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Volume 7 Number 1 Autumn 2017

A*cademy magazine

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NICKY MORGAN ON CHARACTER
AND GOVERNANCE WITH**

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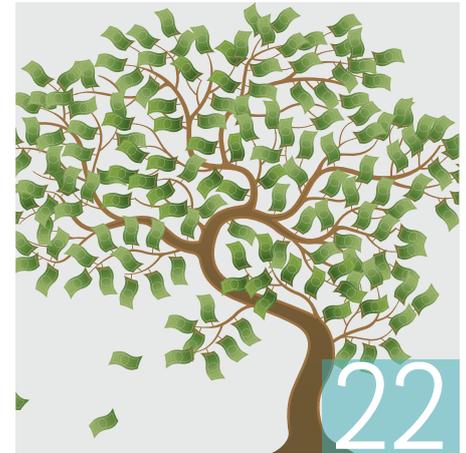
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CHARACTER AND KNOWLEDGE ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Previewing her new book *Taught Not Caught*, Nicky Morgan tells us why she continues to push for the recognition of character development as a crucial part of education

The English education system is only doing half the job it needs to do to prepare our children for the 21st century. In a world where many of the jobs of tomorrow haven't even been invented, where technology is changing our world increasingly rapidly and where people are likely to dip in and out of self-employment employers are putting an ever greater premium on character traits such as resilience, persistence, grit, leadership, self-awareness and self-efficacy.

But this isn't just about our working lives. These traits stand all of us in great stead for an ever-more complicated life and as schools shape our society the more people who have these traits the stronger and more values-driven our society will be.

And yet it is still too hit and miss as to whether our schools actively develop these traits. What is character? How do people develop their character? What do they have to do or experience to build those traits? Can these traits be taught? I firmly believe the answer is yes and this book explains why and how.

Why is it the case that only some of our schools, often in the independent sector, develop strong character traits whilst

also managing to combine this with an excellent academic and rigorous education? A truly one-nation government must not accept that only some people deserve the opportunities to build character that will help them to get on in life.

If we don't provide all children with those opportunities to build character (often supported through extra-curricular activities) then however many SATs tests and GCSEs our state-educated pupils pass they will still be at a disadvantage. That is not only unfair to them but also detrimental to the future success of our country.

How do we stand a chance of healing the divisions in our country if our education system isn't preparing the next generation for the challenges of the world we live in rather than be threatened or left behind by them?

Privilege

I've had the privilege of holding one of the best jobs in the UK cabinet. As Education Secretary I visited many schools and could see those schools where the Headteacher and all the staff were building not just knowledgeable young people but also engaged and confident pupils. Where they were helping them to

develop values which would set them up for life, to be aware of their community, to identify their passions in life and to help them to flourish. And I could see those schools which professed to do these things but didn't, those which told me they simply didn't have the time due to the demands of the curriculum and their governors or parents and those which told me they didn't need to bother with all this "soft skills stuff" and that an academic curriculum was their only goal.

Success and stability

A rich education full of character development is not an alternative to an academic knowledge-rich education. They are two sides of the same coin and both are necessary to prepare our young people for success and stability in the 21st century.

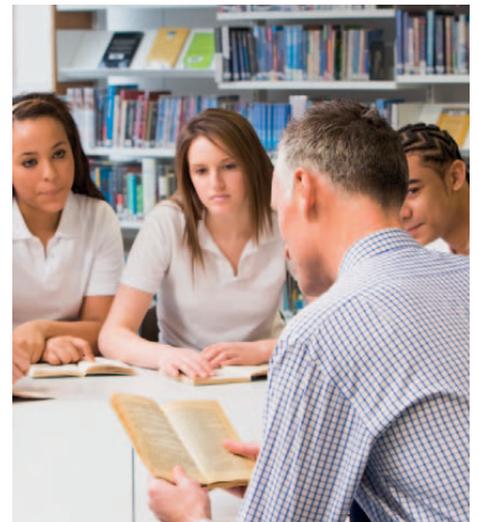
Character can be defined as "the distinguishing qualities of a person, a person's moral qualities, moral strength." An alternative, which many schools already do, is to focus on the values which make up a person's character. A value has been defined as "... a principle that guides our thinking and behaviour" and "Values help to determine the formation of our character". Others have said that



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character is about what you do or who you are when nobody is watching.

Unexpected

The point is to set young people up with the key traits they can call on when things don't work out and they are faced with the unexpected. I've had my own taste of needing to demonstrate be resilient in the past year. All politicians know that their careers are likely to end in failure – or, at least, to leave office at a time not necessarily of their choosing. But my ministerial career fell apart a bit earlier than I'd expected. There is nothing so "ex" as an "ex-minister". Continuing to be an MP is a hugely satisfying as well as challenging part of most ex-minister's lives but as with any major life change it takes time to adjust and to find the next goal in life.

If schools shape society then the person who shapes a school and is key to making sure children within them flourish is the Headteacher. Without their leadership, support and drive then attempts to build character-ful children will fail. But they also need the support and buy-in of their staff and families. The book therefore also looks at the influence of adult role models – deliberate and accidental.

Resilience

Building character-ful children is also a way of increasing mental wellbeing and resilience. That isn't to say that a focus on character will stop some young people developing mental ill health. Sadly there will always be those who need professional support to help them to overcome their mental ill-health. But I do believe that growing up today is more complicated than it has ever been. Rapid technological change, longer and more demanding working lives for parents and grandparents, the daily deluge of information, the competitiveness and relentlessness of 21st century life make mental resilience even more important.

I also look at whether building character-ful children has a positive impact on academic attainment and ask should character be assessed or would that provide the wrong incentive? The importance of extra-curricular activities is also examined – including the fact that the availability and take up of those activities is, in itself a victim of social injustice. And what are employers saying about the need for the non-cognitive skills which character education develops?

Taught Not Caught

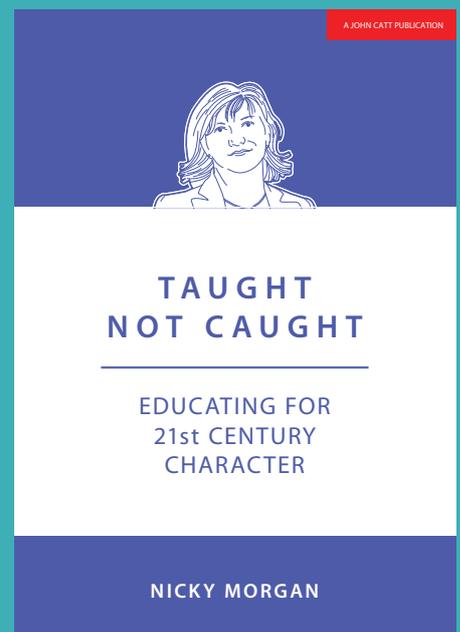
In writing my book, *Taught Not Caught*, I've had the privilege of visiting some of the schools who won Department for Education character awards. Hearing their stories, looking at the work they've done to promote character education and identify the values they want to embed in their schools and seeing how positive they are about this area of their school life has confirmed to me that focusing on character sits alongside gaining knowledge. In fact, the former helps the latter. The generosity of the schools enables me to capture key examples and bring character education to life.

Change in education doesn't happen by accident. It needs a deliberate push. Public awareness needs to be raised, government needs to make it clear to those in the education system that this is a priority and they will support it and, most importantly, the frontline namely schools, heads, teachers, governors and communities need to be enabled to create the conditions to allow systemic change to happen, to take hold and to grow

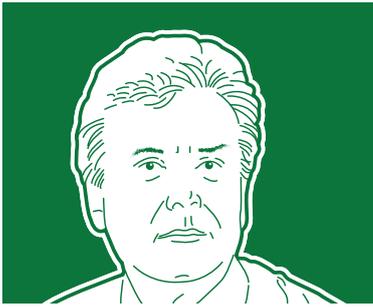
Education is the greatest investment we can make in the future of our country. And the greatest investment the education system can make in our pupils is to ensure they gain both knowledge and character.

In *Taught Not Caught*, Nicky Morgan reveals why she believes that building characterful children has a positive impact on academic attainment. Change in education doesn't happen by accident. It needs a deliberate push. Public awareness needs to be raised, government needs to make it clear to those in the education system that this is a priority and they will support it and, most importantly, the frontline namely schools, heads, teachers, governors and communities need to be enabled to create the conditions to allow systemic change to happen, to take hold and to grow.

Taught Not Caught: Educating for 21st Century Character,
by Nicky Morgan
Published by John Catt Educational, £12



PRODUCTIVITY, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND BREXIT: EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE



Neil Carmichael, former chair of the Education Select Committee, writes on the challenges of adapting our education system to cope with the changes of a post-Brexit economy

Whatever the final outcomes from Brexit, the referendum outcome itself and the negotiation processes now underway have helped to put the spotlight on two stubborn and significant problems in the United Kingdom.

The first is economic productivity – basically the comparative measure of the efficiency between outputs and inputs; the United Kingdom trails behind key competitors such as the United States, Germany and France by 29%, 28% and 19% respectively (OECD figures). Where open trade is dominant, poor productivity levels result in a lack of competitiveness when exporting. Productivity also has a bearing on overall gross domestic product because resources – notably people – are not performing at optimum efficiency. The consequences can be stark; the value of Germany’s export performance to China is some three times more than that of the United Kingdom.

The second problem is social mobility or, rather, the lack of it. Parts of the United Kingdom contain communities where families and individuals are, quite literally, trapped in circumstances where life fulfilment is restricted through a lack of economic opportunity and little or no sense of ambition. These characteristics can be

seen spatially, socially and culturally. In terms of education, the much-quoted Ofsted theme of the longtail of underachievement gives texture and meaning to the causes of social immobility. The damage to the economy and, crucially, society is all about the costs of, effectively, warehousing much needed human resources. The Social Mobility Commission’s recent report “Time for change: an assessment of government policies on social mobility 1997-2017” notes slow progress in narrowing achievement gaps and highlights need for further reform of the education system.

Productivity and social mobility are linked together and also integral to necessary reforms as Brexit takes effect. The key is education, and how it is reshaped and resourced to prepare the United Kingdom for the challenges and opportunities outside the European Union. The experiences of Finland and South Korea provide some clues for a way forward. Both countries emerged from terrible and destructive conflicts; Finland was severely battered by the Second World War and South Korea was created through partition after the torturous Korean War. Furthermore, neither country enjoyed plentiful and valuable raw materials but both understood the potential of having a

well-educated workforce. Today, these two countries score impressively in international comparisons, and also demonstrate some agility and modernity as they address changing economic circumstances.

No education system can be easily replicated – there are far too many powerful and sometimes indefinable influences on policy making and delivery systems to make that possible but the fundamental requirement is to put education front and centre of national policy as the Fins and South Koreans did five decades ago. This has obvious resource implications but it is also about political leadership because big rational choices have to be made as opposed to the incremental ‘step by step’ approach so often adopted by governments of all political complexions.

To begin to tackle productivity and social mobility, wellbeing in the classroom, recruitment and retention of top quality teachers, and choice across the curriculum are all areas in need of modernisation and reform.

Recent years have seen significant steps forward in promoting wellbeing in the classroom but also in investing early years. This has been further boosted through the increased focus on young people’s mental health and



the evidence pointing to the need for more integration between healthcare and education. Campaigns for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) have been high profile and increasing successful in placing wellbeing near the top of the Department of Education's agenda. This progress is aligned with the interest in 'life skills' – particularly from the business community – as the 'employability' of young people has increasingly become a concern.

The ultimate aim must be to ensure all young people are equipped with the life skills necessary to be able to fulfil their lives. The next stage in policy development is to embed wellbeing across the education system by creating the space for it and, crucially, demonstrating its value by measuring destinations during a young person's journey through the education system and beyond. This, in turn, means less emphasis on league tables derived from testing and qualifications.

Teacher recruitment and retention

remain contested issues. As the Education Select Committee recently noted, a number of subjects, including maths, physics, and design and technology, fall short of recruitment targets and retention trends of newly qualified teachers are not encouraging. Some Multi-Academy Trusts are leading the way in deploying the best teachers most effectively and there is evidence of formalised subject leadership having a positive impact on teacher satisfaction. The case for a College of Teaching is strong and is part of a wider theme to boost the teaching profession in terms of recognition and autonomy. Developing policies to further underpin the profession's sense of value remains important.

Finally, with such focus on skills and training, there must be a more easily navigable set of choices for young people as they progress from primary school. Obviously, such choices must be informed through work experience and effective career guidance but, like the

system in Finland, there should be 'no dead end' meaning a properly calibrated balance between academic and technical skills can be achieved. Bold thinking in education is required as the world of work becomes even more complex but the twin prizes of dramatically increasing productivity and social mobility will not be grasped if radical and rational action is eschewed.

Neil Carmichael earned cross-party plaudits and deep respect for his work as chair of the Education Select committee from 2015-2017. He was MP for Stroud Valleys and Vale from 2010 - 2017 and has since been appointed Honorary Professor of Social Science (Education and Politics) at the University of Nottingham



THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS THAT EDUCATION MUSTN'T FORGET

Tom Ravenscroft, founder of Enabling Enterprises, tells of the 'missing piece' in education - the skills and attributes that pupils need to thrive in the 21st Century

I will always remember the headline from an early term as a teacher: 'schools are churning out the unemployable'.

It would have been just another one of those headlines – another jibe at the hard-working, committed teachers around me. We would have rolled our eyes at it in the staffroom, muttered about how the journalist could never understand the day-to-day realities of an inner-city comprehensive and then moved on. Except something in it resonated with me.

As a newly qualified teacher and unhelpfully fresh-faced with it, I was not short of classroom challenges – behaviour, assessment for learning, turning the business studies curriculum into something engaging and accessible. But throughout it all there was a growing sense of dissonance.

This dissonance was the gap between my focus on the coursework and predicted grades of my students, and the skills and attributes that I knew those 15- and 16-year-olds would need in the wider world.

The gap

I first became conscious of the gap back in 2008. In the midst of the financial crisis, the wider world was looking an increasingly unwelcoming and

inhospitable place for the young people in my classroom. Youth unemployment would top one million before the crisis receded again.

The underlying problem was long-lasting. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) – representing British business – had long argued that there was a need for young people to build employability skills like teamwork, communication and self-management. In 2016, the CBI's annual survey of employers highlighted that 50% were concerned about school leavers' communication skills and problem-solving skills, and 48% were underwhelmed by their ability to self-manage.

We can debate the extent to which preparation for employment is the principle goal of schools – but it surely must be part of preparing students for their futures.

However, what makes the gap much more compelling is that under the guise of 'study skills' a very similar set of skills are called for by universities and colleges. For example, the University of Cambridge highlights the 'intellectual skills' of analysis and problem-solving, communication skills, interpersonal skills and organisational skills.

Organisations that support entrepreneurs also call for a similar set

of skills, like the ability to persuade, leadership, vision, forward-planning and risk management.

When we break down the silos that these groups of skills have been traditionally placed into, we find that much of the difference is artificial. There is a set of skills which are universally important for education, enterprise and employment. We can call them the Essential Skills.

The Essential Skills

My experience in the classroom led me to set up a not-for-profit organisation called Enabling Enterprise to find effective, rigorous ways to build those skills. In the past year alone, we've worked with over 85,000 students across nearly 300 schools in partnership with over 130 employers.

We work on eight essential skills, which we sometimes refer to as enterprise skills:

Listening and Presenting as the two parts of effective communication.

Teamwork and Leadership as the two sides of interpersonal skills.

Creativity and Problem-Solving to help create and manage new ideas.

Aiming High and Staying Positive as the two dimensions of setting clear goals and plans, and then having the strategies to stick at achieving them.



These skills are distinctly different from knowledge and character which make up the other two parts of the trio of what a great education should develop.

Instead, we have focused in our work on breaking down each of these skills into their teachable chunks. For example, for our youngest students of 4- or 5-years-old, we might be focused on helping them take it in turns. Whereas we want our 14- and 15-year-olds to be able to spot when they might be getting into an argument and take steps to avoid it. Under problem-solving we want our oldest students to understand inductive and deductive logic, decision trees and scoring and weighting outcomes to reach decisions.

How to build them

Our work has shown clearly that it is possible for almost every child and young person to secure the competence in these essential skills. These then underpin effective learning in the classroom, and success in the rest of their lives. It doesn't require tearing up the curriculum, undermining knowledge acquisition or seeing the entirety of schooling through the lens of these skills.

Instead, the schools who are really excelling at building these skills alongside knowledge and character are consistently following six principles:

They are using a simple and consistent set of language, and are disciplined about retaining a focus on these teachable skills, rather than confusing them with broader

attributes like confidence or resilience.

They are starting young, with children as young as 3-years-old and continuing to build these skills until their young people leave school at 18.

They are focusing on measuring where students are and the progress they are making, often using the free skills assessment tools at skillsbuilder.org

They are making dedicated time available to just focus on the skill. This doesn't have to be a lot of time but it has to be just about building the skills, often through direct instruction and deliberate practice.

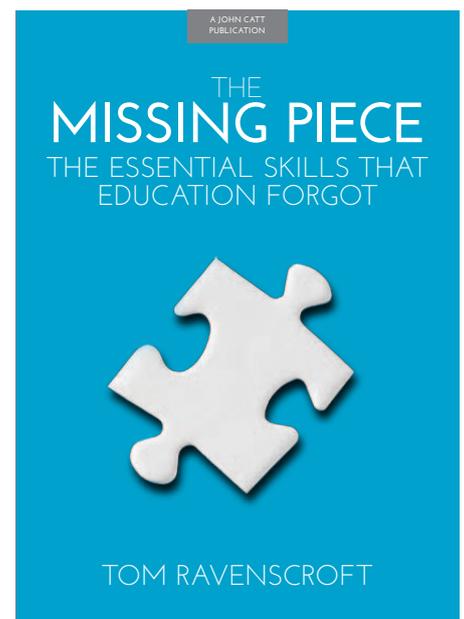
They reinforce those skills consistently – by referring to them at appropriate points in other teaching, and ensuring students join up the times when they practice the skill.

They bring the skills to life, through taking the students out into the real world with trips to employers, and bringing the real world into the classroom through projects. This helps to secure their transferability.

Reasons for optimism

Through the work of Enabling Enterprise and our growing group of partners, we have seen that these skills can be a core enabler of our children and young people. By making them a central part of learning, alongside knowledge and character, we fill a missing piece in what our students need – and in turn set them up to learn better in school, and to succeed in university, employment or

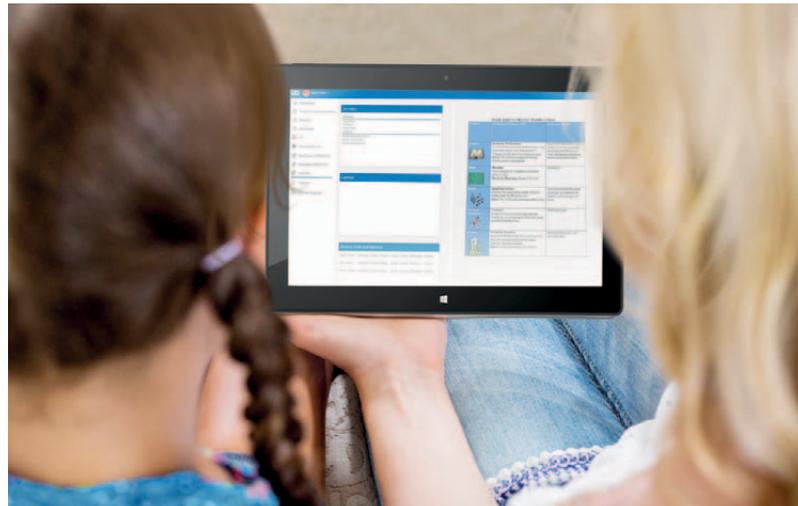
entrepreneurship thereafter. Which is why I became a teacher in the first place.



The Missing Piece by Tom Ravenscroft is published by John Catt Educational.

A wake-up call to all those who work with young people, calling for an explicit focus to develop the non-academic skills that will be essential to thrive in the 21st Century

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Education isn't just a teacher's job and learning doesn't just happen at school, it's a partnership between home and school. Parents can influence their child's attainment, playing an active role in their child's education can contribute to their overall achievement and behaviour.

While it's important for schools to arrange regular opportunities for parents to meet with teachers or see pupils' work, it's not always possible for this to happen as often as some parents may want. Therefore, having an online space in which data can be shared, means this doesn't weaken the relationships between parent, teacher and the school.

In EdTech we've seen a concerted effort to provide schools with technology options that can support home / school communication and the sharing of information. Sharing summative data has been a major focus of most of these kinds of services. Others have provided ways of sending messages and letters electronically to overcome the 'bottom of the book bag' scenario.

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RESEARCH ON, IN AND AS TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Teachers are engaging more than ever with research and evidence-based practices, says Cat Scutt of the Chartered College

The idea that teaching should be an evidence-informed profession is becoming increasingly widespread.

From ResearchEd to #UKEdResChat, via Research Schools and the EEF, more and more teachers are engaging with research evidence.

The new Chartered College of Teaching, too, has a focus on helping teaching and teachers to be more evidence-informed, developing the profession's autonomy and status. But what does this have to do with teachers' classroom practice, and with students' learning? Is being research-informed simply another trend in a profession that sees so many of them?

Somewhat ironically, the evidence that teachers being research-engaged has impact on student outcomes is as yet limited, largely only identifying correlation, rather than causation (Brown and Greany, 2017); more work is needed in this area. Nevertheless, the idea that it is positive for teachers to make use of the findings from rigorous educational research in their classroom is certainly compelling; Ben Goldacre, of Bad Science fame, argued the case in 2013 by drawing on (somewhat contested) comparisons with the medical profession, where evidence-based practice is the norm, but the wide buy-in to the proposition at all levels is clear in the growth of interest in 'evidence-informed education'.

Of course, there is criticism too of the notion. Much relates to what we actually mean by teaching being 'evidence-informed', or 'evidence-based' – the terminology itself is divisive – and whether this suggests a devaluing of professional judgment; or to the issues raised by Dylan Wiliam (2015) around the extent to which 'what works' is meaningful in education.

It is critical, therefore, that context is recognised and the relationship between teacher expertise and research evidence valued, and that research engagement is considered within the wider sphere of teacher professional development.

1) Research on teacher professional development

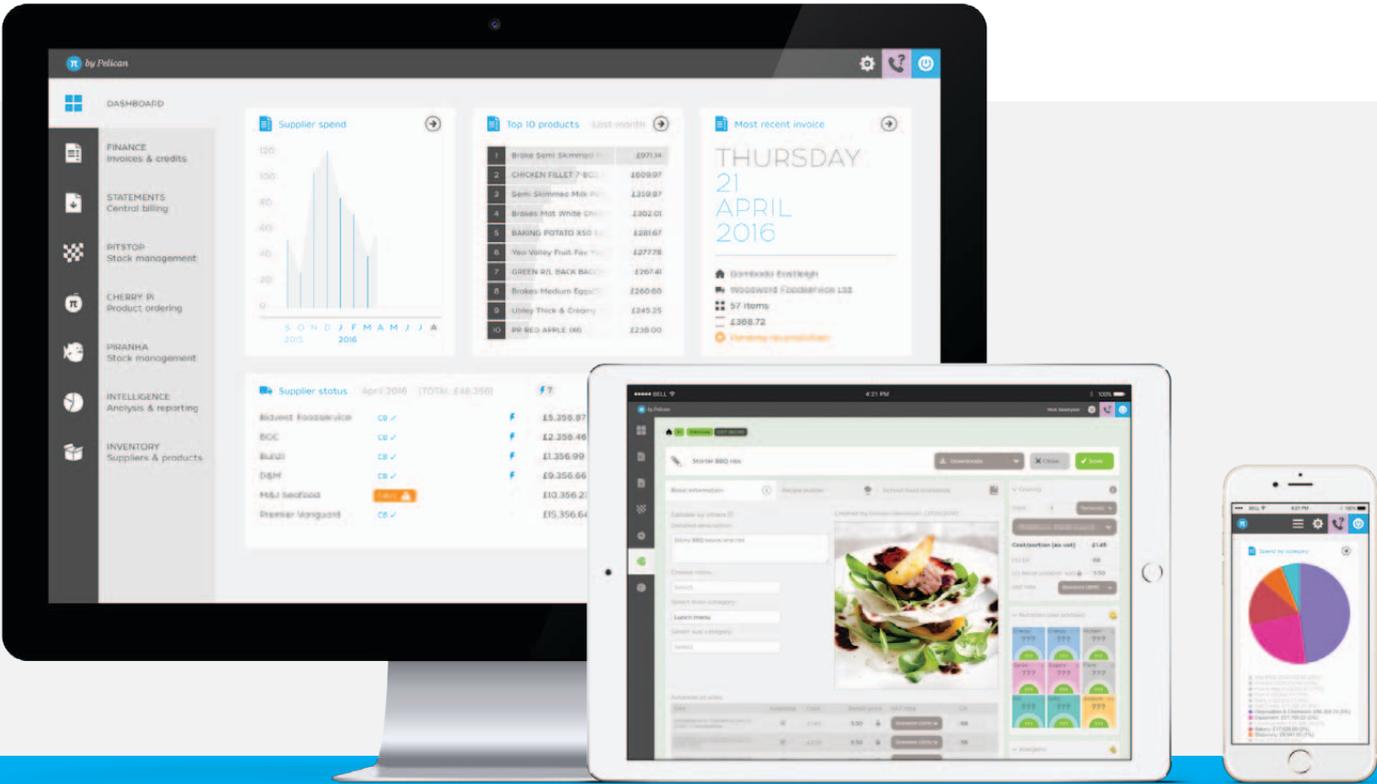
Looking at the research on what works in professional development is perhaps an obvious place to start. Whilst the classic INSET day has long been a part of the rhythm of the school year, there are significant challenges in providing professional development opportunities that actually have an impact on teacher practice, let alone student outcomes. Approaches to professional development need to be rethought if we wish to see practice change as a result – which is itself of course not entirely without debate, there being an argument that increasing teachers' confidence in their existing practice could be a valid outcome, as well as for professional development as a

recruitment and retention activity.

In considering how to effectively develop teachers, a useful starting point is the research that has been undertaken into development programmes for teachers in the UK and internationally. Reviews of research such as that on developing great teaching (Higgins et al, 2015) and on teacher professional learning and development (Timperley et al, 2007) articulate the need for programmes to be sustained, collaborative, subject-specific and practice-based.

Critically, though, there is also the need for a whole-school culture that supports and enables development. This applies equally to the idea of evidence-engagement. If schools expect staff to engage with and act upon research and evidence, this needs to be modelled at a whole-school level: concepts introduced in CPD sessions should be informed by research and evidence, as should new schemes and products purchased. Responsibility to examine evidence for effectiveness falls not just at the door of schools, but also with the providers of commercial products and services. The IEE's 'Evidence 4 Impact' database provides a useful starting point, but the reality is that there is a lack of research into the effectiveness of many appealing interventions – due in part to the time and expertise it takes to robustly pilot and evaluate them.

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2) Research in teacher professional development

Reading, interpreting and, where appropriate, acting upon research evidence is also growing in popularity as a form of professional development. Some schools are now running teacher journal or book clubs, while individual teachers are accessing either pieces of original research or summaries. In combination with professional judgment and dialogue, this has the potential to be extremely powerful.

However, the challenges here are myriad. Paywalls have long been cited as an issue for teachers wishing to access research, but in reality this is only part of the problem. Chartered College membership provides access to a huge database of research, but significant challenges lie in teachers having the time and knowledge-base to read, interpret and critique research. The field is vast, and the quality and relevance of papers published is inevitably variable; an expectation that busy teachers will not only read lengthy academic papers, but also develop the research literacy required to make judgments on and use of these papers is problematic. Organisations like the EEF provide useful aggregations of research, whilst the IEE's 'Best Evidence in Brief' newsletter provides valuable summaries of new research; approaches such as these are a helpful way in for many teachers, although it is important to be aware of the loss of detail and nuance in

an aggregation or summary.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in engaging with research is knowing what to do based on what you have read; changing practice is difficult, and it is important to come back to the features of effective professional development here. Teacher journal clubs take the approach of encouraging staff to discuss findings from education research and identify implications for their practice, then commit to trying something based on this. Having a 'research lead' responsible for connecting colleagues to research is also rising in popularity – these can both identify and summarise research for their colleagues, and contextualise and connect it to local practice.

3) Research as teacher professional development

The final – and perhaps most intensive – way in which teachers and schools can use research within professional development is by providing opportunities for teachers to carry out their own 'action research' or 'inquiry' projects. The idea of teachers as researchers is not without difficulties: from the inevitable problem of workload and expectation, via ethical issues, to the question of whether teachers have the skills to effectively carry out and evaluate research. It is, perhaps, a question of degrees – at the simplest level, 'research' as a process of 'identifying an idea that seems likely to work, trying it in the classroom, and evaluating whether it did

work' seems simply to articulate the cycle that many teachers go through on a daily basis.

Increased rigour in this cycle could involve engagement with research and evidence to inform the new approaches trialled, a strengthened approach to identifying, baselining and evaluating goals, and a more structured expectation of sharing findings to help inform colleagues' practice. If we come back to the research around effective professional development, it is easy to see how engaging in a cycle of research or inquiry can support professional learning: models such as 'lesson study' or engagement in a research learning community provide a collaborative, practice-based approach that is by necessity sustained over a period of time.

Again, further research is needed into the impact of engaging in research on student outcomes, but studies including that by DeLuca and colleagues (2017) seem promising in terms of teachers' perceptions of engaging in collaborative inquiry leading to increased teacher reflection, discussion and confidence, greater focus on professional learning, and indeed, of improved student learning. The challenge, though, lies in teachers having the skills to design and carry out rigorous research, and schools wishing to support these kinds of projects will need to be aware of the time and support that will be required for them to be an effective part of teachers' professional development.

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TALKING HEADS: SCHOOL LEADERS' VIEWS ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

London head teachers are grappling with a funding crisis that will damage the quality of education schools can provide, writes Cllr Peter John OBE, Deputy Chair of London Councils and Executive member with responsibility for schools

School funding has been a topic of much debate for some time now. Justine Greening's recent promise of an extra £1.3 billion for the schools budget is welcome but without further detail there are concerns that this funding will not be sufficient to protect all school budgets from increasing cost pressures.

At London Councils, the membership organisation that represents all 33 London local authorities, we have been leading a campaign calling for more funding for all schools across the country – whether they are local authority maintained, standalone, or sit within a multi academy trust. We are also determined that schools outside London and those in the capital are all fully funded on the basis of need.

This is because investing in high educational standards has never been more important in order to prepare young people for future challenges and opportunities, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding the impact of Brexit on our jobs market. Yet all schools are facing a range of additional cost pressures including pupil population growth and increases to national insurance and pension contributions.

To inform our campaign, we wanted to find out how school funding policy was

playing out on the ground. What plans are headteachers making for their schools' and students' future? What are their fears? How are school pupils actually being impacted by funding cuts?

Research

With this in mind, London Councils commissioned a piece of research to understand the views of headteachers on a number of key issues, with school funding very much at the forefront. We had good take up from school leaders across the country, including amongst academy heads, with responses received from 88 academies within multi-academy trusts and 101 standalone academies, as well as 474 local authority maintained schools. While the results revealed a handful of minor differences between the approaches of headteachers in academies and maintained schools, the similarities were far more striking, highlighting the many common issues facing the education system and the importance of schools working beyond structures to tackle them.

One of the key messages that emerged from the research was that budget cuts are by no means a new phenomenon for schools. 66% of schools surveyed had

experienced a decrease in their school's budget in the last 3 years, with 45% highlighting a reduction of more than 3%.

These cuts have impacted on a whole range of different budgets. Unsurprisingly, headteachers across the country have been prioritising the areas that are least likely to affect children's outcomes, with ICT and building maintenance the first budgets to be squeezed. A headteacher from a secondary academy described their school's approach to building maintenance as 'making do and mending', saying, 'I just worry that at some point the IT or physical infrastructure of the place will fall over'.

Cutting down

Lots of schools have not been able to avoid cutting down on support staff and teaching assistants. A secondary academy head described their concerns about finding cover if a teacher is off sick, now that support staff had been cut 'right down to the bone'. Another told us about their school's new strategy to make all teaching assistants redundant and adding hours to teachers' calendars to make up the time.

The research paints an even bleaker picture of the future challenges. While



academy heads feel slightly more prepared than maintained schools to deal with future budgets, this difference disappears when we look at the impact the cuts are going to have on schools. Headteachers are planning on narrowing curriculums, with subjects such as Physical Education, Languages and Art increasingly being reduced. Many heads admitted that the funding gap will need to be plugged increasingly by cuts to teaching staff, with 65% of secondary schools planning to reduce the number of teachers in their schools. One headteacher from a maintained primary school told us that the only options left were 'to just absolutely slash the number of adults or shut the school'.

Strategies

To cope with the impact of the staff redundancies that have been made, headteachers have developed strategies including reducing teachers' planning time so they can take on additional teaching hours, decreasing the amount of time students spend in class, and using unqualified teachers to cover lessons.

So it should come as no surprise that headteachers believe that changes to their budgets will affect children's learning. 70% are expecting pupils' outcomes to be directly impacted by the cuts, with one headteacher saying, 'I cannot see any way other than that teaching and learning is going to suffer'. This concern is particularly acute for pupils with additional needs who rely on dedicated

staff for support that is vital for their learning.

It is extremely concerning that the burden of the cuts is falling not only on students but increasingly on teachers themselves. Headteachers told us that recruiting every type of teacher, including NQTs, classroom teachers, subject leaders and senior leaders, has become more difficult in the last five years. Retention is also becoming increasingly problematic – a trend that is unlikely to change given the implications that funding cuts are already having on teachers' workloads and responsibilities.

Impartial advisor

Finally, we interviewed headteachers about their perspectives on the role of the local authority in schools. Headteachers from across the spectrum saw a key role for councils as an impartial advisor and facilitator of networks across all school types. They also highlighted the local and specialist knowledge that local authorities can bring to bear in areas such as social care, safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities. As one London academy head put it, "Schools aren't just about maths and English, and communities aren't just about children come to school and they go home. We're community leaders and it's really important that we work together to protect children from all the things which living in a big global city bring about."

Headteachers see a clear role for local authorities, and councils want to be part

of the local strategic leadership of schools. A clear message emerges that, whether we work for standalone academies, MATs, Regional School Commissioners or councils, we need to work together to drive up performance and tackle the challenges facing the sector collectively. Hearing from headteachers in London and across the country has provided a strong evidence base for London Councils' continued work with schools to drive improvements across the education system.

London Councils represents London's 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all of its member authorities regardless of political persuasion.

To gather data for this report, The Education Company and TES broadcast an online survey to schools across the UK in January and February 2017. Responses were received from 399 school leaders in London, with 32 London boroughs being represented. 264 responses were received from the rest of England. In-depth follow-up interviews were then conducted with 48 London head teachers from a broad range of London schools by Shift Learning.

SETTING CHALLENGING YET ACHIEVABLE GCSE TARGET GRADES TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Wayne Perry, Data Manager and SLE, Arthur Terry School, on the challenges of developing a data system across an entire MAT



At the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, we have worked hard to create a data system that works for all stakeholders, most notably, parents. During the initial design of this system, we started with what seemed to us to be the most logical place – student outcomes. We need to ask ourselves, what does good progress look like for each student? If each school within our MAT is using the same robust target-setting system, then we can answer this question with relative ease across all of our schools.

Defining “good” progress: The traditional school approach

Deciding what “good” progress looks like for a student can be a tricky process. Many schools across the country have adopted a mechanical approach, whereby they input each students’ Key Stage 2 results into a system. This system then compares these results against the national data set to see how students with

the same Key Stage 2 results achieved at Key Stage 4 in previous years. It then generates a target grade for each student; using this grade, students, teachers and parents all know what grade the student is aiming for in each subject. The school can then track each students’ progress against these targets, and make sure each student remains on track throughout their school life.

The attraction of this system is in its simplicity. There is a starting point and an end point, every stakeholder knows what the student is expected to achieve, and any relative under-achievement or over-achievement can be identified against this grade.

However, as school practitioners, we know that defining “good” progress is rarely this simple. This type of system faces three main barriers:

1. Teachers rarely respond well to having target grades imposed upon them; having target grades generated by a system without any input from the teacher or student is can often be met with some resistance.

2. The target grade generated by the system does not take into account the full picture. We know that Key Stage 2 results are not the only factor that affects student progress. It can be very demotivating for a student to constantly hear that they are underachieving in their subjects, and can result in the student disengaging with their studies – the exact opposite of the motivating effects that an effective target setting process is supposed to achieve.

3. The target might equally be too low for the student. Target grades effectively inform the teacher where any intervention is required. If a student is comfortably meeting their target grade, the teacher may decide to concentrate their efforts on students that are below target. It is possible that students who have the potential to reach higher grades, regardless of their Key Stage 2 results, are neglected in favour of students whose target grades might too high.

The ATLP approach

To overcome these barriers, it seems obvious to conclude that there must be some element of human input when it comes to setting targets. At the ATLP, we make sure that this input comes from the teacher. School leaders can often react with a touch of terror to this idea. If we allow teachers to dictate student target grades, won’t they just set them as low as possible in an effort to make their job easier?

While we do need to trust in teachers’ professionalism, the above scenario is very possible, even if some teachers might only be doing this at a subconscious level. This is where we use our target-setting system to give boundaries as to how much the targets can be changed. To do this, we make use of data provided by the Fischer Family Trust (FFT), a charity involved in providing schools with robust estimates of student performance. FFT look at the Key Stage 2 results, sex and month of birth of each student to estimate their future

performance. We use this data as the foundation of our target-setting system.

Using FFT data, we provide teachers with a “profile” of the students within their subject and the results similar students achieved nationally in those schools that are making progress at the rate of which we are aiming for as a MAT. As a practical example, this could mean saying to a History teacher:

“If your class performs in line with schools that make a good amount of progress, they would achieve 15% A*-A grades, 38% A*-B grades and 64% A*-C grades.”

We then allow the teacher to adjust the targets of the students in their class, as long as the targets are at least in line with the class profile provided to them. The teacher can use their knowledge of the student’s assessment results, aspirations and other factors to arrive at a target grade that is challenging yet achievable. This avoids the scenario where the teacher sets low target grades for the class as they must stay within the boundaries set.

We must also put other caveats in place to make sure this process is effective. For example, how do we know that the teacher

has not only made sure they have targeted the class to make good progress overall, but also different groups of students, such as disadvantaged and SEN? A quality assurance process means we can check the targets of these subgroups and go back to the teacher with any queries.

The result of this process is teachers who feel more engaged with the targets that have been set the students as they have been an active part of it. Students also have more personalised and relevant target grades that can be used to inspire and motivate them. We can then use these target grades to build up a profile of each school, to ensure that they are targeted to achieve well in the headline measures, relative to their intake of students.

talent will grow and learner outcomes will rise. More teachers will enjoy the experience and more will rise to be in positions of leadership. The demographic of retiring primary heads and the attrition rates of NQTs leads us to the question of what other choice is there?

3. to make the selection of the head less of a risk by adopting an approach to school strategy that is rooted in evidence and research. We know enough from Hattie

and from the Education Endowment Fund to know ‘what works most’. Through the process of MAT directors deciding which teaching packages to adopt from a secure evidence base, the risk of a rogue appointment that undermines school outcomes is minimised.

Across the country, multi-academy trusts cannot afford to ignore the best practice of their more established contemporaries and the turbulent nature of our industry means it is in the interest of all to raise standards urgently. Well, perhaps all but the agencies!

The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) is a multi-academy trust of five children’s centres, four primary schools, three secondary schools and one teaching school, based in Four Oaks, Erdington and Coleshill. The partnership includes 4,500 children, more than 700 members of staff, and 70 governors across seven local governing bodies.



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CLOSING THE YAWNING GULF

Dan Bell, communications manager, on how The Access Project are doing critical work in improving social mobility

I entered the classroom in 2006, with the optimistic aim of improving life chances for young people in a tough part of outer London. Ten years on, our society remains deeply unequal in many ways – for example, did you know that you are six times less likely to make it to a top third university if you are from one of the UK's least affluent households?

The Access Project believes that this is unfair and we want to make a change, as it significantly affects many young peoples' life chances by restricting access to a key vehicle for social mobility.

We tackle this head on by providing motivated and talented students who come from less affluent backgrounds, with free one-to-one tuition in subjects they are struggling with and in-depth, tailored support throughout the university application process.

There is good news: more young people from less affluent backgrounds are going to these high-selective universities than ever before. However, the bad news is that – like in so many other areas of our economy – the gap between rich and poor is growing year on year.

There is a yawning gulf – an Access Gap – between the number of less affluent young people going to our top third universities and those from more affluent backgrounds. In 2010, this 'gap' was 36,900 students. By 2015, it had grown to 39,600 young people, an increase of 2,700.

This Access Gap is driven largely by the continued gulf in attainment between the most and least affluent young people. The barriers to attainment for less affluent young people are numerous. This is exacerbated by a booming private tuition industry that provides intensive one-to-one support for those who can afford it – whilst state schools across the country are facing real-terms cuts in funding.

On one hand, it's an issue of fairness. Not everyone should go to university at age 18. However, we believe it cannot be

right that if you're poor you are far less likely to go to university, and six times less likely to go to a top third institution. This segregated system does not reflect the talent of our young people, and is deeply unfair.

The Access Gap is also an issue of life prospects. Young people leaving education today face an increasingly complex labour market. Reviewing all of the available evidence, it is clear that going to a top third university remains the most reliable vehicle for less affluent students to be socially mobile and achieve financially secure, high status employment. We believe all young people should have the opportunity to access this. This is emphatically not the case today.

Our programme is founded on a unique and highly effective collaboration between our community of students, schools, volunteers, individual supporters, grant makers and business partners.

Our businesses encourage their employees to train as volunteer academic tutors to our students. Businesses, grant makers and individual supporters provide matched funding for our work with these students.

We provide in-depth support to students, schools and volunteers through a dedicated member of staff who works on site at our partner schools, programme coordinators and an office-based team who give support behind the scenes.

And the effectiveness of our programme is born out by the proven impact we have on our students' academic attainment and applications to top universities. At GCSE, our tutored students made an extra 9 months' academic progress. What's more, when it comes to applying to and receiving offers from top-third universities, our students are significantly more likely to be successful than those who are not on the programme, and place at top universities at a rate of 15 percentage points higher

than those in UCAS-built control group of similar students who did not receive our support.

From September, we will be working with 31 schools across London and the Midlands. We are looking to expand into a further schools in these areas in September 2018 – if your school is in these areas and you serve a very deprived community (typically more than 50% pupil premium), please get in touch. Alternatively if our programme doesn't sound right for your school, we have made publicly available our guidance on best-practice for supporting students throughout the university application process, so if this is something you feel your student body could benefit from, just give us a call.

This is a critical time for all of us who are committed to improving social mobility by making a difference to young people's life chances. Our goal is to work with 2000 young people in the areas of highest need by 2020 – and in time to work with all of the 400 schools in England that meet our eligibility criteria.

Getting there will not be easy – and will require us to work with more partners than ever before. Whether you are reading this as a leader in education, business, charity, or government, we need your support to realise our vision to close The Access Gap and make a real and lasting difference to our young people's lives. I hope you will join us.

The Access Project matches motivated students with high-flying graduates for weekly one-to-one tutorials with the aim of raising the student's grades to enable them to apply to top-tier universities

SOCIAL MOBILITY IS AT THE HEART OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS' MORAL PURPOSE

Reigate Grammar School Headteacher Shaun Fenton says bursaries and partnerships are vital – but so is preparing students to go out and make the world a better place

Reigate Grammar School (RGS) has more children who would qualify for government pupil premium funding than the average state grammar school. Of our 900-plus students, we have over 170 receiving means-tested support for their places.

Former RGS pupil Sir Peter Lampl, one of the greatest educational philanthropists of his generation and the founder of the Sutton Trust, supports our bursaries scheme and believes a lack of access to great education diminishes social mobility. He says: “Not only is this an individual tragedy for every young person who fails to fulfil their potential, but it highlights a national waste of talent that threatens the future economic health of our country.” I couldn’t agree more.

Changing lives

With our ‘Changing Lives’ programme we engage alumni and friends of the school from the UK and our international networks to raise money to offer places to children who would benefit from an RGS education but whose family circumstances mean that they could not afford to pay the fees. The scheme is growing in momentum and making a big difference to increasing numbers of families. Our recent award from the prestigious IDPE (Institute of Development Professionals in Education) is testament to our success.

The difference our bursaries make is most vividly described by those who have



benefitted from the scheme. Former RGS student Matt Burns, for example, says: “I think that this level of education should be available to everyone, not just to those that can afford it”.

Carolina Csathy benefitted from our fee support and then headed off to Cambridge University, leaving us these words: “I promise to make the most of the opportunities available to me, because I am constantly reminded of the journey which has brought me here and I realise that it began with the gift of Reigate Grammar education.”

Ellis Clarke also went on to Cambridge, to read English literature: “There is no gift for me that could have inspired as much gratitude as the bursary

I received to study at RGS. It provided me with the skills to pursue my ambitions and an environment where questions and challenges are always welcome.”

Bursary programmes are one of the important ways we can support increased social mobility and, in doing so, maintain a rich and diverse community in our schools for the benefit of all.

Squeezed middle

I would encourage prep school headteachers and parents to contact Reigate Grammar School or senior schools like ours about how our fee-support programmes help families coming through a prep school education with or without a prep school bursary or means-tested scholarship. We have bursaries aimed at the lowest income groups in society, but we are also keen to help the ‘squeezed middle’.

At RGS, we are typical of so many HMC schools in working really hard to help social mobility. This is not a future aspiration or something that we are doing in response to government pressure. This is something that top independent schools up and down the land see as part of their core moral purpose, as a part of what they do to help our society.

Supporting social mobility is about more than offering bursaries. It is about making the education system in our

country work better for all children, and again and again prep and senior schools are working hard to do just that. There are so many excellent maintained schools, but I agree with the Government's view that there are problems with consistency across the sector. So we try to help.

Cultural opportunities

For example, RGS and other top independent schools work in partnership with schools where we can support greater opportunity and aspiration for children in some of the state schools where children may not get the cultural opportunities, specialist teaching or excellent facilities that are commonplace in independent sector prep and senior schools. Our schools regularly deploy teachers in partner schools, share our facilities, involve local children in our arts, public speaking or cultural

programmes, help with advice about university, Oxbridge or medical applications, and more. Representatives from the independent sector are engaged with academies, supporting new teacher training initiatives, working to improve the quality of the national examination processes, and so much more.

Our detractors will take a 'glass half full' approach and criticise us for not doing even more or suggest that the fact that there are problems with the consistency of education provision in the maintained sector is somehow due to the mere existence of independent schools. The truth is that the independent sector's education of 6.5% of children can never be the cause of, nor the solution for, the education of the 93.5% in the maintained sector. That does not stop us from wanting to play our part – and we are doing just that.

Hunger for justice

Finally, and most importantly, I want to say that independent prep and senior schools are helping social mobility as part of our mission to educate all of the young people in our schools. At our leavers assembly each year, I ask them each student to accept a commission to take the lessons learned in childhood and, as they go forward, to remember their moral compass, to nurture a hunger for justice and to have a determination that they can make the world a better place. We should never let anyone doubt the importance for wider society of the work we do, the great things we achieve for the young people in our care as we prepare them for future roles as employers, leaders of society and opinion-formers in the world they are to inherit.

Our school song is "To be a Pilgrim" and I tell the students that being a 'pilgrim' means to be on a special journey with a good purpose. I see that the graduates of our independent senior and prep schools are just that – on life's journey with a purpose to do good.

Social mobility is served by offering bursary places, by independent schools undertaking partnerships to help improve the consistency of maintained sector education. However, I think that our schools can and do make the biggest difference when, each year, we send students on to the next stage of their life wanting to make the world a fairer place and equipped with the qualifications and personal qualities of character to make just that difference.



Shaun Fenton is Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School. He will be Chair of the HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference), which represents top independent schools, for 2018-19. To find out more about Changing Lives, visit <http://www.rgschanginglives.org>

‘YOU’VE GOT A LOT MORE BULL**** THAN ME’

Roy Blatchford reflects on school governance and the chairs of governors he has learned from

Sir Ken Morrison, founder of the supermarket chain, called a spade a spade. Following his death earlier this year, stories of his bluff Yorkshire nature have been legion. At one of the retailer’s annual meetings in his native Bradford he launched a verbal assault on Dalton Philips from which the then chief executive would not recover.

‘When I left work and started working as a hobby, I chose to raise cattle’, the veteran grocer boomed. ‘I have something like 1,000 bullocks and, having listened to your presentation, Dalton, you’ve got a lot more bull**** than me.’

Sir Ken eschewed the world of the City and corporate governance edicts. Memorably, he once asked why have non-executive directors when he could have checkout assistants instead. And he was never happier than when pacing stores, weaving through the aisles talking to staff and shoppers, and working out what was selling well, what was not, and why.

Reading of Morrison’s style and relationship with his chief executives set me thinking how I have interacted over the years with chairs of governors.

Flourishing relationship

School leaders know, in sickness and in health, that the critical factor in running a successful school is a flourishing professional relationship with the chair of governors or trustees. A head who does not view the chair as his or her boss usually comes unstuck. The chair may well have been the person who had the final say in your appointment, so they are rooting for you to succeed.

As a young teacher in large London comprehensives during the 1970s I was aware of two distinguished chairs of



governors: Lord Mischon at Stockwell Manor and Sir Ashley Bramall at Pimlico School. To me they were distant figures with splendid white hair, glimpsed going into the head’s office for important meetings or listened to keenly on annual speech days. To everyone on the staffs they were outstanding ambassadors for comprehensive education in the Inner London Education Authority, much needed in those heady political times.

Only later in my career, interviewing the heads they worked with, did I discover just how much time and personal support Lord Mischon and Sir Ashley gave regularly, despite their own demanding professional duties in the law and local government. These were the days of disruptive teacher union action, community tensions in the estates, stop-and-search on Brixton’s streets, and IRA

bomb threats to schools.

Moving in 1982 as deputy to a north London grammar-school-going-comprehensive, I encountered a set of Camden and Highgate governors not to be messed with. Their combined legal, academic and financial acumen was formidable, nay intimidating. And then Sir Peter Newsam (retiring ILEA Chief) joined the board.

Sticky moment

For my term as Acting Head their patience with the rookie head was invaluable. When the really sticky moment came of having to deal with the suspension of a member of staff, the chair was unfailing in helping me follow due procedures, affording timely counsel when I doubted my own abilities. Above all, I learned that the very best of governors are ‘privately critical and publicly loyal’ - probably the most important lesson for headteachers in their dealings with boards.

There were two other outstanding chairs of governors during my headship days: Robert Palmer and Chris Pym. I think it no coincidence that their peers nominated them, for both were likeable, intelligent, compassionate men. The former appointed me in Oxfordshire, the latter in Milton Keynes - both invested in me from the days we first met.

Robert Palmer was a senior officer in Thames Valley Police. Working with him for a decade was the most pleasurable professional relationship I ever enjoyed in a school. His ability to judge people whom he’d only just met and to assess the merits of any situation were remarkable. On interviews panels his dry humour used to keep everyone gently in order and constantly amused.

Cigar

He taught me the Jesuit principle of leadership: it's easier to beg forgiveness than seek permission. It suited us both that he was adept at keeping his distance from the school to let me get on with things. Equally, he was always there at end of the phone: to offer advice the day a sixth former committed suicide, and on the occasion when the BNP came leafleting students at the school gate. Of course Robert had his foibles: he was always the Chairman; chairs, he asserted, were for sitting on. And lighting up a favourite cigar while standing by the finishing tape on sports days used to wind up the Head of PE wonderfully!

Chris Pym appointed me to open a brand new school and learning centre - in state of the art premises - which he wished to be both traditional and radical in practice and outlook. That suited 1999, on the cusp of a new century, and both our temperaments and educational intuitions. His political nous, deep knowledge of community, adroit handling of founding governors with different agendas, passion for deep learning and out-of-the-box thinking were everything the founding staff team and student body required to shape a sustainable vision.

For a few short years we chose to meet every Monday afternoon for a couple of hours in the school's cafe, a statement to staff about our partnership and providing me with a regular opportunity to sound out my latest brilliant ruse. 'Don't scare the horses', he would say, knowing how experimental we could and

couldn't be with parents who wanted the best of a Buckinghamshire grammar school blended with a pioneering comprehensive.

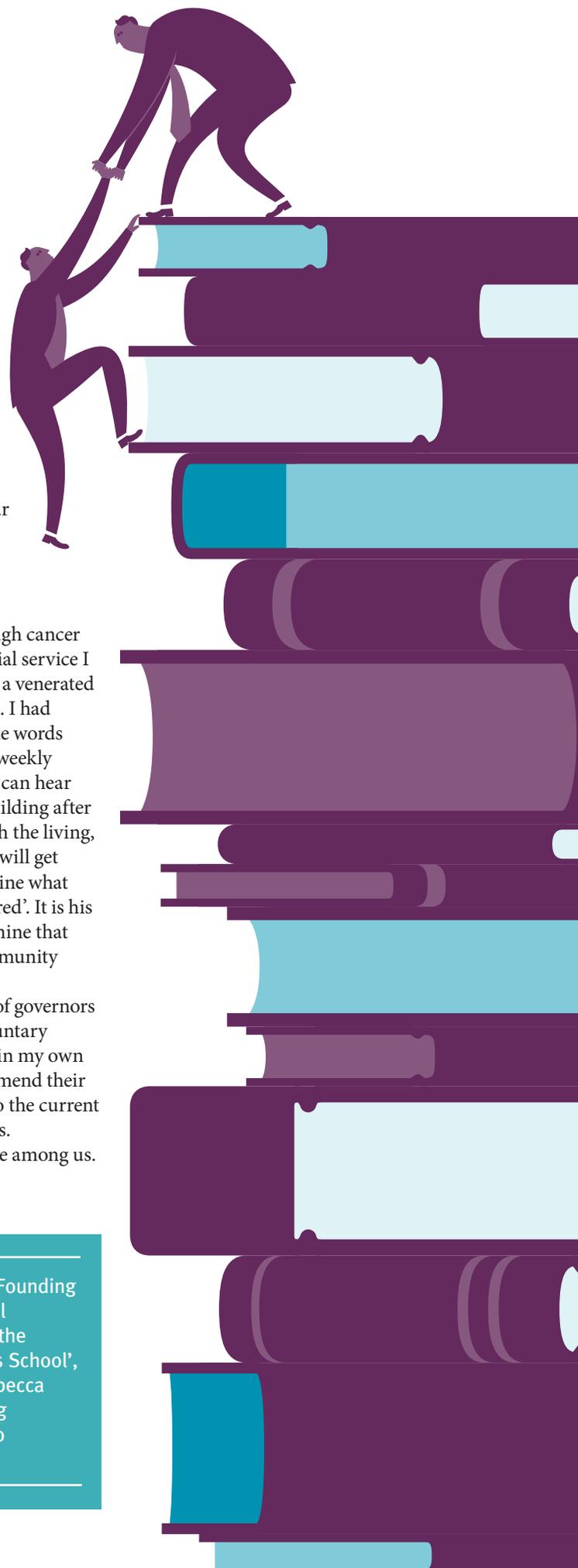
Venerated

Chris's sudden death through cancer hit me hard. At his memorial service I realised his family had lost a venerated father figure of many parts. I had lost a founding partner. The words he expressed at one of our weekly discussions stay with me. I can hear him still: 'Never name a building after anyone living or dead. With the living, you never know what they will get up to. With the dead, imagine what skeletons might be uncovered'. It is his imprint much more than mine that lives on in that school community today.

So I thank these chairs of governors for their distinguished voluntary service and their vital role in my own education as a head. I commend their wise words and thoughts to the current generation of school leaders.

May good governance be among us.

Roy Blatchford CBE is Founding Director of the National Education Trust. He is the author of 'The Restless School', and co-author with Rebecca Clark of 'Self-Improving Schools: the Journey to Excellence'.



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- our Community MATs Network is a great opportunity for trustees and clerks of existing smaller MATs to discuss best practice and share experiences
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ALL THINGS GOVERNANCE

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ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

When scrutiny of academy trusts remains high, the governing board has a critical role to play in determining the ethos and values and the senior leadership team, says Gillian Allcroft, Deputy Chief Executive



In his foreword to the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) 2017, Lord Nash (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System) took the opportunity to remind academy trusts of the importance of the seven principles of public life; often referred to as the Nolan principles (see box).

“Whilst objectivity and impartiality are essential in financial management I expect the broader framework of behaviours offered by the ‘seven principles of public life’ to continue guiding everyone in your trust so that money is spent wisely and honestly. The new handbook reminds you what these principles are.” -- Lord Nash, Foreword to the Academies Financial Handbook 2017

While the AFH is not surprisingly principally about finance, over the years it has developed a significant chunk which is about governance. This is of course, partly because the AFH is pretty much the only document (barring some primary legislation) which is common to all academy trusts – ie Funding Agreements all contain the requirement that trusts must have regard to the guidance in the AFH. Consequently, if the Department for Education (DfE) wishes to change or drive practice around

academy governance then the AFH is the vehicle of choice. Of course there is also the Governance Handbook, which comes under the heading of ‘advice’, but which the AFH says trustees should refer to.

What does this have to do with ‘ethical governance’? The first core function of governing boards is: Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. But what do we mean by ethos? The ethos or values of an organisation is the set of beliefs and principles that guide its work. The values should underpin the way the trustee board operates and how the organisation is managed and its pupils, staff and parents are treated; cue the Nolan principles. The governing board has a critical role to play in determining the ethos and values and the senior leadership team has an equally critical role in ensuring this is translated into day to day practice.

The first report of the Nolan



committee which established the seven principles included the sentence “We take propriety to encompass not only financial rectitude, but a sense of the values and behaviour appropriate to the public sector.”

Scrutiny of academy trusts remains high, “Academy trust gets great results and manages its finances well’ doesn’t hit the headlines. And while in the minority, examples of poor financial practice (and in an even smaller minority of cases criminal practice) often encompassing conflicts of interest and familial connections, emphatically do. When the story is about what our school leaders are being paid rather than what they are achieving then we’ve lost the narrative, and to be frank in some cases probably the plot.

Pay

Remuneration of the senior leader is a direct decision of the board. Of course governing boards want to recognise the responsibilities of the role, but some of our senior leaders are being rather handsomely rewarded. Accountability and transparency are at the heart of the Nolan principles and governing boards need to be able to justify any pay awards. In setting pay levels it is worth bearing in mind that quote from the original Nolan report. This is public money, those in public service, have always understood that it doesn’t come with the same

remuneration as a role in a private for profit business does. Governing boards need to stick to that principle.

Related party transactions

The vast majority of those governing set out to do so with the best interests of children and young people at heart and consequently those in trusts who have hit the headlines may have been surprised when the ethics of their decisions are held up to question. Quite often this has boiled down to how conflicts of interest are dealt with. Too often we fall into the trap of dealing with the person not the conflict. X may have a conflict but would never use her/his position on this board to gain a benefit – as long as s/he isn’t involved in any relevant decisions it will be fine. Most of us will experience a conflict at some point and many can be dealt with by the simple expedient of removing the individual from the discussion, but not all and not often where they involve significant financial transactions or family ties. Yes, the person can be removed from the room, but not from consciousness.

The AFH isn’t at its strongest on this question of related party transactions. The relevant section describes who would be classed as a related party, sets limits on the level of expenditure above which this provision applies and then stipulates that any qualifying transactions should be at cost. Assuming that we all have the same view of what ‘at cost’ means (yes I know

the document includes a guide) there will still be a huge conflict of interest.

If you award a firm closely associated with a trustee a contract will you genuinely be able to demonstrate that you weren’t influenced by her/his status? A number of trusts who have found themselves in that position have tried to make such an argument, not altogether successfully. The truth is regardless of how stringent you have been with your processes the perception that the trustee has benefitted from their position will linger. Alternatively, you may unconsciously look for reasons not to award the trustee’s firm the contract to avoid such a charge – but they have may have been the best provider. Neither outcome is satisfactory. Better not to put oneself in that position in the first place.

Trustees would be better placed reading and abiding by Charity Commission guidance on conflicts of interest (referenced in the AFH) and its other associated document Its Your Decision.

The pupils

But ethos is emphatically not just about money, but how and what we provide for the children in our school. Quite recently an Ofsted report noted that a school had simply not put its year 11 pupils forward to sit any qualifications, apparently for managerial and organisation reasons, rather than whether this was in the best

interests of the pupils. While this is (as far as we know) an isolated case – it is not unusual, possibly common place, for performance measures to be influencing the curriculum offer. Our annual survey with TES to which 5,000 governors take part, of those governing in secondary schools 40% said the curriculum offer had been amended in the light of Progress 8 and the English Baccalaureate. This is in addition to a number reporting the narrowing of the curriculum because of financial restraints.

At least the school which didn't enter pupils for exams still had the pupils on roll to be found, but there have been several reports about significant numbers of young people 'falling off roll' between

year 7 and 11; yes, we have a high stakes accountability system, but what about high moral purpose. If trustees are asking the right questions then they should know how many pupils started in year 7, how many have been excluded and if that is a significant number asking why and what we are doing to prevent it?

An effective governing board is one which sets a culture and ethos which is welcoming and provides an environment in which all pupils can thrive and reach their full potential. A subjective, but perhaps telling test is in how inclusive our settings are to children with special educational needs and disabilities (hugely vulnerable and still much more likely to be excluded than their peers). Or do they

never gain entry in the first place, parents discouraged from applying by a discrete 'y school is better placed to cater for your child's needs' – translation 'we don't want you'. What's the picture in your school?

None of the reported failings are exclusive to the academy sector, but this is *Academy Magazine* and in academy trusts, the buck stops with the board of trustees.

Most governing boards adopt a code of conduct and it's a safe bet that most of them refer to the Nolan principles, but when did you last have a board discussion about them and whether they actually influence the decisions you make? The start of the new academic year might be a good time.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

An effective governing board is one which sets a culture and ethos which is welcoming and provides an environment in which all pupils can thrive and reach their full potential

MATS – LESSONS LEARNED

Clare Collins, Head of Consultancy, reveals what the NGA have learned from their external reviews of MAT governance



Multi academy trusts (MATs) are forming, growing and evolving fast, and as with any area of rapid growth, there are growing pains.

Many of these are little more than a dull ache which irritates but which goes away once the systems have been fine tuned and become embedded, and the new organisation has adapted. Others are more problematic and NGA would say that MAT governance is an area where the pain has ranged from being what one would expect to being acute with complete system failures.

We have been undertaking external reviews of governance for some years now. Because we use our knowledge and practice of governance systems across other sectors, we have been well placed to expand our offer from reviews of maintained schools where governance is subject to well established and well known school governance regulations, to reviews of MAT governance which is subject to the less well understood charity and company law.

Our knowledge of the governance is also informed by working to our own organisation's governance structure as NGA is a charitable company with members and a board of trustees. In response to the changing landscape, we have also extended our training offer to

ensure that it meets the specific needs of academy trusts, including individually tailored sessions. To date, we have worked with over 60 MATs which has provided us with an enormous amount of intelligence about what, in governance terms, is happening.

So what have we learned?

First and foremost we have learned that each MATs' governance arrangements are different, so everyone involved with governance needs to make time to understand their MAT's governance framework and how it works. This means reading the articles of association and the scheme of delegation. Neither of these documents are riveting, but as the former is the closest a trust will get to having a 'rule book', and the latter makes clear to whom those rules apply and how, it still surprises how often these key documents are not being given the attention they should get.

When we work with trusts our starting point is always to build an understanding of their framework from these documents and to use this in conjunction with other documents which we know well such as the DfE's Academies' Financial Handbook which outlines the government's expectations of governance, such as the preference for there being at least five members, although most articles specify only a minimum of three.

From this we are able to check compliance, work with trustees to understand the flexibilities – or otherwise – available to them, and to map a way forward which ensures that governance is effective enough to ensure the trust meets its charitable object.

The second lesson we've learned concerns the delegation within the trust. The trustees have to determine which governance functions can be delegated and to whom. Delegation of financial matters to a committee of the board

appears to be pretty well established and many boards are also delegating curriculum and standards to a board committee – mirroring the model in many maintained schools.

Expectation

However, delegation to the CEO is often not clearly defined, most especially the performance management function. In trusts the expectation is that the trustees will performance manage the CEO and the CEO will oversee the performance management of all other staff and this includes the schools' headteachers.

This leads on to the other area where delegation is often not clearly defined and that is to the committees the board sets up in each academy, mostly known as local governing bodies (LGBs). These LGBs are not governing bodies in the traditional maintained sense but committees of the board; their function will be defined in the scheme of delegation and associated terms of reference. For this reason NGA prefers to use the term 'academy committee'.

Academy committees very rarely have the function of performance managing their school's headteacher delegated solely to them, and as such, this changes their place in the line of accountability to the trust board.

Often this is seen as a down grading of the local governance role, but we have been impressed at how some trusts have recognised the importance of having the local view, and that skilled academy committee members can add to the thoroughness and responsiveness of the monitoring role.

These trusts convene termly meetings of chairs where there is an opportunity to meet with a trustee and feed back any issues, to undertake training, and through the network, to share good practice. They often also have an annual conference for all those involved in governance from the



top to the bottom; some even use this as an opportunity to say thank you for the support offered by these many willing volunteers.

Thirdly, that the first core function of the board which is ensuring the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the trust, is often not happening. This is for quite understandable reasons – after all, all the schools will have their own ethos and vision which the trust may wish them to preserve, there are challenges in creating the new trust which are time consuming and the role of the board, the CEO and other stakeholders in creating a new vision can be hard to define and then to assign. However, without this clarity, crucially the trust's identity will not embed, and the critical culture shift to this being one organisation will be hampered. In purely practical terms, the board will not be able to set meaningful performance indicators, nor objectives for the CEO.

Innovation

The final lesson we have learned is that few trusts are innovating with governance.

For example, we expected that more trusts would take the opportunity to be flexible in the approach to local governance such as convening one academy committee to oversee several schools - especially where there are many small schools close together, or because volunteers are hard to recruit.

We would also like to see some innovation with the role of the members of the trust. These three to five people have ultimate control as it is very usually the members who appoint the majority of the trustees and who can change the articles of association.

For this power to sit in the hands of so few people constitutes a risk. NGA has suggested that other models might be explored such as the parents of the

pupils of the schools in the trust being the members. This may be a little harder to administrate but it would complete the circle of accountability very neatly.

NGA's increasingly experienced team of consultants who work with MATs on their governance arrangements enable us to not only contribute to their more effective governance, but also provides a rich source of learning from which our policy and best practice can be developed.

This in turn fulfils NGA's charitable object which is to 'improve the educational standards and well-being of children and young people through supporting and promoting outstanding governance in all state-funded schools' – thus neatly completing our own accountability circle.



COMMUNITY MATS

Sam Henson, Head of Information, reveals why NGA decided to set up a network for trustees and clerks of small local MATs – something the NGA have called the community MATs network



Much of the wider discussion on multi-academy trusts (MATs) has so far focused on larger MATs but, as at 1 July 2017, 60% of academies were still part of a trust with between one and five academies while only 21% of academies were part of a MAT with more than 10 schools.

At NGA we prefer to talk about the number of pupils educated by a MAT, as this puts the emphasis on what matters most as well as being a much better indicator of complexity than the number of schools; even some of the trusts with more than 10 schools are fairly small in terms of number of pupils. There are clearly a significant number of smaller MATs operating around the country,

whether that is because they are new, taking a steady approach to growth or just because they have decided they are big enough as they are. Many of these MATs have been formed by a group of schools in the same geographical area, have a strong community ethos, and intend to keep it that way.

Some trustees governing in this type of MAT have commented that there is not enough support or guidance available to them, with the national and often regional focus instead on larger MATs or middle-sized MATs looking at continuing expansion. Trustees have pointed out that as a result they have often had to start from scratch, not reaping from the benefits of shared experience. As a result, in the

summer of 2016 NGA decided to set up a network for trustees and clerks of these MATs – something we have called the community MATs network.

What are community MATs?

Let's be clear, Community MATs isn't a centrally defined technical term – it's a phrase NGA has adopted to describe local, schools-led, community-centred MATs.

The aims of the project are simple: to raise the profile of community MATs as an option for schools interested in joining or forming a group and to spread good practice to improve the effectiveness of new or existing MATs.

NGA is pulling together a team of Community MAT Champions happy to share their experiences with others. We have also just completed our first round of annual meetings, starting in Manchester back in November 2016, then to Birmingham in February this year before finishing off in London in June. We are now busy planning our next cycle of the network, but here is a snapshot of what we have gathered from it so far.

Geography

Locality is important for our community MATs and our previous research on federations shows this plays a key role in enabling relationships between staff based in different schools to develop and thrive.

The ability for staff to move between schools and share CPD are also two of the greatest potential advantages – community MATs tend to retain focus on realising this benefit. Schools-led in the plural is intentional: this is about MATs developing collaborative models, with all the schools in the group drawing on each other's strengths and addressing any weaknesses together.

Financial culture

Financial management is an area everyone has been keen to talk about. But the network has shown us that many of the supposed financial benefits of being part of a MAT may be hindered by traditional thinking. Despite there being a significant push to reinforce the fact that a MAT is 'one organisation', discussion has suggested that many MATs feel like a collection of separate schools rather than a single entity.

There has been much consideration whether the term 'top slicing' was unhelpful to MATs, as it does not lend itself particularly well to the concept of one organisation – smacking as it does as something that is done to you, rather than an organisational benefit. Many MATs do not appear to be making best use of economies of scale. There certainly appears to be something preventing some trusts from looking to pool more resources while making sure executive structures are absolutely clear. One challenge is the need to lead those at local level (e.g. academy committees) to understand the organisation's approach, including agreed local budget management.

Bluntly put, some schools within MATs are being protective of 'their' budgets, even when they have surplus, and being unwilling to support other schools within the MAT. This is symptomatic of the failure to grasp the concept that this 'one organisation'. It was agreed that the trust board needs to be explicit about how finances will be organised and crucially at what level decisions will be made. Failure of clarity has led to disputes between those at academy level and the trust board. This brings us on nicely to the next key feature of network discussion.

Governance models

Governing at trust level is more challenging than governing individual schools. Governance models without academy committees, while raised as a possibility at all the meetings were also just as frequently discarded as not a viable option. In small geographically close MATs it is entirely possible, in just the same way as a maintained federation has one governing body.

Some trusts have not really got to grips with idea of thinking about different models, including those with no governance at local level and structures where more governance functions were undertaken by the executive tier. Some feel such structures have too much of a top-down approach.

How MATs hold executive leaders to account, the information required to do this, and the level of involvement in governance decisions from executives are all things trusts are keen to hear more about. But the picture so far certainly seems

to suggest that there is a balance to be found in order to enable the trust board to retain a strategic role and not get weighed down by excessive information. Culture change, in terms of school leaders and those governing getting used to more extensive executive structures, was frequently raised as a potential barrier to trusts getting a model together that really works. Clear reporting lines are essential, and these must provide a meaningful role for local committees where they are used, while ensuring trustee boards don't receive any nasty shocks later on.

Expansion

Expansion is something too many MATs have assumed in the past is their only way to success. NGA does not assume that MATs should grow or that growth is inevitable; there is little evidence of the relationship between size and performance. The overriding view from the network meetings was that success depended on allowing time for good systems and processes to be embedded. There was much discussion about sustainability, with different messages coming from different sources but all apparently deriving from central policy – there is definitely some confusion out there. Some MATs have reported being encouraged to develop a growth strategy when they did not feel ready; others did not want to expand.

Conclusion

Ultimately a year's worth of discussions have shown that it is wise to invest time in reinforcing the basics and the lessons that have been learnt in the past as the MAT system has developed. No one model works for everyone, it is important to not just do what the MAT down the road has done. Too many new trusts are making the same mistakes some older MATs were making five years ago. Those basics include being very clear from the word go that the trust board, as the accountable body, can decide to delegate functions but can also change this at any time – there is no complete individual autonomy for schools within a MAT. The importance of transparency, in terms of having clear lines of accountability, is something everyone agrees on and a compromise trusts make at their own peril.

NGA OUTSTANDING GOVERNANCE AWARDS 2017

Every two years NGA holds its awards for outstanding governance. There are awards for both governing boards and those clerking them.

For this round of the awards we made a conscious decision to split the outstanding governing board award into two categories: outstanding governing board in a single school and outstanding governing board in multi-academy trust or a federation to recognise the different challenges that governing in a group presents.

Applications were invited in autumn 2016 and after sifting, those shortlisted were met and interviewed, the judges deliberated we were ready to announce the winners at our Awards Event in the Houses of Parliament in May. Unfortunately, as a result of the heightened security following the terror attacks the event had to be postponed at short notice (the day before). Consequently, our finalists have had to wait patiently over the summer for the rescheduled event which took place on 5 September.

Presented by Lord Nash, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the School System (with responsibility for governance) the Awards provide a great opportunity to celebrate governance.

In our Governing in a Group category we gave awards to two trusts who from very different starting points stood out as not only recognising the importance of good governance, making it a cornerstone of their MATs, but they have also put into place people and systems which should ensure the trusts are successful and able to provide the best possible education to their pupils. Other applicants, while reviewing governance and understanding its importance, were not yet at the stage that the judges were convinced that governance had yet achieved outstanding.



CORE Education Trust

CORE was founded in March 2015 to govern the schools at the heart of the so-called Trojan horse crisis in Birmingham. This presented immediate and significant challenges to the trustees. Since then, the CEO, members and trustees have overseen complete reformation of governance as well as the leadership within each school in the Trust. Trustees have instigated new policies and procedures to secure financial and governance compliance and worked hard to rebuild and reimagine ethos, vision and strategy. The schools have subsequently moved out of special measures and are now good.

The trustees have worked to move the trust from introspection to openness and see themselves as the heart of an outward facing, proud and modern community. The Board is able to critically review itself and make the necessary changes to ensure trustees provide the breadth of expertise for the future direction of the trust.

During the course of its relatively short-life this has included a very particular focus on ensuring that the chair of the trust is the right person at the right time.

Judges said that “The commitment of Core Trustees to ensure their students had access to the widest possible opportunities while retaining pride and roots in their local communities shone through.”

Spring Partnership Trust

Spring Partnership Trust is a MAT of six primary schools in South London. The trust started with one school providing support to another which was struggling. This developed into a MAT of six primary schools in South London.

The decision to become a MAT stemming from the trustees strong belief that a formal governance structure was the most effective way in which to provide and receive support to develop and maintain excellence. Following consultation, the trustees set an ambitious strategy focused on improving and growing a group of schools - exploiting the opportunities of the group model to develop staff and help other local children. They have developed new methods to use and evaluate Pupil Premium funding, leading to the Pupil Premium Award in 2016. The trustees are committed to reviewing their own practice and ensuring that the future of the board is not compromised by being too reliant on one or two individuals.

Judges said “It was evident that the trustees understood the challenges of governing in a group and were committed to self-review and renewal in order to ensure the best possible education for all the children in the trust.”

MAKING A VIRTUE OF A NECESSITY

Henry Briggs, senior partner of the Birmingham office of Haines Watts, Chartered Accountants, and a former school governor, considers ways of making better use of financial information that most will consider a burden to prepare

Of all the returns required by the regulators of Academies, the most complained of that we hear about is the Annual Accounts Return ('AAR').

This 'necessary evil' needs to be completed after the annual financial accounts have been prepared and extracts much of the information included in them, but in a format needed by the DfE for Central Government statistical purposes.

It is a tedious process and might well be considered to be a waste of time by pressed finance managers who can think of better ways of spending their days.

This year it has been re badged the SARA (Sector Annual Report and Accounts) by The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and comes with an earlier deadline (19th January 2018). It is designed and intended to provide a more holistic report of the academy sector by aligning the reporting of financial results with educational performance. It is also intended to separate academy spending from that of the DfE and show - for the first time - the resources academies receive and how they use them. This, it is reckoned, will make it easier for Parliament, parents and taxpayers to scrutinise and test information about academy funding and spending.

Deadline

If previous years are anything to go by, both ESFA and many academies will have trouble meeting this deadline and, when they do, will heave a sigh of relief that this complicated spreadsheet, reworking information that has already been prepared in another statutory format, has been completed.

The constantly changing and onerous bureaucracy is seen as one of the penalties to pay for Government funding. But need it be of benefit only to Government statisticians and not to those involved in preparing the returns?

The DfE have used the spreadsheets in the past for their own financial benchmarking analysis and this is published, despite tight deadlines imposed on academies, for its financial year (to 31st March) consolidating the previous academy year ended 31st August some nine months later, in December. This makes the figures 16 months old.

This year's SARA is intended to be of more educational value as well as financial information.

Its format lends itself to comparisons and some accountants, including my own firm, will use it for this purpose - as they have done for previous AARs. They will do so just as soon as they can after the deadline, whilst the information is still fresh.

Our survey for the last full year ended 31st August 2016, showed consistent ratios on average for secondary schools with 2015. In both years, reserves stood at 16% of total income and total staff costs at 70% of income. Where GAG (general annual grant) income per pupil had fallen in 2016, so too had teaching costs per pupil. The changes on these figures and ratios (including reserves) had increased in the year for primary schools on average.

All schools can benefit from comparison, if not competition. Independently governed academies know that keeping a careful eye on the figures is a necessity for survival. With funding per pupil falling, they need to look at ways of smart management that let them achieve more with less.

In reality, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are simple. The ratio of teaching costs to GAG and total income is the single most important one. This will vary according to the type of school, but looking at other comparable ones will be helpful, particularly those that are succeeding.

Learning from this exercise and applying change is more difficult. Effecting changes to direct salary costs is never quick and inevitably involves a time lag. There may still be questions over the implementation of the new funding formula, but action now to meet reduced funding generally should be of help in the medium to long term. Every time a decision is made on a new staff appointment is an opportunity for the school to manage costs sensibly and will have a knock on effect of significant proportions over time.

Inevitable

It is still the case that many academies are failing to face the inevitable. Any chance to reduce the cost base without compromising standards, should be taken.

Another KPI is the existence of unrestricted reserves which should be a policy target, if possible, to prepare for unexpected factors in the future, or indeed planned expansion in facilities when they can be paid for.

Review and comparison of SARAs is not the only area in which virtues can be made of necessity. Governing bodies should insist that the financial and management information they receive during the year can easily follow through to the end of year audited accounts, so they appreciate exactly what the state of affairs is before it may be too late. Heads should have their finger on the pulse as they are usually the nominated accounting officer and they should be in more than name only.

Governors need to be 'critical friends' and by using financial and other comparative information available to them, are less likely to be poorly or ill-informed about what is really going on in the school and how to better use their resources.

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Good governance in MATS

Two case studies

Lee Miller, Deputy CEO and board director, The Thinking School Academy Trust

During our growth towards five schools each school had its own governing body which worked in a very traditional way, holding an individual school to account, and the Trust body was more of a background figure. At that size, we had the Trust board taking responsibility for strategic decisions and direction and local governing bodies responsible for more operational decisions. As we moved towards 10 schools, we had to review the layers of governance and this created some tension. We had some great governors on our local bodies who had to give up some responsibility to the directors. Of course, we wanted to keep them and so we had to ensure that they understood why the right decision was being made.

We had to make the new model clear and explain how this would benefit not just the individual school they governed but also the whole Trust. We did a lot of

work in ensuring that anyone who worked here, paid or not, understood that their responsibilities meant they look after all the children in TSAT, not just those in a single school. We view the Trust as a family and therefore need a governance model which works effectively across all the schools.

Libby Nicholas, CEO, Astrea Academy Trust

We haven't had to change our governance structure as our trust has grown, quite the opposite. When we were setting up Astrea Academy Trust about a year and a half ago, I knew that we were going to grow quickly. We knew that around 15 schools would be joining us in our first year and so the governance structure was designed with this in mind. If anything, we've grown into our governance structure as opposed to outgrown it.

In October 2016, the Education Funding Agency reviewed our governance arrangements and we also carry out our own reviews of governance at all three levels. We also make active use of skills

matrices to identify any areas that we might be light on and need attention and where we are strong and well-represented. This combination of internal assurance checks has been hugely valuable.

The 3rd annual MATs Summit will take place on 12 & 13 October 2017 in The Cotswolds. Featuring key topics including, strategic growth, leadership skills, governance structures, financial management, central services and due diligence, this flagship summit for Multi-Academy Trusts is a vital event for MAT leaders. Book your place by visiting oego.co/MATs-Summit17. Read the whole Optimus Education report on Multi-Academy Trusts: [Getting governance right at oego.co/MATs-Governance](http://oego.co/MATs-Governance).



EduKent: a day of innovation and inspiration for school leadership teams

Looking for new ideas on creating a vibrant and motivated education environment? Keen to save time and money by sourcing innovative products and services? Eager to meet your counterparts from other schools and learn from their experiences?

If the answer YES, make sure you have Wednesday 8th November in your diary for this Autumn, to join 400 education leaders, managers and policy-makers at the Kent Event Centre for this year's EduKent Expo & Conference.

Over the past decade, this free one-day event has become a key platform for the promotion and development of effective school management, learning and teaching – offering a range of inspirational speakers, practical workshops and an extensive showcase of specialist suppliers for the schools and academy sector.

Each year, the popular EduKent event brings together hundreds of school leaders from across Kent, Sussex and other neighbouring counties to learn from leading thinkers and policy-makers, find new ways to stretch their budgets further and share ideas that will improve outcomes for their pupils.

The event is completely free to attend for all members of the school leadership team, including Head Teachers, Deputy Heads, Bursars & Finance Directors, Business Managers, Facilities Managers, department heads, governors and PTA representatives from the state, academy and private sectors. Plus there's a complimentary lunch and free refreshments throughout the day.

The free educational programme at the EduKent Expo & Conference provides a perfect forum for sharing experiences and learning from experts in the field.

Free for all pre-registered delegates, the multi-streamed programme offers a comprehensive range of inspirational keynotes, fresh perspectives on common challenges, real-life case studies and practical workshops on a range of school-related issues.

Schools can send as many delegates as they like – for the whole day or just the morning or afternoon – to benefit from a wide range of engaging content and to catch up on all the latest developments and new resources for the learning environment.

An Evidence-based Approach to World-Class Education

This year's opening speaker is David Laws, Executive Chairman of Education Policy Institute since 2015 and an outspoken politician during the Conservative / Liberal Democrat Coalition.

In a fascinating keynote session, David will present a compelling case for why government needs to apply more hard evidence (and less ideology) when making key decisions about the future of education in the UK.

Using rigorous research and a huge repository of data, David and the Education Policy Institute are developing a clear and detailed vision of how a world-class educational environment should function if the UK really wants to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people of all backgrounds.

David is well-placed to campaign for innovation and change in the education system, having acted as Economic Adviser and Director of Policy & Research for the Liberal Democrats and served in the Coalition Government from 2010 to 2015: as Chief Secretary to the Treasury,

Schools Minister and Cabinet Office Minister. Whilst Schools Minister he was responsible for policy areas that included all capital & revenue funding, the Pupil Premium, accountability and policy on teachers and leadership.

Lessons from Elite Athletics

Later in the day, the afternoon keynote will be presented by sporting legend Roger Black MBE, Olympic Medallist, two-time World Champion, TV Presenter and a past contestant on Strictly Come Dancing, Celebrity Master Chef and numerous popular quiz shows.

As one of the country's most successful sportsmen, Roger abandoned a career in medicine to represent Great Britain at the highest level of world athletics. Over the next fourteen years, he won fifteen major Championship Medals in the individual 400m and 4x 400m relay and is particularly admired for battling serious injuries and a rare heart valve condition in his quest for sporting excellence.

In a lively session on applying the lessons from elite athletics to pursue excellence in the classroom, Roger will share techniques and ideas on how to overcome adversity, build a high-performing team and inspire future generations of young people to reach their full potential.

Further Highlights for 8th November

In between the main keynotes, attendees can choose from a range of interactive workshops from an impressive line-up of education trailblazers, policy-makers and industry experts...

In a special update from Ofsted, HMI Mark Cole will update delegates on the current priorities for schools in the South



East of England and explain what Ofsted is doing to support improvement through its inspections. Mark will discuss the ongoing evolution of Ofsted's inspection framework, together with recent changes and new developments in the inspectorate and the impact these have had on the department's work.

Simon O'Keefe, CEO of The Stour Academy Trust will describe their journey from stand-alone school to a successful Multi-Academy Trust of eight primaries, with growth predicted to double over the next three years. He will cover the many lessons they have learned along the way and show how the Trust's model of close collaboration and succession planning aims to secure and improve future

educational performance.

Social media trainer Zoe Cairns and primary school teacher Ria Cairns will present a highly topical workshop about Internet safeguarding and schools' important role in protecting pupils against the various dangers of the online world. Using recent case studies, Zoe and Ria will show how e-safety can be integrated into school lesson plans and the overall curriculum, highlighting emerging threats for young people in the rapidly evolving websphere.

Make sure you don't miss out on hearing these fascinating speakers and many more, by putting EduKent Expo & Conference in your diary now and reserving your free place online.

You will also get chance to meet and chat to over 140 specialist suppliers to the education sector, in a major exhibition of innovative products and services designed to make your school even more efficient in the future.

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Inspiration, ideas, solutions and networking

Education Estates 1-2 November, Manchester Central Exhibition, Conference, Dinner & Awards

Education Estates focuses on the funding, design, build, management and maintenance of schools, colleges and universities across the UK.

Whether you are preparing for an upcoming project or looking for solutions and ideas to current challenges; Education Estates - the largest gathering of Education Buildings Professionals from across the UK, will enable you to achieve your objectives.

Why should you attend?

To source organisations in the exhibition that can help you achieve your development, refurbishment, or buildings maintenance objectives.

To take advantage of the FREE* TWO DAY CONFERENCE PROGRAMME and benefit from the advice and expert opinions from industry leaders. To receive tailored advice and guidance for education projects. To listen, network and share best practice with your industry peers.

The Conference is free for those directly employed in schools, colleges, universities and local authorities (includes governors & independent schools).

The Conference features over 70 speakers, with specialist content streams for Schools, Colleges & Universities and Asset Management & Maintenance. Lively and authoritative, it's THE professional gathering for everyone concerned with education's built environment.

Conference sessions include:

School Estate Management – What Does “Good” Look Like?

This is a joint EFA Capital presentation by Catherine Jenkins, Head of Capital

Efficiency and Capability and Victoria Baker, Head of Strategic Projects and Casework.

The presentation will outline the resources which the EFA is making available to promote good estate management by those responsible for managing school buildings (generally local authorities for community schools or academy trusts for academies and free schools).

The School Sites Challenge – Design and Build Implications - Claire Jackson, Education Director, Galliford Try

One of the key challenges for current and future school buildings programmes is the identification and acquisition of suitable school sites, to the extent that the Department for Education has now set up its own arms-length company, LocatEd, to source and acquire sites for new free schools.

The shortage of land, particularly in London and the South East, is leading to more sites with considerable challenges being developed for new schools, which has implications for the design and build process.

The range of issues affecting new sites includes working with existing planning policies and local challenges, transport considerations, constrained working areas including working around existing schools within temporary accommodation, contaminated land, poor ground conditions, flood considerations and achieving environmental standards with high levels of background noise.

Our presentation will look at case studies including:

Harris Invictus Academy, Croydon, designed and built for a Multi Academy

Trust with a particular curriculum delivery philosophy, on a constrained urban site, sharing a live site with the temporary school, on a contaminated former hospital site which the local authority had identified to spearhead regeneration in West Croydon.

Watling Park Primary School, Barnet, built on a constrained site which was a designated ‘open space’, again sharing the site with the temporary school, bounded by railway lines and a neighbouring residential development with local traffic and transport constraints.

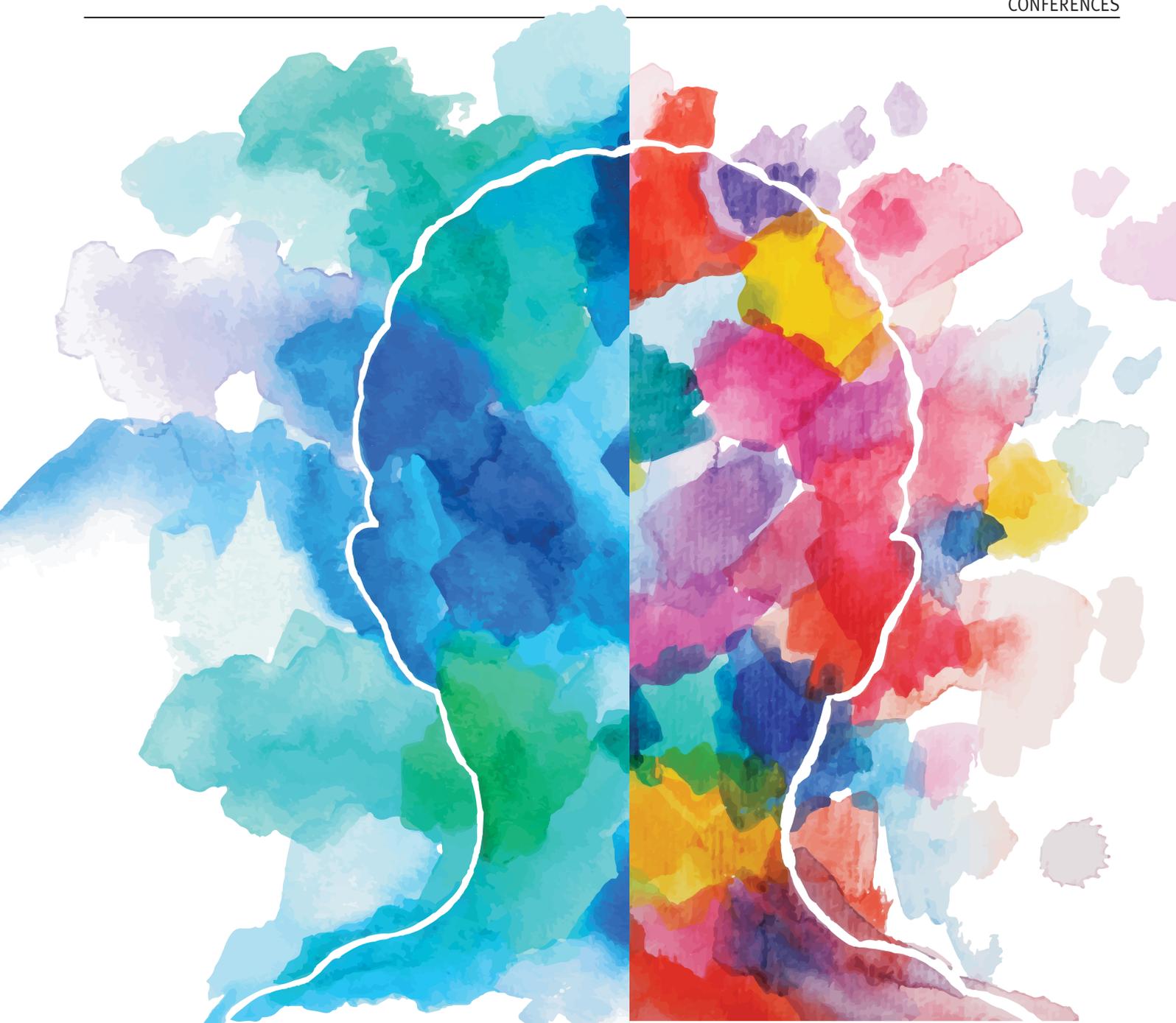
We will discuss how we have employed innovation and efficiency to overcome the challenges presented by difficult sites, the implications on the school's design and for construction delivery; and consider lessons learnt for the future.

New School in the Green Belt – How We Did It - Jeremy Hinds, Planning Team Director, Savills

The King's School in Macclesfield currently operates from its historic home of two split sites in either side of Macclesfield. Its strategic vision has been to relocate to a new, more efficient, single site that will meet its sporting and educational needs for the next 100 years. Delivering the vision is reliant on funding being raised through the sale of existing land, along with a deliverable planning permission for the new school.

On behalf of the King's School, Savills Planning secured consent for the development of a new school in the green belt, along with the redevelopment of two existing school sites as enabling housing development. Savills provided planning and strategic advice and led the three major planning applications.

Working closely with the local



planning authority, Savills secured positive recommendations on all three of the applications, addressing difficult and emotive planning issues including development on playing fields, heritage impacts on listed buildings, landscape, highways, and green belt. Savills evidence in relation to green belt matters demonstrated that very special circumstances existed in support of the schemes. The planning permissions will now enable the School to move forward with its strategic vision. The housing proposals will deliver much needed new homes in Macclesfield in sustainable locations close to the town centre and train station.

The 21,000 sq. m new school is on

a 22 hectare site between Macclesfield and Prestbury and has been designed by architects Pick Everard. The residential proposals are for up to 450 new homes. Savills also undertook the Environmental Impact Assessment, viability assessment, master planning and landscape and visual impact assessments. Savills has been retained to market the residential sites to housebuilders.

To view the two day conference programme and the speaker list go to www.educationstates.com.

Exhibitors that can help you achieve your development, refurbishment, or buildings maintenance objectives include: North West Construction Hub, Sports Facilities Group, Faithful+Gould,

Kingspan Insulation, Pegasus Group, Galliford Try, Caledonian Modular, Trend Control Systems, McAvoy Group, Saint Gobain Ecophon, ATKINS, PAGABO, Turner & Townsend, Thorlux Lighting, Forbo Flooring, VELUX, Elliott Group, Mars Drinks, Screwfix and many more. If you're interested in exhibiting email jameslee@stepex.com to view the floorplan.

For more information about the event and to register go to www.educationstates.com.

Staff development: a mobile solution?

How Pearson Publishing is tackling CPD issues with technology

Providing staff with effective CPD has long been an issue for schools, academies and academy trusts. According to a recent report from the Education and Training Foundation (bit.ly/2vFF8Um), the most significant barrier to career progression is the inability to take part in CPD due to heavy workloads and a lack of time. In addition to this, CPD can be impeded by cost, infrequency of training and overly broad training that doesn't account for the needs of individual staff members.

To address this problem, Pearson Publishing, a Cambridge-based publishing company (not to be confused with Pearson Plc.), have come up with a solution based on mobile learning.

Mobile learning (m-learning) involves using smartphones and tablets to access bite-sized training modules. Unlike e-learning, m-learning is truly flexible with offline learning available anytime, anywhere. Pearson Publishing believes this can benefit CPD as it ensures development is ongoing rather than based on one-off events. As most staff members have mobile devices, it's both cost-effective and easily integrated into existing provision without disrupting daily routines.

The team at Pearson Publishing have combined 25 years of education publishing experience with technological innovation to create *nimbl*, an app giving staff continuous access to a digital library of CPD courses (the CPD Library). The growing range of courses are written by expert practitioners and covers both school-wide and role-specific topics. These include compliance issues, classroom skills, pastoral care, leadership development and new staff induction.

The courses are accessible offline via smartphones or tablets and can also be

accessed online on a computer.

We spoke to George Pearson, director of Pearson Publishing, to find out more about the CPD Library.

“An instant source of reference”

George, a former teacher and now trustee of a multi-academy trust, has 25 years of experience in educational publishing. His experiences in the industry have highlighted to him the issues staff and schools face.

“The main grievances I hear about CPD from schools and staff is that it can be expensive, inconsistent, irrelevant and time-consuming.”

“The CPD Library addresses this by combining convenience with quality. It makes CPD easily accessible, quantifiable and applicable to the needs of many individuals.”

“What really stands out is the potential for true anytime, anywhere learning. Staff can access the courses, at home, at work or on the go - they provide an instant source of reference from your pocket.”

“A richer, more engaging learning experience”

Aside from their convenience, we asked George what makes Pearson Publishing's courses so effective.

“The courses are designed to engage and involve the learner. One of the benefits of m-learning is that we can include multimedia features, links to online information and a host of different interactive activities.”

“The topic assessments allow learners to review their knowledge as they go, with self-marking quizzes giving instant feedback on progress.”

“This provides a richer, more engaging learning experience.”

Flexible deployment

We asked George about the realities of implementing this CPD solution in schools.

“In my experience of implementing training programmes in schools, this is undoubtedly the easiest to implement.”

“The process is quick and easy, and we provide a highly supportive service including administrative help, CPD coordinator training and ongoing assistance.”

George also notes that the way schools use the CPD Library is highly flexible.

“Some schools use the CPD Library to complement existing provision whereas others use it as a replacement for the least convenient face-to-face events.”

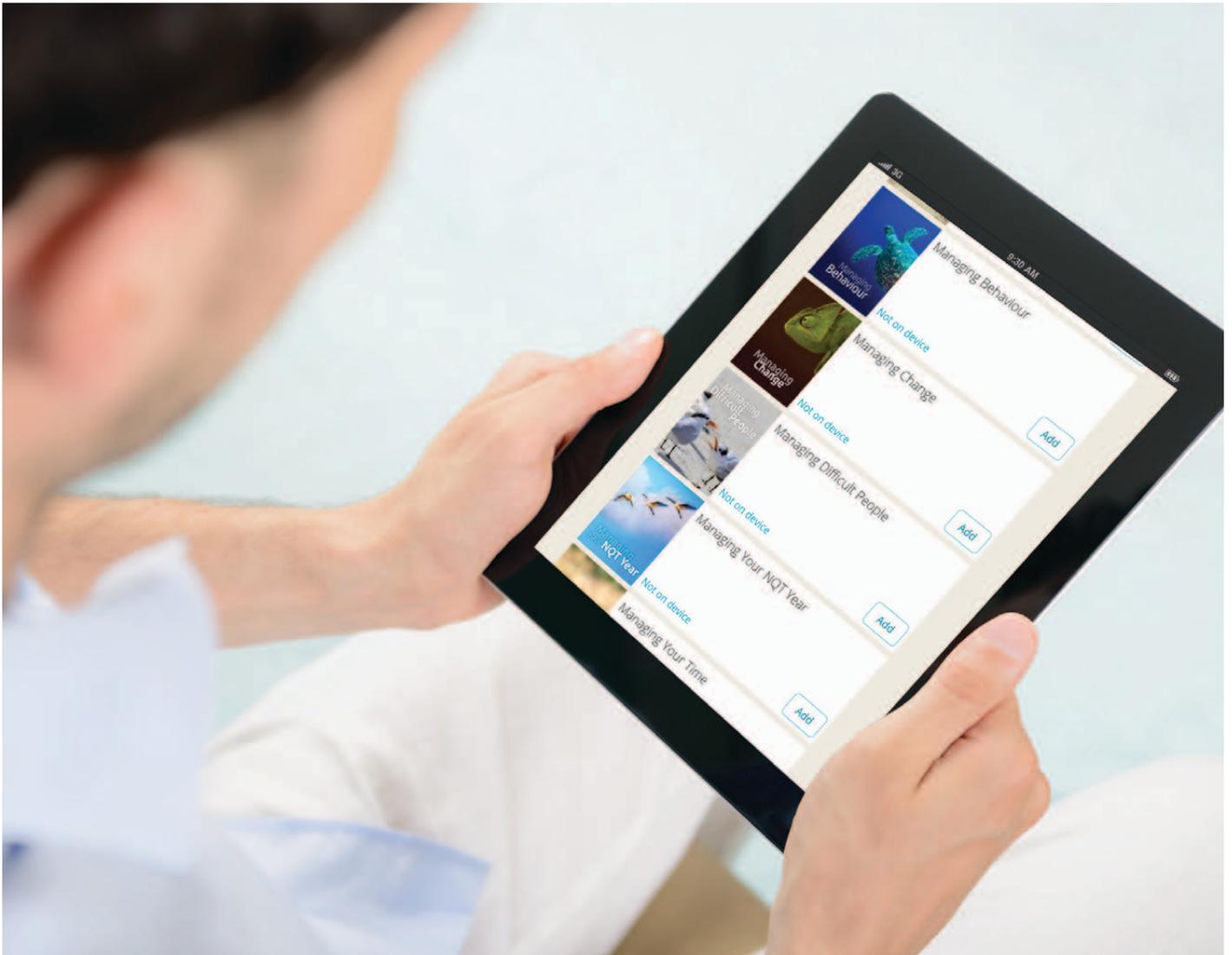
“Likewise, some schools may use it to run compliance training for all staff more efficiently while others use it to support the development of individuals such as trainee teachers, NQTs, teaching assistants, aspiring middle or pastoral leaders, or senior leaders.”

“Each member of staff can have access to any or all of the courses in the Library, so appropriate programmes of training and development can be easily created and adapted during the year.”

Streamlining the induction process

As a former teacher and now trustee of a multi-academy trust, George understands that induction is a key problem for schools and academies. “With staff joining schools at many times during the year, induction can be very time-consuming and inefficient.”

“Our system can significantly streamline this process. Individuals are given access to a range of courses before they start and their efforts tracked, providing crucial evidence of



understanding. Consistency in training can be readily achieved, even across a large trust.”

Giving staff ownership of their CPD

We asked George what the mobile CPD Library means for the learners themselves.

“The CPD Library puts learners in control – over their goals and what they focus on. CPD becomes a choice rather than a requirement, and engenders feelings of confidence, opportunity and personal investment.”

“Existing courses are continuously updated to ensure staff always have the most up-to-date information as the profession evolves.”

Martin Barwise, an Assistant Headteacher and Consultant Editor of the CPD Library, echoes George’s comments.

“With oversight of CPD and staff development within my school, my central belief is that the most effective CPD is personalised to ensure that it suits the specific needs of the individual. The CPD library gives staff ownership of their CPD, they can access and engage with training at times that suit them covering a broad range of topics. The resources have been developed ‘by teachers, for teachers’ and so are current, relevant and embedded in best practice.”

Using the data

With the need to provide evidence of completing training, the crucial question is: how do schools know it is working?

The courses within Pearson Publishing’s CPD Library include automatic data tracking and reporting for each individual, ensuring leaders and

managers are kept abreast of staff activity.

“Leaders can not only see progress and performance but can also judge engagement and which issues are most popular by seeing which courses are most widely used.”

Pearson Publishing’s CPD Library seems to address many of the issues around CPD provision. With both staff time and school budgets under pressure, perhaps m-learning is the approach we should take.

Request a free preview of the CPD Library by emailing info@pearson.co.uk or calling 01223 350555. Find out more at www.pearson.co.uk/CPD.

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“The time we have saved has just been incredible...”

Colin Robson, Catering Manager for the Carmel Education Trust discusses the switch back to in-house catering

The Carmel Education Trust has overarching accountability and governance of a number of Academies in and around Darlington and Stockton on Tees. It includes seven schools altogether consisting of Carmel College, Holy Family and St Augustine's Primary Schools in Darlington; Our Lady and St Bede, St Gregory's Primary School, and St Bede in Stockton; and St Michael's Catholic Academy in Billingham.

All members of the Trust benefit from the strong ethos, quality governance in addition to providing all members with a formalised collaboration, where each school shares a vision to provide the very best possible outcomes for its children

The collaboration between all schools in the Trust also provides a number of operational and financial benefits.

We interviewed Colin Robson, Catering Manager for the Carmel Education Trust who discussed how switching back to in-house catering and centralising the management of the catering function has delivered significant benefits to the group as a whole.

“We have around 4,000 students across the Trust and serve approximately 2,500 meals every day and organising everything behind the scenes to make that happen involves a great deal of planning and coordination.

I have been involved with the Trust for around ten years, although originally I started as a contract caterer at Carmel College before I was promoted to the Trust's Catering Manager last 2014. Back then, the contract caterer was managing one site and the rest were run by the local authorities.

At that time, Directors and Heads took the decision to bring the catering back in-house. We felt we could do it better ourselves, would have greater flexibility,

and also provide better choice to students.

To get the ball rolling and start the transition from contract caterer to in-house, a local consultant was at first hired to guide us through the initial changes. It was quite a big shift, having previously worked with a contractor, but it was great to start identifying ways of making improvements in all aspects of service delivery.

When reviewing how we manage suppliers and in particular the purchasing of all our food and beverage products, we decided that we should go to tender, however as we were so large, we were over the EU tender limit, and felt that we needed help in managing this process. We turned to Pelican Procurement Services, who I had heard great things about, for support in this process and in doing so, we have since formed a long-term partnership where they support us in a number of different ways.

For the tender, Pelican worked with us to explain the process, what to do, and how to set the categories for the different suppliers. They then managed the whole tender for us, which saved us all a huge amount of work. I had spent the previous year working with suppliers to negotiate product pricing and it is a huge task, so to have Pelican managing this for me was invaluable.

A real driver for us doing the tender was the need to streamline suppliers and to make finance a lot easier. We were receiving around 30 or 40 invoices every day and the administration of dealing with this had become really cumbersome.

Also, we had multiple suppliers across each site and in some cases, we had the same suppliers covering more than one school yet they were working on different pricing structures and terms! The tender was vital in consolidating suppliers,

buying lists and prices to streamline the overall management of our catering function, and also deliver cost savings.

The great thing with the tender process was that we still have flexibility to work with local suppliers. Pelican split chilled, frozen and non-food and that was put out to national suppliers. Then categories include meat, dairy, fresh produce was sent to local suppliers within a 30-mile radius of the schools.

This was important for us as a school to support local suppliers and it was reassuring to know that our hands wouldn't be tied to just national suppliers as part of the tender. I think many people assume that you lose some control when going to tender, but you really don't.

Following the tender, we selected the suppliers to suit and are very pleased with how it's going. While we have an agreed buying list across all sites, it's not set in stone so our chefs still have an opportunity to create new menu options, yet I can now monitor or advise on product selection, working with Pelican at my side.

I now use a centralised system – Pelican Pi – to track purchases, costs, stock and more. A major benefit has been the change in invoicing. Everything is managed by Pelican so instead of receiving individual invoices from suppliers we receive one single statement each month – the centralised invoicing is such a huge time-saver. It's reduced our administration considerably.

On top of this, we use Pelican's stock management system Pitstop, which is brilliant. It's saved a huge amount of time for stocktaking as it automatically does this for each site based on what's been ordered and used. It's a fantastic tool which just gives us so much time back every month.

B FIRE SAFE NOTICE BOARDS

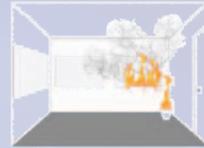
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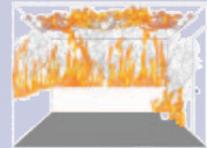
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I'm now also blessed with as much reporting as I can muster! I have my single monthly statement, and each month I have to report to the financial manager on profit and loss. This is now so simple. I used to have to trawl invoices and find individual items and costs, and now it's all there on Pi. The compliance reporting is a very useful tool; I can see what people are purchasing, analyse trends, see supplier spend, category spend and more.

I can also log issues at any time, which Pelican is able to deal with for me straight away.

Our next step is looking at menu planning and analysis, which will enable myself and our chefs to analyse menus from a nutritional and allergen perspective. This is again all within the Pelican system and is so useful to us.

When I look back at the transition from contract caterer to in-house catering,

it could have been quite a daunting affair, however having linked up with Pelican, there's been so many aspects that they have really supported us with. They are more than just procurement. In fact, when I mentioned to some local school contacts what we were doing, they said 'couldn't you do that yourselves?' – however I explain that it's not just about purchasing products; Pelican has managed the whole tender, they work with our suppliers to actively monitor prices, they manage and resolve any issues and provide also guidance on menu analysis, development as well as provide marketing support.

For the kitchen, we've streamlined the number of suppliers coming through the door. Agreed lists have made it easier to purchase the right products for the right prices. Plus, we now have confidence in deliveries and that they will be made at the right time, due to the KPIs put in place as part of the contract negotiations. Our chefs know that they will receive their delivery at a set time with less stress – they can plan their day far better.

Our chefs are not restricted and have the freedom to deliver the food and

menus that they want, so quality and choice is key. When we were operating under the local authorities and via the contract caterer, we could see both being compromised due to costs. Now, this isn't the case and we feel far more in control of the service we are able to deliver to our students.

The biggest benefit to the finance team is that the paperwork relating to catering have dramatically reduced; you'd think that moving from contract catering to in-house you would see an increase, however with Pelican this hasn't been the case. It has saved us a lot of time and labour.

The one year contract is coming up from renewal with Pelican and we will most certainly be extending it. We've received direct financial savings of around 9%, as well as stripping out a layer of financial administration and reporting. The time we have saved has just been incredible and we are today in a far richer place, in terms of service provision, quality and choice, than before. Moving back to in-house catering has been a very positive journey for us all."



TRUANCY IS NO JOKE

Absences, either authorised or unauthorised, can have a huge impact on learning in schools. Here are some tips for being proactive in tackling the problem head-on

‘Bunking off’. It’s an expression we all use, when what we are really talking about is truancy. One might ask, “What’s in a name?”. Unfortunately, the term ‘bunking off’, with its undertones of simply being ‘naughty’ or having a laugh at the expense of authority, trivialises the issue. Truancy is a serious business, with real consequences.

Let’s look at it from the pupil’s point of view first, and then from the school’s perspective.

The child’s perspective

There is now plenty of research to suggest that missing even a relatively short period of school can affect a child’s grades. For instance, research reported by the Department for Education found very strong, and statistically significant, links between absence and attainment. Even one day out of school is apparently enough to have an effect.

“Ah”, you say. “That may be the case, but in our school we don’t have any unauthorised absences, only ‘official’ ones.”

Unfortunately, that doesn’t matter. The outcome is the same: lower attainment.

Similar results have been found in many research studies in the USA. For example, having a couple of days off a month doesn’t sound bad. But when you add them all up they total around 20 days a year, which is the definition of ‘chronic absence’. That is bad news, because children with a chronic absence record are not only likely to attain lower grades than they might otherwise have, but are also more likely to drop out of school altogether in their teens.

There is even research that shows that

a pupil is more likely to drop out of school in later years if their mother dropped out of school. In other words, absenteeism can affect future generations as well.

Bottom line: absenteeism can spoil a child’s life chances, and possibly even their children’s life chances. And it’s even worse for children who miss school in their early school days, and come from poor families. Why? Because better off children are more likely to be able to have the resources at home to help make up for lost time.

So far we’ve been talking about absenteeism in general, but when one looks at truancy in particular the situation is worse. The effects in the short term have been shown to include lower grades, dropping out of education, substance abuse and even teenage pregnancy.

In the longer term, the effects include adult criminal behaviour, leading to prison, and failing marriages. Research in England in 2002 found that children aged between 11 and 15 who truant were 6 times more likely to become smokers than those who didn’t.

Also, over half of truanting pupils reported drinking in the week the survey took place, compared with fewer than 20% of their peers.

The school’s perspective

Not everything is directly within the school’s control. For example, some students may take time off because they feel isolated and alone.

Research in America has also found that 23% of truants choose to skip school because they do not feel safe in their school environment. Moreover, draconian

punishment when the child does return tends to be counterproductive.

So what can a school do? Here’s a checklist you might wish to consider.

Provide a safe environment

This is one of the primary functions of the school, embodied in the phrase in *loco parentis*, which means ‘in place of the parents’. It stands to reason that if a pupil feels safer somewhere other than school then he or she might think it logical and sensible to go there instead.

For example, when new pupils join the school, especially if they are the only one from their feeder school, what system is in place to help them meet other people and simply just be able to find their way around? In many schools pupils are simply left to their own devices.

Know who is absent, quickly

Data is the bedrock of decision-making. One of the most basic pieces of data is the question: “Who is not in school today?” That’s a question which needs to be answered by the end of registration period at the latest, because that gives the school office time to contact the parents and find out what’s going on.

Know who else is absent

One of the benefits of using software to keep track of attendance and absenteeism, even in a very small school, is that it can highlight patterns and correlations that you could easily miss when doing it manually.

For example, if a child is missing the second Wednesday of every month, what is that about? It needs to be investigated.



If a year 7 pupil is always absent at the same times as a year 10 pupil, is there something unsavoury going on?

And a note for local authorities and multi-academy trusts: you really need to look out for correlations between schools too. For instance, is a pupil from school X always off on the same days as a pupil from school Y?

Focus on all absences

It's tempting to focus your energies on truancy because that's the worst kind of absenteeism, but it's important not to forget about authorised absences too, because of the negative effects of absenteeism on grades.

Be proactive

Finally, make sure that parents know the damaging effects of not ensuring that their child goes to school, or even keeping them off for the odd day for what they believe is a legitimate reason.

Even the shortest period of absence is bad for children, and truancy is even worse. Schools owe it to themselves, parents, but above all the children, to ensure that it's acted upon immediately and, ideally, prevented altogether.

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MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL - WHICH IS THE BEST APP OF ALL?

An app is the most cost-effective method of communicating with parents in the 21st Century - but choose carefully

Most schools are looking for an app to help them engage with parents more effectively as studies have shown the more engaged the parent, the better the student performs. From the safeguarding perspective, getting messages through to parents can be costly if you're dependent on text messages and unreliable if you're using social media – so when someone says, “there's an app for that,” it sounds like the perfect solution in this smartphone generation.

There are now so many apps to choose from it has quickly become a minefield to negotiate. School budgets are already constrictive, so making an informed decision is key to ensure you're getting the best value for your money and not making a costly mistake.

Streamlining the back-office

Using technology to communicate with parents is not a new thing. As technology has evolved schools have embraced the benefits it can bring, but equally the speed of this technology growth has resulted in schools contracting with many different providers. The lack of integration between the different systems a school may be using, forces parents to numerous websites to receive and respond to information about their child(ren).

The more complicated it is for parents, the less they'll engage.

However, there are now some very good, reliable systems such as Schoolcomms, who recognise this and work closely with schools to understand the ever-changing needs they have. Schoolcomms is the market leading one-

system solution that brings all parent interactions into one place. A simple, but sophisticated system that integrates fully with SIMS and the pièce de résistance is that they also provide a parent app - for free.

It's wise to review the systems your school is already using to communicate with parents. The technology progression has seen providers like Schoolcomms really come into their own, leaving the specialist one-type providers trailing behind, particularly in terms of functionality.

Why streamline?

The thought of moving text, email, online payments, absence chasing, reporting etc from your current system to another probably fills you with dread – well, it shouldn't. A good one-system provider can make the transition and implementation easy for you. Having a single contract, invoice and renewal date, alongside one place for staff and parents just screams efficiency and cost saving at the top of its voice.

Consolidating your back-office systems is a giant step towards placing yourself in a strong position to have an app that actually works for you – keeping those efficiencies going beyond the school boundaries.

Beware design over functionality

Many apps on the market focus on the style of the app and even offer you the option to brand with your school logo. However, scratch the surface and you will generally discover that there is no



substance to these and you may as well just use your website as this probably gives you more functionality!

It's better not to be swayed by looks and go for an industry recognised app (would you trust a banking app if it wasn't?) and when it comes to information about their children, parents are looking for the same level of integrity. School Gateway by Schoolcomms is a great example of a nationally recognisable and most importantly, trustworthy app.

Value beyond the hype

What gives an app value? The synergy between Schoolcomms and School

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Gateway is the best example of integrated functionality, making it the UK's best parent app.

- Seamless integration with SIMS, which is a nifty feature meaning you only record your data once and it does the rest for you
- It identifies parents who have the app and automatically converts a text message to a free app message to keep those text costs down
- It cuts time, every day, chasing unauthorised absences. Schoolcomms not only reads

attendance information from SIMS, but allows parents to respond via School Gateway and these responses can be written back into SIMS

- Achievement and behaviour can be set to automatically alert parents with a notification to let them know there is new information to view
- Parents only see what is relevant to their child(ren)
- Schoolcomms gives control over what you want to share, so you can customise it in line with your own policies. Sharing reports and

timetables direct from SIMS and being able to instantly publish to the app is another nice feature, completely eradicating printing costs

- Plus, there's a host of functionality around breakfast and after-school club booking, payment collection for dinners, parents evening and more
- All suppliers of these systems should be able to offer you a live demonstration using your own school data before you commit. So, don't be afraid to ask them and do probe into the detail.

Feature	Functionality	Yes	No
Message	Auto-identify app users – convert texts to free app messages		
Email	Draw on contact data already in your MIS		
Attendance	Auto identify from MIS, chase and write back parent response, share attendance stats		
Payments	Multiple payment options, show balances		
Clubs	Online booking, limit places, pay online		
Dinners	Show menu choices, book online, identify FSM		
Timetables	Share from MIS. Can be viewed by parents, students & staff		
Reports	Share from MIS. Viewable until you remove		
Achievements & Behaviours	Notify and share with parents from your MIS. Control what you share		
Parents Evening	Online booking, waiting list, confirmation list of all appts		
Multiple Children	View multiple children in one account		
Surveys & Forms	Access for parents and students		
Homework	Access for students and parents		
Student access	Separate login to app for students		
Support	Call their support line – check their answer speed		

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MOBILE TECHNOLOGY U-TURN

How Mangotsfield Academy turned scepticism into support

We've all been there haven't we? You've found something you feel passion about, but the people around you are just not convinced. Whether it's the perfect place to go on holiday, your new dream home or in a professional sense, an education resource which you are sure will make a huge difference yet others around you don't share your enthusiasm.

Sticking your neck on the line and persuading your senior management team that an investment will deliver real value is a brave move. In 2012 a newly appointed assistant head teacher at Mangotsfield School, a secondary academy with 1,200 students in South Gloucestershire did just that. Thankfully however, he has transformed the scepticism of his SLT into whole-hearted support.

Del Planter, now deputy head at Mangotsfield School, joined the teaching staff at the Bristol based academy which is part of the CSET Multi Academy Trust in 2012. At the time, just like many other schools up and down the country, Mangotsfield operated a blanket ban on the use of mobile technology. So when a new member of staff suggested investing in a resource which would actually encourage the use of mobile technology, his suggestion was met with a large degree of scepticism.

Del explained: "I had a personal interest in e-learning and could really see the direction that this could take education, but my optimism was not shared by many teaching professionals. I attended BETT that year to deepen my understanding of how and where technology fits in to education and I came across GCSEPod – at the time a relatively unknown resource, only in its second full academic year on the market so was by no means the proven resource it is today.

"Whilst it's fair to say that in 2012 the visual aspect of the product was

not a patch on the graphics of the current product, I could nevertheless instantly see how it could be used and provide students with a deeper learning experience. However, five years ago not everyone shared my enthusiasm and technology was often demonised for its dumbing down of education but I could see just how it might have the opposite effect. The short sharp bursts of information were not about dumbing things down but rather providing students with relevant, accurate information delivered in a way in which has been proven to work.

"So with support from my colleagues, the SLT and a very keen head of history, we trialled the resource in the history department and whilst we had a few hurdles to jump around our then IT infrastructure, I knew that I had been right to believe in it as the students adopted it quickly and easily and their feedback was positive."

However not all staff were convinced of the benefits quite as quickly and Mangotsfield did not subscribe to GCSEPod until January 2014, more than 12 months after the original trial, but once it did, it was quickly introduced across a number of different subjects.

Del added: "I think the key was that GCSEPod could be set up so that it could be accessed using the same user name and passwords as student's logins for the school network, removing any perceived barriers. We almost instantly created a sense of competition between departments which helped to get staff as well as students on board quickly which meant it was well used from the outset.

"Student usage has steadily risen year on year and in some subjects such as history, GCSEPod has been embedded in to the schemes of work and it's no small coincidence that we have seen a significant increase in results and progress in this subject. Admittedly, take up amongst some of our less able

students has been slower, however our summer 2016 results showed a marked improvement amongst this specific group following a huge increase in their usage of GCSEPod.

"The changes to the English curriculum and the expected deeper levels of understanding, coupled with the closed book examinations led to a huge spike in usage in this subject- up 18% on the previous year and students told us that GCSEPod really helped them to be better prepared.

"As changes to the assessment of Science and Maths based subjects come in to force we expect to see a similar increase in usage and as a school we will need to work with teaching staff to demonstrate the added value that GCSEPod can bring to their teaching and to their students' learning.

"Going forward we are going to introduce students as young as year 7 to GCSEPod so that by the time they reach Year 9 and can really engage with the content, it has already become second nature to them, much like their use of social platforms such as Spotify and You Tube."

In just three years GCSEPod, has become very much part of the fabric of Mangotsfield School and despite initial reservations, Del says that the SLT would not now be without it. So much so, Mangotsfield School is now using its experience to help other schools in the area to successfully introduce and embed GCSEPod.

Del concluded: "Going out on a limb is always a risk, but I just knew that this would be a really useful resource for the digital savvy students who conduct their live on mobile devices and have become accustomed to accessing content of their choice whenever and however they wish."

THE CONSTANT GARDNER

Andrew Reay, Associate Principal of King's Leadership Academy Warrington, on The Power of Character

Whilst I applaud the Chief Inspector's recent call to put children's education before the constraints of performance tables and school inspection, I could not help wonder whether parts of the speech succumbed to the principles of self-deception – the power of problem is firstly the fact that you don't recognise the problem exists; and secondly, you are actually at the heart of the very problem itself or choose to ignore it.

Schools are not just at risk of becoming tangled in a football league table like culture, head teachers have become no different to football managers and are recognised, rewarded, and even honoured, by the speed of movement up the league table. Those who produce the quickest results and best Ofsted ratings get the biggest bonuses, those who fail are sacked instantly – is the dog currently being well and truly wagged by the tail? The cost of this transformation to our schooling system through a legacy of quick fixes – early entry, multiple entry, easy vocational equivalents, EAL students entered for their native language as a modern foreign entry, all in an effort to boost statistics – has created a seismic shift from long term to short term thinking, and a slow eroding of what might be seen as traditional values based education.

Exam metric

If the whole purpose of a school is to develop every facet of a child, why, then, up and down the country, do schools continue to focus far too heavily on the metric of exam results and obsess over Ofsted inspections? How many times do you hear this in your school “We don't do it for Ofsted but we need to do X, Y & Z in case of Ofsted”? What could a paradigm shift in the way we run our



schools and classrooms look like and how could it be achieved? The consultant and author Peter Drucker put it best: management is about getting by – or, in our case, ‘managing’ the system to get the best ranking in the performance tables and stay in the good books of Ofsted; but leadership? Well, leadership is about doing the right thing per se: not right for the league tables, not right for the system, but simply right. It is about accepting that there is a simple and unalienable definition of ‘right’, one that transcends everything else – and this brings us right back to the value systems and culture that underpin our organisation.

The more tangible cost of ‘management’ has been the generations of children ejected from school into the working world with qualifications that might, on the face of it, seem encouraging – but which, in reality, hide the stark truth of their under-preparedness from view. Yet, despite what the science is telling

us, despite revolutionary writers and thinking increasingly challenging these norms, there appears to be a systemic refusal to see the problem staring us in the face. Why should the tail, made up of government led performance measures and inspectorates, continue to wag the main body of our educational system? Only the other day did I receive an invitation to attend a conference on British values and the delivery of character education in our schools – its closing title “what Ofsted is looking for”. Too often, the failure to see that a problem even exists expounds the problem itself. The solution stands right before us – personal leadership from ourselves and what is truly best for our children.

The Iceberg Effect

It was at the height of the quick fix culture in 2009 that I first began to think of school leadership in terms of icebergs. Think that sounds nonsensical? Well, think again! Icebergs are curious things; we think of them as big chunks of ice floating on the water, but in fact they're much vaster than that. What we see are only the tips of giant mountains of ice hewn from the Arctic and Antarctic ice sheets, with most of their bodies, over 90% of it, entirely submerged. In other words, only 10% of what goes on is ‘outward facing’ or in plain sight for all to see; the rest is ‘inwards facing’. When we talk about scratching the surface of the problem, sometimes we talk about seeing only “the tip of an iceberg”. Dentists have a similar expression and express it with their own mordant sense of humour: they talk about getting to the “root of the problem.” As Confucius once said, “you reap what you sow” and we are all too familiar with the tactics many schools revert to in an attempt to jump the hurdles of the accountability system



(and could be argued are required) to 'game' the system in order to protect their schools (and countless jobs). So why do we take short-cuts year after year in our schools?

Long view

Quite simply, the way schools are examined and held to account, and ranked against each other, doesn't encourage teachers and school leaders to take the long view. What's happening in Britain's schools, particularly those which are failing or struggling to keep their heads above required performance measures, even under the stewardship of strong-willed, driven school leaders, points to this very fact: it takes willpower and a ferocious strength from its leadership to turn an unsatisfactory school around, but too often these transformations are driven by tip-of-the-iceberg thinking; because of the way the inspection system works, change has to be fast – and only change that is

imposed by brute force can be rapidly effected. To outside observers, the transformation strong school leaders can effect must look revelatory, but to what extent are the long term implications of these blitzkriegs being taken into account? More importantly, what happens to an institution, to a culture, when its head is cut off or removed, literally? If change has been imposed by a super head or NLE for example, parachuted in to save the day, rather than cultivated from below, what happens when that imposition is taken away? Can change be lasting if it is forced, or does it just wither away? Does a school or any other organisation for that matter start to nosedive when their leader is removed or moves on to bigger and better things? If it does, this points to an overt focus on 'tip of the iceberg' thinking; in other words, the organisation has succumbed to the 'iceberg effect'.

The Constant Gardener

What's happening in rapid turnaround schools up and down the country is

remarkable and inspiring in so many ways, but I wonder if the incentives created by the current system risk being overtly subjected to the quick fix culture – a legitimate reaction to the demands of the system, perhaps, but still an example of how momentary improvements can be made at the expense of long term thinking.

Horticulture

Education, just like horticulture, is based on an ecosystem requiring constant seeding, nurture and cultivation to achieve its true potential. Yet, is education now a system that actively encourages schools to become 'seasonal gardeners', sowing new seeds each and every year yet only tending to a select group of their flowers at the most important times of school year – and defining that importance in terms of them and their positions rather than the long term benefits of their students.

Constant gardener

The idea of a school leader becoming a ‘constant gardener’, who plants and nourishes every seed, attends to each and every flower equally, regardless of species or time away from the annual village show, with the same rigour and commitment every day of their working lives, is actively not encouraged by the system into which our school leaders are bound. We might laugh at the colourful comparison between leaders of education and those of horticulture, but look a little closer and think about what we, as teachers, do in comparison to gardeners: we plant the seeds in September, we ignore them for four years, expecting all our flowers to grow in a linear fashion; then, when the summer show is fast approaching, we cram in all the quick fix techniques and miracle grow cures we can, and keep our fingers crossed for a perfect summer bloom.

And just as Aristotle has taught us that habits are the cornerstone of every behaviour, positive or negative, if we fail to prepare the minds of our students effectively over the course of their childhood, is it any wonder why so many adults fail to develop into life-long learners? Rather, our students become more adept at cramming and see education as something to be endured, all at the expense of developing mastery and a lifelong passion for learning.

The ‘constant gardener’ knows that a truly flourishing life starts at the root. Although it is impossible to make a flower grow in a linear fashion, we can create a culture that fosters the right conditions to maximise growth for the long term. As the old adage goes: give a man a fish and you will feed him for a night; give him a fishing rod and he can feed himself for a lifetime. One of the best pieces of advice was given to me on day 1 of the Future Leaders programme by Sir Iain Hall: “Invest more time and resources into year 7 than you do for any other year group; get year 7 right and the rest will follow”. Only recently did I visit an inspirational primary school and their actions mirrored this same principle, with the school investing more time and resources into their pre-school students than for any other year group. The values

based culture and ethos of the school was palpable at every level because the foundations of character and the essential ingredients of how to be a model student had been codified on entry and reinforced relentlessly.

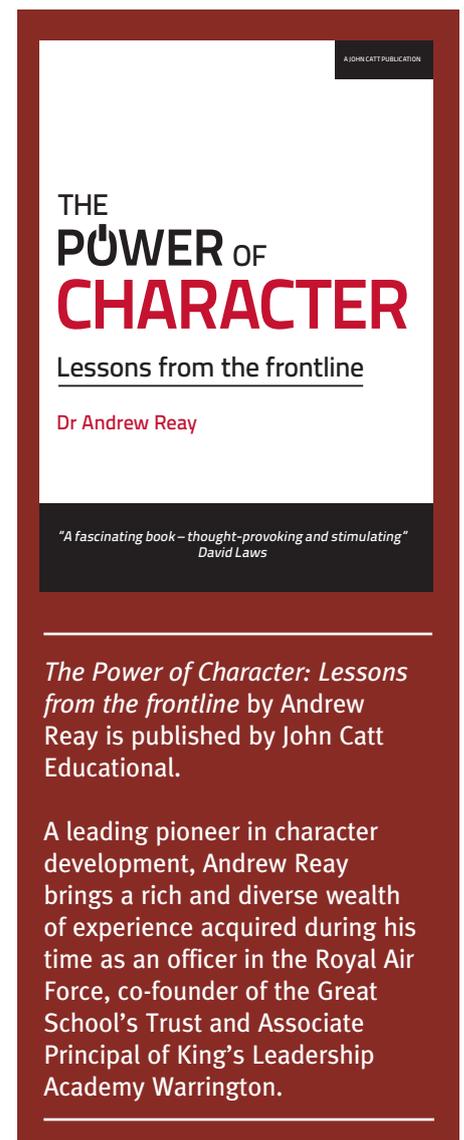
Education 2.0

My experiences have only bolstered the belief that there is no quick fix to the problems of the quick fix culture: at its heart, the system needs fundamental change – a new paradigm, an Education 2.0. If there is a valid Education 2.0 out there, it must be one that goes against the grain of modern living, one that puts value in the solid and long term instead of the fleeting and momentary; and one that, in eschewing the rush for instant gratification and putting the desires of the present ahead of the needs of the future, lays long-lasting foundations. Education 2.0 has to become focused on “below the iceberg” principles, hewing close to the character virtues and values that set students up to be successful in the long term, not just to appear successful in the short.

My book *The Power of Character: Lessons from the Frontline* has opened my eyes to the wealth of research, dialogue and debate being undertaken by some of the world’s most learned researchers into this very field. Not everyone agrees on everything, but common to all these thinkers is a unifying thread – that character matters, and whether we frame it in terms of ‘Emotional Intelligence’, ‘Grit’, or any one of a dozen other different titles, all of the behavioural scientists agree that strength of character is a better indicator of a child’s future success in life than the academic markers which have, until now, been our only way of gauging, measuring and unfortunately in too many cases, restricting the innate potential of our children.

When I reflect on Doctor Martin Luther King’s statement, ‘Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education’, I believe we are all drawn to people by forces that go beyond intellect and success, drawn to them because of the intangible, often unspoken, merits of their character. How long before we recognise that character is all – that everything else

is a sub-set of character, that everything we do would be easier to understand, easier to process, easier to learn, if we turned to the merits of character first. How might the world look if it had more teachers, more school leaders, parents, communities and business leaders who looked to character education as a real asset, one that could holistically better the world? What if we collectively turned our backs on short-termism, on tip of the iceberg thinking, and took more time to build our young people’s self-worth through a firm foundation of principle-driven values? What if we then took the time to nurture them for the long term, confronting both what we do and why we do it? As Covey says, “To do well, you must be good. And to do good, you must first be good”.



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