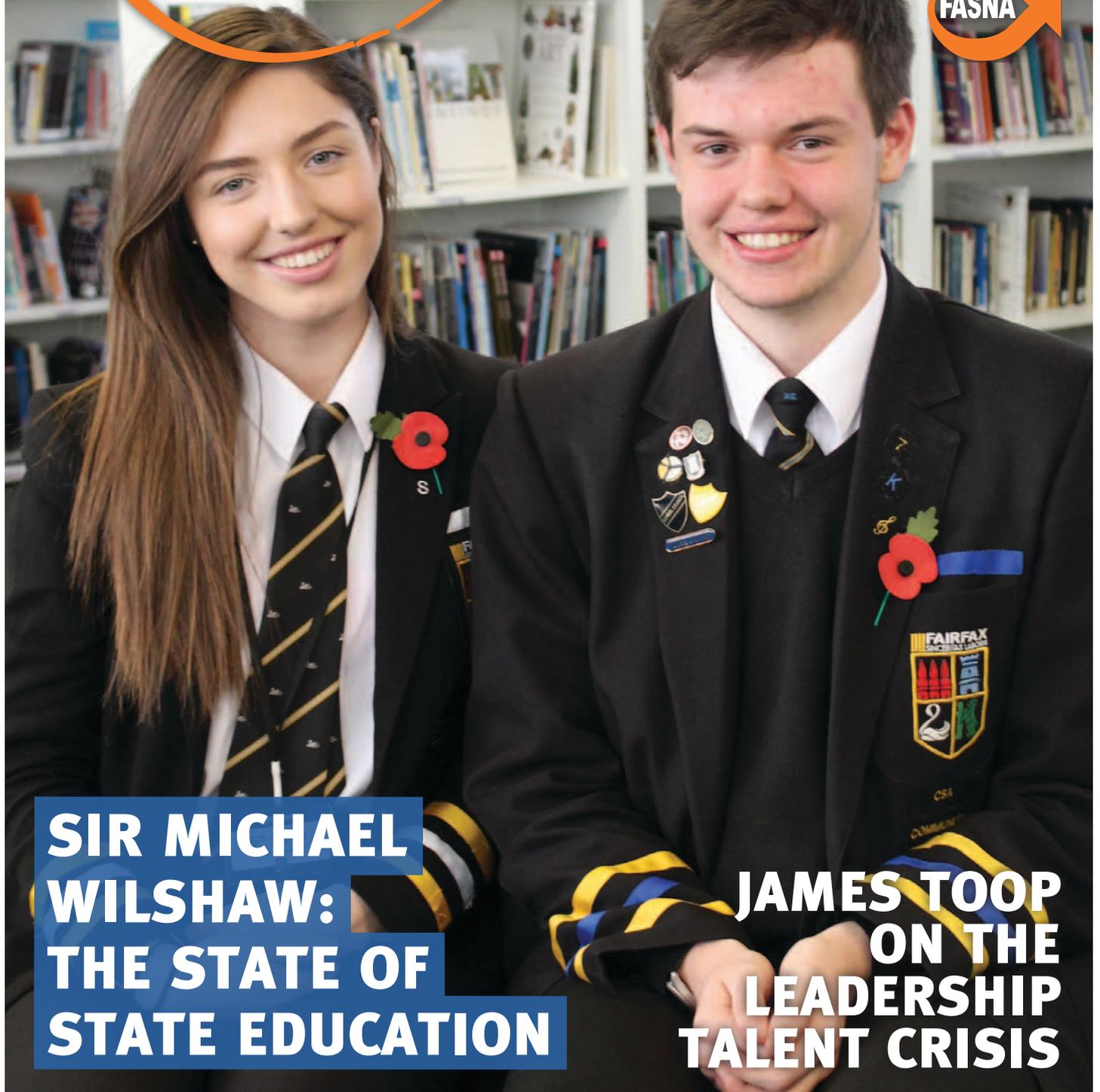


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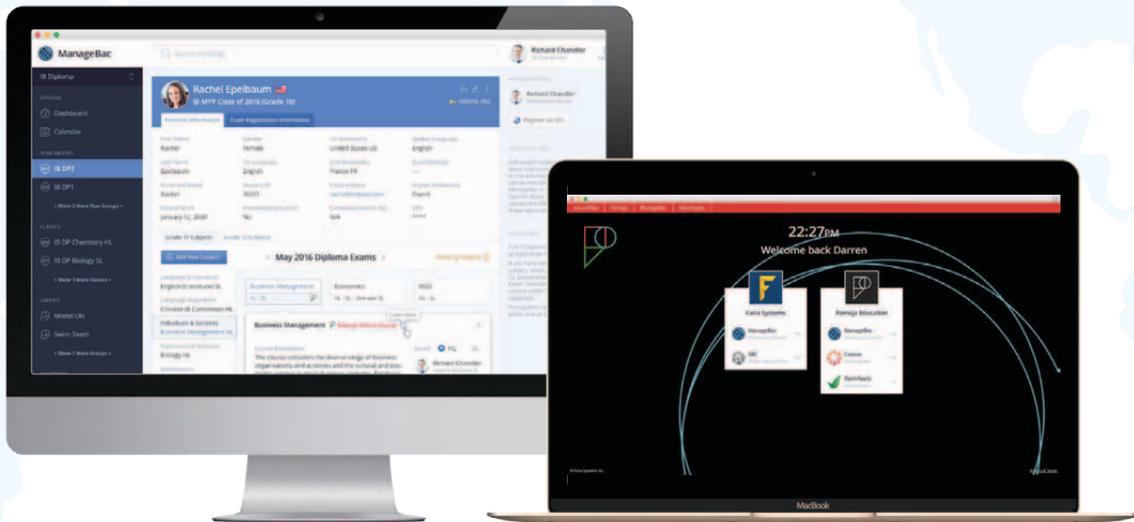
Volume 6 Number 2 Spring 2017

A*cademy magazine



**SIR MICHAEL
WILSHAW:
THE STATE OF
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**JAMES TOOP
ON THE
LEADERSHIP
TALENT CRISIS**



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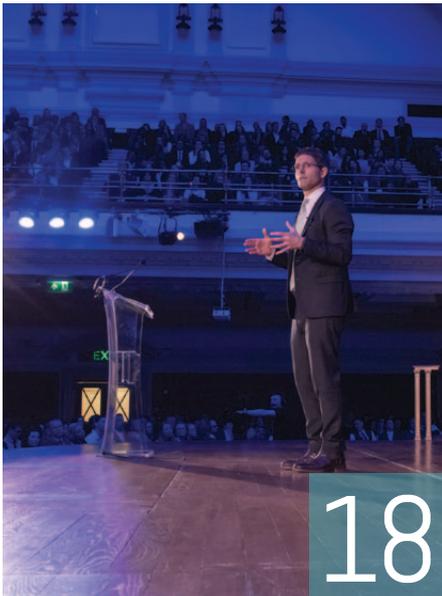
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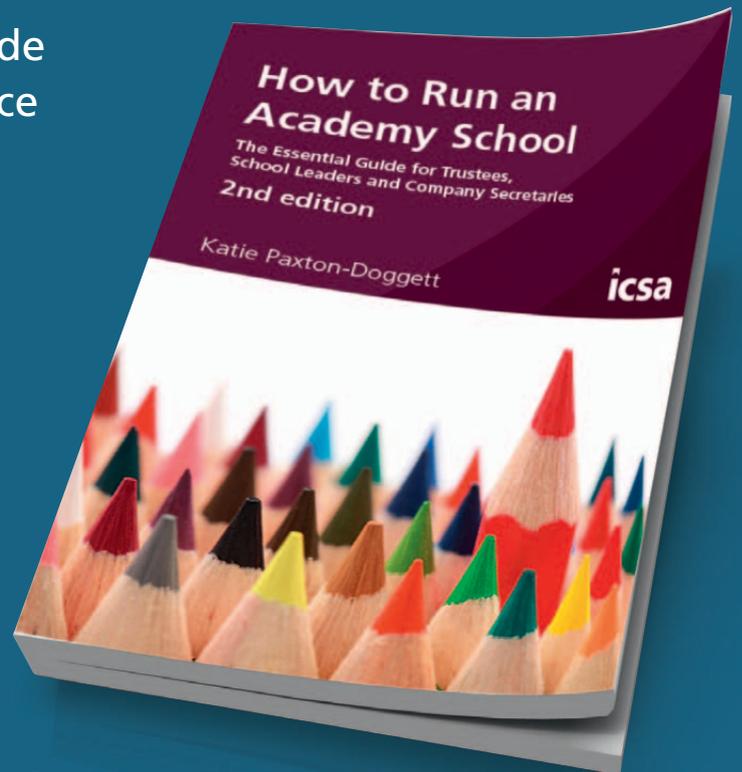
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FROM THE EDITOR

Since last going to print, the political turmoil both at home and abroad has continued apace with ‘Brexit’ and ‘Trump’ being the two words that surely must have been used on more occasions than anyone could even begin to estimate. Of real concern, both domestically and internationally, are the as yet unknown implications of these decisions and that includes here in the UK, things that may impact on the wider education landscape, on which we are all focussed.

In this edition of *Academy Magazine*, Sir Michael Wilshaw, as he approached the end of his four-year term of office as Chief Inspector, shares with readers the opinion he has previously offered to the Education Select Committee, that our education system, despite having come a long way, remains, like our national football team, only ‘mediocre’. He specifically comments on the badly needed reform to vocational education, expressing his view that, to prosper, the country, post-Brexit, cannot rely on importing the skills its school-leavers lack – it has to develop them itself. He also expresses his concerns about the proposed move back to selection not being the answer to the issues that we face currently within state education. He warns about the potential for such steps to begin to dissolve the glue that holds our society together “through a needless return to selection and segregation”. Some of these same concerns, as you will read, are echoed by FASNA Chair Tom Clark, who feels that although the Green Paper is asking some of the right

He warns about the potential for such steps to begin to dissolve the glue that holds our society together ‘through a needless return to selection and segregation’

questions, it is not necessarily offering the right answers.

Other content includes a contribution from David Laws, now Executive Chairman of the Education Policy Institute who gives an interesting and useful update on the findings of the research work of the institute and offers his thoughts on what the Government ought to be focussing on in terms of education policy. We also hear from Gabriel Heller Sahlgren, Director of Research at the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education (CMRE), who assesses the future of the

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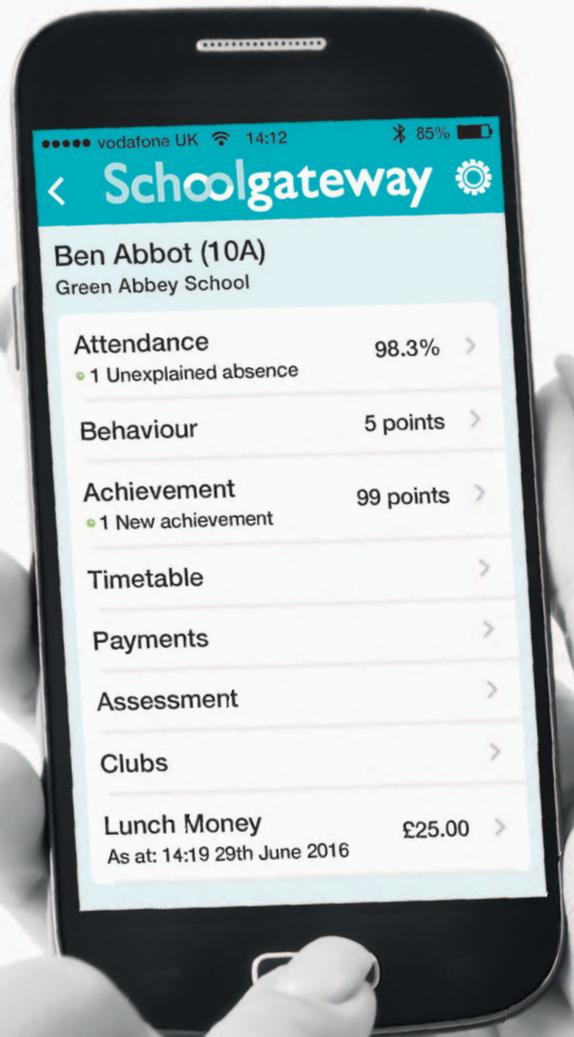
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We are also pleased to have a number of contributions from Multi Academy Trusts who collectively share their thoughts and experience across a range of subjects including remodelling governance structures, school and wider system improvement, leadership, growing a MAT and joining a MAT and the benefits of holistically embracing internal assurance processes. In addition, James Toop, CEO of newly formed Ambition School Leadership (a merger of Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders) deals with the challenging issue of the system developing a sufficient and sustainable supply of leadership

talent. Dai Durbridge, Education Lawyer with Browne Jacobson also provides a useful insight into the importance of MATs having a trust wide approach to safeguarding.

As ever I would like to thank everyone for their contributions which I hope you will find both interesting and of real value. At the time of writing, the editorial team wish all our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. At the time of reading, after I trust, a restful and enjoyable festive season, you will already have rolled up your sleeves and got stuck into another testing term and yet hopefully another very fruitful and rewarding one.

Caroline Whitty, the editor of *Academy* magazine, has been working in education within the academies sector for the last 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 is also a FASNA consultant and Company Secretary of The National Induction Panel for Teachers (NIPT).

Gareth Dawkins 1958 - 2016

In his introductory address at the FASNA Autumn Conference in early November, Chair Tom Clark had the sad duty to break the news that FASNA Board member and Executive Principal of Bradford Academy, Gareth Dawkins, had died very suddenly during the half term holiday. Gareth had done much in the world of education, both in the Bradford area and beyond. A memorial service was held in Bradford Cathedral on November 30th to celebrate his life and his many achievements. Amongst those who paid tribute was Peter Lauener, Chief Executive of the EFA.



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‘SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE’: RIGHT ISSUE, WRONG SOLUTION?

Tom Clark, Chair of the FASNA Board, on the recent Green Paper consultation

Internationally, most countries have improved their education systems because they have achieved success by improving the attainment of the poorest. In England the ‘gap’ between disadvantaged and other children starts before they arrive at school. This consultation may be asking the right question but proposing, in part, the wrong solution. A debate about early years would be a better starting point to address the problem of social mobility.

Few could disagree with the principles behind this paper: the need to improve social mobility and the need to provide more ‘good’ places in schools but the Green Paper implies that these places can only come from grammar schools and the independent sector. ‘Good’ schools are those that demonstrate good outcomes in terms of student progress and student experiences whatever their status, and should be supported to develop their capacity.

In some ways the consultation seems to be about furthering academisation as much as selection. Happily, ‘forced academisation’ is off the agenda but during the lifetime of this parliament, the number of academies will be well-past the tipping point where they become the norm and nearly all will be operating within multi-academy trusts. The challenges of leadership succession, recruitment, retention, and the impending changes to funding will no doubt be the incentives for this to happen.

Too much of the criticism of the consultation seems to be about what it isn’t saying. A return to the 1950’s binary system is not being proposed. Encouraging schools to take students from lower income households; establishing a feeder primary in an area with a higher proportion of low income households; and the transfer between schools at a number of given ages can be welcomed. More partnerships which help deliver minority subjects, develop master-classes and share facilities and corporate resource would help to support the system.

There are four areas to the consultation:

1. Independent Schools and MATs

To achieve more good places, all successful schools, irrespective of status should collaborate. Senior leaders from the independent sector could join the boards of MATs if they have specific expertise to offer but this would be for the MAT Board to decide. The idea of setting benchmarks and thresholds for compliance with government policy and the real or implied threat of independent schools losing charitable status if they don’t, seems less than constructive and to be inviting a fight with the wrong people. Financial incentives and targets could be written into funding agreements to help ensure proper outcomes.

2. Universities and MATs

Universities operate in a highly regulated sector that is subject to the accountability of the public sector alongside the commercial challenges of the private sector. There is, therefore, significant expertise in corporate governance within the senior leadership of universities that could be invaluable to MATs at Trust Board level. Any requirement for each university to sponsor a MAT and implied threats concerning university fees, again seem less than constructive.

3. Selective Schools

Successful grammar schools already have the opportunity to expand and some have done so. Any future expansion should only take place if the grammar school can evidence its successes in accelerating social mobility. Collaborative support from successful selective schools and successful non-selective schools, could help other schools in stretching the more able. Defined projects with measurable outcomes (quantitative in terms of attainment, qualitative in terms of experiences) could be identified on a bespoke basis and written into funding agreements.

The consultation paper asks what can be done to support the creation of either wholly or partially new selective schools? A way forward might be to look at models for partial selection. This could be on a similar basis to that which was afforded to ‘specialist schools’ in the past. Schools



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could partially select a proportion of each cohort on aptitude, for example for STEM subjects, or languages. Schools could build expertise and share facilities and resource to support and develop other schools based on their needs. This strategy could be adopted within a MAT and can already be evidenced in some. Partial selection already exists in many schools through carefully planned setting systems. Encouraging MATs to identify and make appropriate provision for more able pupils across the whole MAT, especially if it is a mixed MAT of primary and secondary schools, could help ensure that pupils are targeted at whatever age they demonstrated 'readiness'. Parents would probably see this as part of normal 'setting' arrangements as it would not involve any move to a different institution.

It would be unwise to underestimate the potential negative parental perception towards selection if their children are not 'selected'. Parents also have concerns regarding the 'housing premium' they have already paid to attend a good school if new selective schools take students away and this impacts on the standing or reputation of other schools in the locality. Parents who 'succeed' in getting their children into a new grammar school, of course might think otherwise.

The consultation asks how we might support existing non-selective schools to become selective. This defaults to a view that all selective schools are successful and seems to ignore a future where all schools are in MATs. Selection based on aptitude should only happen if there is evidence that outcomes are being realised. The idea

that norm-referenced 'quotas' of children from low income households across the country should qualify for admission to selective schools and that 'sanctions' should be applied where schools fail to meet government aspirations, seems both wrong-headed and heavy handed.

We are invited to suggest how we might best ensure that the benefits of existing selective schools are brought to bear on local non-selective schools. This question should be addressed to all good schools, not just selective schools. The development of partnerships, sponsorship of academies and working through successful MATs, are already vehicles for school collaboration.

We are asked whether there are other things we should ask of existing selective schools to ensure they support non-selective education in their areas. Any requests to support underperforming schools should be made to all successful schools, not just selective schools.

Finally, we are asked how we can improve the quality of non-selective schools. There is a need to improve the quality of some selective and some non-selective schools. The implication is that non-selective schools need to improve. Some do, some are performing exceptionally well.

4. Faith Schools

The proposal to replace the 50% rule is reasonable – faith schools should promote both inclusivity and diversity along with twinning arrangements. The development of mixed-faith MATs including governors and directors of MATs of different faiths is also welcomed.

Asked whether there are ways in which we can effectively monitor faith schools for integration and hold them to account for performance, the view would be that both the curriculum and the wider educational experiences should be monitored to ensure a balanced approach to educational opportunity through the regulatory bodies of Ofsted and RSCs.

In summary then, the Green Paper has two laudable aims which all schools will support: to improve social mobility and increase the number of 'good' school places to ensure that the most disadvantaged have better access to such schools and the needs of the most able students are met. The language, some of the identified strategies and underlying assumptions do little to promote wholehearted acceptance of the proposals. The existing and developing climate, where schools are collaborating, supporting each other and developing system leadership more than ever before, should receive much more recognition and encouragement. Schools' greatest concerns are around the impact new or expanding schools might have on them.

Tom Clark is Chair of the FASNA Board. He was formerly Chief Executive of George Spencer Foundation School and Technology College in Nottingham. George Spencer School received three consecutive 'outstanding' Ofsted reports.

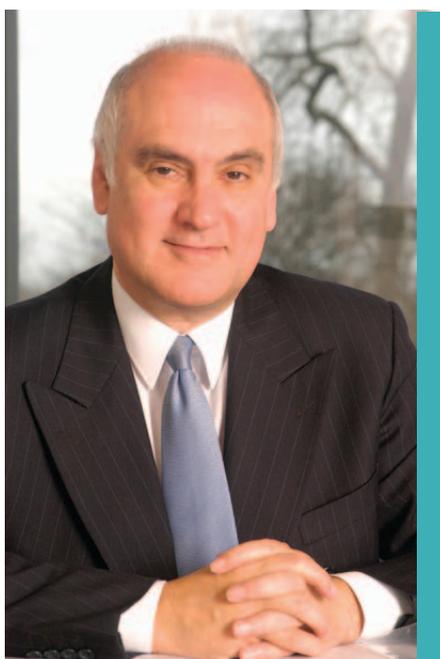
THE STATE OF STATE EDUCATION

As he approached the end of his four year term, Sir Michael Wilshaw shared his views on progress made within the state education system and the challenges that still lie ahead

The missionary zeal of the early Academy Principals to promote freedom and autonomy for all schools as a means of raising standards was palpable. The big question now is whether that missionary zeal is as strong, powerful and as effective when academy status is more the norm than the exception. I didn't beat about the bush when addressing the Education Select Committee recently with my view that we still have a mediocre education system. This did not go down well in certain quarters but I stand by it, as compared to the international competitors we want to emulate, we still trail the best.

Interestingly, given the controversies around Brexit and immigration, one of the few measures where England leaves its rivals trailing is in the proportion of students with a degree who come from immigrant backgrounds. In this respect we are way ahead of most countries. However, for the most part, England's education system is a bit like its football team – better than many but hardly top notch. We comfort ourselves with past success, dream of future glory then collapse into despair when we come across superior play.

This familiar tale of disappointment, however, is misleading in two important respects. Firstly, it fails to recognize that our education system has come from a long way back. Twenty years ago standards were truly dire with generations of children being let down year after year.



Since those dark days schools have got a lot better. Secondly, it can tempt us to adopt fanciful and nostalgic solutions while our very real structural problems are ignored.

For all their faults, our schools have improved immeasurably. Greater autonomy matched with greater accountability is making a significant difference to standards. The proportion of good and outstanding schools has never been higher and as a result, some 1.8 million additional children are now in good or better schools than was the case six years ago. Primary schools have been particularly successful, with a great

majority now judged good or outstanding.

Secondary performance is not as stellar but nearly 6 in 10 youngsters now achieve the benchmark GCSE grades even though examinations are that much tougher. Twenty years ago, with easier examinations, less than 1 in 5 achieved these grades. The percentage of disadvantaged youngsters going into higher education is at an all-time high. Astonishingly, such has been the improvement among secondary schools in London, that its disadvantaged pupils were more likely to go on to university last year than their more affluent peers.

Escalators of opportunity

There is another successful aspect to our school system that has largely gone unnoticed. We regularly castigate ourselves for the poor performance of white British pupils. Children of immigrants, conversely, have in recent years done remarkably well. Our schools are proving themselves to be remarkable escalators of opportunity. Whatever cultural tensions exist outside of school, race and religion are not treated as handicaps inside them. All children are taught equally and contrary to tabloid claims, non-immigrant children do not suffer, rather the reverse. Schools, it turns out, are great forces for social cohesion and are the place where different communities integrate and provide the glue that helps hold our society together. How short sighted would it be if we carelessly did

Our schools are proving themselves to be remarkable escalators of opportunity. Whatever cultural tensions exist outside of school, race and religion are not treated as handicaps inside them

anything to dissolve it through a needless return to selection and segregation?

At individual school level, the transformation has been remarkable. When I began teaching in Inner London, embarrassing numbers of children left school with pitifully low grades. How different it is today with exceptional head teachers transforming schools that not so long ago were in desperate straits. You can find success stories up and down the country with professionals, often working in extremely challenging circumstances, achieving incredible results. Outstanding, well led comprehensive schools are delivering for children of all abilities. It is no surprise; therefore, that the present Secretary-of-State and many more MPs have been educated at comprehensive schools. The trajectory of improvement in our state education system is palpable. We should therefore be optimistic for the future and above all else, not do anything which jeopardizes this upward trend.

However, although some of our achievements may be unsung, our shortcomings are still serious. The attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM secondary students hasn't budged in a decade. Thousands of poor children, who are in the top ten per cent nationally at age 11, do not make it into the top 25 per cent five years later.

Geographical divide

In my last year's Annual Report, I highlighted a growing geographical

divide in educational standards, after the age of 11, between the North, the Midlands and the South of England. This is compounded by woeful vocational provision at both pre and post-sixteen. The fact that a quarter of a million youngsters leave school after 13 years of formal education without a GCSE in English and Maths is a national disgrace.

All this has led some to conclude that the system is broken. They uncritically accept the narrative, pedalled by many in the press, that comprehensives are comprehensively bad. What is needed, they argue, is a return to the simple truths of yesteryear – when the brightest went to grammars and the rest took their chances. I think this would be a monumental mistake. I do not wish to traduce in any way the fine teaching that goes on in individual grammar schools, nor the choices parents make. They, like everyone else, have to operate within the system they are given, but for the country as a whole, selection at the age of 11 is simply not the answer. There is ample evidence, for instance, that grammars do nothing to improve social mobility. The numbers of children from deprived backgrounds who manage to secure a grammar school place are tiny and their counterparts who go to the local secondary modern, fare badly compared to those who go to comprehensive schools. Furthermore, recent research clearly demonstrates that the value-added progress measures for the most able

children are no better than they are in high performing comprehensive schools.

Unfortunately, we have to acknowledge that grammars are back in vogue now partly because we have failed to sufficiently reform comprehensives. Two years ago I warned that those who were resisting reform and refusing to embrace greater diversity in our school system would inevitably pave the way for the return of selection and so it has proved.

The grammar school ethos that Harold Wilson confidently asserted would permeate comprehensive schools, still hasn't reached too many secondary schools in the Midlands or the North. These schools may be in the minority but their continued existence feeds into a larger narrative. Even though the anti-academic ideology associated with the early comprehensives has been discredited, its damaging effects remain.

Weak leadership

We cannot excuse weak leadership in some of our comprehensives – leaders who simply don't get the basics right and who do not create the culture in which all children can excel, including the brightest and the best. Inspectors see too many secondaries where uniform is not worn properly; where the atmosphere in classrooms is not conducive to good teaching and learning and where expectations are abysmally low. There are too many secondary schools with mixed-ability classes without mixed-

Some academy chains are doing excellent work but others risk replicating the worst aspects of local authorities. This is why my inspectors are instructed to focus on those chains, which according to the data, are not working for their children

ability teaching and where bright children languish in a baleful stupor while the teacher teaches to the middle.

In addition, Ofsted's recent report (*The Wasted Years*) clearly highlighted the problems in the early years of secondary education. Too many children have been allowed to drift and mark time in years 7 to 9 without building on their achievements at the end of primary school. As a consequence, they just scrape through their GCSE examinations and do not achieve the highest grades of which they are capable.

Fighting the good fight

We all know that improving teaching is hard and takes time but it can't be improved unless head teachers are willing to fight the good fight on school culture. There is no reason why comprehensive schools should not have a grammar school ethos and celebrate the importance of tradition, ritual and formality.

As a consequence of all this, and in spite of the enormous strides we have made in the past few years, the comprehensive name is still associated in the minds of many with mediocrity, laxity and failure. This is why the proposal to

set up more grammars has, despite the evidence, found a wider welcome than it had any right to expect.

The tragedy is that the grammar debate isn't necessary or welcome. It threatens to undo the progress we have made and does absolutely nothing to address more fundamental problems. It clouds the debate about early years and does not address the big issues of accountability and early intervention in the new academy landscape. It will obfuscate the big capacity issues – such as the need for more and better teachers and school leaders – which are preventing further progress in our education system, particularly at secondary level. It will further push to the side-lines a much needed reform to vocational education and high quality provision for those who do not want to pursue an academic route to university and it will certainly not tackle the long tail of underachievement containing our poorest children – rather the reverse.

This totally unnecessary debate risks consuming our energies when they should be devoted to far more pressing problems. For example leadership is undoubtedly the single most important factor in improving the quality of our school

system. Excellent leaders are intolerant of mediocrity, support and professionally develop teachers and refuse to permit bad behaviour from students. They set high expectations for all ability groups, especially the most able, who often set the tone and culture for the whole school. These leaders are powerful people who are conscious of the autonomy that has been given to them in order to raise standards and who are bringing about systemic change through clusters and chains of schools. However, we simply do not have enough of them, so why aren't we nurturing the next generation of leaders or training enough of them well, or ensuring that they go to where they are needed most? We should be addressing these issues rather than wasting time talking about grammar schools.

Intervention

Intervention too is an issue. Some academy chains are doing excellent work but others risk replicating the worst aspects of local authorities. This is why my inspectors are instructed to focus on those chains, which according to the data, are not working for their children. Schools need timely and early intervention before they go off the boil.



We now have RSCs who should provide that vital early warning trigger, but there are real questions about their capacity to do so. With, on average, 2,750 schools in their area, of which approximately 750 are academies, how can they possibly monitor so many with the resources they have and intervene speedily and effectively? Even the best are struggling to do so and we could be addressing this issue but instead we're talking about grammars.

We know that our school population is increasing more rapidly than our teaching workforce. We also know that we are not attracting enough recruits into vital subjects, nor tempting them to the isolated towns and regions that need them most. We could be talking about recruitment challenges but for some reason we're not.

Secretaries of state

I've worked with three secretaries of state now as Chief Inspector and I can tell you that they have all been committed to improving our schools. They have all felt passionately that every child deserves the very best and have all realised that a better education system is absolutely crucial to the future health and wealth of this country. But let's be honest, the big issues

facing our education system predate this administration or the one before it, or even the one before that.

We know that if we want to address disadvantage, we have to invest in better Early Years education. The gap between poor children and their better-off peers starts before school and becomes entrenched well before the age of 11. We need to think creatively about that and accept that neither disadvantaged children nor the most able have been nurtured and stretched as well as they could have been, in too many of our schools. The most effective schools may be comprehensive but that doesn't mean that the same approach works best with every child, or indeed every teacher. Schools need to think intelligently about where they deploy resources for the maximum effect. That already happens in the best academy trusts and we need to see more of it.

Finally, we have to tackle our poor performance in vocational education. We know that a good grounding in academic subjects is essential for every child but we also have to accept that some children, when they are older, thrive in a more technical environment. We need to make that happen not only for their sake but also for our own, because to prosper,

the country, post-Brexit, cannot rely on importing the skills its school-leavers lack – it has to develop them itself.

So if the Education Select Committee called me back tomorrow I would still say that we have a mediocre education system but if they pressed me and asked if we should salvage what we could and admit defeat with the rest, I would be equally forthright and say no, we should not.

Enormous strides

Our schools have made enormous strides and they are remarkably good at building social cohesion. We should not let our impatience blind us to our achievements. How foolish would it be to jettison the good work of the past few years only to embrace a model that doesn't meet our needs and has gone out of fashion elsewhere? The best global education systems have achieved success in large part because they improved the attainment of the poorest performing children. It isn't a matter of focusing on the top 20 per cent, to be world class you have to focus on the 100 per cent. It turns out that doing the right thing is also the smart thing and if our international competitors think the future is comprehensive, why shouldn't we?

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS, ACADEMISATION AND FAITH SCHOOLS – SOLUTIONS, OR A DISTRACTION?

David Laws on the findings of the first six months of the Education Policy Institute

We established the Education Policy Institute just six months ago, with the ambition of becoming the “Institute for Fiscal Studies” of the education policy space. The Education Policy Institute is an independent, impartial and evidence-based research institute, which aims to promote high quality education outcomes, regardless of social background.

In our first six months we have produced a range of reports on major issues in English education – including in policy areas which I know will be of keen interest to *Academy* magazine readers.

Our work on the performance of academy chains and local authorities has been important, and in July we published “School Performance in Multi-Academy Trusts and Local Authorities – 2015.” We intend to update this report on an annual basis. The Report created, for the first time, league tables comparing the performance of schools in both academy groups and local authorities, at both primary and secondary level. These tables use two measures – one for the improvement of schools in LAs/MATs, and one for the overall level of “value added”.

These tables help to identify the best and worst school providers, and they could be used to both encourage the expansion of high quality providers and to take intervention action against lower quality providers – both MATs and some local authorities.

Overall, we found multi-academy trusts over-represented amongst both the best and worst performers, which



shows that while higher performing academy chains can make a big impact on delivering higher attainment, there is no “magic wand” that automatically makes academy chains better than local authority groups of schools. Indeed, the difference in results between the highest performing local authority and the lowest-performing large multi-academy trust (in secondary education) is equivalent to just over 7 grades for pupils across their GCSEs. This analysis therefore raises some serious questions about the government’s (now long term) aim of academising all schools.

Interesting results

The Education Policy Institute also carried out work in partnership with the London School of Economics to assess academy performance at a “system” level, i.e. above the level of individual MATs. The LSE uncovered some very interesting results: they found that the early (Labour era) sponsored academies were very successful in delivering higher progress

and attainment – with these sponsored academies delivering around one GCSE grade better in each of five subjects for the average pupil, and with a 30% rise in access to (non Russell Group) universities, compared with a control group. However, the results were far less impressive for the “Converter Academy” programme of the Coalition Government – LSE research showed no improvement in most converter academies versus a control group. The only converter academies whose performance did improve by a modest amount were those already rated “Outstanding” by Ofsted. This may indicate that in a relatively high autonomy school system such as that which we have in England, granting schools more autonomy only delivers improved results where the schools are already very well led, or where new leadership and governance is provided. Again, this has major implications for the way in which the academies programme should develop.

Later in 2016, the Education Policy Institute spent some time looking at the implications of the government’s recent “Green Paper” on school reform – “Schools that work for everyone.” In September 2016 we published a report on the implications of expanding the number of grammar schools – in “Grammar Schools and Social Mobility”. This Report showed that at a national level, and adjusting for pupil characteristics, there appears to be no overall impact of selective education, either positive or negative. This may well suggest that additional grammar schools are not a good intervention for raising the average

We also found that the poorest children were notably under-represented in grammar schools, even when prior attainment is taken into account

standards across a school system.

We found, however, that pupils attending grammar schools achieve, on average, an estimated one third of a GCSE grade higher in each of eight GCSE subjects, compared with similar pupils in non-selective schools in comprehensive areas. At a national level, and given the current number of grammar schools, there does not appear to be a significant attainment penalty from not attending a grammar school, for those children who applied and were not selected or who did not apply. Such children achieve similar results as those with the same characteristics in non-selective areas.

Grammar school effects

We did find, however, that as the number of grammar school places in an area rises, the positive grammar school effects on attainment decline. In areas where the number of grammar school places exceeds the number of high attaining pupils, the grammar school “bonus” falls by two thirds. Importantly, in the most selective areas we find a small negative effect of not attending grammar schools, which is larger for the poorest children.

For pupils who live in grammar school areas but do not attend such schools, negative effects are estimated to emerge at around the point where selective places are available for 70 per cent of high attaining pupils.

We also found that the poorest children were notably under-represented in grammar schools, even when prior attainment is taken into account, so an expansion of selective schools risks

widening the disadvantage gap and further curtailing social mobility. This is hardly surprising. Earlier EPI research has shown that around 40% of the disadvantage gap has emerged before school has even started, so a policy to improve social mobility which relies heavily on pupil selection at age 11 is unlikely to be successful.

By contrast, we also looked at the top 25% of non-selective schools on a value added basis. We found that these schools were far more socially representative than grammar schools, and that compared with these schools there is no benefit to attending a grammar school for high attaining pupils, measured by “best 8” GCSE results.

It is also worth bearing in mind that in the first 203 (Labour era) sponsored academies, not only were the attainment gains much greater than in grammar schools, but these academies now educate 50,000 children entitled to free school meals, compared with 4,000 such pupils in grammar schools.

In December 2016, EPI published a further report which relates to proposals in the Green Paper – the plan to encourage faith schools to expand, to deliver “more good school places”.

We found that faith schools are on average far less selective (unsurprisingly) than grammar schools, but they are more selective than other state funded (non selective) schools. And while some faith schools take in many more disadvantaged pupils than could be expected, 1 in 10 such schools are at least as socially selective as the average grammar school

– which must raise some concerns about their admissions criteria.

Faith schools

We also looked at attainment in faith schools. This is, in raw terms, higher than in non-faith schools on average at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. But, adjusting for pupil characteristics, we found no material difference in attainment at Key Stage 2, and a small gain of around 1/7th of a GCSE grade on average across 8 GCSEs at Key Stage 4.

So additional faith schools seem unlikely to make any positive difference to social mobility – attainment gains are low, and disadvantaged pupils are less likely, on average, to enter these schools.

This is just a snap-shot of some of our work over a six month period. Other research has also covered issues such as: teacher hours and professional development; the funding of technical education; school inspection; early years education; and trends in the disadvantaged gap.

We hope that in 2017 our research can continue to shed light on key education issues, in order to improve the quality of the debate, and ultimately contribute to better policy making and improved outcomes.



WHAT IS IN GREAT SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

Brian Sims describes the Ark leadership culture

Ark is a network of 35 non-selective schools, educating over 21,000 children and young people across Birmingham, Hastings, London and Portsmouth. From our executive principals to our admin teams, we are all united by our mission to ensure that every young person, regardless of their background, has access to a great education and real choices in life.

We have guiding principles, our six pillars, that underpin everything that we all do. These pillars are: excellent teaching, high expectations, exemplary behaviour, knowing every child, depth before breadth, and more time for learning. What these mean in practice vary from school to school. We have very purposely never taken a cookie-cutter approach because we know that our principals know their schools and their local communities better than anybody.

It is this uniqueness that makes the Ark network so special. Though wildly different at times, what unites us is our urgent pursuit of great outcomes for our students. The more I study our schools – and other amazing schools around the country – the more I come to believe that no matter the differences, great schools share three common traits. These schools all have leaders who are: brutally consistent in designing

clear policies, communicating them simply, and implementing them to the highest standard; respectfully relentless in developing people and helping put them in a position to maximise impact; rigorously joyful in embracing the opportunities and challenges of educating young people, having fun while doing it, and celebrating success along the way.

Three areas

If you want to be a great school leader, I urge you to consider these three areas and measure your actions against them. Literally, as an SLT, self-evaluate against each one. You'll find yourself pulling up a bit from the details and remembering the why behind the what, and the how behind the who. More importantly, you'll begin making adjustments that help you get stronger, right from the start.

As leaders, one of the most important roles we play is ensuring the people around us are able to do their best work. Creating the conditions for people who, if we've done it right, are better at their areas of expertise than we ever could be, is a critical part of our job.

Equally as essential is how we respond when someone isn't meeting expectations. One approach I've tried over the years is to ask myself: is the person unaware, unable, or unwilling? These

three categories offer a simple checklist, sequenced in a helpful order. In fact, they basically follow the "I do, we do, you do" of lesson planning.

If someone is unaware, that's my fault and therefore falls into the I do category. I need to communicate expectations more clearly. If someone is unable, that's a joint task; a we do. I need to help them develop the skill or capacity to do the work at a high level.

If someone knows what's expected and has demonstrated the ability to do it but still isn't getting it done, then they've moved into the unwilling category – the you do. It's important to try to understand why they aren't doing it, but the reality is, if they're unwilling to do the task that you need them to do at the level you need them to do it, that's not okay.

As a manager, trying to understand where someone sits along this continuum can help in deciding how to improve the situation. At best you provide the right support and they begin to do the work properly; at worst you provide the right support and they don't. Either way, your next steps are clear. Our students deserve our best. That means the adults around them have to be able to do great work, every day. As leaders, it's our job to make sure that happens.



Aspirations and achievements

Many school leaders face a huge task in raising aspirations and achievements in their schools. It is likely they will face a number of challenges on the way. But my experience as an educator has taught me that hard work, a desire to see your colleagues and students succeed, and the ability to look at oneself critically, all help to drive high levels of achievement.

One of the highlights of the school calendar for me is the Ark Music Gala, where hundreds of students, primary and secondary, from across the country, come together to perform together on the famous Barbican stage. I am always amazed by their courage and musicianship, and surprised by their creativity and confidence.

We take it incredibly seriously and countless people work hard to make it happen, led brilliantly by our Music Team. The Gala for us has become a symbolic reminder of the heartbeat of who we are and what we believe. As much as any Results Day, it brings us that much closer to achieving our mission.

As school leaders, it also provides us with an opportunity to consider leadership in a different context – that of the music conductor.

I saw a TED talk recently that

analysed symphony conductors as a way of identifying the most powerful characteristics of effective leaders. It's well worth the 20 minutes.

The speaker, Itay Talgam, provides a humorous and insightful take on different styles of conductors, complete with action videos. To Talgam, the best conductors create the conditions for musicians to feel autonomous in their work – despite the fact that each one has a specific seat in the symphony and exact notes to play during a piece.

It's fascinating to consider: what messages can a conductor send to his orchestra to motivate and inspire them while also holding members to account? How can she empower musicians to transcend the notes on the page and produce not just music but beautiful music, and not alone but together?

Talgam's conclusions about great conductors apply equally well to our work in schools. The best leaders start with a deep and personal understanding of the music they're conducting; they have a relentless drive for storytelling; they set high expectations for quality and collaboration; and they are committed to accountability. Just as important, they see themselves as a partner in the work, well aware that the musicians bring the score to life. Ultimately, he believes that

the leader's capacity to "do without doing" makes all the difference.

The Ark network is a special place to be a senior leader – what always strikes me is the incredibly collaborative and collegiate atmosphere that we have created. From hosting school visits for their peers to taking part in overseas studies and regional tours, our leaders are always ready to learn, to hone their craft and to share their learnings with others. This is most visible at our Principals residential and regular meetings where we support, stretch and encourage each other to be the best leaders that we can be.

Leadership is not just a set of skills, it is a hunger to learn, to listen, to challenge, to support and to improve yourself as well as the others around you.

Ark

Brian Sims is director of education at Ark

FROM PROBLEM TO PIPELINE: CRACKING THE TALENT CRISIS



As he commences his leadership of the newly formed Ambition School Leadership, CEO James Toop outlines their contribution to system improvement by working strategically with MATs to develop their crucial talent ‘pipeline’

No organisation can become successful and grow without a sustainable pipeline of leadership talent at all levels. This has become an increasingly important focus for heads, CEOs, boards and HR Directors in multi-academy trusts where sustained high performance and growth are strategic priorities. In his presentation – 9 Characteristics of Successful Multi-academy Trusts – Sir David Carter lays out a clear succession plan for the key posts in the MAT as step 8. When the trust is performing at “leading” level, he says it will have: “... a talent management plan that has matured and now includes staff at all levels across the Trust. Senior leaders have worked in more than one Trust academy and middle leaders and the best teachers are deployed across the Trust to sustain and deepen impact.”

So if we know that getting the right people into the right roles is so important, why do we invest so little time and money in building long-term people plans to achieve it?

When it’s time for one of our best leaders to move on, organisations typically face three challenges: we have nobody suitable internally to fill the role; we struggle to attract strong external candidates; or the new candidate falters within their first 18 months in role. These challenges waste time and money, and (in the case of a multi-academy trust) impact on the progress and learning of the children.

There are four solutions to this: strategic talent management; long-

term succession planning; transition management; and improving recruitment and attraction. To be effective though, they require strategic investment, multi-year planning and systems to embed them in the heart of your organisation.

1. Strategic talent Management

Every academy and trust should have a central database of their top talent with individual plans mapping out potential next roles and development needs. Line managers as well as an organisational sponsor or mentor should have regular “check-ins” with these individuals to monitor their motivation, whether they are addressing their development needs and how they feel they are progressing towards their next role.

Their development should be integrated with succession planning for future roles. For example, training should focus on behaviours or skills needed for the next role. ‘Stretch’ projects can also be a great way to take leaders out of their current role to develop new skills, and academy trusts have a unique opportunity to move people around the trust to different roles to build new skills. It is worth checking the mobility clauses in staff contracts to see whether they facilitate secondments and school-to-school movement.

Finally this needs to be embedded into systems and structures. It should be triangulated with performance management, academies should consider how they pay and reward their top talent, and crucially it must be enacted

at every level of the organisation. This is a job for all line managers not just the responsibility of the top tiers of leadership.

2. Long-term succession planning

Once you’ve identified your talent and where they might go, start planning for who might replace them. Research from Heidrick and Struggles quoted in last December’s Harvard Business Review (HBR) found that only 54% of corporate boards are grooming a successor to their CEO, and 39% had no viable internal candidates who could immediately replace the CEO if the need arose.

Succession planning takes years not months and you should start early, ideally the moment a new leader takes charge. Claudio Fernandez-Araoz, in his book, *It’s Not the How or the What but the Who*, says that it’s helpful to identify potential successors within the organisation and benchmark them against the performance criteria for the role and external candidates. This will both identify where their immediate development needs are and how strong the external field is.

It is also the job of all leaders to be looking out for potential talent to join the organisation. Keeping your networks active and finding ways to stay in touch with future potential candidates keeps them engaged with the trust. The ideal role may not be there at the moment, but you should know which role they would be suitable for if anyone moved on or up.

One good way to focus the mind on the importance of different roles is also to require the board or academy leadership team to conduct periodic emergency succession drills. Asking key questions can test your organisational readiness for change. For example, what would we do now if our CEO, principal or Head of English left? Who would replace them? Would they be ready? How great a risk would that be? They all help focus the mind and will tell you if your plans are not right.

3. Transition management

Outside of education, one-third to 50 percent of new leaders fail within the first 18 months. There is no conclusive evidence either way as to whether internal or external candidates are more likely to succeed. Context can be one determining factor. For example, for an academy in crisis, an external candidate can provide a fresh start, and a mandate and the objectivity required to deliver change. For an organisation in development, continuity from inside can help continue the momentum and move faster as they know the context and key staff.

But if the first part of succession is identifying the right candidate, the second part is transition. Whatever the context, preparation, time for ongoing support are key to success. This is more than onboarding which Dan Ciampa describes in December's HBR as a "formal, short-term, agenda-driven orientation programme of briefings and meetings. An onboarding plan can be a useful component of the transition process... but a CEO's transition is a longer process of interactions both formal and informal, planned and impromptu. Handled correctly, the process will begin when the board's choice accepts the position and will last for months after she arrives."

Leadership transitions should involve meetings with key stakeholders, coffees with key staff, observations of existing processes so that the incoming leader understands the political and cultural challenges, the people who they will be leading and the agenda and priorities of the academy or MAT. There might even be a period of handover where the incoming leader acts as "designated successor" working alongside the

incumbent. This is especially important at headteacher or CEO level where relationships with boards or governing bodies are critical.

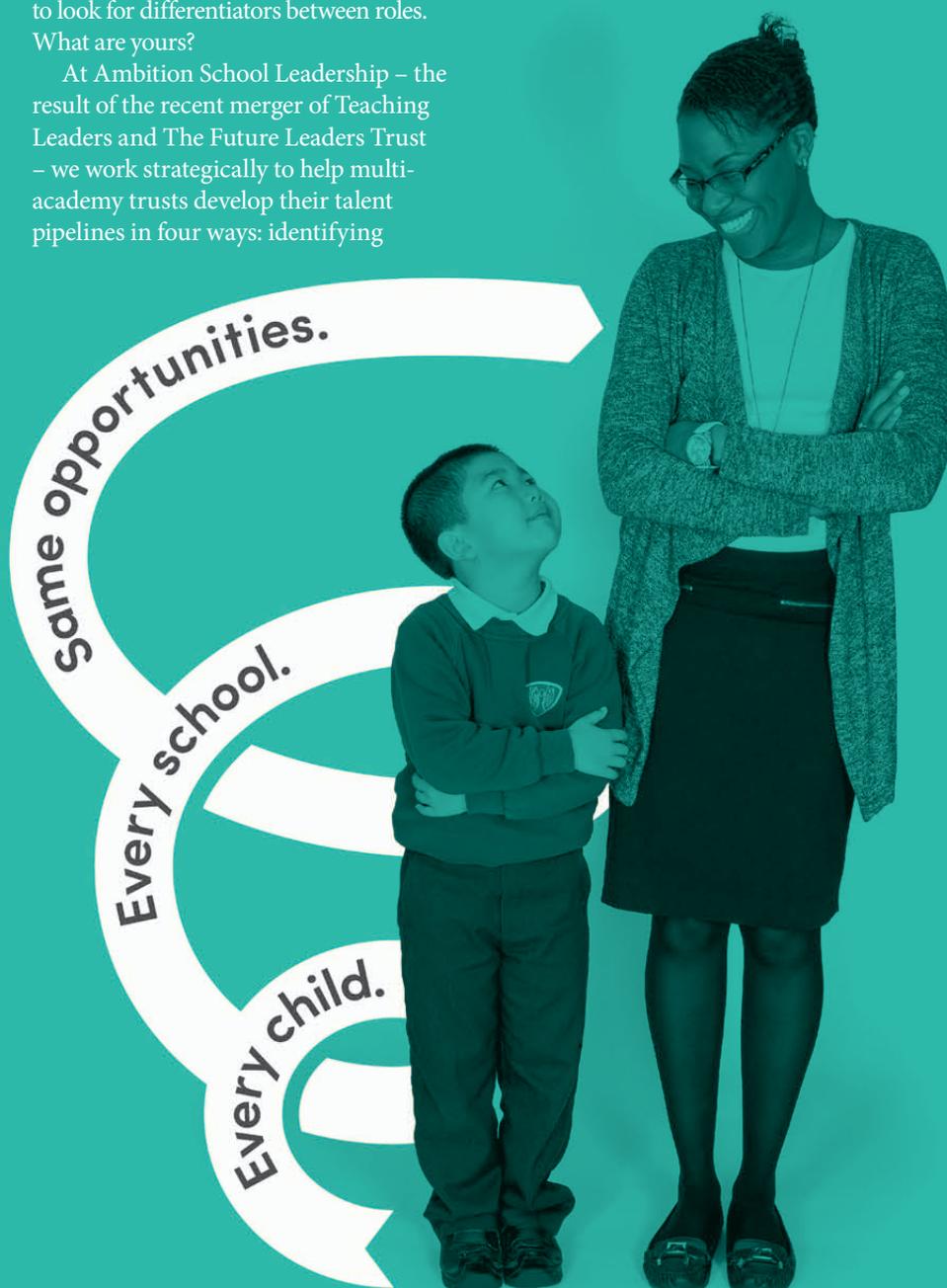
4. Improved recruitment and attraction

If you put all of this in place, not only will your new leaders be more effective in role, you will reduce recruitment costs, retain more staff and make your trust or academy more attractive. Research shows that organisations which systematically invest in development, talent management and succession planning, are more attractive places to work. In an increasingly competitive market, candidates can afford to look for differentiators between roles. What are yours?

At Ambition School Leadership – the result of the recent merger of Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust – we work strategically to help multi-academy trusts develop their talent pipelines in four ways: identifying

high potential leaders for future roles; developing leaders at all levels through our leadership programmes at every stage of a leadership journey; providing a career pathway to aid retention and progression; and a new service to support multi-academy trusts with talent management and succession planning strategy.

Just as the quality of an education cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, an academy trust cannot sustain impact or grow faster than the quality of its leadership pipeline. By investing early in spotting talent, developing it and planning succession, I believe you can enable greater impact in the long run.



WHO'S TO PRODUCE AND WHO'S TO CHOOSE?

Gabriel Heller Sahlgren, Director of Research at the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education (CMRE), assesses the future of the qualifications and assessment market



Over the past several decades, an increasing number of governments have sought to introduce choice and competition in their state-funded education systems. In most countries, this debate is confined to the issue of parental choice only. By allowing parents to choose schools, politicians hope to increase competitive pressures to spur higher outcomes.

Yet, in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, there is also another type of choice within the education system. In these nations, schools have the right to decide which qualifications their pupils take from a range of options offered by multiple independent exam boards. In international perspective this is unique.

In the last couple of years, however, this system has come under intense scrutiny, and faced increasing criticism from politicians and in the media. Qualification and assessment choice, it is argued, introduces perverse incentives that induce exam boards to

decrease standards and inflate grades. Instead of raising overall system quality, the story goes, competition spurs a 'race to the bottom'.

Abolishing exam boards

To address these concerns, some have argued in favour of abolishing independent exam boards in favour of a single government board. Others have suggested a franchising model under which boards would compete for politicians' business – tendering for the privilege of being able to deliver qualifications and examinations on a fixed-term contractual basis. Both ideas were floated under the previous Coalition and Conservative governments.

There are two issues at stake in the debate. The first concerns the question of who should provide qualifications and assessment – government or the private sector; the second concerns the question of whether or not schools should be able to choose their providers.

From an economic perspective, whether or not the government or independent organisations should provide a service depends on who can deliver it most efficiently. In turn, this depends on the so-called external transaction costs involved – the costs of appropriate monitoring and accountability to ensure that the service is provided in accordance with the government's expectations. If the total price for buying the service externally, including the external transaction costs, is lower than the costs of producing it in-

house, it makes more economic sense to outsource service provision.

The key question for assessing whether or not service provision is best provided in-house is the level of 'contract incompleteness'. Many aspects of the quality of complex public services are non-measurable, which therefore makes them difficult to specify in contracts and to address in regulatory requirements. While independent organisations have stronger incentives to cut costs and improve quality than the government, the effect of private provision on 'non-contractible quality' is ambiguous – depending largely on how strong the relationship is between such quality and costs. This means that the stronger the relationship between such aspects of quality and costs (and the less scope there is for innovation in the sector), the greater is the likelihood of negative effects. In practice, though often supposed the contrary, there are few public services that warrant government provision on this basis.

Franchising

Research from complex welfare services, including schooling and care – where the non-contractible elements are more considerable than in qualifications and assessment – indicates that franchising via procurement often improves efficiency and in fact also non-contractible quality. For example, in Sweden, outsourcing of elderly care to venture-capitalist owned, for-profit companies has decreased both mortality – which is difficult to contract – as well as costs per resident. Private provision helped

stimulate higher quality to a lower price.

Overall, therefore, research indicates that private incentives to invest in higher welfare service quality, and avoid harmful cost-cutting, appear stronger than any theoretical incentives to cut corners on the expense of quality. This is most likely due to reputational mechanisms.

Where non-contractible aspects of quality feature prominently, reputational mechanisms are especially important. In qualifications and assessment, the fact that there are few non-contractible elements involved, and that there is considerable scope for innovation, together with the strong reputational mechanisms at work, means government provision appears particularly unwarranted. This would be merely likely to raise costs and decrease the potential for innovation.

But should the government or schools choose the exam board? In the suggested franchising alternative, government would pick winners via competition in a tendering process, in sharp contrast to the current user-choice model where schools do the choosing.

User choice

The case for user choice rests on the assumption that it could improve matching between pupils and the qualification offered, while also generating stronger competitive pressures between exam boards on an on-going basis in the market. Yet, in some situations, choice may in fact not necessarily generate the desired outcomes. For example, since price competition is

allowed, the impact of competition on quality depends on how schools weight quality vis-à-vis price.

Still, there is no evidence that the existing model has produced a race to the bottom. Given the strict regulatory framework in place, this is not surprising. There is simply little wiggle room to compete by providing lower standards. Certainly, the equivalency framework and the way school league tables have been constructed have incentivised schools to choose what they perceive to be easier subjects – a problem that would remain also if choice were to be abolished. At the same time, there is little evidence of excessive price competition in the current system either.

Rather than abolishing the qualifications and assessment market, therefore, it would be preferable to reform it. Instead of seeking strict comparability, the accreditation framework should focus on specified minimum standards. In this way, boards could compete by providing higher – but not lower – standards and quality in national qualifications. With such as focus, it would also be possible to lower the regulatory barriers to new providers. It is important to promote entry because this generates incentives among existing providers to compete and innovate.

To gauge the standard and quality of different qualifications and specifications, we should use an empirical approach based on post-hoc outcomes at university and/or in the labour market. It would also be helpful to introduce a national

cohort-referenced competency test for comparison purposes. By studying the future performance of pupils taking different qualifications, as well as performance on the competency test, it would be easier to assess their relative value.

It would then also be useful to reform league tables to avoid perverse incentives. For example, outcomes could be published separately for different qualifications or, alternatively, once they have been adjusted using the empirical equivalency approach. In addition, Ofqual should provide information to end users and schools – and in this way help generate a better functioning market.

And since theory suggests that price competition could decrease pressures to compete by raising quality, it is important to monitor this more closely in future – and, if necessary, consider some regulation in this respect.

Certainly, the specifics must still be worked out and there may be other worthwhile reforms to consider. By trialling the changes rigorously, we should seek to avoid unintended consequences that all too often arise as a result of government action. The goal, however, should be to improve the market – not to abolish it entirely.

This article is based on the monograph 'Who's to choose and who's to produce?', published recently by CMRE.

CHANGING SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE

Julie Bloor explains how Ormiston Academies Trust plan to trial a new shared model of governance across a cluster of academies

Governors work incredibly hard and fulfil a vital role – they are generally required to attend an average of 10 meetings per year, in addition to any exclusion or performance management panels, robustly holding the school’s teaching team to account for performance in a number of areas, ensuring the finances are in a strong position, and making essential decisions for the smooth running of school.

Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT) is fortunate to have an incredibly dedicated, strong team of governors but finding those with the skills, knowledge and the time required to do this demanding role well, can be a challenge.

OAT, in keeping with our promise to be the Trust that makes the biggest difference, is developing an innovative new system to enhance our already strong governance system and ensure this crucial area is working at its very best for the benefit of our students and academies.

One area in particular that we are focusing on is to foster more collaboration and school-to-school support. For example, at the moment when a governor sits on one Local Governing Body, they won’t have any real points of reference for how the school is doing compared to its local counterparts. We are seeking to tackle these challenges by developing a unique approach.

Our vision

In the New Year, we plan to trial a shared model of governance across a cluster of academies in a specific region. While OAT academies are geographically spread across the country, we have



formed clusters of local schools, and we want to take advantage of this to improve our governorship model.

Each academy cluster will have an Academy Strategic Body, and each individual academy will have an Academy Council. This will help us place those with the right skills in the right place, and allow for effective collaboration between governors across the cluster.

Academy Strategic Bodies

The Academy Strategic Bodies (ASBs) will be responsible for high-level strategic direction of the cluster of schools they support. Their main responsibilities will include:

- Directing and overseeing the work of each Academy Council, ensuring the outcomes are of great benefit to students and staff
- Providing the reporting link to the Trust Board
- Conducting any staff disciplinary hearings
- Representing the strategic element of academy governance during inspection
- Contributing to the Principal’s performance management.

Furthermore they will contribute to the recruitment of the senior leadership team and oversee the strategic direction

of each academy including finance matters. Its members will include a Chair (an appointment made by the Trust), a Clerk, the Principal from each academy in the cluster, the Regional Director, a nominee by the Trust, and up to 4 additional governors with a strategic skill set, which will include each Academy Council Chair. This will enable the senior leadership team at each school to be part of the strategic governance, and make the communication line between the school and the Trust stronger. The number of meetings will decrease, thus allowing more people to get involved.

Academy Councils

Academy Councils on the other hand will deal with issues relating to the school they serve. Their main responsibilities will include:

- Maintaining links with academy departments in line with the Academy Development Plan
- Monitoring and delivering priorities identified by the ASBs
- Overseeing the academy's pastoral responsibilities
- Taking responsibility for community engagement
- Organising student behaviour warning panels and exclusion panels
- Representing the local element of academy governance during inspection

The membership will include the Chair of the Academy Council (also a member of the ASB), the Academy's Principal, parents, community members and teaching and support staff members. Importantly the Academy Councils' system will give more people the opportunity to contribute to the governorship of the school and allow those with less free time to be involved, as they will meet less frequently than the current average of around 10 meetings per academic year. This also ensures the work-life balance of our Principals, leaders and staff is maintained.

Whilst different groups have different responsibilities, neither will be more important than the other and they will work together for the benefit of all of the schools that they oversee. If one academy

needs to hold an exclusion panel but does not have enough people available, then members of another Academy Council within that cluster will be called upon to contribute, and vice versa. It will be a unique system whereby the Academy Councils can call for support from the others.

Sharing and learning from others

One of the many advantages of being a Multi Academy Trust is that we utilise collaborative practice and skills across the leadership structure and staff teams. A shared governance model will allow us to share expertise and knowledge for the mutual benefit of schools.

There is certainly a national push towards smaller governing bodies and we expect that other academy trusts are already developing or operating new models. Each academy trust will have their own challenges, and therefore will form their own solution. We should encourage the sharing of best practice, recognising that we are not competitors but are all working for the same cause – to provide an excellent education to our students.

We hope to be able to share what we learn along the way as we work towards a better model of governance that benefits the 25,000 plus students supported by OAT.



Achieving more together

National Leader in Education Julie Bloor leads Ormiston Academies Trust's work on governance, alongside her role as Central Regional Director. Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT) supports 27 secondary schools and four primary schools across the country, many of which are in coastal, rural or economically deprived areas

Nicki Wadley – Head of Governance, OAT

As OAT's Head of Governance, Nicki has worked closely with Julie Bloor to develop the new model.

"We are always looking at how we can develop collaboration further within the Trust, and this doesn't just mean within teaching and learning, but also through our governance procedures."

"The model will not be hierarchical but inclusive and integrated. Both Academy Councils and the Academy Strategic Bodies will work together to bring about the best outcomes for students and staff at OAT schools."

Ken Lloyd – National Leader of Governance and Chair of Governors at Ormiston Six Villages Academy in Chichester

"Having worked as a Chair of Governors for over 10 years, and supported governing bodies in several counties, I know only too well the challenges of recruiting people with the right skills onto governing bodies. I have seen first-hand the benefit that comes when schools work together in order to improve key areas and to share expertise.

"OAT's new proposals provide a sensible approach to the remodelling of governance. It can be difficult to get the right mix of skills, and this change will separate the strategic elements from those involving a local connection operating closer in to the school. Doing this will allow greater flexibility and enable a wider group of people to get involved. At the strategic board level, members will be discussing common issues across a cluster of schools, which will encourage an easy exchange of ideas and stimulate the sharing of good practice."



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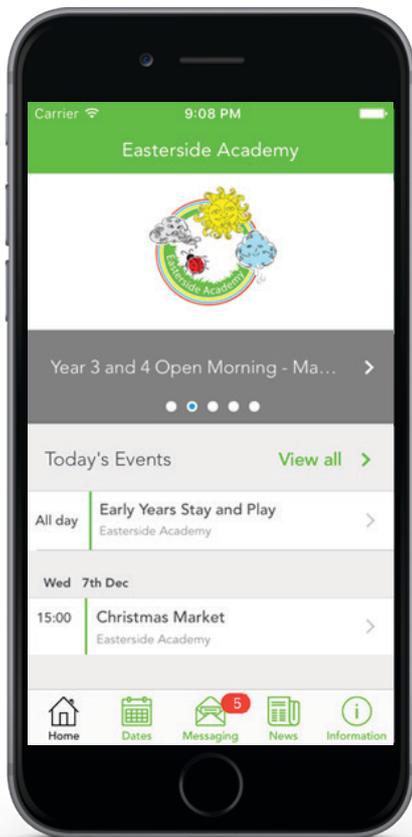


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LABELS DAMAGE CHILDREN

In this extract from *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers*, Katie Ashford, Deputy Head and Director of Inclusion, explains how Michaela Community School liberate their pupils from labels

Cast into the bottom sets, surrounded by anarchic misbehaviour, entered only for foundation papers, subjected to low expectations, taught by the least experienced teachers: for the least able pupils, this was once the norm. Over the last ten years, much has been done to provide better support and resources for pupils with the greatest need, yet results for these pupils – particularly those with a statement of Special Educational Needs – have remained stagnant. In England and Wales, around 1.5 million children are labelled as having a ‘Special Educational

Need’ of some variety, meaning that around a fifth of school-age children are diagnosed with having cognitive or behavioural barriers that make it more difficult for them to learn. Whilst it will always be the case that some children will require more support than others, we must stop to ask whether it is reasonable that a fifth of the children in this country are afflicted with an issue so profound that it prevents them from learning as easily as their peers.

Of course, some kids do struggle more than other kids. Whilst it may indeed be the case that they have particular needs

that require attention, their difficulties could exist for any number of reasons. Perhaps they have missed a lot of school. Perhaps there have been issues at home. Perhaps the kid is less motivated than they ought to be, and a few reminders will be enough to get her back on the right track. The common assumption when dealing with a child who finds learning more challenging than her peers ought not to be that there is something profoundly wrong with her. Desperate for answers and an explanation as to why some children underachieve, it is tempting to look to labels for answers.



Janelle's struggling to decode? She must be dyslexic. Brandon's incapable of sitting still in lessons? He must have ADHD.

Standing firm

At Michaela, we stand firm with a growing number of educators who refuse to let labels damage a child's education. We refuse to allow a misdiagnosed label set the expectations for each child or to become an excuse that will hang like a millstone around the child's neck for the rest of their life. We want all our pupils to be liberated from labels, rather than be shaped and defined by them. For too many children, the unfounded assumption that underachievement is a result of something irreparably wrong with them has led to a catastrophic reduction of expectations. For a child to be convinced of some fundamental inability to achieve at such a young and impressionable age is tragic. No child should ever feel that, due to a supposed medical issue that is not within their control, they are incapable of reaching excellence.

We must open our eyes to the damaging effect of labelling. Any diagnosis given to a child affects the perception they have of themselves and their ability to learn and achieve. To impose a label on a child is to remove her agency and make her dependent upon support mechanisms that will not be there to prop her up once she enters the real world. She learns to be

helpless, not independent. She learns to feel hopeless, not hopeful. She learns disenfranchisement and disengagement right from the start of her life, before she has even had the opportunity to grow and experience everything the world has to offer. The reduction of expectations narrows a child's horizons and future prospects, imprisoning her in the world she was born into, rather than raising her out of it.

As the tides change, more schools are moving away from this damaging paradigm towards a way of thinking that will allow all children to make as much progress as possible. At Michaela, we refuse to believe that any child's future should be restricted by a label. Unshackling pupils from the tyranny of labelling is the first step to ensuring that every child, regardless of starting point, achieves their very best.

Quite simply, the weakest pupils need more rigour, more focus and more practice. And at Michaela, we make it our mission to ensure this happens every single lesson, every single day.

Extraordinarily high standards

When the disengaged reign supreme in the classroom, chaos ensues. Rather than allowing precious minutes to melt away, we maintain a razor-sharp focus on ensuring that every child is held – and indeed, holds themselves – to extraordinarily high standards of behaviour. I frequently remind

myself that every time I allow the slightest transgression to slip, I'm allowing the child to get into bad habits, the cumulative effect of which will dramatically inhibit their learning in the long term. The occasional daydream drift-away moment may seem innocuous, but those seconds gradually amount to minutes and hours of learning time lost. I don't want any child to miss learning time, because I don't want any child to learn less than the rest of the class, who are listening carefully. And if I know the child's label – perhaps they have a history of not focusing well in lessons and are suspected of having a cognitive issue – then I have even more reason not to allow the child to fall deeper into bad habits. Like trudging through boggy marshland, once one is in the mindset of not paying attention in lessons, it's hard to climb back out. So instead of allowing this to happen, I calmly remind the absent-minded pupil to listen, helping her to get back on track and keep on learning.

When pupils find extended reading and writing difficult because of literacy difficulties such as dyslexia, there is a temptation to reduce the rigour in the content and tasks they are asked to do. It's tough to give a kid with a reading age of 7 a full page of text to wade through, but surely it is better for them to struggle and come out the other side than to never even attempt such tasks.

Again, we feel like it might be cruel to expect pupils who have been labelled in this way to sit and read a challenging text for an hour, but isn't it crueller to never give them the chance? Reading texts in lessons with weak pupils is tough, but it isn't impossible. If they get into the habit of doing it every lesson across subjects, they improve and feel successful. At Michaela, we embrace this philosophy wholeheartedly, insisting on high levels of focus on demanding content every single lesson, every single day.

If a child with developmental delay arrives in year 7 with a limited vocabulary and little grasp of basic spelling, she needs to spend the bulk of her time in lessons reading and writing. Pupils in this predicament are literally years behind where they should be, and we simply do not have a moment to spare. Every

planning decision we make gives us a choice: spend time doing things they can already do easily (such as drawing a story board), or spend time developing subject skills they desperately need to master if they are going to stand a chance of being successful in the future.

Time is precious

We must also remember that pupils only spend around 25 hours per week in lessons. This time is so precious. With such limited exposure to teachers and their expertise, we should strive to make the most of every second they have. They can watch films, make posters, do a bit of drawing and chat to their mates at home or at break time. They can't work out how to solve quadratic equations or read and understand a Dickens novel without the support of a subject expert. We've got to make the most of every second we have with them. Again, this is central to the Michaela ethos. Our refusal to allow prescribed labels to determine how and what we teach liberates our pupils from the manacles of mediocrity. Rather than reducing the bar to their level, we push them to rise up and reach what may at first appear to be an insurmountable goal.

We believe that every child can do it if they are given the right opportunities to practise. Our intake is challenging, as Joe Kirby has outlined in his chapter on bootcamp. Some of our pupils arrive unable to read the simplest words, or add 1 to a number. Some of our pupils have profound cognitive needs that make learning a far more arduous process than it is for most. Some of our pupils really struggle to sit still and listen to their teachers when they arrive at the beginning of year 7. And yet time and time again, we see enormous transformations and turnarounds. In the book, we share some of these case studies with you, demonstrating further how our refusal to allow labels to damage children enables their success.

For some children, there is an enormous mountain to climb. It takes years of restless urgency and unrelenting ambition to reach the peak, and whilst some may never get there, we should at least give them the chance. As educators, it is incumbent upon us to do everything

in our power to give every single child the best possible chance in life. At Michaela, we refuse to allow our children to be dragged down by the label-obsessed status quo, instead doing everything in our power to reduce the impact of any barriers they may face.

Our methods are controversially simple: enforce strict behaviour systems and routines, offer an immensely challenging curriculum, provide plenty of time to practise reading, writing, speaking and arithmetic, and never give up. Treat every child as if they are aiming for Oxbridge, regardless of starting point or supposed 'need.' And make no excuses, for excuses do nothing to teach children about having true agency and a sense of personal responsibility.

Expectations

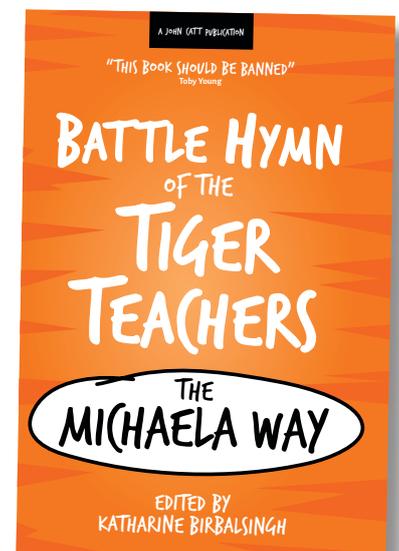
At Michaela, we are very clear that we have the same expectations for every child, regardless of label. If Jimmy doesn't do his homework, it is not a result of his ADHD, but a failure to make the right choice. If Holly stares out the window and writes nothing during the lesson, it is not a result of her dyslexia, but her choice not to focus. To say that a child's inability or lack of motivation to work is a result of anything other than their own choice is to condemn them to continue to make that same weak choice. To say that the problem is beyond their control is to remove any ability they might have to change it. Telling the child that they need to work harder may jar and feel harsher than making an excuse in the short term, but it is by far the more caring route to take in the long term. If we are to instil true responsibility and empowerment in every child, we must force them to make the tougher, better choice.

Ultimately, because we believe that all children are capable of achieving, we will never allow them to make an excuse or refuse to take responsibility. Michaela teachers believe in every pupil's ability to excel. We do not believe that an SEN label removes one's ability to work hard. On the contrary, we believe that the more 'issues' they have, the harder they must work and the more they need to be pushed by their teachers.

SEN children

In the book, I outline the impact of our methods. If you don't believe that what I've said here will work for SEN children, take a look at the chapter written by my colleague Joe Allan, where the Michaela pupils get an opportunity to share their stories and work. Even better, come and visit the school and ask the children yourself.

This is why we do things the way we do them. Our irrepressible desire to get the very best out of every child drives us to reject labels and increase the discipline and rigour. It's why we never let a misspelling slip or a mispronounced word go by. It's why we will never reduce the challenge in the curriculum, ask fewer questions, or expect less writing at the end of the lesson. It's why we will never, ever reduce our standards. Most importantly, it's why we will never lose sight of the unshakeable faith we have in the belief that every child can succeed.



Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers is published by John Catt Educational and available now, £14. It is a collection of contributions from teachers at Michaela Community School, and edited by Headmistress Katharine Birbalsingh.

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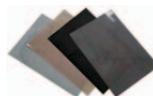
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IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, WHO DO YOU TURN TO?

Graham Feek, Deputy CEO of The Greenwood Multi Academy Trust, outlines how the innovative way that they have holistically embraced Internal Assurance is paying dividends



We live in interesting times. Traditional orthodoxies are being ripped up and tossed away. Brexit, Trump, Leicester City, British world number one tennis player... the list goes on. The whole political and cultural landscape that we've lived with for many years is on the move – but to where we don't know.

History has taught us that in uncertain times people revert to what they know and what they trust in. We often turn to those institutions, organisations, assets and professions that we respect and provide us with safety and comfort. Just look at the price of gold!

We may all have a vision of where we want to go and the values we want to follow to get there, but to whom should we turn to help chart us through choppy waters to get there?

Whilst a key plank of the government's proposed reforms from March's White Paper of academising all schools by 2022 has gone, the direction of travel has not altered. The number and size of Multi-Academy Trusts will continue to grow. The expectations of delivering the best outcomes for young people from the sector will (rightly) continue to increase, as in all likelihood will the requirements of good governance. This will happen against a backdrop of harder finances and volatility in funding for many.

Challenges and expectations

I know from challenges and expectations that we have within our own MAT (and I'm sure we are not alone) that it can sometimes be difficult to successfully align the right skills, experience and attributes of the key members of the

organisation to deal with the multiplicity of problems and the risks we face in order to help our young people to be the best that they can be.

So in these uncertain and challenging times who should MATs look to help meet the challenge? Well surely the answer obvious, isn't it? Internal Assurance – of course!

For those still reading who may be thinking that I have I had an early taste of the Christmas sherry, just bear with me.

Like all larger MATs, we had to decide several years ago how to meet the additional expectations set out in the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) regarding internal assurance. Rather than resist the change, or do the minimum and treat it as a necessary evil, we embraced it. To support our newly formed Audit Committee, we resourced an Internal Assurance Team to deliver a programme of work to review risks and test our systems of internal control.

Dedicated staff members

The role of internal assurance was new to much of the organisation and to many of our staff. In the early days, there were some challenges in relation to the organisation's understanding of the role of the Internal Assurance Team. However, this was soon ironed out and now we have a small team of two dedicated staff members and a scalable model that provides the Accounting Officer and the Trust Board, through the Audit Committee, assurance in relation to the effective operation of the internal control environment.

I guess you could get this (although at greater cost) through a third party

service. However, that is only part of what the service delivers.

The time invested on operating procedures within the team and MAT, not only allow two people to deliver a risk based assurance process focussed on the review of financial controls for 31 academies within 250 audit days, but also enables it to offer around 100 days to review other areas of high risk and of strategic importance.

Whilst it is often the norm for many medium to large corporates to actively seize the opportunities to use the skills within Internal Assurance to help drive forward the strategic agenda, I'm not sure that our sector generally embraces audit in this way. An example might help to underline the significant benefit of this approach.

Like all MATs, we maintain a Risk Register, which is reviewed regularly by our Audit Committee on behalf of the Trust Board. This approach drives actions in order to put in place any additional controls necessary to reduce current levels of risk.

The work of the Internal Assurance Team is directed through an Annual Internal Assurance Plan determined by the Trust Board, which is informed by the Risk. Like any educational establishment, our highest risks include the failure to safeguard or to provide a safe environment for students, staff and visitors.

We've made a significant investment in the Trust-wide resources to support our academies to effectively safeguard and maintain a safe operating environment. This has resulted in new systems, policies, procedures, and assurance frameworks



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being put in place. Our approach to internal assurance has allowed the Executive to implement appropriate systems such as these, as it has the responsibility to do so, and then for the Trust Board, to programme a subsequent internal assurance review to ensure that the implementation is effective.

Line of escalation

Whilst our Principal Auditor reports directly to the Trust Finance Director, he also has a line of escalation to the Chair of the Audit Committee, which is set out in an Audit Charter. Therefore the Trust Board can place additional reliance on key controls being in place for strategically important areas because of the programmed work of the Internal Assurance Team. There are a number of examples of this including Health and Safety, Pupil Premium and Data

Governance. This approach keeps accountabilities clear but maximises the strategic impact of audit.

As well as the approach giving additional assurance to the Trust Board, it allows the Team to use the high level skills developed over many years to look at new areas of work, often from a new perspective. It also gives the possibility for the Team to get closer to the 'core' business of the Trust, which really helps to solidify for them that student outcome is our core business and shows the wider organisation the huge added value of the Team.

There is a time lag between setting a team up and them realising their true value, because of the essential effort required to set up robust working systems and processes. However, once done there is huge scalability for the service.

The Team has become a victim of its own success and whereas you may expect

some Executives to be wary of internal assurance, in our case the Team is often considered the first port of call to help work on a tricky problem!

So whether you believe or not that in times of uncertainty you should turn to trusted institutions and approaches, I encourage you to be open-minded and embrace the opportunities to use the skills of auditors as a key piece of your armoury to advance your organisation's strategic priorities, unless you prefer them to count beans of course!



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SAFEGUARDING IN MATS

Leading safeguarding lawyer, Dai Durbridge of Browne Jacobson Solicitors, explains why MATs need to have a Trust wide focus on safeguarding and sets out his top tips for improving your safeguarding approach

Safeguarding continues to be one of the most important issues in education. This is true whether you are an individual academy or part of a multi academy trust (MAT). However, whilst individual academies address safeguarding matters on a local basis and face Ofsted inspections – the focus of which is immediately upon safeguarding – the safeguarding approach taken by the MAT is not subject to the same scrutiny and can be inconsistent between academies in the MAT. As a result, for many MATs their safeguarding practices are not as strong as they could be.

Statutory safeguarding guidance and Ofsted inspections focus on practice within the school site and pay little attention to what goes on across the MAT as a whole or at Trustee level. There is no expectation that inspectors consider the safeguarding approach across the MAT and no requirement in guidance that MATs take a cross-Trust, consistent approach to safeguarding. This is partly due to there being no decision on who should regulate this level of education and partly because the September 2016 version of the guidance missed an opportunity to begin talking about the expectation on MATs.

MATs need to think now about safeguarding as a whole-Trust issue, not only because the regulatory hole will be filled in due course, but also because weaknesses in safeguarding practice at one academy can impact on the reputation of the entire MAT. If it does, it would not be an easy reputation to change.

Five steps to effective MAT safeguarding:

1. Consistent approach to policy, dissemination and training

Your starting point must be that the safeguarding policy of each academy in the MAT is the same. There may well be calls for a difference in one academy or another for a very good reason, but these variations should be resisted unless they are absolutely necessary. Your policy is the foundation of your safeguarding approach and by getting this right you form a strong basis for the safeguarding practices in each academy.

It should be accepted that policy variations may be necessary in some academies. For example, if you have a special school in the MAT, a slightly different approach to the policy may be required. The same could be said of a school that, due to its particular circumstances, needs to have a more detailed policy statement on the Prevent duty. Whilst such variations make sense, it is important that the framework of the policy and the core elements remain consistent.

A great policy will be useless if it is not properly disseminated, so having finalised the policy, consider its dissemination and the consistency of approach across the MAT. Review how it is disseminated and what evidence you require of that dissemination.

The final piece of this jigsaw is the

training. Ensure that all staff in the MAT receive the right training for their level, by the right provider, at the right time. Different training providers could result in a different understanding between the academies of how guidance and policy should work, which in turn leads to a different approach and a lack of consistency. This weakens the safeguarding practices in the MAT.

2. Address safeguarding in your scheme of delegation

Most schemes of delegation reference safeguarding but the better ones make it abundantly clear precisely who does what. Whilst it is sensible to delegate the day-to-day management of safeguarding standards to local governing bodies (LGB), it should also be made clear the extent to which each LGB should be working with the academy to ensure standards are high. This may include regular meetings between the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and the safeguarding governor on the LGB and an annual or termly audit by the safeguarding governor. For the meetings and the audit, consistency across the MAT is key and the scheme of delegation should set out what is required and how reporting to the Trust Board should take place.

3. Ensure your DSLs work as a team

Even in starter MATs, there could be up to 10 or 12 DSLs and deputies. In larger MATs that number increases beyond 20.



How well they work together, will have a significant impact on the quality and consistency of safeguarding practices in your MAT. For the best possible outcomes, consider the opportunities your MAT provides for them to meet to discuss practice, to share learning and to train. Appointing a senior DSL and having a leadership structure in place, not only assists with good governance, but also provides a framework within which the DSLs can grow and consistency can be managed.

4. Post incident reflection resulting in a cross-MAT improvement plan

This point is not unique to MATs but it can have even greater benefit when the learning from one incident is shared across other academies. Taking the time to reflect on the outcome of a safeguarding incident is good practice and excellent evidence for Ofsted as to the seriousness with which you take safeguarding and the opportunities you create for proactive learning. Building in

post incident reflection into the regular MAT-wide DSL meetings and coming away with action points to improve practice, will benefit the MAT as a whole.

5. MAT action plans and reporting to the Chief Executive and the Board

If your MAT has carried out post incident reviews and the safeguarding governor on the LGB has undertaken audits, then completing a full report to the board and an annual MAT safeguarding action plan, should be straightforward. Focussing on safeguarding at this level is critical. It supports good governance, it evidences how seriously the MAT takes safeguarding and, most importantly, when done properly, it will improve safeguarding practices within the MAT and will help drive consistency and best practice across it. The report should address key safeguarding concerns that have arisen, issues flagged following post incident reviews and audits, emerging safeguarding issues and training needs as a minimum.

It remains unclear exactly how the government would like to inspect MATs and the timescale for doing so. Given how much Ofsted focus on safeguarding when inspecting schools and academies, it seems highly likely that regardless of who takes on the role of inspecting MATs, safeguarding will form a significant part of that inspection process. It follows that one area of importance will be the way in which the MAT manages and improves its safeguarding approach.

The likelihood of MAT inspections should not be the driver for improvement. The need to ensure your MAT is doing all it can to safeguard its pupils and to continue to raise the standards of safeguarding across the MAT, is a far better reason to address it. Stronger safeguarding practices means safer students, a consistent and improved safeguarding culture at your academies and a significant reduction in the risk of an adverse safeguarding concern impacting on your MAT and its hard-earned reputation.



PROGRESS BOARDS – AN EXCITING AND POWERFUL TOOL

Chris James on working towards improving teaching and assessment across a MAT

One of the many challenges facing Multi Academy Trusts is ensuring that there is consistency in achievement data and teaching standards across all schools.

In 2015, the Torch Academy Gateway Trust embarked on an ambitious scheme to create an internal examination board and shared curriculum in an attempt to address these issues.

As a trust we were very conscious that quality teaching is the key factor in raising achievement in schools and academies. All leaders look at headline figures, plan carefully targeted interventions and ensure that students are well supported to

achieve their full potential.

However, this approach can put all the focus on exam years and take the spotlight away from ensuring that from day one of Year 7, students are put on a clear pathway to success. Careful and well thought through planning is time consuming and draining and it is difficult for teachers to give the same focus to planning for Year 7 students as they do for Year 11 students.

The Executive team at the Torch Academy Gateway Trust reached the natural conclusion that if planning outstanding lessons was central to driving achievement, then a core group

of outstanding teachers should be given time to plan units of work and develop resources. This would allow schools within the trust to ensure that the focus on standards and teaching and learning were more consistently delivered across all year groups.

Curriculum leaders

Five 'Progress Boards' were established in the first instance in English, maths, science, history and geography. The Progress Boards consisted of curriculum leaders representing all academies in the trust. Each Progress Board was led by an 'examiner' or group of examiners.

The plan was for the examiners to write the materials and set exams that would be taken twice a year from Year 7. SLT links from academies across the trust would support the examiners by quality assuring the work that was being developed and supporting the examiners at Progress Board meetings.

In order to ensure that the units and materials were not just a bank of on-line resources, each Progress Board went through a process of choosing a common exam board and specification. The role



of the examiners was to take the final specifications and work backwards to Year 7 to ensure that students had a clear flight-path to developing the skills that they would need to be successful. Each academy was to be charged with allowing examiners to have reduced timetables. This was set up by the summer term of 2015 and examiners planned units and resources that were to be taught from September 2015 to students in Years 7 and 8.

Professional development

This vision of securing strong progress over time for our learners, required more than high quality resources though. It was equally important that professional development took place through collaboration and networking. It should allow us to identify areas of good and outstanding practice and disseminate it across the trust and partner schools through subject based working groups. Ultimately we hoped we could reduce teacher workloads whilst allowing staff to share good practice and help them to focus on supporting students to be successful.

This was a logical and well thought

through process in theory. However, in practice, as the Progress Boards' materials were used in classrooms, there were a number of barriers. How would experienced and successful teachers welcome new units and resources that they had not planned? Academies in the trust were working in very different contexts in terms of the students and the Ofsted judgements. Could a teacher in an outstanding academy use the same resources to plan as a teacher in an academy in special measures? Could teachers in an academy with a high percentage of EAL students use the same resources as those with very few EAL students? If the exams outcomes were to be accurate, then would the examiners, SLT links and curriculum leaders have the same level of expertise and rigour as a national exam board? To confuse matters further, specifications were changing and there was real uncertainty around the new levels.

Having identified these issues in December 2015 we refocused the key purpose of the Progress Boards. In order to ensure that experienced and successful teachers were not de-skilled

they followed the units of work to build lessons, but were told that there was no necessity to use all the resources. The objectives needed to be consistent, but the resources were broken down so that teachers could use the materials they needed or use resources that they had previously developed and that had been successful. Progress Boards need to be seen to be working with teachers rather than dictating to them.

The purpose of the Progress Board meetings was clarified to enable curriculum leaders from across the trust to work collaboratively. The Progress Boards functioned most effectively when a curriculum leader represented each academy. These members of staff need to have the authority to make subject based decisions on behalf of their academies and to feedback the information agreed to their subject areas and leaders of achievement.

However, we also encouraged less experienced colleagues to attend meetings with the curriculum leaders. This was to help them gain a greater understanding of planning and examination protocols and the thought processes behind the



decisions that were made by examiners and SLT links.

Accurate and rigorous

SLT links and examiners refined the process to ensure that the exams were accurate and rigorous by mirroring the methodology of exam boards. Specimen papers, consultation with curriculum leaders and discussions with representatives from exam boards led to the production of exam papers. This included a process to develop an understanding of the new levels and a clear and consistent methodology to translate raw marks into levels. Once students had taken the exams, teachers marked the papers and these were then moderated by Progress Boards and published for the Executive Team.

Effective communication is essential to ensure that the Progress Boards function in a swift and responsive manner. We ensured that there was absolute clarity around the key relationship between the SLT links and the examiners. The examiners have the responsibility of writing the units, creating the resources and developing the exams. The SLT links support the examiners by quality assuring the materials, the exams and planning the Progress Board meetings. Within individual academies, the Leaders of Achievement act as champions for Progress Boards.

The context of the academies is a deeper issue. The purpose of the Progress Boards is to raise aspirations and increase the level of challenge. However, if an academy is in special measures the danger is that the level of challenge is too great at this stage. Poor leadership over a period

of time in academies that were new to the trust often meant that teachers had not developed their pedagogy sufficiently to make the best use of the resources.

In academies where expectations for students had previously been low, it was easy to suggest that the Progress Boards were producing work that students were finding difficult to access. In these instances, bespoke CPD was produced to support the teachers. It was important to not compromise and make exceptions.

Monitoring of existing academies had shown a significant improvement in the quality of work produced by students in Years 7 and 8. It was important to ensure that teachers were able to improve their skills to make the best use of the resources to plan, rather than to compromise and revert to more comfortable and less challenging planning.

Subject portals

At the same time these issues were being addressed, the technology team at the trust developed a series of subject portals that could be accessed through the trust website. The examiners further developed the resources and uploaded the materials onto the portal. The portal opens up an overall summary and teachers are then able to dig down into unit plans and individual lessons.

Lesson resources are broken down into starters, mains, mini-plenaries, plenaries, example exam questions and homework. Explanations of context and purpose are key to making sure that the teachers have ownership of the planning of the lessons to suit the needs of their students.

In September 2016 an INSET event was held at Nottingham University Academy

of Science and Technology to launch the portal and give all the teachers of maths, English, science, geography and history across the trust, the opportunity to work as a group with the examiners and SLT links. The event was well received by staff but the real test is whether the resources have a positive impact in raising expectations and achievement.

Year 9 materials are now available and Progress Boards are being formed in the other curriculum areas. Moving forward we are starting to develop a primary Progress Board. The examiners have become Specialist Leaders of Education and will start to work in academies to monitor and further support colleagues. Trust monitoring visits are showing the positive impact of the Progress Boards.

The first round of progress checks are about to take place for Years 7, 8 and 9 and the outcomes will allow us to evaluate the impact in terms of achievement. There is still much to do, but Progress Boards are an exciting and powerful tool to ensure that teachers are able to concentrate on securing the outcomes that our students deserve.



Chris James is Senior Executive Headteacher of the Torch Academy Gateway Trust

STEPPING UP TO LEAD SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Andy Bird, founder and CEO of the Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, reveals the trials and tribulations of helping schools on a journey of transformation



I joined Fairfax, a larger than average secondary school in a Birmingham suburb called Sutton Coldfield, as Head Teacher in January 2012, having previously worked as a deputy head at three other Midlands schools.

Fairfax had been converted to an academy in July 2011 and I was passionate about helping it to become one of the best schools in the area. I was fortunate to have a team of dedicated staff who shared my relentless focus on

high standards. Our hard work paid off when the Academy achieved record-breaking GCSE results in the summer of 2013. I was so proud of what we had achieved in a short space of time at Fairfax, that I felt compelled to achieve the same results for even more children, so becoming a Multi-Academy Trust felt like the right and natural next step.

In July 2014, after a serious amount of hard work, Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust was born and I was appointed CEO. I knew this would provide a real opportunity to begin helping struggling schools. However, I also wanted to bring into the Trust, schools which were performing well, knowing it would develop a stronger family of schools working together to feed off one another, sharing best practice and growing into a strong network.

I passionately believe that all children, irrespective of their background, deserve an outstanding education and at FMAT, we feel it is our moral duty to assist schools and help them to provide the best opportunities in life. All too often we

see schools trapped in a cycle of repeated decline, often lost in the system and left feeling isolated and alone. The children are the ones who ultimately suffer through no fault of their own. They only have one shot at their education, and it's our responsibility as educators to step up to the plate and help schools to grow and flourish, in turn transforming the opportunities and life chances of young people and giving them what they both need and deserve.

Determined to make a difference to as many young people's lives as possible, my decision to create Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust was a move welcomed by education chiefs both at Birmingham City Council and the Department for Education.

Invited to sponsor

Within four months of its inception, FMAT was invited to sponsor Bournville School which had converted to academy status after being placed in special measures and rated 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in September 2013. Bournville School joined FMAT in November

The first hurdle was carrying out our due diligence – we didn't want to solve one set of problems by creating another. We then also had to begin a consultation process, which came with added complexities as our plans also involved proposals to close the school's sixth form due to falling student numbers

2014 – a very exciting yet daunting time. We inherited a legacy of ineffective management – particularly in terms of finances. Student numbers were falling and our first priority was to secure Bournville School's financial future. We quickly realised we had to make some innovative and ground-breaking changes if we wanted to change its fortunes. Approached by Birmingham City Council's education department to address a shortage of primary places in the city, we decided to make the bold move to create a primary school on the existing site of Bournville School.

Pressing need

The need for primary places was so pressing that the Local Authority was keen to act swiftly and put forward a suggested opening date of September 2016. The enormity of the task ahead of us, and the timescale of the project, was not lost on us. We had a mountain to climb and very little time to do it, so developing effective planning and an open dialogue with the Local Authority was essential. The first hurdle was carrying out our due diligence – we didn't want to solve one set of problems by creating another. We then also had to begin a consultation process, which came with added complexities as our plans also involved proposals to close the school's sixth form due to falling student numbers.

The new direction we were taking the school in was bold and undoubtedly contentious. Winning the hearts and minds of staff and the community has been one of a number of challenges. The school has a long history of tradition and is much-loved, which is why it is so important to us to secure its future.

I was so proud when Bournville Primary opened its doors to its first pupils in September 2016. Currently we have pupils being taught in a number of refurbished classrooms and work has begun on a new building which is set for completion by September 2017. The school will gradually grow to reach its full capacity of 420 pupils by 2021. Without question it is a mammoth project that is logistically challenging, but it is wonderful to see the primary school children settling in so well. The move also meant we were able to secure extra funding to make improvements to the secondary school provision, and we are very excited to be responsible for creating South West Birmingham's first all-through school.

School-to-school support

It wasn't long before FMAT was being called on once more, this time being asked to provide school-to-school support in February 2015 to Kingsbury School and Sports College in Erdington, Birmingham. We immediately appointed

one of our leading staff at FMAT, Mark Rhatigan, as the new Head of Academy, as we were certain that he had the skills needed to make a quick and significant impact. We weren't mistaken, and Mark was instrumental in leading a remarkable turnaround of the school. His work saw the school being removed from 'Special Measures' by Ofsted in November 2015, and in April 2016 inspectors found that the school was on course to be rated 'Good' after having made rapid progress and improvement. It was the icing on the cake when, in September 2016, the school officially joined FMAT, changing its name to Erdington Academy as it began a new chapter in its 98-year history.

Full of praise

At a special opening ceremony to celebrate the milestone moment, Erdington MP Jack Dromey was full of praise for FMAT and Mark. He said he had seen the school transform before his very eyes. The MP's acknowledgement of the difference we have made to the lives of Erdington Academy's pupils was a significant moment, and one which we will all doubtless treasure.

However, we are not resting on our laurels; there is still much work to be done. To that end, we have appointed Mark as Executive Head Teacher working across both Bournville School and Erdington Academy to continue



to drive school improvement. In addition, our growing reputation for helping struggling schools continues as we have begun providing school-to-school support to Smith's Wood Sports College in Solihull. It is hoped the school will be the latest to join FMAT in January 2017 as the Trust steadily grows and expands.

Smith's Wood Sports College is a school rated 'Good' by Ofsted and we feel it has the capacity to build on the many successes that the school has achieved over the past few years in order for it to become 'Outstanding'.

We are delighted with the progress already made at Smith's Wood Sports College, Erdington Academy and Bournville School and we are entirely committed to playing a pivotal role in the improvement of all our schools as they continue on their journey of transformation. We will continue to strive for excellence and we have big ambitions for our Trust, our schools and our students and staff alike. There are exciting times ahead for FMAT and we are proud to be such an integral part of school-led improvement in Birmingham.



Established in July 2014, Birmingham-based Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust (FMAT) is quickly growing a reputation for leading school-to-school improvement

ABOUT FASNA



FASNA is the only national, independent, not-for-profit school membership network for self-governing primary, secondary and special schools, academies and multi-academy trusts. It expressly represents the interests and views of all self-governing schools.

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

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

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

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

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- Free *Academy Magazine* each term worth £30 pa
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- Free resources: 'Effective Governance' (including new update) and 'Effective Financial Management' worth £23
- FASNA Website – with members' only section
- Member networks through online forums and personal contacts
- National conferences with distinguished speakers
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Primary & Special Schools £125 + VAT (£150) Direct Debit or £175 + VAT (£210) BACS or cheque

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

Visit fasna.org.uk for further information



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To find out more please visit www.nqtinduction.co.uk or contact the NIPT office admin@nqtinduction.co.uk



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Lord Nash
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PLAYING WITH FIRE

Moving children out of their comfort zone is key to giving them the confidence to succeed. First though, educators need to break free of their own comfort zones, says Mike Fairclough in this extract from *Playing with Fire...*



More than fears of what the HSE will do or what Ofsted might say, the biggest barrier to children having magnificent experiences is the low expectation teachers and parents have of the children in their care.

I recently drove my mud splattered Land Rover to the far side of the marsh where we teach our children shooting, fishing and beekeeping. It was raining hard and the ground was heavily waterlogged. A group of 16 children aged nine were lighting fires, gathering wood and erecting shelters with sticks and tarps. I joined them by the fire to have a chat and for them to make me a hot cup

of coffee. Despite being wet and cold, all of the children, most of whom were girls, were smiling, happy and getting on with the job at hand. This may come as a surprise, given the harsh weather conditions, but we have come to expect this positive attitude from our children at West Rise. This is because, as a school, we have taught the children to be resilient and to venture out of their comfort zones.

The concept of people having a 'comfort zone' was first conceived by psychologists, Robert M. Yerkes and John Dodson, more than a 100 years ago. After many experiments, they concluded that "a state of relative comfort created a steady level of performance". This state of relative comfort is the 'comfort zone'.

However, if a person wants to increase their performance levels and to develop personally they need to step into a state of relative anxiety where their stress levels are slightly higher than normal. The psychologists labelled this state, "optimal anxiety," which lies just beyond our comfort zone.

Perceived limitations

Since becoming the Headteacher of West Rise Junior School, as well as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator in 2004, I have observed a steady increase in discussions amongst professionals and parents about children's perceived limitations, often sighting that they are anxious or lacking in self-esteem. I have also seen an increasing number of parents

'diagnosing' their children with various disorders using internet questionnaires, simply because their children do not like change or they struggle in certain situations. The discussions have largely depended on what has been shown recently on television and therefore sparking people's fears and influencing their views. This is not to say that some children do not suffer from anxiety or struggle with change, but it is definitely the case that some parents and professionals project their own limiting beliefs and traits onto the young people in their care.

I recognise that this may be controversial for some people to read, however I have had conversations with teachers and educational psychologists from across the country who have felt the same way but are too scared to talk about it. I am convinced that in the future adults will be seeking compensation from local authorities and external agencies for inaccurately labelling them with debilitating traits when they were children, which have then negatively affected their lives.

I believe that there is currently a trend for some parents and education professionals to interpret the effects of life's challenges on children and label them with some sort of problem. This is in contrast to a culture where adults expect children to overcome their fears, build resilience and exceed expectations.

An attitude to life fostered by my parents' generation and of those before

them. My parents, both of whom are in their 80s, grew up in the war years. My dad, the son of working class Irish immigrants and living in Manchester, was never evacuated from the city and remembers the Germans dropping bombs on his street in Droylsden. My mother was from a more affluent background and was evacuated to Canada, although this didn't stop the Germans from trying to torpedo the ship she was on. Similarly, my great grandfather on my father's side lied about his age during the outbreak of the First World War and found himself fighting in the trenches at the Battle of the Somme at the age of 15. I often wonder how the younger generations would fair in the face of such adversity. I am not saying that children should be made to struggle, but I do feel that we should have higher expectations of them and of ourselves.

Anxiety and depression

There is no doubt whatsoever that some children do suffer from anxiety and depression and many children are accurately diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, among other significant disorders. These children are then given the extra support that they need at home and at school. There are also other times when it is the parents themselves who don't like change or who are anxious or depressed. Fuelled by misinformation on the internet and television, they then project these dynamics and fears onto their children. This dilutes the focus away from the children who genuinely need their support.

Throughout my years of teaching, I have seen many children who have been labelled with some kind of mental health issue or limiting trait, from anxiety through to lack of self-confidence, fear of change or depression. I have then observed the same children working outside in nature, in which they are not being labelled and where they are expected to rise to a particular challenge. More often than not, these children have demonstrated skills and attributes which were previously unobserved and shown confidence and courage, exceeding their own and others' limiting beliefs.

I believe that getting children outside

in all weathers, giving them new and expansive experiences, having high expectations of them and demanding resilience is what many children want and need. Having an aspirational "they can do it!" approach rather than a weak "they are unable to do this" attitude, helps push children out of their comfort zones and towards fulfilling their potential.

The culture of expecting every child to have some sort of psychological problem has got to end, especially if it appears that it has more to do with their parents' or teachers' fears and obstacles. What is even more worrying is when the concerns raised are the result of the media playing on people's anxieties.

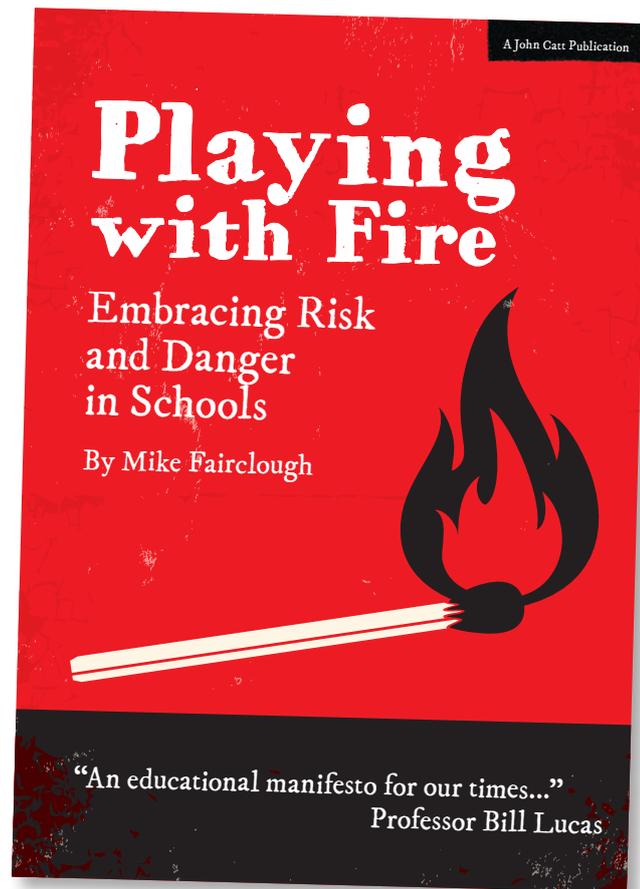
For those children who are accurately diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD or are depressed, West Rise has integrated and worked with these children too. I can recall several examples of children who I have been told will "not be able to cope" with working outside in the rain because they are autistic or cannot be trusted with a knife or a gun. These children in particular exceed everyone's expectations every time. With appropriate support and a watchful eye, but even more importantly

with trust in the young person and with high expectations, these children are able to enjoy learning which has an element of risk and danger just as much as their peers.

Significant risk and danger

It is interesting, that people generally assume that I am the headteacher of a nice little private school for middle class kids when I tell them about the activities I do with the children at my school. The school is populated primarily with children from working class backgrounds and every year group has children within it who are accurately diagnosed with ASD. Yet we engage in activities with an element of significant risk and danger with every child in the school. As a result, the children achieve, thrive and succeed.

After three hours of hard work in the rain and while completely wet and muddy, my Year 4 children were still smiling after my visit with them. The long walk through the marshes back to school still lay ahead of them, but those children all had an aura of achievement and power about them. They had adopted attributes which, if encouraged, will serve them well throughout their lives in





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a world full of change and uncertainty. They had stepped out of their comfort zones and into that place where they can grow and achieve. A place where they can ultimately live their dreams and go beyond the constraints of others' beliefs about them. Two of the children in the group were officially diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum, although the parent helpers who did not know them could never have known that.

It is important that we have high expectations of the children in our care and have a positive and aspirational outlook with regards to what they can do. I have had children with ADHD handle guns proficiently. I have had children who are low-attaining writers suddenly write magnificently after being immersed in nature. I have had girls who have run away from bees in the playground have thousands of them crawling all over them after lifting the lid off a hive, whilst wearing protective clothing. People have limitless potential and children deserve to be seen as capable of reaching their potential and then exceeding it.

Carefully managed exposure to risk and danger will enable children to have new experiences and to move beyond their comfort zones. Like a flower opening up, once they return to normal

life, they will have expanded that little bit more. Each time they step outside of the comfort zone they expand again, building on their confidence and enthusiasm for life. It isn't always easy, but that is the whole point.

Ideas for teachers

There will always be a child in every class who the teacher feels will not be able to handle risk or be able to be trusted in a dangerous environment or situation. Assuming that the teacher has positive behaviour management skills, is well organised and takes full responsibility, there is no barrier to that child engaging in 'dangerous' activities. The best way is to simply do it. Trust and high expectations must come first and must not be waited for. A child will know if they are trusted or not. The power of that trust, or lack of it, goes a very long way indeed and will often dictate the outcome.

Choose your groups carefully and have a balance of children who are known to be capable and responsible, with one or two who you have to keep a closer eye on. Usually, the 'naughty ones' are thrown in to a group of their own and as everyone predicted they mess around and are told that they can never be trusted again. This is an example of poor management and

a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is important to be one of those parents or teachers who believes in the child and is willing to give them a chance with the best possible conditions for success.

If it is a child on the autistic spectrum, pair them with an adult who enjoys being outside and wants to be there themselves. Prepare the child by telling them what they will be doing and show them photographs and videos of what they will do. Most of all, be really positive about the activities and tell them how brilliantly they are doing and have the highest possible expectations for success.

However, before you can expect children to move out of their comfort zones you need to be willing to move out of your own one first.

Playing with Fire is published by John Catt Educational, £14. Mike Fairclough has been the Headteacher of West Rise Junior School since 2004. The School became the TES School of the Year in 2015.

SETTING UP AND DEVELOPING A MAT – INTO THE FIFTH YEAR

Jon Chaloner, CEO of GLF Schools, shares his experience of the changing nature of leadership roles as a MAT grows

Imagine being told in 2010 that within six years you would be leading a group of over 20 schools. This was not actually the case, but in 2010, I was asked by Surrey LA to provide interim leadership for a local junior school. It was the first time in Surrey's history that a leader from one sector led two schools simultaneously across the traditional primary-secondary divide.

From my personal perspective, this rates as the most important phase of my professional development. I believe that my experience of leading in the primary sector improved my approach to leadership. Learning, teaching, the curriculum, governance and the sheer vitality of the primary setting, challenged my leadership within the secondary sector.

It is a privilege to now lead GLF Schools which is a multi-academy trust comprising 19 primary schools and four secondary schools which span five local authority areas: Oxfordshire, Wokingham, Surrey, West Sussex and Croydon. GLF Schools was founded in 2012 in order to enable the permanent federation of Glyn School (an academy since April 2011) and Danetree Junior School. Having worked in partnership since October 2010, both schools' governing bodies and leadership teams believed that, as like-minded partners, working across different sectors gave incredible opportunities to the children and students of both schools.

Over the last four years, GLF has responded to the academy agenda, as well as to approaches from LAs and the DfE by expanding and the Trust now comprises five brand new schools, six sponsored schools and 12 converters. Despite the

changing landscape, we at GLF constantly remind ourselves that each of our schools is a complex community. In our view, our schools are not businesses; they have neither clients, customers nor a product. What they do have is people, with all their ups and downs, their hopes and fears, their good days and bad.

Personal challenge

MAT CEO leadership is certainly very different from leadership as a Headteacher. Successfully managing this transition has been a personal challenge since I relinquished hands-on headship in order to move into the GLF Schools CEO role full-time in September 2015. In 2012-13, I was Executive Headteacher of three schools simultaneously with three leadership teams and three governing bodies. As the year progressed, I was increasingly conscious of not being able to be as effective as I knew I could be, due to the conflicting challenges of each school and not having sufficient time to give my best to all three. Thus began the personal process of 'shedding' my Executive Head Teacher and Headteacher roles. Firmly established as the Trust CEO, the greatest adjustment has been for me to accept that parents, children and young people are not as aware of you as a significant leader within their school. A CEO, however, must set aside such personal 'loss' and focus on providing the support and challenge necessary for the children's Headteacher and their team to be as effective as possible.

Reflecting upon the last few years, leading a MAT has enabled collaboration with a wide range of leaders across the organisation, both at the centre, which is where the educational and operational

support for the schools is coordinated, as well as within the schools themselves. It is exciting to witness the collaboration of leaders across schools having a positive impact upon practice but not in a top-down prescriptive way. 'Flexible Collaboration' allows leaders to access support and challenge at a peer level with oversight and coordination from the central education team. Flexible Collaboration has increased as GLF Schools has grown and as the trust's schools have improved.

The Headteachers within GLF also adopt flexible collaboration in many aspects of their role. Due to the geographical location of our schools, we have four distinct regions, within which, schools can collaborate not only in their local clusters, but also across the Trust as a whole. The flexibility that this brings, along with the diversity of the communities that we serve, means that we are able to employ Headteachers with different strengths and, more importantly, different passions. This enables us to empower them to lead beyond their own school which has resulted in increased retention rates.

As a result of our expansion teachers and support staff now also have the potential to work with GLF throughout their careers, as there will always be opportunities in schools available to them. This is very important from a Trust perspective as the national recruitment crisis and the #flatcash funding issues continue to bite.

Non-teaching operations

Another vital aspect of leadership within a MAT is that of the management of the non-teaching operations. Mirroring the

There is little value in making a decision based upon a charismatic CEO. The decision must be based on a much deeper evaluation of the match and its various implications

introduction of a range of roles beyond that of head teacher, the traditional School Business Manager (SBM) role of the last twenty years is now being challenged by the introduction of roles such as Finance Directors, Group Accountants, Business Leaders and Chief Operating Officers (COO).

Holy Trinity

It has historically been suggested that effective school leadership comprises the 'Holy Trinity' of the Headteacher, the Governing Body and the School Business Manager (SBM) but is this still the case within the MAT world? Does this 'trinity' allow schools to develop the strength necessary to achieve outstanding leadership capable of driving change? I would suggest that the Holy Trinity within a MAT is in fact the Trust Board, the CEO and the leader of the operations of the Trust – increasingly the COO.

Having spent 11 years as a Headteacher of two secondary schools, I have been able to experience leading schools both with an SBM and without one. There are undoubtedly benefits to be had from a school having a highly capable and strategic SBM as part of the Leadership and Management Team (LMT). As my knowledge of the primary sector has increased since the formation of GLF Schools MAT, I have become increasingly concerned at the disparity between the role of the SBM within the secondary sector as compared to that within primary. Are SBMs finance officers, bursars, office managers or all three and more? To ensure stability and parity across schools in terms of the responsibilities and strategic leadership of

the SBM role, this year we have embarked upon a review of the new Business Leader (BL) role within GLF to bring about more consistency in order to enable flexible collaboration to also flourish in this area of operation.

I am keen to develop this role so that each school acknowledges and buys into the fundamental principle that the work of the BLs should allow the Headteachers and LMTs to focus their energies on driving up standards in the classroom. My aim is for BLs to work across more than one school in an 'executive' capacity, so that we can realise the multiple benefits of collaboration and the sharing of resources. Our experience so far strongly suggests that the multiple-school BL can provide the essential conduit between the school and 'the centre' in terms of, for instance, finance, HR, capital planning and IT provision. This allows the Heads and LMTs to be freed up to meet the challenges of further improving outcomes and to concentrate on liaising with the education support, SEN and behaviour support services provided by 'the centre'.

Declining budgets

We are in a position of declining budgets, especially in terms of vastly reduced capital funding for aging buildings. There are more children needing to be educated within the state sector but less money available to deliver this. We appear to be trying to recruit from an ever-diminishing supply of trained teachers with the potential to be teachers of the highest quality. "To transform schools successfully, we need to navigate the difficult space between letting go of old strategies and grabbing on to new ones."

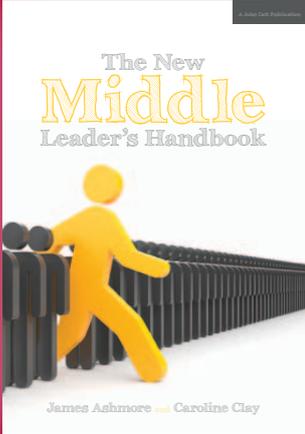
(Robert John Meehan). BLs are essential in supporting Headteachers in this way, utilising their skills in procurement, income generation, premises management and HR to ensure that each school's funding effectively targets its key priorities.

The experience of school and MAT senior leadership accrued over the past 19 years reaffirms my belief that the MAT structure and the associated opportunities that go with it are right for schools. Finding the right strategic partner is not straight forward and the search should involve a careful process with plenty of opportunity for review. What should drive leaders and governors is the knowledge that decisions need to stand the test of time. There is little value in making a decision based upon a charismatic CEO. The decision must be based on a much deeper evaluation of the match and its various implications as the Trust will surely exist for longer than the occupants of key roles in the schools and Trust today.

Crucial to the sustainability of a growing MAT is a constant focus on leadership. How are school and business leaders coached, trained, developed and how is potential future talent identified and fed into such development activity? Whatever the answers to these questions are, I would agree with David Weston who says that "a great school is a balanced orchestra; everyone contributes to the harmony & performance." This underpins successful schools within successful MATs; after all, it is all about people.



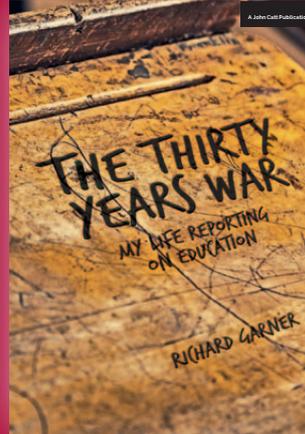
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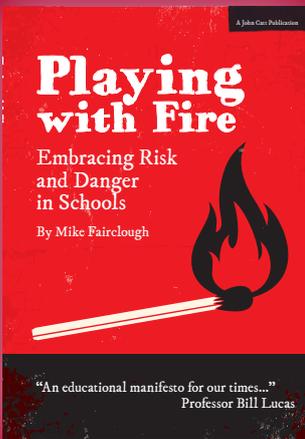


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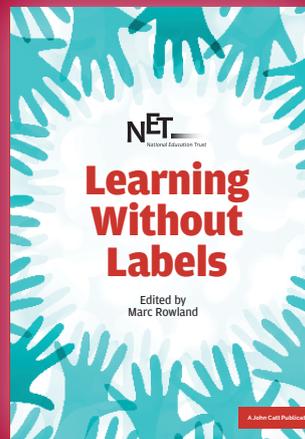


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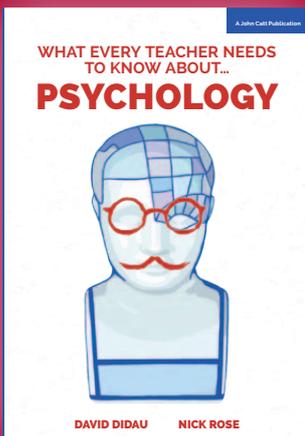


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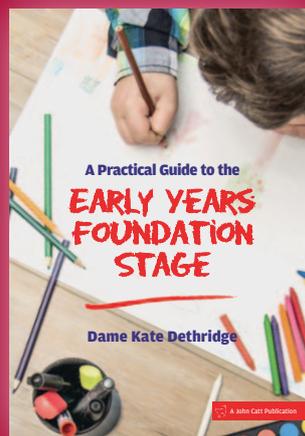
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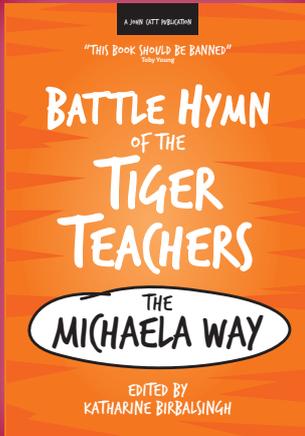
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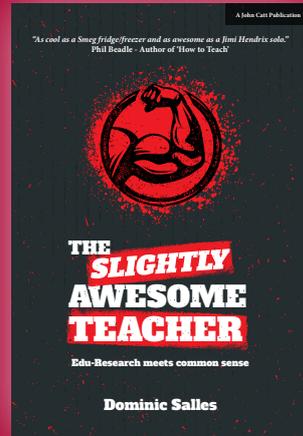


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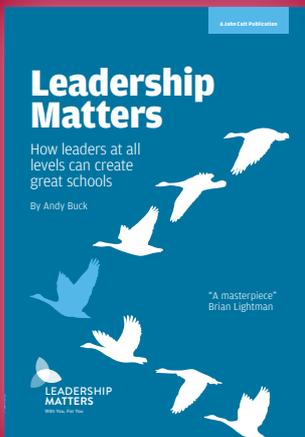


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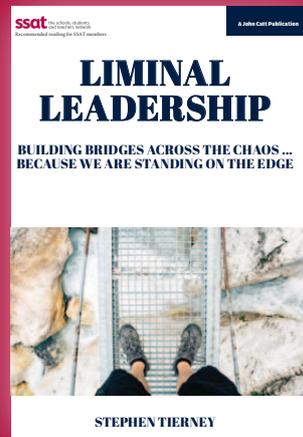


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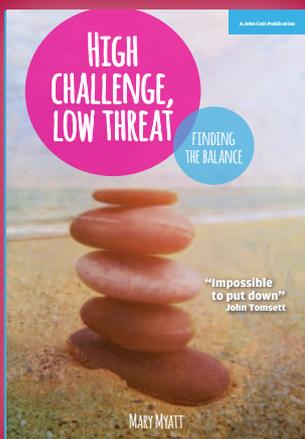


Liminal Leadership

Building bridges across the chaos... because we are standing on the edge

By Stephen Tierney

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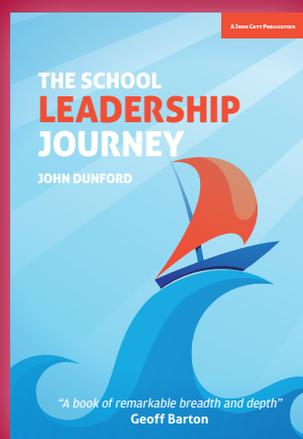


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“WE HAVE A NEW MOMENTUM...”



Darren Turner recounts his journey into Headship within a MAT

As a new Principal I was always going to be slightly nervous of making an impact in an institution which is steeped in tradition and has a track record for outstanding outcomes. I arrived Tudor Grange Academy Solihull (a member of the Tudor Grange Academies Trust) in September 2014 with a lot of confidence from previous roles in standalone schools. I immediately felt that I was not alone in my new post having the benefit of open discussions with the then Executive Principal, Mrs Jenny Bexon-Smith and the current Executive Principal, Mrs Claire Maclean. Both gave me the reassurance that I needed to make a change and to believe in my own vision. The support from the Trust through the MAT Board and Local Governing Board has been excellent and has encouraged me to use my personal attributes to drive the Academy to achieve its ambition of offering a ‘World Class’ education.

The journey has not been complicated or turbulent but it has required effective leadership and hard work and commitment. My focus has been to generate a culture of reflection by addressing what we do and how we do it, then nurturing and reinforcing a ‘feel good’ factor for both students and staff. Celebration has been key for staff and students to build their thirst for teaching and learning, whilst working tirelessly to bring about exceedingly high outcomes and consistent progression for all students.

As a community we have been on this pathway for over two years now and the creativity, productivity, opportunity and outcomes all remain outstanding. There is real evidence from our student voice, our staff and parents’ forum and the general community that change has happened. This is not seismic change, as this was not needed, but fine marginal change which has given the Academy a breath of new life and renewed energy to face the challenge of the coming years and remain resilient through change.

Quality assurance tools

As I have been on a journey to develop my own leadership, I have refocused a senior leadership team, remapped CPD, made roles and responsibilities absolutely clear. I have also been innovative in developing new quality assurance tools and exposed all staff to the much needed data to inform practice and precision plan for each student to achieve and progress. This has been made possible by the support of the Trust, firstly in the guise of regular meetings with the executive team and other Principals, where we have openly discussed strengths, areas for development and new initiatives. The key to these meetings has been the clear agenda set by the Executive Principal. This has generated discussion, encouraged us to meet potential problems head on, and helped to develop us as a collective and forged a real togetherness. This collective approach allows us to

think and work as one, a Trust body, with the interests of students at the heart of all its decision making, doing the right things for the right reasons.

As a Principal, I have also had the reassurance of financial advice from our Executive Finance Officer within the Trust, developing my knowledge of the complex financial landscape not only of an Academy but also of a Multi-Academy Trust. This has been particularly useful when discussing financial pressures with the Governors and setting realistic targets for all to work towards. Finance is something you never really train for in your years leading up to Headship and when completing your NPQH, it is not usually a topic during masters level study, so to have someone steering me and providing a regular point of contact, has been a massive benefit.

The Trust have invested a great deal of time and effort in ensuring all areas of operation are maximised, even catering must be an area of excellence. Our Executive Catering Officer provides an incredible insight into how catering can and should work in an educational establishment and it is certainly linked to our excellent outcomes. Over 97% of our Academy population enjoy hot, nutritious, value for money meals, which fuel the minds of both staff and students. The climate in the restaurant and café areas at Solihull is wonderful, with young people sitting having meals together and staff intermingling with them, connecting to





them outside the classroom environment. The split lunch-time we operate works really well and provides me with the opportunity, alongside other staff, to chat with our students and to take pride in doing so, because they enjoy our company as much as we do theirs. The value of these moments cannot be underestimated as it is the relaxed non-structured time where you can get a real sense of what an Academy is really like and to be present at that time with a smile not a scowl, is vital. The students will often discuss how they feel about the Academy at these moments and it gives us an insight into how we can develop things further.

Great value

One aspect of the Academy that students will often offer opinions on is the building and facilities and this again is an area where the Trust adds great value. The Associate Principal for Estates and IT offers sound advice, is always looking for the best ways to improve the Academy and is tireless in his quest to make sure we have the best value for money from external providers. This removes much of the headache linked with procurement and allows me to concentrate on working

with phenomenal staff to get the best from incredibly talented students, through quality experiences in the classroom, supported by great teaching.

There is no doubt that by working as part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust, I have benefitted hugely as a Principal, as has the Academy itself, with a large amount of investment in infrastructure and buildings. The students have reaped the benefits by having a warm, safe and dry environment and the staff come to work knowing that they are supported and encouraged to be innovative and to enjoy their work. Our student and staff voice certainly suggest that there is an increased level of fulfilment and enjoyment and it is one of my roles to mirror that feeling when I am at the Academy. The culture is now noticeably 'want to' and can do', with a definitive 'feel good' climate. This does not happen purely by chance; it is worked on by everyone and is constantly reinforced around the Academy. Many visitors remark upon this when they come to the Academy for it is palpable and evident in all aspects of life at Tudor Grange Academy Solihull.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first two years as Principal and look forward

to this my third year. There is a real buzz about the Academy with ever increasing numbers in the sixth-form and with new reforms embraced in the new 'life after levels'. We have a new momentum. This has not just been created by me, but by a Trust and more importantly by the staff and students who drive us on to greater things and inspire each other to achieve and progress. People are encouraged to make a difference both within their own school and in the wider system beyond; the essential factor is for me to never forget to congratulate them and to celebrate this.

Tudor Grange Academy Solihull became an Academy in June 2010, became a Teaching School 2011 and opened a sixth form 2012. It achieved Ofsted 'Outstanding' in 2014 and was in the Top 5% of secondary institutions in the country for four years in a row and last year was in the top 5 achieving non-selective secondary schools in the country.

DELIVERING THE VISION



Wendy Weldon, Executive Principal of Greengate Lane Primary, recounts the story of her school's impressive seven-year school improvement journey

When I first came to Greengate Lane Primary School in Sheffield in March 2009, the school was in crisis. Results were well below floor (KS2 43% L4 combined KS1 21% 2b+) behaviour was out of control, teaching was inadequate in every year group and there was an endemic culture of low expectations. The school is in an area of high economic deprivation with FSM at double the national figure (52%) and is in the bottom 20% in all deprivation indices. Almost all the children are White British and the school is in the far north of the city. Seven years on and the school has just achieved the third best KS2 results in Sheffield (84% combined) and all other results are well above national. In addition, the school has an Ofsted grade of 'Good' (Sept 14) with 'Outstanding' for Early Years and Leadership and Management and the school designated as a National Support School. Greengate Lane Primary Academy is one of only 18 Achievement for All Ambassador schools.

When I arrived, there was a culture of very low expectations: the view was that this was the sink school of the area and that the children would never be any different. In my previous headship, the school had been judged 'Outstanding' in all areas and I was determined that

Greengate Lane children should have the same opportunities to achieve.

Long, hard journey

This vision to embed a culture of high expectations amongst all members of the school community has been central to our success but it has been a long, hard journey and myself and my deputy, Paul Cross, have been relentless in our pursuit of this aim. This has sometimes required courageous conversations and decisions but we believe that all children deserve the very best every day in school and we are prepared to support and challenge in whatever ways are needed to achieve that.

The first area to be tackled in the school was behaviour. To this end a firm and clear system was put into place which all children and parents understood and for which all staff were responsible. Alongside this, we implemented a very strong pastoral system which provided the necessary support for those families and children who needed it. Attendance (up from 91% in 2009 to 96.4% in 2016) was another area where robust systems have had a huge impact.

Next came the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning and build a team with the attitude, understanding and skills to deliver the vision. As a former lecturer in ITT and a Literacy Consultant,

I have always had a passion for developing the highest calibre of staff. The school now has very strong teaching across the board and quality leaders including two SLEs who were NQTs in my first year. We are very choosy about how we spend valuable CPD time, using only the work of the highest quality national experts. Many headteachers, bamboozled by the constant changes and demands, lurch into the first potential solution offered to them but we take time to research, decide on an approach, use an action research model to trial and measure impact and then roll it out across school.

We are unusual in many aspects of our practice. Firstly, much of our development has come from EYFS upwards. As a specialist in Early Years, I believe that much of the best understanding of learning comes from EYFS and that if gaps can be filled at the earliest stages, then success later on is much easier to achieve. To this end, all classes in school have reading areas, small world, role play and independent research areas as part of their provision. The focus on a learning environment to both support and celebrate achievement is also central. In too many cases, schools have to resort to a 'sticking plaster' boost at Year 6, but we aim to close the gaps from FS1. In this we have been greatly helped by the



Achievement for All Framework which helps to identify barriers to learning and implement the right strategies to break them down. So, for example, we have employed our own speech and language therapist for three days a week.

Sutton Trust

Our staffing structure greatly supports this approach too. We looked in depth at the Sutton Trust's findings and changed our structure accordingly. In each class, there are three teachers/HLTAs working in the morning (top 2/3, boost, SEND) to ensure that every child gets the very best personalised support and challenge. In the afternoons, the 'boost' teacher (often an NQT who learns from the experienced class teacher: a true apprenticeship model) will lead the enquiry based cross curricular theme work with the class, whilst the 'class teacher' can take out any individuals or groups who need support to understand the morning's lesson, pre-teach or challenge the higher attainers. This personalised, bespoke approach ensures gaps are constantly closed rather than widening and this means that we have no need for 'off the shelf' interventions. The budget is prioritised to employ extra teachers and HLTAs. In this, I have been fortunate to work with three excellent Chairs of Governors who

have all been forward thinking and have encouraged the school to look for the best possible solutions.

The quality of our curriculum is also vital. Our premise is that children learn the basic skills in the morning and are able to use and apply these in the afternoon. The teaching of reading (judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in Sept 2014) is central to everything we do in school and our children are immersed in a rich world of experiences and skill development, which is constantly reviewed and improved as we look to close gaps. We also believe that Year 6 should be the best year of your school life and so last year our children experienced taking part in the Shakespeare in Schools Festival, performing a 30-minute version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in front of an audience of 400 at the Montgomery Theatre. They attended a three-day residential in Stratford-on-Avon including visiting the RSC, watching the RSC perform in Bradford, performing the musical *The Lion King* and raising over £600 in an Enterprise Project. These children were ready for the next step in their education in every possible way.

The school became an academy in a very small newly established MAT in 2013. The autonomy to access rigorous HR support from a private provider

was central to our continuing success as staff are held to account by a very clear appraisal process based on career stage expectations. Academisation can also provide more freedom to use the budget in the innovative ways already described.

Our designation as an NSS in 2015 gave us further opportunities to support schools across the region and share our good practice. Our recent move to join Reach4 Trust will enable us to broaden this role further and we have recently taken over Executive leadership of a school in Doncaster.

We have proved that schools in challenging circumstances can achieve great results and equip children with the skills and confidence they need to have the best choices in their lives ahead. Our children are now proud to say that they go to one of the best schools in the city and indeed the country.

Wendy was designated a National Leader of Education in 2015 and was the recent winner of the Best Head Teacher and Best Primary School in the Sheffield Education Awards 2016

GET 'DATA AWARE' TO SURVIVE AND PROSPER



Will Jordan, Education Sector Manager at PS Financials, explains that the growing data volumes held within multi-academy trusts needs to be combined, digested and understood so they can 'weather' the impending financial storm – and achieve successful outcomes

MATs within the UK Education sector now face the challenge of utilising increasing amounts of data, spread across a range of system silos, to help support and challenge leadership intuition. We're all too aware that there are only so many hours in the day and the last thing that teachers need is yet another system that needs to be maintained. Whilst it's recognised that an environment needs to be created where data is entered just once, but can be used multiple times, in reality this is not likely to occur any time soon.

Therefore, we need to look at data consolidation routes that are more achievable in the short term, so the question becomes: how can we combine, format and analyse raw data from disparate systems to provide meaningful insight across multiple schools?

Providing answers

It's clear that having the ability to draw insight from data, with speed and ease, is becoming more important than ever. In a recent survey, we discovered that schools store and analyse data across an average of 14 different systems. Systems that

generally only hold information about a single element of school life, making useful analysis time consuming and often impossible. Once schools join MATs, the issue is compounded as different schools use different systems to hold the same information, hampering cross-trust analysis.

The current attitude of having different systems that in data terms, essentially retain and record data, needs to be refocused on extracting data's value and then using it. You also need to understand how different data types impact on each other by consolidating it in a way that can be easily digested. You can then gain new insights and foresight that aid forward planning to create both opportunities and avoid future problems. This is crucial, as it enables you to understand where ever-stretching resources can be better utilised to achieve the best results.

Seeking intelligence

Modern business intelligence (BI) solutions can help you achieve these goals. These technologies link multiple and varied data sources, making it interactive and easily accessible on any

device. This then helps the MAT's central teams, education leaders and financial managers, to make better decisions in a more efficient way. As a solid starting point, BI solutions can work together in consolidating financial, management information systems and timetable data, in order to gain a granular insight into the effect of investment vs. return, when compared to progress, attainment levels and effectiveness of interventions.

Used effectively, BI can help MATs and schools start to do some interesting things. For example, you can compare different departments or Academies in a MAT, or even do a comparison between similar geographic regions. Head teachers are a competitive bunch and the introduction of internal benchmarking can have a transformational effect. Not only does it set schools against their peers but it can also aid the sharing of best practice.

External benchmarking will often generate questions, but it can be very difficult to establish answers, particularly where contextual pupil factors are unknown. Easy to use BI features lets you examine this data in a way that you want to see it, so that you can gain insight at

the most granular level. This data will not make decisions for you, but can be used to either support or challenge leadership judgment with data-based evidence.

A consistent issue facing MAT BI projects is that all schools use their systems in varying ways. In some cases the same system can be used differently, as each school will only use it to the extent that it suits them and their unique situation. Additionally, many schools may feel that the effort of keeping their systems current doesn't merit the resulting quality of information and insight.

To employ BI systems effectively requires an internal mindset change from users. They must focus on the 'bigger picture' and understand that over time, as the quality and consistency of their data improves, it will become invaluable, especially when they see the insight that it can provide. To a certain extent, this requires a 'leap of faith' for the schools that are already stretching their finite staff resources, so it is important that several 'quick wins' are established to retain MAT-wide stakeholder approval.

A quick win example might be combining timetable and financial data to understand the true cost of the curriculum. Historically it's likely that these have been the responsibility of separate departments within a school. For example, a deputy head teacher might typically look after the timetabling process, and a bursar or finance director will be responsible for the finances. With funding pressures becoming ever more pertinent, it is vital that the timetable process is supported by financial rationale and this process will often identify significant opportunities to improve the utilisation of resources, ensuring the maximum impact on educational performance.

BI selection

To achieve successful analytics, it's vital that users are properly equipped to effectively extract information in a format that suits them. Good BI tools allow you to employ the knowledge gained from creating graphs and measures, using tools such as Excel to query the vast

datasets. You can then generate easy to understand visualisations, presented as reports and dashboards, making it simple to get answers and make better and faster decisions.

Importantly, you don't have to learn a new interface or be a business intelligence expert to get the most out of these tools. The familiarity that many people already have using applications like Excel, will mean that that access to this data, and the insights that we're describing here, will make it simple for all.

Technically, schools have been faced with the prospect of managing large volumes of data on local servers which has meant that users from all locations, can't access the same data that they need. Increasingly, with the advent of cloud-based, 'BI as a service' solutions provide all users with easy access. As your requirements and your appetite grow for data analysis and valuable results are achieved, these service solutions can then scale up to meet these needs.



BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Dame Kate Dethridge outlines some strategies for maintaining order in the EYFS

When 30 children walk through the doors into your classroom at the start of the new academic year, they will be 30 children who all have, to a lesser or greater extent, a different understanding of what it is to behave. Some will have had their behaviour managed in a highly effective way at home, with high standards set for them. Others may be used to ignoring what an adult tells them to do in the full knowledge that sooner or later that adult will give up trying to persuade the child to do as they are told. These children see requests to behave as a negotiation, a war of attrition that they are likely to win if they just keep disregarding the instructions.

In more extreme cases, you may have children in your class who have never been set expectations regarding their behaviour. Their parents have rarely told the child 'no' or intervened if they have been doing or saying something unacceptable. When such children are

faced with a more disciplinary approach they often have disproportionately dramatic reactions. They have developed a heightened sense of self-importance and really struggle with doing anything they do not want to.

Regardless of any child's starting point, for those adults managing them in the classroom, the most important thing is to have in mind a very clear understanding of what acceptable behaviour is and what it looks like in the classroom. This understanding has to be shared and agreed amongst all the adults who work together because a consistent approach for children will be the key to effective behaviour management.

The importance of routine

Children thrive on routine. They need to know that each school day has a pattern to it. They take comfort in the predictability of their days and become unsettled and possibly distressed when they are faced with too much change.

It is important therefore that classroom routines are firmly established at the start of each new academic year and that these are adhered to throughout. To begin with, it may be helpful to have a pictorial representation of each day. Children can easily understand such a model and it can be used to show them what happens next; in this way nothing is a surprise to them.

Apart from timetabling routines, children also benefit from a consistent approach being employed by all those adults who they come into contact with, whether that is in the classroom, the dining room or the playground. In the best practice, children receive the same message from any adult that they communicate with regarding behavioural expectations or school routines. As managers, it is crucial that we invest time in revisiting these regularly with our established staff, as well as ensuring any induction programme highlights the importance



of consistency to all new members of staff.

Positive behaviour management

Almost all children are desperate to please. Once they have developed a relationship with you, they will seek your approval and will do almost anything to get it. Children also respond best to being praised rather than criticised and, as a practitioner, it is far more satisfying to focus on what children are doing right than on what they are getting wrong. Praise and reward are the two most useful weapons in your behaviour management armoury.

Praise: children love to be noticed, especially if this is public and in front of their peers. Never underestimate the power of praise. Even with the most challenging child, adults will be able to find things to praise them for.

Reward: this can involve sticker

charts, star charts, choosing a favourite toy, choosing a friend to play with, being chosen to do something and being given extra time with an activity they love. All of these are highly effective at moderating poor behaviour.

Disapproval: this often proves to be far more effective than raising your voice. Shouting at a child is poor practice, unless they are in immediate danger of harming themselves or others, and shows a lack of control and professionalism from the adult. It is more effective to explain that you are disappointed. It is important that we help children to cultivate a conscience. Feeling slightly guilty for a short amount of time is an essential part of children learning the difference between right and wrong. Remember that this is only for a very short period of time, a couple of minutes at the most. Children have to know that they are forgiven and can make a fresh start without an adult holding any sort of

grudge or reminding them constantly what they did wrong.

Do not expect too much from children too quickly, do not set targets that they cannot achieve or expectations that they cannot meet or you will both be left disappointed. When first working with children or when introducing a new behaviour expectation, it might be useful to explain to children why they need to conform to your expectation. Do not give elaborate explanations why you expect certain behaviours, but if children understand there are simple reasons for your rules then they are more likely to comply. For example, informing children that we have to put the toys away at the end of the day because otherwise we might not be able to find them tomorrow.

It may be useful to plot all the members of your class on a behaviour continuum to ensure all staff members know about any potential difficulties and to identify the best approach to take



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in order to modify or improve behaviour.

Sometimes you will encounter children who demonstrate controlling behaviour, for example they have to be in charge at all times when playing or engaging with others. How do you help them to move away from this need to be in control?

Adults need to plan plenty of daily, short and sharp activities where the child is not in control; they have to follow the lead and instructions of somebody else. To begin with, it will require adult supervision to ensure that the child does not dominate.

Eventually children will begin to get the picture of what acceptable behaviour looks like once they have had behaviour modelled, interventions from an adult each time a child attempts to dominate and praise when they allow others to take the lead. What about pupils who demonstrate characteristics of being a victim? What can you do to support them so that they stop seeing themselves as a victim?

Usually such children are lacking in confidence and self-esteem, so it is important to focus on building this. For such children, think about what it is they are particularly good at, for example are they knowledgeable about a particular subject? When you have identified these strengths, plan opportunities for children to demonstrate these and share their knowledge with their peers. If you are planning such an activity though, ensure that you have created a safe environment in which they will feel comfortable and succeed. At the same time, they will need to learn to develop and apply strategies to deal with more domineering children. These can be modelled to children in the first instance, through role-play, which offers a safe environment to practice being assertive.

When you are faced with a child whose behaviour is proving particularly challenging and hard to manage, an individual plan will be advisable. It will help you identify exactly what the problem is, how to address it and to ensure that all staff employ a consistent approach. The role of early years practitioners, and in particular key workers, is absolutely vital in supporting children to learn how to behave appropriately in school. There

are some obvious considerations that will ensure children have the best chance of developing behaviours that are appropriate to their school lives.

The environment

You must ask yourself:

- Does the curriculum you plan stimulate children's interest?
- Is there enough for them to do?

If your plan for the children is not engaging and does not foster their curiosity, they are less likely to be engaged and will quickly lose interest. This can lead to a decline in behaviour. Given that the majority of very young children do not have the language required to express themselves, we have to ensure that our curriculum allows them to express themselves in other ways for example through movement, mark-making, modelling, story and song.

Do we have enough high quality resources for all the children we serve? Of course children have to learn to take turn and share but many frustrations can be avoided and disputes minimised if we have enough materials for all children to use.

Do we give children enough opportunity for physical exercise? Some children need to be able to go outside and run off their energy before being expected to concentrate for long periods of time on something more technical or challenging. If you know your class well enough, you will know which children this might apply to.

Links with parents

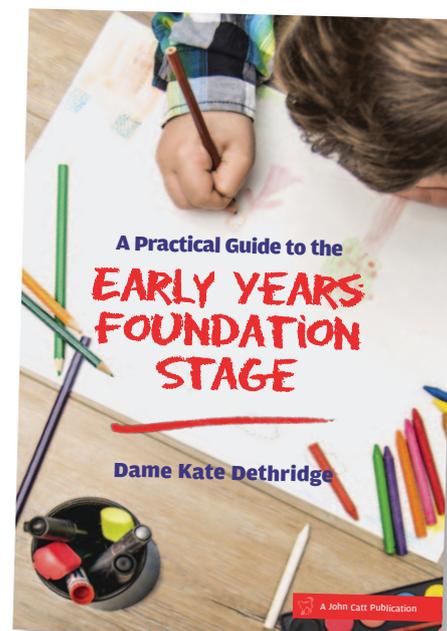
Parents are not always aware that their children may display behaviours that are not acceptable outside their family. It takes very sensitive handling to give parents bad news about their child, particularly as you might be the first adult to say anything negative about their child. Regardless, it is important that parents do know about any potential problems early on so that together you can work to address them. It helps if you ensure the following:

- It is a private matter; never talk to parents about their children within earshot of other parents.
- If you are feeling cross with a child,

make sure you have calmed down before you see the parent. Being emotional or heated will not help anybody.

- Make sure you have notes and evidence that will support what you are saying to parents.
- Sound optimistic, for example 'I'm sure this is just a little blip, however...'
- Try not to just concentrate on the negative, ensure that parents are also told when their children behave well.
- Make sure you record your meeting, with notes about what you said, what the parent said and what you have both agreed to do moving forward.

As a practitioner, if you feel that behaviour management remains an issue, it is worth spending time reflecting on your current practice to check that the adults and setting offer everything possible to ensure children behave well.



A Practical Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage is published by John Catt Educational, £14. Dame Kate Dethridge is Deputy Director RSC for North West London and South Central London.

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HOW THE PARKER E-ACT ACADEMY HAS GONE FROM FAILING TO FLYING



This summer, Daventry's Parker E-ACT Academy pulled in its best ever set of exam results with 55% of its students achieving five grade A*-Cs and its principal Andrew Mackereth is resolute that the academy will become Daventry's next 'Outstanding' school: no small feat for an academy which only two years ago was placed in 'Special Measures'.

Whilst there is still work to be done, Andrew explains how with the support of E-ACT multi academy trust, he has led the transformation of the academy and how its heart and spirit has once again been restored.

"One of our senior house keepers who has worked at the academy for more than 30 years came in to my office on the first day of the autumn term and her words

pretty much sum up why we have been able to make so much progress in such a short space of time. She said, "see I told you it would all come good." Her words stick with me because it's her belief and the belief of every member of staff, every student and of our parents which I believe has helped us to turn things round in such a short space of time."

In 2013, the former struggling William Parker School in Daventry was converted in to an academy and became part of the E-ACT Multi Academy Trust – which manages, maintains and develops 23 academies across the UK and is committed to improving historically under-performing schools in disadvantaged social economic areas.

Andrew said: "When I arrived in June of 2014 the academy had been in 'Special Measures' for six months and things were far from great. It was clear to me that the school and everyone in it needed a complete change of mind set if we were to turn things around. Yes, our results and attainment were well below expectation, but I made the decision not to place my immediate focus on the teaching and attainment within the academy, but instead I reorganised our pastoral structures, introducing a house based system which I was confident would add huge value.

"Much to the surprise of the staff and the students I also invested a lot of energy in to reintroducing sports day – a good old

fashioned house based event filled with welly whanging and egg and spoon races. I was told it wouldn't work, that the students historically would not engage. Whilst I knew I was sticking my neck on the line placing such importance on an event that had typically had little support, I had conviction in my belief so ploughed on with plans. Thankfully it paid off and in one short two hour window we could all see a glimmer of hope which became a turning point.

Sinking ship

"When I joined the academy, a large proportion of the students and indeed the staff only knew the school as a failing one and when you are part of a sinking ship it is hard to see how you will ever get off. I knew we had to change the ethos of the academy – a monumental and unquantifiable task – but one I believe, and Ofsted inspectors have also confirmed, we have achieved.

"I spent time with the students, teachers and parents and affirmed we were going to be different, we were going to be the best we could be. Out with the old and in with the new and some of the attitudes and behaviour which had become common place, such as swearing, could no longer be accepted at The Parker Academy. I wanted to send out a clear message that the academy now had real leadership and together we would make it a place we were all proud to be part of.



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Self-fulfilling prophecy

"I'm a firm believer in self-fulfilling prophecy so we used social media and other communication channels to build a positive image of the academy and repeatedly reminded everyone involved – the general public included – that The Parker Academy was a great place to learn and to be the best you can be.

"It became our mantra and the last round of Ofsted inspectors to visit us highlighted how everyone involved in the academy knows what it stands for and their role in achieving it. In fact you can find inspirational words from staff and students adorned all over the walls; the one that stands out and resonates most is from the student panel who said; *'The school might be in 'Special Measures' but the students are not.'*" Indeed this is true."

Whilst building belief and a sense of feel good was an important part of the academy's recovery, Andrew knows that it goes much further and he spent a great deal of time examining the teaching. However, he did not make busloads of staff changes but rather recruited additional support in subjects such as maths and science where attainment was particularly low, and invested time empowering the existing teachers and instilling confidence in their ability which he believes has liberated their approach.

He said: "We encourage teachers to try new techniques, perhaps we might introduce a 'no hands up day' or recommend a 'no questions lesson' or that they use some of the academy's technology resources to 'flip the classroom'. We have encouraged our

teaching staff to have courage to step out of their comfort zones and work with new resources and techniques.

"Our students were criticised for lacking any sense of responsibility for their own learning and success and were, in the main, happy passive learners. We know that in order to help our students to develop as fully rounded individuals and become the best they can be, ready for the next chapter in their lives, we owe it to them to foster their own independent learning skills."

Whilst Andrew and his team take charge of the day to day running of the academy, The Parker Academy is part of a wider supportive Multi Academy Trust, two thirds of which are rated 'Good' by Ofsted and one 'Outstanding'. As part of the Trust's ongoing commitment to providing every student, regardless of location and background, access to the same opportunities in order to accelerate attainment and raise the bar in education standards.

E-ACT became the first multi academy trust in the UK to subscribe to GCSEPod across its entire secondary estate, providing 9,500 students with access to the award winning content.

"I could immediately see how GCSEPod could work for us and how it would benefit our students and help us to encourage a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning," added Andrew. "We use it in the main as an independent learning tool but I am working closely with the teaching staff – even those who shy away from technology – to encourage them to make it part of everyday learning. Some teachers use it to set assignments whilst others simply gently remind

students to refer to GCSEPod on their phones and mobile devices whenever they have a spare few minutes to recap on things they have learnt in the classroom or to prepare for upcoming topics.

Independent learners

"Without a doubt I think encouraging students to become independent learners and take responsibility for their own success has had a massive impact. We introduced GCSEPod relatively late in the academic year and I was a little anxious that it was perhaps too late to benefit the then Year 11 students. However, with 10,000 downloads within a six month period and our best set of exam results ever, I needn't have worried. And the data shows that there was most certainly a direct correlation between students who engaged in independent learning through the likes of GCSEPod and other resources and the progress they made; all of our students, bar one, who made the greatest progress were high users and I was pleasantly surprised by the wide range of students making good use of it.

"So whilst we still have some way to go, we have come an awful long way in a very short space of time. Becoming the next outstanding school in Daventry no longer seems out of reach for either our staff or students. We are built on strong foundations and all share the same belief that we can be great which I think prepares us fully for the future."

Andrew Mackereth is principal of Daventry's Parker E-ACT Academy

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A school's biomass boiler can now become a reliable financial asset that gives budgetary certainty as well as continuing to provide huge environmental benefits thanks to a unique new income protection cover launched earlier this month.

This unique product is a UK first and has been developed and bought together by insurance brokers, Aston Scott, and the UK's foremost biomass specialists, Myriad CEG. Established since the inception of biomass in 2002, Myriad has installed over 1500 biomass boilers across the UK – their national network of highly skilled specialist engineers often go on to service the majority of these systems.

This RHI scheme and a comprehensive range of tailored service options are

available for existing and new installations for virtually all boiler types including the newer waste wood and poultry litter fuel models. An essential part of the scheme is that an enhanced five star service regime is provided by Myriad Plant Room Services which in itself brings important economic advantages. Paul Clark, Managing Director and a founder of Myriad explains:

“With the enhanced service regime, the fuel consumption and maintenance costs are much lower due to optimised operation so it will often be possible to cover the cost of the RHI cover with the fuel savings created”.

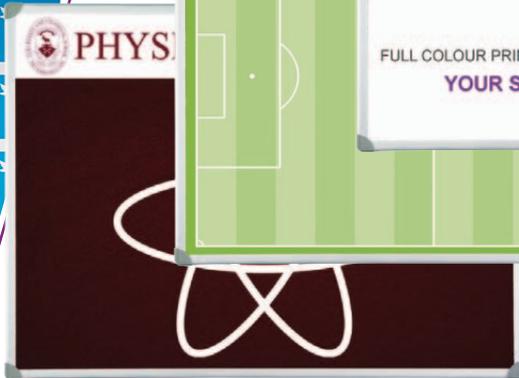
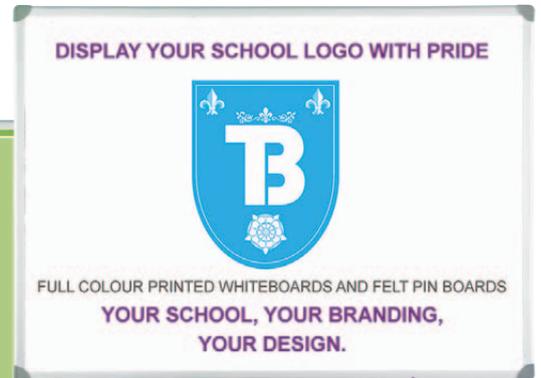
With the complexities of biomass, a growing number of organisations are seeking a ‘one-stop shop’ for all things

biomass and as well as the tailored service plans, the fuel supply can also be included. This is sourced and selected for quality by Myriad from their network of regional suppliers and provided as part of Myriads comprehensive package.

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SCHOOLS AND THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY



The Apprenticeship Levy will be introduced in April 2017, and is a 0.5% payroll tax to fund apprenticeship training, paid by any organisation with a payroll bill of more than £3million per annum. So does this mean that the majority of schools will be unaffected? No, in fact ALL schools will be affected by the Apprenticeship Levy; how they will be affected depends on their size and status.

Size and scale

For those schools who are grant maintained, the Levy will be paid by the

Local Authority, and therefore, as every Local Authority has a payroll bill of over £3m p.a., the Levy will be another tax deduction from the school payroll costs. So there will be a direct financial hit on every school that is grant maintained. Most Local Authorities are starting to plan how they can get some value from the Apprenticeship Levy that they will pay, many will turn to schools, who for many Authorities are a major part of the headcount and payroll.

It's a similar story for Multi Academy Trusts, the majority of whom will have a combined payroll bill of more than £3m

per annum. MATs will be assessed as a single entity for the Levy, and hence even though individual schools may have a payroll below £3m, the overall MAT will be subject to the Apprenticeship Levy and the 0.5% tax deducted. So many MATs are busy planning how they can use the Levy to get maximum value and return in investment.

Small MATs or single Academy Schools (along with Free & Independent Schools) may not pay the Levy if they are below the £3m payroll bill. However, the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy is being accompanied by a new



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Apprenticeship funding model for smaller organisations, such as these schools. Under present funding arrangement most apprenticeship training, regardless of learners age or whether the learner is a new apprentice of staff or existing member of staff, is free of charge for the school. From April 2017 these schools will need to co-invest, or in other words 'pay' for a proportion of the apprenticeship training; this is currently proposed to be a 10% payment; which whilst not a huge contribution; moving from free to any payment will be troublesome for already stretched school budgets.

The only employers who will not have to either pay the Levy or co-invest in Apprenticeship training costs are employers employing a new 16 to 18-year-old apprentice with less than 50 employees. So some small schools, probably rural primary schools may still get free apprenticeship training. There are changes even for these schools however. Under present arrangements these schools can often claim a £1,500 grant from the government; this will be replaced by a £1,000 contribution from April 2017.

Enterprise Bill – a double whammy

There is another piece of legislation that is coming into force in April 2017 called the Enterprise Bill; this a double whammy for many schools. The Enterprise Bill contains new requirements for all public sector employers; including schools of all types, to employ a minimum of 2.3% of apprentices as part of their staffing establishment. The only exceptions will be schools with less than 250 employees; but again for grant maintained and academy groups it is the bigger entity that will be used to assess whether you are in scope, so only independent or academy schools with less than 250 staff will be exempt. Organisations who do not comply with this regulation will be named and shamed and be required to submit a plan to bring their organisation up to the required levels.

So what should schools do?

There are many misconceptions regarding apprenticeships. Long gone are the days when apprenticeships

were solely for young people learning craft trades. Apprenticeships are now increasingly for white collar occupations; increasingly available at higher levels and even to degree and professional status levels: did you know for example you can become a qualified lawyer through an apprenticeship pathway? Indeed, there is work underway for an apprenticeship routeway to become a QTS!

Apprenticeship training is also no longer the sole domain for young people placed into new apprenticeship roles; apprenticeship training is available for existing staff, providing that they are in need of new skills and training. The majority of apprenticeship growth, and the government need 30% growth to hit their manifesto pledge of 3 million apprenticeships, will come from existing staff rather than new, young apprenticeships. There are simply not enough young people to provide for such growth; and for many schools employing 16 to 18-year-olds is not appropriate.

As mentioned earlier there is work underway for an apprenticeship pathway through the QTS, although this is likely to be 2-3 years in development. There is however no shortage of other apprenticeship programmes that school based staff can undertake. The most common is the Supporting Teaching and Learning qualification for Teaching Assistants; with over 4,000 learners per annum being trained in school each year. More specialist frameworks are available in PE (Activity Leadership), Science (Science Technician), IT (ICT Technician) and Library (Librarian). A range of business support apprenticeship programmes are also available; the most popular being Business Administration and Customer Service courses, with Team Leader and HR and Accounting apprenticeships also becoming popular, particularly for new Academies who find skills gaps in these areas when newly formed. Catering, Play-Work and Facilities Management are other apprenticeships that school based staff can undertake.

Most of the programmes currently on offer are at Level 2 and Level 3, however there are some exciting developments of higher level programmes. The

development of a pathway towards QTS will clearly necessitate the introduction of new apprenticeship programmes from Level 4 to Level 7 in teaching; but more and more subject areas are seeing the introduction of higher level qualifications. Business Administration and Facilities Management both now have a Level 4 apprenticeship offer, and many of the new apprenticeship standards being developed are higher level. The most popular higher level apprenticeships are in Leadership and Management; with programmes from Level 3 through to the Chartered Management Apprenticeship Degree. Changes to the funding rules being introduced alongside the Levy in April mean that staff with existing degrees are for the first time eligible to undertake these apprenticeship programmes. This could be a fantastic opportunity for schools; with teaching staff newly promoted into management positions being eligible for apprenticeship training in management.

The way forward

Using apprenticeship training to simply spend the Levy tax, or to hit a government target, is not the way forward. Schools should review their staffing needs; both current and future, and identify areas where apprenticeship training could help improve skills and performance of existing staff; or help succession plan for future requirements. Apprenticeships, when well planned and delivered, can provide an excellent career pathway for staff in schools; identifying and planning successful careers that can benefit the employee and the school; and most importantly in the long term, the pupils!

For more information, contact
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EDUCATION: THE ROCK AND ROLL YEARS

Ageing rocker Les Walton reminisces

1971 – Caretakers

My most memorable caretaker was Jack, whom I met in 1971, when the grammar school in which he worked merged with two secondary modern schools to become a comprehensive school.

Jack, a former pitman, resented the secondary modern staff joining his school. In his view, being the caretaker in the local grammar school was of much higher status than working in a comprehensive school. Before the establishment of the new comprehensive, he was used to morning meetings with the Headmaster in his 'study'. Now he was being invaded by all these secondary modern kids and teachers. Both the kids and the teachers compared unfavourably to Jack's perspective of the grammar school student and teacher, who, in his view, were superior, both academically and socially.

'Remember,' he would say, 'if it wasn't for all these little b%£\$%s, the school would be perfect. Every day they come in and make a mess of my place.'

Jack ran the school with a rod of iron and occasional help from the Head teacher. If a member of staff stayed late to work, he would kick them out. If a football match went into extra time, he would 'declare time'. If the art teacher dared to leave some paint stains, he would have a 'blue fit'. To give Jack his due, the school was immaculate. It would have been even more perfect, if all children had been banned.

One day, I was being interviewed for a post in another school. When I returned to school, I was in a pretty good mood, even pleased to see Jack standing by the school gate. Behind the school was what appeared to be a beautiful red sky. "Jack," I said, "have you seen the lovely sunset?" pointing to the red glow surrounding the school. "That's not a sunset," shouted Jack. "The \$!*@ing school's on fire." Just at that point a fire engine came rushing up the road, siren screaming.

Over the years, I have worked with a number of caretakers and building managers.

Bill was the caretaker during my first headship. His speciality was only cleaning up to 11 feet from the floor. The school was beginning to look like it was covered in two different coats of paint. This complied with union guidelines. One classic quote from a colleague at the time was that if Bill refused to clean above 11 feet, I would have to take 'steps' to sort it.

Alan was the building manager, when I was a Principal of an FE College. He would issue weekly email bulletins, saying things like: "I am notifying staff that they cannot enter the staff room this morning, as I have taken off the door." I knew what he meant.

Too often we don't value those who clean our buildings and ensure the basic services work well. One day, I was leading a conference in a Durham Hotel and was wandering around the hotel looking for the reception. I asked a cleaner, who

pointed me in the right direction. I then noticed a sign for the reception, which pointed the opposite way. The cleaner pointed out that it had been wrong for months. "Nobody asks us for our opinion, so we just let the problem continue."

Good school leaders listen to all their staff, not just the teachers.

Very early in my career a very flustered Headteacher asked me to go to his office. When I arrived, the archbishop of Santiago, Chile, was standing dressed in full regalia. He introduced himself as Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez. I then took the cardinal on a tour of the school, introducing him to all the staff, including the school cook. Doris bent forward and kissed his large gold stone-set ecclesiastical ring. Just afterwards, Doris took me aside and whispered that the ring was on the wrong hand. When we quizzed him a little more, he eventually admitted he was a waiter from Hexham.

Konosuke Matsushita, the one-time Head of Matsushita Electric, once commented that organisations' continued existence "depends on the day-to-day mobilisation of every ounce of intelligence." That intelligence must involve all staff, including the school cook!



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Did you know?

Only 50% of young people feel they have enough knowledge to manage their personal finance with 60% of them admitting to worrying about their personal finances.

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