

CELEBRATING THE BEST IN ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS

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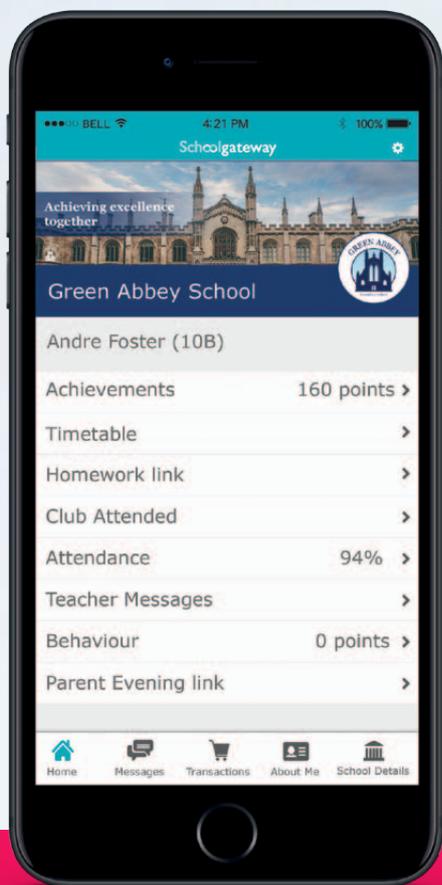
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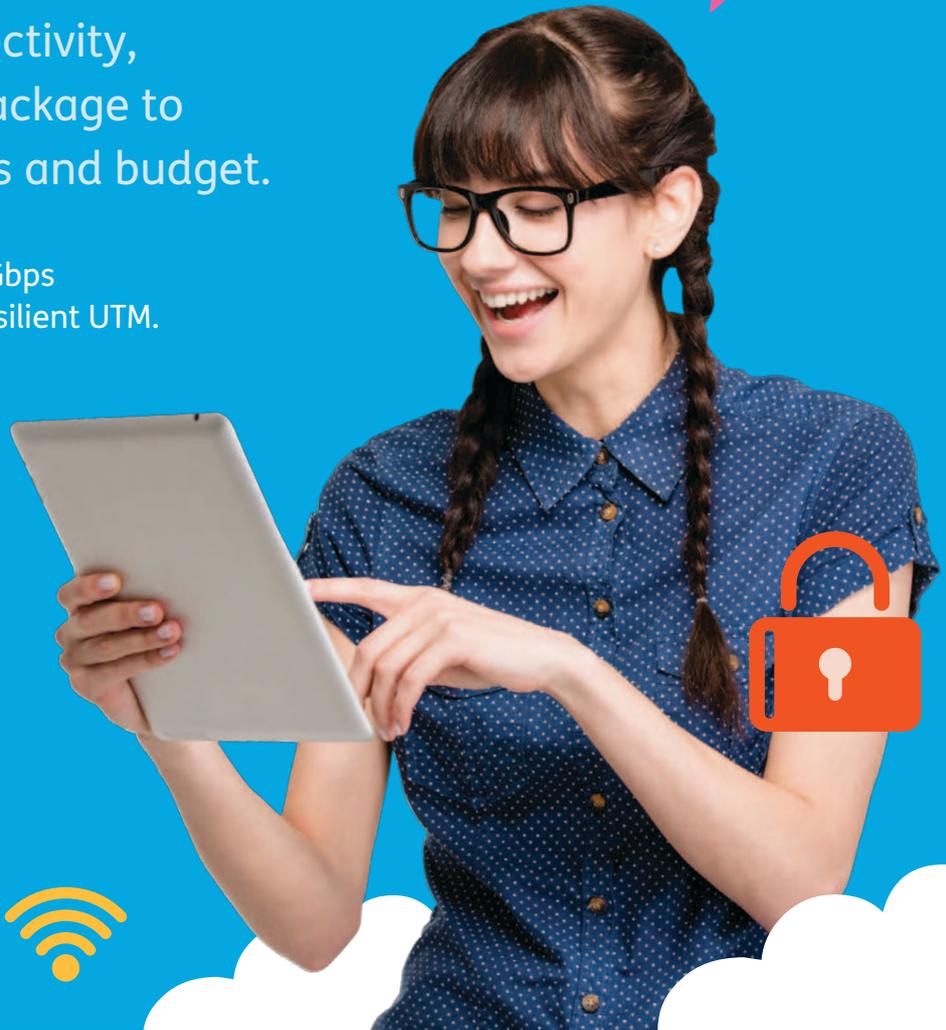


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SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY

A spell working in the Middle East has allowed Roy Blatchford the chance to reflect on the UK education system

I recently addressed an audience comprising the leaders of the Arabian Gulf's petrochemical industries. The buzzword at the conference was 'diversification'. The price of a barrel of oil hovers around \$60, where once it was over \$100. The leaders of the Gulf nations need the wealthy oil companies to help their economies diversify. They look with envy at the way research-led science parks, bustling with innovators, have spun off from major UK universities thereby creating considerable wealth for the nation.

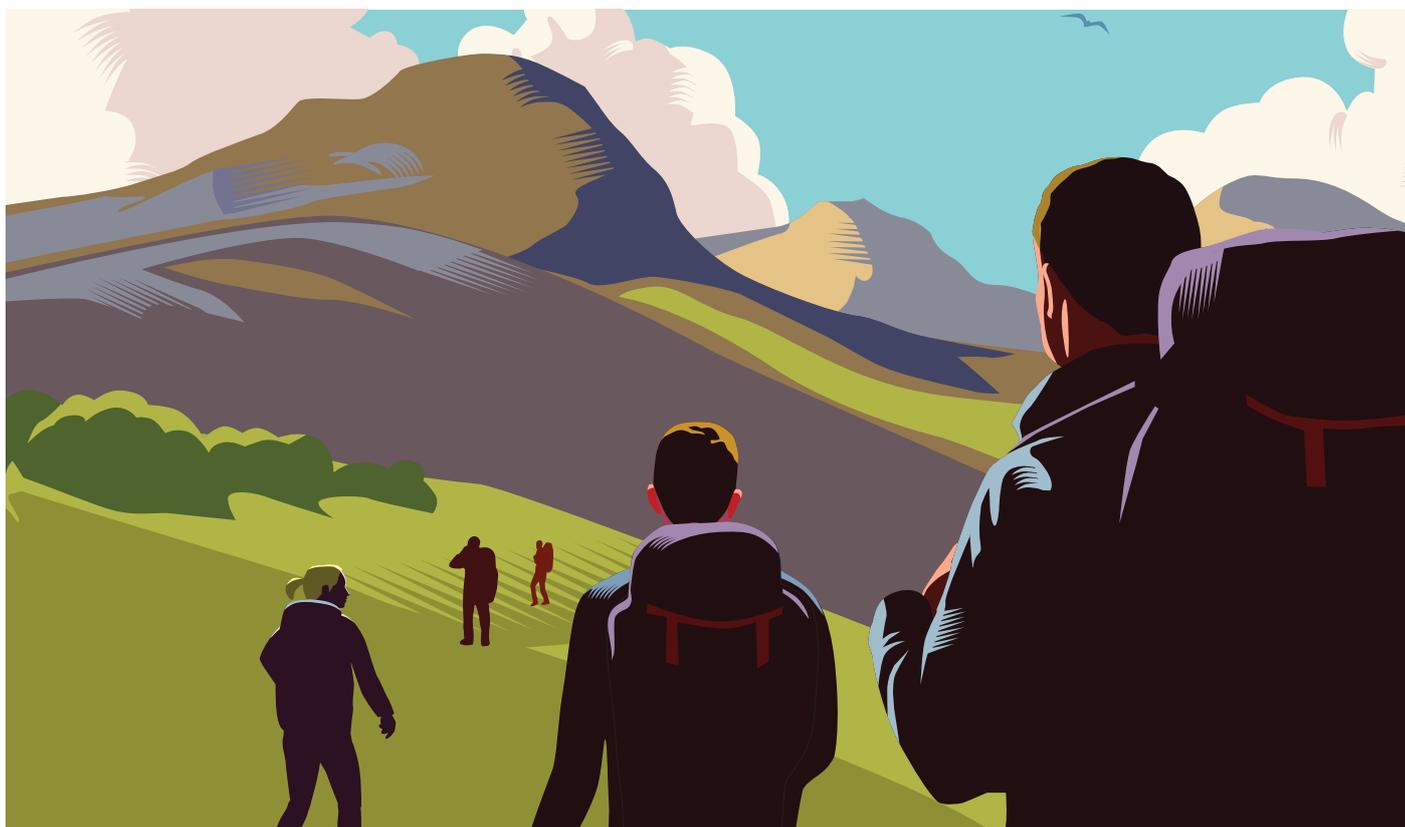
My theme was about government, education and industry working to common goals. In particular, I stressed the point that as well as diversifying their economies they need to invest in education. And they all are doing just that - with education at the heart of their 2030 and 2040 visions of sustainable societies 'beyond oil'. Sustainability is the mantra.

It is instructive to see which particular aspects of a successful education system they are choosing to embrace. Success is a journey, and each country is at a

different stage of planning and delivery. I would identify seven priorities they are variously following through on.

1. Investing in teachers

There is unanimous recognition that in the most successful global systems, teachers are well trained, respected by parents and trusted by politicians. But to be a teacher, particularly for men, is not a natural career path in some cultures. The equivalent of Teach First is being tried, but cultural shifts are not easy. What is being acknowledged is that the



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remuneration of teachers in government schools needs a considerable lift if, as part of diversification, the brightest and best are to take up the teacher's vocation.

2. Investing in leaders

The same rings true for leadership. Education ministries are realising that a systematic approach to high quality leadership training is a sine qua non. Principals and senior teachers are being given appropriate mentoring and tailored courses, with a special emphasis on teaching and learning, and moving them away from their traditional role as administrators. Links between international and local government schools are paving the way. School leaders I've met are responding enthusiastically.

3. Kindergarten: a running start

The reputation of fine early years work in much of northern Europe has persuaded many governments in the Gulf Region that investment in kindergarten is vital. Publicly and privately funded systems are emerging, many rooted in the UK's best early years practice, many borrowing the best from Montessori. How cultures through history have educated very young children has varied, but today most countries hold to this vital, formative period for a child being a shared enterprise between the family and the state.

4. 21st Century Curriculum

Local, national and international dimensions underpin the best curriculum in any jurisdiction. For countries with

textbooks and workbooks which form the core of classroom teaching, change is gradual. Content is being updated to ensure a careful balance between 'old' and 'new'. And countries across the globe rightly want to modernise without westernising. Two aspects of curriculum development though are on the march across the Gulf: digital empowerment leading to blended learning for students; and the classroom of tomorrow being bilingual in Arabic and English.

5. International Benchmarking

The impact of TIMSS, PISA and PIRLS in recent years offering respected international comparators is not to be underestimated. In countries without the traditions of long established, independent national examinations, looking outwards for external validation of students' outcomes becomes increasingly important. Where countries feature in international league tables matters to them, and provide a stimulus for further government investment in schools. In a climate of business diversifying, what others across the globe are doing assumes a particular resonance.

6. Vocational and technical training

A feature of a number of countries driving for world-class education - notably some of those formerly in the USSR - has been their well judged investment in vocational and technical education, closely linked to local labour markets. Establishing appropriate qualification frameworks

has been an integral of the process. The oil-rich nations have observed this and are following suit. Persuading business to set aside budgets for traineeships and apprenticeships is imperative, and an arena where government, industry and education must collaborate.

7. Graduation and post-graduation rates, research and innovation

There are no Gulf universities in the world's top 200. But the ambition is there. Business leaders, who themselves have often enjoyed an education in some of the best universities in the US and UK, know with a passion that their own higher education sectors need to step up to the mark. As the oil business helps economies in the region diversify, so it must do all it can to press the case for a research and innovation dividend located in public and private universities. The collaboration imperative is again self-evident.

Looking at this list of seven priorities from a UK perspective, one can feel professionally proud without being complacent. The best I see in schools and universities across the UK suggests that what others in the world are pursuing in educational planning and delivery, we have been pretty smart at for a good few decades now.

Perhaps it takes a period working outside the UK to appreciate just how successful our own education system, with all its wrinkles, really is.



Roy Blatchford is founder of www.blinks.education, working with schools, colleges and universities in the UK and internationally. He has spent the past two years implementing education system reform in the Middle East.

Roy was Founding Director (2006 - 2016) of the National Education Trust, an independent foundation which leads excellent practice and innovation in education.

For 30 years Roy has been an international trainer and conference speaker on English and literacy, school improvement, leadership and curriculum development. He has been an adviser to various UK governments and is a member of the Education Policy Institute's advisory board.

Roy was appointed CBE for services to education in the 2016 New Year Honours.

THE STORY OF A VOLUNTARY MAT MERGER



Chair Andrew Mayo tells the story of an amicable merger between two successful MATS in Hertfordshire

In the commercial world “Mergers and Acquisitions” are a common form of corporate growth, but are nearly always an acquisition rather than any merger of equals, despite publicity to the contrary.

One side holds the balance of power and after an initial period this frequently becomes very clear. It is also the case that more than half of such events fail in the realisation of their initial strategic objectives. The most frequent reasons are clashes of culture and the departure of key people from the “junior partner”. In the MAT world, mergers – in terms of two established and flourishing MAT’s voluntarily coming together -are not common. Recommendations are only likely to be made by RSC’s where one party is in difficulty. For example, TES reported in December the case of Floreat Educational Trust approaching Avanti Schools Trust because of its financial difficulties.

There is no doubt that there is a critical mass that is needed to support the infrastructure of a true MAT, and that certainly exceeds two schools. It was the consciousness of this that led the Boards of two primary MAT’s in St Albans to consider their options. The local area did not have many schools that would need sponsorship. Still a strong local authority, Herts at the end

of 2014 had seen 21 out of 29 previously RI schools now rated as “good”.

Successful schools

Fleetville Multi Academy Trust was formed in 2012 by the Fleetville Junior and Infants Schools, both rated outstanding. As successful schools they wanted to take charge of their own destinies and take advantage of the freedom and autonomy academisation brought.

In 2014 the Infant School head moved to the Junior school and doubled as Executive Head of the new Trust. In early 2012, the Governors of Mandeville Primary School decided to convert to an academy and set up a subcommittee to investigate what was needed. This led to Spiral Academies Trust being formed legally in January 2013. Even before this date a request was made to sponsor Chaulden Junior School in Hemel Hempstead, and in May 2013 Spiral became two schools and a MAT. The Head of Mandeville became fulltime Executive Head, bringing in additional finance through school-to-school support assignments.

After a couple of years operation, both Trusts were aware that to be financially sustainable and to be able to maximise the benefits of being a MAT, they needed growth. Both Executive Heads were well connected and constantly alive to possible

opportunities. Growth was actively discussed at the Fleetville Board meeting of October 2014, and shortly afterwards they made an informal approach to Spiral to consider a possible merger.

The two Executive Heads and the two Chairs met in mid November and commissioned the former to start sharing information and to understand the respective ways of operation. The minutes of that meeting record the potential advantages as:

- Sharing Finance and HR resources
- Greater depth of staff: for example having ‘floating teachers’ to help cover maternity
- Greater capacity to support other schools – greater opportunities for our staff to share good practice between schools to produce results.
- Sharing of knowledge on contract bidding processes

Exciting future

And so the journey of 2015 started – one of discussions, learning, negotiations, compromises, occasional misunderstandings and frustrations – leading to an agreed way forward and a potentially exciting future. The Chair of Spiral had several experiences of commercial mergers in his business life and knew that culture clashes could be the greatest enemy.



them continuing as Head of one school, assisted by an able Deputy who acted as Associate Headteacher.

Biggest struggle

Perhaps the biggest struggle was to decide on a new name for what was being referred to as “NewTrust”. Spiral had invested a lot in brand building in its new name and was reluctant to start again; indeed regarded it as a “red line” to retain the name. Fleetville had no loyalty to their Trust name as it was still the name of their two schools and geographical area but were reluctant to be seen as “taken over”.

A small sub-committee formed and a deal was struck – that in return for keeping the Spiral name the Trust company address would remain at Fleetville and the existing Executive Head of Fleetville would take the title CEO. The other would stay as Executive Head. The planned joint leadership would however stay in place.

The original planned merger date of September before long became unrealistic, given the hurdles of legal work, financial due diligence, and DfE approval that had to be gone through – just as all the papers were ready we hit the summer period. This meant that we would not have a full accounting year for the new merged Trust until 2016/17. Nevertheless with the deal agreed in principle the new Board of Spiral Partnership Trust met for the first time with 11 Trustees in September 2015. Nine of these were also Members, which has been changed since following DfE requirements. The previous Chairs became Chair and Deputy Chair respectively.

In March 2016 a special Board meeting was called to formulate a five year strategic plan. Much work was put into the Scheme of delegation and the adjustment of accountabilities needed between Board, LGB’s, Heads and the Executive Leadership.

The new Board defined “non negotiable Guiding Principles” and set out a range of strategies, including further growth, as specifically as possible. Since so many academies repeat the same kinds of values and aspirations, the new Board also looked for some characteristics that

The two executive heads set about looking carefully at the approaches to teaching and learning, and found much common ground and synergy across the schools. Meanwhile each Board formally approved the progression of talks. Each Trust nominated three people to form a “Shadow Board”, as it was called, a Steering Committee for the merger process. A project plan was prepared and until consultation formally was ready to commence it was agreed to keep the plan confidential to the Boards and the School Heads only.

It is no surprise that cultural differences did arise, particularly in approaches to governance. The two Boards varied in their willingness to delegate decisions to the “Shadow Board”. It believed it had been given authority, but later found one of the Boards wished to ratify each decision themselves as a full Board, which caused some delays. The Boards also varied in their approach to innovation and risk – one of them having introduced a radical new set of terms and conditions for staff.

Practical issues to be solved included the constitution of the new Board –we had 17 between us as at January 2015; the name of the new merged Trust; where it would be headquartered; the future of the two Executive Heads; the roles of Trust level staff and how they would be paid for, and the new Articles of Association. Legally, one Trust did have to absorb the other – ie one would be dissolved, and the other would take over the assets, liabilities and staff of the dissolved Trust.

Both parties however were anxious to be genuinely even handed so that neither would be seen to dominate the other.

Formal consultation of the intentions of the Trusts with their stakeholders commenced in June with a joint letter from the Chairs of each Board. Staff, parents and carers were invited to meetings at each school, and to write to the Chairs if they wished. In the event, there was very little concern showed by any stakeholder group. Meanwhile on the ground, the schools began cooperating very quickly, sharing resources and ideas and meeting together regularly.

Behind the scenes the Shadow Board pursued the project plan and sought to find mutual agreement on the issues of difficulty. During 2015 some Board members bowed out voluntarily and only one was asked to resign, so that by the first meeting of the new Board it was a manageable size.

Expected practice

It would have been expected practice that one of the Executive Heads would be nominated CEO, which would inevitably lead to the departure of the other. Either would have been a great loss due to their experience and maturity. As it happened they had complementary skills and worked very well together. They divided the top role broadly into “Business and Infrastructure” and “Education and HR” and wrote a clear division of accountabilities. So the Board took the decision to make them joint leaders; and this was afforded financially by one of

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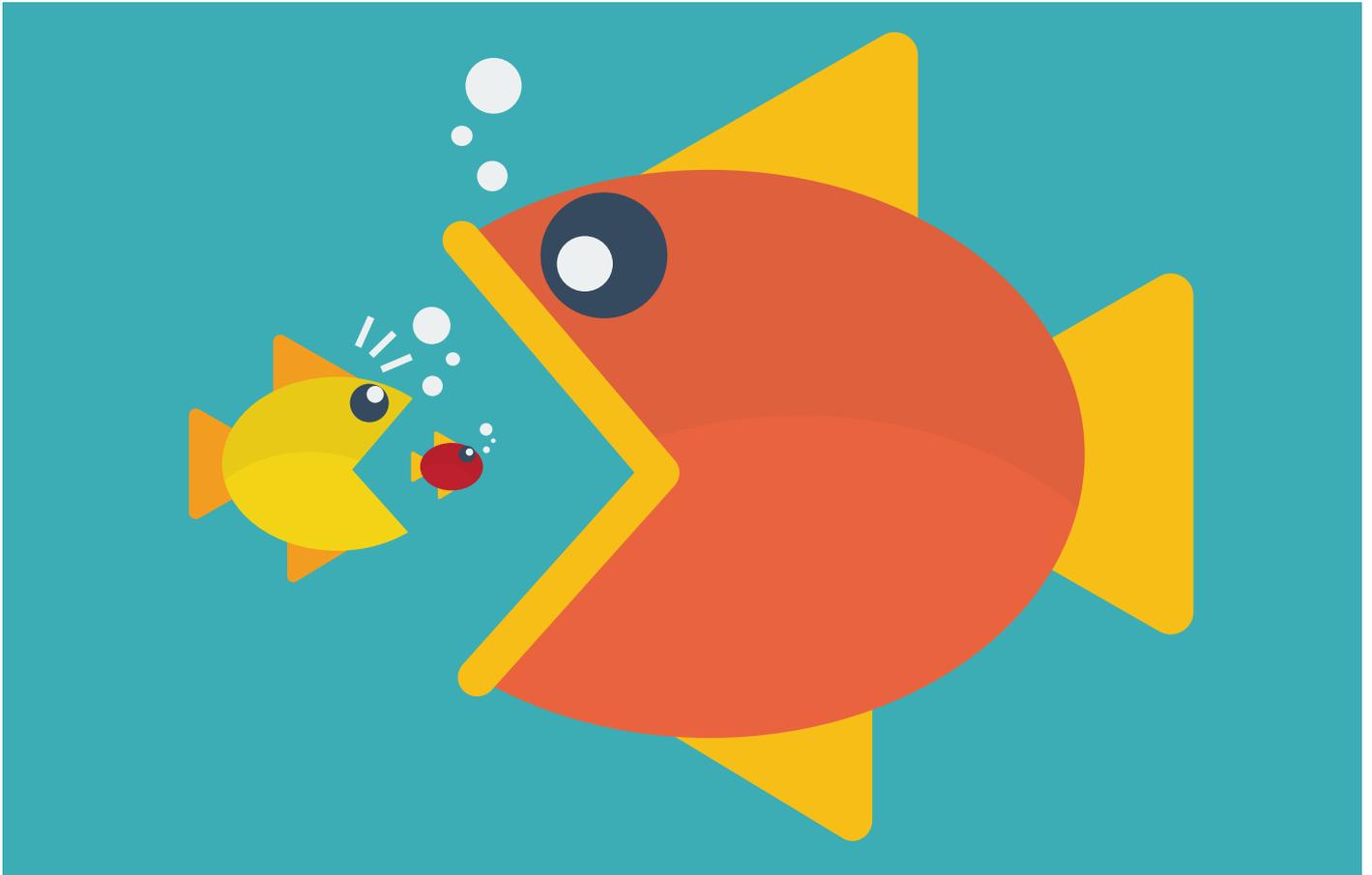
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made Spiral “distinctive” and came up with the following:

- Creativity and Innovation; thinking beyond “the box”
- Experienced and nationally recognised staff, especially at the senior level
- Celebrating and maintaining individual school identities
- Operating the management principle of “earned autonomy”
- Providing excellent support when, where and how it is needed
- Disciplined focus on performance and achievement
- Building varied “Learning Communities” (everywhere, not just in the classroom)
- Minimising paperwork that adds little value provided it is not needed for compliance purposes
- ‘Partnerships’, networking and benchmarking
- Balanced expertise of the Board

Sub-committees

Sub committees were formed with

carefully balanced membership, especially in this first year, to avoid over domination by one party. The Chair met monthly with the two Executives – who worked together admirably, a fact that was a key ingredient in the new Trust gelling as one body. They worked tirelessly in the search for further growth, presenting the benefits of the MAT to schools considering becoming an academy.

Adjustments to the shared executive role and establishing a clear Trust structure inevitably raised some issues to be resolved. Whereas we wanted synergies of scale wherever possible, this sometimes conflicted with the policy of “earned autonomy” for individual schools. The external world found our structure confusing and so during 2017 we changed the titles of the Executives to be CEO, Business and CEO Education, and are well able to argue the merits of this joint leadership, a model that is incidentally common in Germany. Staff at the Trust level changed over the following two years enabling an initial “blueprint” for a desired structure to be realised.

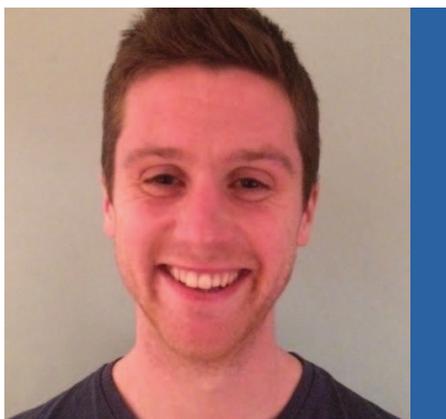
Growth

Now in 2018 we are finally able to embark on growth, with two more schools joining us. This enables us financially to have both executives working full time at the Trust level. We have no doubt that the two Boards made the right decision three years ago, and believe we have created an organisation that can not only put children first, but offers a range of development opportunities for staff with or without leadership potential.

We continue to provide services and support to other schools on a consultancy basis. We do not aspire to become a “corporate” MAT, but to build sufficient economies of scale which will enable the best teaching and learning for all the diverse range of pupils in our care, and to be an employer “of choice” with both financial and non financial benefits.

In all organisations Leadership is the fundamental ingredient of success – and in that we consider ourselves very fortunate to have so much ability taking us forward.

S..L..O..W



Jamie Thom argues it is time to teach like the tortoise...

Allow me an extended analogy. We are all familiar with the basic plot of Aesop's fable 'The Tortoise and The Hare'. It revolves around two contrasting figures: the speedy Hare and the slow Tortoise.

This fable is a perfect representation of the contrast between teachers in a school environment. Mr Hare is

the charismatic 'outstanding' lesson deliverer: his individual lessons sparkle with flair, dynamism and engagement. Students talk highly of him: 'Every lesson is so fun and interesting!' or 'We are never bored!' They dash for his lessons, waiting eagerly for whatever 'learning journey' will be tightly and energetically compressed into an hour.

Mr Hare puts hours into manufacturing detailed PowerPoint slides that are full of stimulating images; he photocopies endless resources, and he has a particular penchant for group work tasks that are spectacularly well organised. There is an almost manic energy to Mr Hare; he moves all day with irresistible speed.

Mr Tortoise is a more self-deprecating classroom figure. His individual lessons are more refined, with his painstaking long-term plans providing the insight he needs to generate the individual experiences for his students. He has an almost-mythical knowledge of his subject; the product of intense investment in developing mastery of subject content. He rejected the default mode of PowerPoint

slides some time ago, preferring to focus his students' full attention on the purpose of learning.

Serenity

His students may speak about him in a slightly less effusive manner, but what they do say is telling: 'We know what we need to do to improve.' 'He explains things for us so clearly.' 'He knows his subject inside out.' There is a serenity to Mr Tortoise's professional demeanour; he appears to glide through the day, omitting an aura of wisdom and experience.

In the examination race at the end of the year, senior management are bewildered and confused.

Mr Tortoise's group performed much better, despite Mr Hare's 'outstanding' performance management lesson observation. Keen to learn from this experience, they set themselves a challenge: it is time to deconstruct, learn and share the practice of Mr Tortoise...

As Henry Thoreau (1908) highlights: 'our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify, simplify'. This is an adage that is wonderfully applicable to



TEACHING

lessons. Lesson time is often 'frittered away', so our mission with the individual lesson is to keep the purpose, clarity and direction as streamlined as possible.

Our individual lesson planning should ideally encompass the following:

Step 1: Ascertaining prior knowledge

Lessons should invest heavily in checking students' understanding from previous weeks; on recalling and remembering what has come before. Without being confident of this, we are effectively guessing what the direction of our lesson will be. The opening of the lesson is the optimal moment to begin this review. Barak Rosenshine (2012) states that 'The most effective teachers in the studies of classroom instruction understood the importance of practice, and they began their lessons with a five- to eight-minute review of previously covered material'.

Step 2: Student thinking

Our planning for lessons needs to reflect carefully on what it is we want students to be thinking about at each stage of the lesson. In Daniel Willingham's (2009) view 'learning is the residue of thought'. This is a careful distinction between what students are actively doing, as this does not necessarily result in them thinking and engaging with their learning. Tasks should be designed with careful consideration about how we manage our students' thinking process throughout the lesson.

Step 3: Guided success

Clarity around exactly what our expectations of students are, and what we want them to produce in our lessons, is vital. In our planning stage, we need to consider how we will guide students towards being able to produce a final outcome. Deconstructing modelled examples with students, talking through

our own thought process, and breaking down the skills are all steps that need to be included if we want students to develop a sense of clarity about the expectations we have for them.

Step 4: Deliberate practice

Planning will be at its most effective if we also give students time to practice independently the skills we want them to gain confidence in. This practice enables students to repeat tasks over lessons and weeks, in order to ensure clarity of understanding and mastery of the skills. This is another justification for why the slow unit planning is vital: these moments of deliberate practice need to be planned for periodically. Brown et al (2014) note that 'The striving, failure, problem solving and renewed attempts that characterise deliberate practice build the new knowledge, physiological adaptations, and complex mental models required to attain ever high levels'.

Step 5: Check for understanding

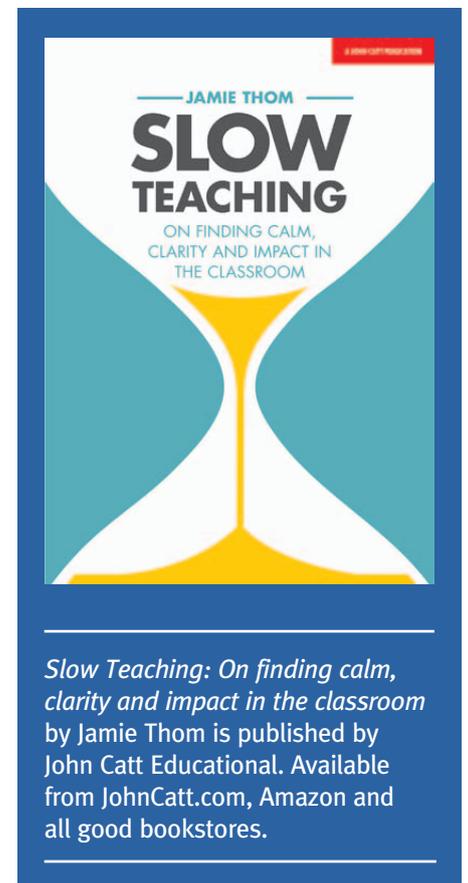
The best teachers frequently plan for moments that will check their students' comprehension of material throughout individual lessons. Without doing this, we have no real understanding of what is and what isn't working in our classroom. As we work through Slow Teaching, we will see the various strategies we can use to facilitate this – the most obvious being the use of questioning.

Maximising Planning Time

Albert Einstein (a man whose guidance on planning we should heed) said, in response to a question about what he would do given one hour to save the world, 'I would spend forty-five minutes defining the problem and only five minutes finding the solution'. Planning must be towards the top of our teaching hierarchy of needs: it should be the means

by which we spend a significant amount of our time outside of teaching lessons. Otherwise, Mr Hare's myopic philosophy begins to work its way back into our daily life in school.

Planning is our framework for teaching, a vital process to help us to provide the best for our students. Yet, it will only go so far, unless we can secure positive relationships with them. We shall return to this integral area once we have welcomed in our intrepid youngsters – who will be the fruits of our systematic and excellent planning – into our streamlined environment. Before we begin to inspire and challenge them with our wonderful subjects, it is time to consider how we use our non-verbal communication.



Slow Teaching: On finding calm, clarity and impact in the classroom by Jamie Thom is published by John Catt Educational. Available from JohnCatt.com, Amazon and all good bookstores.



WHY VR VIDEO IS DESTINED FOR THE CLASSROOM

Immersive fieldtrips without leaving the classroom. Virtual school tours for prospective new starters without the need to wait for an open day.

Virtual Reality (VR), and with-it VR video, has an enormous amount to offer schools, and the Vuze 360 3D VR camera is the perfect tool for those looking to enter into the world of VR.

VR is fast becoming the must-have tech for all storytelling faculties, from art to drama to science. There are a whole host of VR videos now available including tours of cities, natural wonders, museums and exhibitions from all over the world. There are also videos that offer experiences such as scuba diving, flying in the cockpit of a plane and building a car. Allowing students to see this footage through a VR headset provides an immersive, inspiring and unforgettable learning experience.

Every teacher will know how easily distracted students can be and maintaining their interest can often be difficult. Taking pupils out of the classroom and immersing them in a new experience can help to keep them engaged but this can often come at a heavy financial cost. VR is the perfect solution for this. Using VR headsets, students can delve into a whole new experience or discover new places all whilst in the safety of the classroom.

To unlock the true potential of VR in schools, however, the schools themselves must become the creators, and to do this they require a VR camera. The cameras can be used to record field trips, experiments, workshops or lessons, all of which can be

viewed by the students whenever they choose. The ability to watch an immersive VR video of a past lesson during revision time is an incredibly useful and powerful tool during the build-up to exams.

Teachers and staff can also watch back lessons or workshops to experience the class from the pupil's perspective. This footage can be used to improve teaching methods, review teaching performances and also provide new parents with an idea of what the school offers.

VR video can also be a powerful marketing tool, particularly when providing a virtual tour of the school and facilities. Prospective parents and students will be able to take a tour of the school online and see all the facilities available before deciding whether to enrol their child. The footage can also help to put new students at ease, allowing them to experience their first steps into their new school from home, making them feel more confident when the day arrives. Starting at secondary school can be a daunting experience so offering the unique ability of being able to see what the average day will be like would be very comforting and reassuring.

The true benefit for students, though will be when they get behind the lens and become the creators of their own footage. Encouraging pupils to create their own VR videos and explore their creativity would allow for expression, engagement and skills development. Students would be able to record their experiences, from birthday

parties to football matches, or develop their own films.

The Vuze camera from HumanEyes allows schools to perform a whole host of creative tasks. From filming, to editing and viewing, all that's needed is a Vuze camera, your computer and headset. With 4K resolution and eight camera lenses combining to create a 3D, VR experience for around £1,000 and in a small form factor, Vuze is the perfect answer for those in search of professional results on a limited budget. Editing VR videos is traditionally a difficult and time-consuming process, however HumanEyes has made this incredibly straightforward thanks to the Vuze VR Studio, a powerful but easy to use editing suite which is included with all Vuze cameras.

The cutting-edge technology in Vuze cameras also enables events to be broadcast live to Facebook, YouTube and Periscope, allowing schools from around the world to share live performances and events.

VR is set to be the next technology to revolutionise teaching and learning in the classroom thanks to its significant benefits for teachers, students and parents alike. HumanEyes, and the company's Vuze cameras, offer the perfect solution for schools to both record, experience and inspire within the world of VR.

W: vuze.camera

COMBINING FINANCIAL EFFICIENCY WITH ACADEMIC SUCCESS: A CURRICULUM-BASED MODEL



Stuart Gardner, Chief Executive, says the Thinking Schools Academy Trust have developed their financial planning by setting their staffing structure against a curriculum map - and saved millions across their MAT

An ongoing but essential educational challenge school system Leaders face is how to improve standards and enhance attainment while simultaneously reducing costs.

The ultimate priority for educators is creating the environment for students to achieve their best and realise their potential, but - especially in times of tighter funding - it is also crucial to do this in the most efficient way possible.

At the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT), we have developed and use a curriculum-based financial planning model which has been able to strike this balance. We have saved millions of pounds at our schools across Medway and Portsmouth, all while transforming standards and our students' life chances over a short period of time.

Our model, which has been in place for three years, allows school leaders to make efficiencies by evaluating the existing staffing structure at a school and setting it against a curriculum map - which shows how many classes will be required for each subject across each year group. It gives leaders a birds' eye view of the staffing resources required to deliver teaching effectively on the agreed pupil-to-teacher ratio.

The model enables accurate forecasting of staff for the next academic year. All our secondary schools sent us their curriculum maps and staffing structures

at the end of 2017, allowing us the time to intervene well in advance, either to recruit a new teacher into a subject, or to stop a recruitment if not needed. If a member of staff in a particular subject leaves halfway through the year, we know immediately whether we need to hire a full-time replacement, or if makes more sense to take on a teacher on a fixed, short-term contract.

Rapid transformation

Our leadership of The Victory Academy over the last three years shows it is possible to combine rigorous financial planning and rapid educational transformation. When the school (previously named Bishop of Rochester Academy) was taken over by TSAT in September 2015, it had been issued a financial notice to improve, which was almost entirely down to a staffing structure that did not match its curriculum, and was rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted.

Our curriculum-led financial planning model has been at the heart of our transformation of the school - reducing costs by more than £2m over the last three years, and revolutionising academic standards. The school is now rated 'Good', and in October's provisional Progress 8 results (+0.44 for all pupils) it was ranked the best non-selective school in Medway, with only three Grammar schools ahead of it overall.

This shows just how far effective financial planning can go, and just how quickly it can make a tangible difference. Reducing costs and raising standards may seem like opposing forces to some, but our model shows they can work in a mutually-supportive way.

Achieving efficiency and high-performance simultaneously is an important priority at the moment, particularly for academies that have recently been re-brokered by other trusts. Last year, it was revealed that the average cost to the taxpayer of a re-brokering was £131,000 in 2016, but we have shown that this process can lead to real savings rather than losses. Successful trusts taking over other academies is not the problem - it is the way it is done that is crucial.

Flexibility

The flexibility of our financial model means its benefits can be reaped by a multitude of different types of schools. In a Trust like TSAT, with high-performing grammar schools like The Rochester Grammar School and Holcombe Grammar School, as well as non-selective and comprehensive schools which were historically under-performing before we successfully turned them around (like The Victory Academy and The Portsmouth Academy), allowing for individual schools' differences has real benefits. We are now developing our own framework for primary level, too.

minimum they need to be clear that this is the best value way of meeting their curriculum aims. A rough rule of thumb is that every additional hour of teacher time costs approximately £1,250. This quickly enables school leaders to start to consider if running an additional class is the most cost efficient way of meeting their curriculum goals. For example, with a PAN of 150, if school leaders decide they want to give Year 11 smaller classes to support outcomes in English and Maths they could run 6 rather than 5 classes in these subjects at an approximate cost of £25,000.

Alternatively, school leaders may wish to offer the broadest possible curriculum to their students so they decide to allocate additional subjects to the options blocks at an approximate cost of £6250 per subject – it is important to remember that leaders are committed to this additional cost for the length of the course so each subject will cost an additional £12,500 for a 2 year KS4 and £18,750 for a 3 Year KS4 curriculum. This allows school leaders and governors to make financially-informed decisions about meeting their curriculum aims, and consider whether they would rather have the additional English and Maths teaching in Year 11 or the two extra options subjects at KS4.

Step 2 – Consider your timetable allocations by subject and year group

The timetable can be delivered in a number of different ways (1 week 30 periods; 2 week 60 periods; 2 week 50 periods etc.) - consider what is the most appropriate for your school.

Consider how many periods should be allocated to each subject and year group to meet the curriculum aims considered in step 1.

Step 3 – Map the resource requirements horizontally into a spreadsheet (creating the x axis)

Horizontally list all the subjects that are in your curriculum map by year group showing total cohort size. Within each of the blocks consider how many lessons are required by timetable rotation and how many classes will run. This will equal to

the resources identified in step 2. [Example – Year 7 English may need 9 periods a fortnight and will have a 4 form entry, therefore to deliver this the school will need 36 periods of English teaching]

Step 4 – Map all staff that have an ability to deliver the curriculum

Teachers, Leadership, and Unqualified vertically on the spreadsheet (creating the y axis). Down the vertical axis list every member of staff, grouped by subject specialism. It is important to capture every member of staff who could deliver an element of the curriculum resource requirements identified in step 3.

Step 5 – Consider how many lessons each member of staff can deliver

Against each member of staff listed in step 4 consider how many lessons they can teach out of the maximum timetable rotation.

It is important for schools to have a clear rationale over the appropriate amount of non-contact time for various roles and the cost of any “management” time. A typical middle leader may have an allowance of 5 hours “management” time at a cost of £6,250 in addition to their TLR payment. In a school with 20 members of staff receiving “management” time if the school leaders chose to reduce management time by one hour the school would save £25,000. This is also an important consideration for any timetable allocations that are not classroom based e.g. overseeing an isolation room. Could any of these activities be more cost effectively delivered by support staff?

[Example - a full time teacher on a 50 period timetable can deliver 45 periods once 10% PPA entitlement is removed]

Step 6 – Plot lesson allocation in the grid

Within the grid identify against each member of staff in step 5 what lessons they will be asked to deliver against the subject.

[Example – the teacher who can teach 45 periods could deliver 35 periods of

English and 10 periods of media studies]

Step 7 – Evaluate the model

Use the spreadsheet to review the following information:

- Pupil teacher ratio by subject and year group
- Surplus/deficit time identified by subject
- Surplus/deficit time by staff member changes could be made at this stage to refine the model that would have the following aims:
 1. Move the pupil teacher ratio closer to 30 (25 for practical subjects)
 2. Minimise surplus time by subject
 3. Minimise surplus time by staff member

Step 8 – Identify the resource implications

The model will have 3 possible outcomes;

1) The current staffing structure is still efficient for the curriculum

This is where the current staff have minimal surpluses and pupil teacher ratios are showing at acceptable levels.

2) The current staffing structure is under resourced to deliver the future curriculum

This will show that staff will need to be appointed to deliver the curriculum. The model will identify the subject requirements and therefore will ensure that when appointing the new member of staff is deployed in the most effective way.

3) The current staffing structure is over resourced to deliver the future curriculum

This will show surpluses by subject and staff member and then can be used to either consult on redundancies or as part of a redeployment strategy when resignations are received.

Modelling this three years in advance will help with staff planning decisions and will ensure that any staffing decision is solely linked to the delivery of the curriculum.

EFFECTIVE READING INTERVENTION AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

In an extract from their brilliant new book *Thinking Reading*, James and Dianne Murphy stress the importance of utilising the latest research to help tackle poor reading skills at secondary



Teachers and research

For a long time the relationship between teaching and research was fairly simple: academics did research and teachers taught. There was little or no interaction between the two groups. From the 1980s, the profile of research began to change, not because of a growing interest in research methods, but because educational fads began to appear in education around the world, and these fads claimed to be supported by ‘research’. Such fads had intuitive appeal, and claims that research ‘showed’ them to be effective in boosting pupils’ learning went largely uncontested. Very few teachers knew much about research, and so they were in no position to either challenge or evaluate the claims. It was also at this time that calls for greater impact in education were heard in many countries. Translated through the prism of politics, the result was structural changes which relied heavily on making managers more powerful, but also more accountable. This, it was argued, would put incentives for positive change in place, and would result in higher standards overall.

While standards did rise in many respects, the new powers unleashed a wave of fads upon teaching. Managers were now in a position to direct teaching styles, curriculum content, and staff

In New Zealand, in the early 2000s, we attended a compulsory professional development session. After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions.

“Your talk on the importance of developing higher consciousness in teachers and students in order to lead them to a more mindful state has been

interesting,” I asked, “but can you tell us about the research base for the meditation practices you are recommending?”

“I’m glad you asked me that,” the presenter replied smoothly. “In fact, there is a very solid base of research. Our founder developed his ideas by spending eight weeks in a flotation tank.”



training far more so than they had been. But these same managers were implementing ‘innovations’ which they had no capacity to evaluate, since they were without the necessary education and training. In turn, these managers promoted other teachers on the basis of their enthusiasm for such changes.

One example of a long-lasting education fad is the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic ‘learning styles’ myth. Research from as long ago as the 1990s

found that there was no significant evidence of impact, but uninteresting truth does not travel as quickly as interesting lies, and it was still common practice for school inspectors in the UK to be judging lessons based on the quality of VAK provision in the classroom in 2010.

Fake news

Another ‘fake news’ story in education was the idea that physical exercises could rewire the brain to improve learning by

exercises such as balancing on wobble-boards and ‘crossing the mid-line’. In one primary school we encountered, the entire literacy support system was replaced by a sensory motor programme as described above. The fact that there was no scientific support for such practices did not stop uninformed school leaders from imposing them on their students and staff. A current example in many schools is the use of coloured paper backgrounds, coloured overlays and coloured spectacle



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lenses to improve student reading. In one school visited recently, there were seven different paper colours listed for different students' exam papers. Such practices are without scientific support, despite what their practitioners may claim.

In the field of reading interventions, evidence of effectiveness ran a distant fourth behind whether an intervention intuitively appealed to teachers and managers, how easy it was to deliver, and much students 'engaged' with it. Teachers researched neither the underlying theoretical constructs, nor the evidence for derived teaching approaches, in the research literature, and as a result were left at the mercy of the claims (no doubt enthusiastic and well-intentioned) of the authors or publishers.

Changed landscape

In recent years the landscape has begun to change significantly. There is now much more talk about research, and evaluating the evidence for interventions and teaching approaches. However, because so few teachers have training in this area, and because they have so little time to do their own investigations, the control of information has shifted to what might be called 'research clearinghouses' which

effectively act as consumer guides, testing and comparing interventions, weighing up the security of the evidence, and making recommendations about value for money.

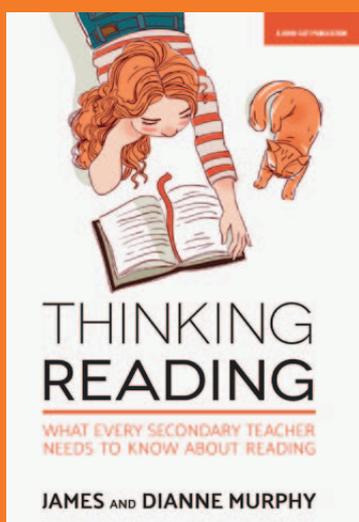
Far from ideal

Admittedly, this is an improvement on what went before – but it is far from ideal. Teachers are still reliant on others to make judgements and recommendations, and there is good evidence that these clearinghouses are themselves vulnerable to bias and selectivity. What Works Clearinghouse, the US government's flagship publicly-funded organisation, has been criticised for apparently arbitrary criteria for including or excluding studies in its reports. This, it is claimed, has led to a misrepresentation of the strength of evidence in favour of particular interventions – for example, by excluding all studies conducted before a certain date, regardless of quality. In some cases, only evidence from randomised controlled trials (RCTs) is included in reports. While RCTs are indeed a high-level test of effectiveness (if well-designed and carefully implemented) they are by no means the only kind of evidence that should be considered by research consumers. Indeed, without a trail of

other kinds of evidence, it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to design useful RCTs. And of course, there are the more subtle kinds of biases, where certain approaches are favoured for further research and funding, or where sympathetic headlines are written which turn out to be unjustified by a study's results.

To navigate this environment, teachers and especially school leaders must have a sound knowledge of research methods, how to interpret and evaluate studies, and the strengths and potential biases of organisations which act as research gatekeepers. This assertion may alarm leaders who are already overstretched – but there is no alternative. This is how we will keep our profession – and our students – safe from being exploited by fads and uninformed innovation.

Rest assured, human nature being what it is, that there will continue to be a stream of 'innovations' on offer. There is no way around it: we will only advance teaching to have more impact by being more scientific about what we do and how we do it. The irony is that equipping teachers in this way will free up students and staff to be more creative and genuinely innovative.



James Murphy was formerly DP, AP and HOD English, and Learning Support Co-ordinator in New Zealand and the UK. He has a research-oriented MEd and a post-graduate SEN Diploma. He is currently School Partnerships Director, Thinking Reading and blogs at: <https://horatiospeaks.wordpress.com>

Dianne Murphy is a secondary school reading specialist and designer of the research-evidenced intervention Thinking Reading. She spent nine years setting up and running Literacy Centres in NZ and UK secondary schools, for students reading significantly behind. She is an experienced teacher with a degree in education and linguistics, and post-graduate diplomas in Special Education.

Thinking Reading: What every secondary teacher needs to know about reading by James Murphy and Dianne Murphy is published by John Catt Educational. Available from JohnCatt.com, Amazon and all good bookstores.



THE PRIDE OF STOCKLAND GREEN SCHOOL

Birmingham's Stockland Green School once had a GCSE pass rate of 14 per cent and was placed into 'Special Measures'. Now, the oversubscribed academy, part of the respected Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, has tripled its headline performance score, with a waiting list of families proud to have a recently Ofsted-rated 'Good' school on their doorsteps. Headteacher Marie George reflects on collaboration, going back to basics and "wonderful" students

Stockland Green is a great place to work, for both its staff and students. It hasn't always been that way.

Serving an area of high social deprivation has its challenges and the school's Ofsted report of 2013, when we were placed into Special Measures, gave Stockland Green clear targets to improve.

A top priority was to improve teaching across the school so that achievement of all groups improved. The key to this was consistency. We needed to ensure that all students, regardless of which teacher they had, had similar lesson structures and an appropriate learning diet. A range of Teaching and Learning measures were put in place to support this. Staff prepared 5 minute lesson plans which, whilst being quick to write (as the name suggests!), ensured that all teachers taught structured lessons, with built in progress checks and a concentration on questioning, literacy and differentiation. Learning objectives were linked to progress; all lessons began with a "Do It Now" activity to ensure they got off to a flying start; all teachers used "Top 10 Teaching Tips" to ensure

engagement levels were high.

Initiatives can be ineffective without being used, and monitoring was a key part of our improvement. Our Quality Assurance calendar included learning walks, book scrutinies and regular SIP visits; all of these contributed to the school being able to show progress during each Ofsted monitoring visit.

In addition, our last Ofsted report acknowledges that school leaders know the school, and its community, extremely well. This knowledge has enabled us to use the support available through The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, to identify specific areas and faculties who needed a helping hand and bring in specialist help, including Specialist Leaders in Education. Shared CPD and joint subject network meetings were also invaluable. Collaboration was crucial.

We're now in the joyous position whereby our own staff have developed so well that they now support other schools with specialist projects and support programmes. We've come full circle.

A school is only as good as its teachers,

and the Leadership Group made high quality recruitment, of both teaching and support staff, a priority. Vacancies were left unfilled if candidates weren't top class. We had a simple benchmark: if staff wouldn't be happy for potential candidates to teach their own children, they certainly weren't good enough to teach Stockland Green students. And recruitment was an area where our membership of the ATLTP proved to be especially fruitful.

National Training School

Arthur Terry is a National Training School. We utilised the Initial Teacher Training programme to ensure that the best young teachers had school based training with us. This gave them a flavour of the school and many of these young teachers are now thriving here having been employed. By retaining our best teachers and only recruiting high quality, we now have a staff body with some brilliant practitioners. Which is only right, as our wonderful students, many of whom come from severely deprived

backgrounds, deserve the best.

Stockland Green's exclusion rate was also twice the national average, reflecting some unacceptable behaviour by certain groups of students. In response, the school invested heavily in our B2A (Believe to Achieve) centre, where students receive proactive mentoring suited to their particular needs; a back to basics policy insisted that all students showed courtesy and manners – our youngsters now routinely open doors for others, say "please" and "thank you" and speak respectfully, qualities constantly modelled by our teachers. Staff also followed a back to basics approach: meeting and greeting; starters on display as students arrive; high presence at changeovers; meetings and marking completed in communal areas, rather than behind locked office doors. Nothing drastic – just good practice, every lesson, every day.

Behaviour support plans

Students failing to adhere to our "Stockland Green Standards" were placed on behaviour support plans, in conjunction with their parents, with clear improvement targets and clear consequences for those failing to meet them.

The result? Ofsted described our students as "courteous, friendly and mature" and they "saw no instances of poor behaviour" during their two day visit – quite a turnaround from their previous findings.

And of course, when the atmosphere of a school is calm and supportive, achievement rises.

So does attendance. It had been well below national average, at around 92%. However, with better teaching, more in school opportunities, a calm, purposeful

atmosphere within the building, plus the increased focus on attendance throughout the school, it has been well over 95% over recent years and Persistent Absence has fallen from over 20% to just 10%. Our students completely bought into the new Stockland Green Standard and, ultimately, they enjoy coming to a school which, for some, is an oasis in a turbulent world.

This is evidenced in one short Ofsted observation, that our students are "proud of their school". This relatively innocuous statement brought great satisfaction to all staff. In 2013, we were worlds away from this position. Now, our students and staff are proud of each other.



‘I AM A SURVIVOR OF DEPRESSION...’

Pran Patel urges teachers to act as positive role models over mental health for both pupils and fellow teachers



Recently, I appeared on BBC London's Inside Out programme with a feature on 'Why Teaching is Making Me Ill'. I disclosed that I, myself, have suffered from bouts of depression, sleeplessness and anxiety.

Since the program aired, not only have I been inundated with emails from fellow teachers in solidarity but my pupils have been completely supportive and frank in their questioning. Although I do feel as though I have reduced my employment opportunities in some schools, do I really want to work those organisations anyway?

'Place mask on securely on yourself before you help others'

On aeroplanes, the oxygen safety mask announcements always end with 'place your mask on securely, before you help others'. If I am saying it's your responsibility to look after your pupil's mental wellbeing, to do this effectively I'm also saying you have to fulfil the same responsibility to your own mental wellbeing.

How do you look check your own mental wellbeing? I live by one steadfast

rule: if there is something that has a detrimental impact on your day to day life, that's not okay. Regardless if it is physical or mental in nature, go and seek medical help from your doctors.

Here are my seven tips for the preparation for getting help:

1. Accept that you are not going crazy or mad. The chances are you are ill: accept this, you going for treatment for your illness. Let me say that again, you are at the doctors for treatment.
2. Doctors are often nebulous beings in our lives: they are always there, but do we really know them? Think about and prepare the words to describe how you have been feeling. It took at least two appointments to describe clearly how I was feeling.
3. Get there in good time and think about asking for a longer appointment. I didn't go to my first appointment, I was minutes late and it was easier to cancel than face it. The second appointment wasn't much better, I made a sharp exit mid-

appointment when I realised that time was an issue.

4. Be honest with yourself and, consequently, the doctor. You deserve to be happy and don't let anything get in the way of that.
5. Take someone who knows you well with you, that's if you need to, we all get lost for words sometimes or become overwhelmed it's easier to tackle if you have back up.
6. Be open to the doctor's advice, remember they are the professionals. Antidepressants are often regarded as taboo. For some people tablets are the way forward and letting a stigma around a pill stop you from feeling better is silly.
7. Commit to making yourself healthy. This means there may not be a quick fix but a long-term strategy. As practitioners we often commit to our schools and pupils, spending endless hours doing your very best for them. Do the same for yourself you deserve it.

**I live by one steadfast rule:
If there is something that has
a detrimental impact on your
day-to-day life, that's not okay**



Telling pupils: about yourself or others

The first time I told I pupil that I suffered was around ten years ago. When she felt so alone in the world and thought the feelings of anguish, and anxiety were brought on by her state of mind because she wasn't positive enough and appreciate her life enough.

'It's okay [insert name], I have these feelings sometimes too. Try and breath through it, it'll pass. I know it doesn't feel like it now, but it'll pass.'

As soon as I said it I stuttered, stammered and stopped. Was this what I should be telling a pupil during an anxiety attack? Does this make me look weak? Will the senior leadership team find out? Is this the right thing to do?

Without a doubt, yes.

Yes, the act of sharing was an act of solidarity: she was no longer alone in the way she felt, it wasn't just her and, more importantly, maybe it wasn't her fault. Yes, it may have made me look weaker

as a person of authority by admitting weakness; but it made me stronger as a human being, and I'd argue as a real role model. Yes, the senior leadership team undoubtedly found out, but there were no issues there. Yes, I believe it was exactly the right thing to do.

Being a role model

Whether you like it or not you are a real tangible role model to your pupils. They look up to you. Even on those dreary days when they are all being so annoying they still look up to you, in many cases you are the constant in their lives, not just someone but that someone that, for whatever reason, cares about them.

What does this burden of role modelhood entail? I'm not going to tell you that teachers must live perfect lives but I do believe as teachers we form pillars on which societies are formed. As role model we should share our adversities and moreover our triumphs over them.

Role models who triumph over

adversity are common place in our schools and in wider society, whether it's a triumph through the tribulations of a slum or overcoming a physical ailment for sporting glory. However triumphant roles models with respect to mental health are few and far between, this is mirrored and is a culturally similar to wider society so having them within schools is an absolute must.

Pran Patel is Assistant Principal Curriculum and Standards at the Mark Hall Academy in Harlow Essex. BSc Hons in Physics at the University of Birmingham. QTS through a GTRP from the University of Wolverhampton. NPQSL from future leaders on whole-school coaching. Teaching for 13 years in East Africa, London and the West Midlands.

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ETHOS AND CULTURE: WHERE DOES EXECUTIVE PAY SIT?



Gillian Allcroft, Deputy Chief Executive, asks MATS to consider the ‘Nolan Principles’ when considering executive pay

Governing boards have three core functions with which you will all be familiar, in summary: setting the ethos and strategic direction, holding the senior executive leader to account for the performance of the organisation and ensuring the money is well spent. All three of these come into play when setting the remuneration of the senior executive leader, which is solely the responsibility of the trustee board.

The current edition of the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) which came

into force on 1 September 2017 included for the first time the following sentence:

“The board of trustees must ensure that their decisions about levels of executive pay follow a robust evidence-based process and are reflective of the individual’s role and responsibilities.”

This follows several years of media scrutiny of the remuneration packages for senior executive leaders in academy trusts. That scrutiny has tended to focus on the larger multi-academy trusts (MATs).

Spring term tends to be the headline season for stories about executive pay. There is obviously a good reason for this, academy accounts have to be submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and subsequently published, so the annual trawl of accounts starts early in the New Year.

Given that statement in the AFH 2017 it’s not just the media who are having a

good look, the ESFA is also on the case, and it is interested in executive leadership pay across the piece, in single academy trusts (SATs) as well as MATs. Indeed the chief executive of the ESFA (Eileen Milner) wrote to 29 SATs where the accounts show that the senior executive leader is paid more than £150,000 asking the trustees to explain the rationale behind the level of remuneration. Following that initial exercise the ESFA has asked approximately two thirds of those trusts for further information – ie it wasn’t satisfied with the initial explanations.

On 30 March 2018 the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee published its report into Academy Schools’ Finances. While acknowledging that 96% of academies paid no member of staff over £150,000 it commented that “Some academy trusts appear to be using



public money to pay excessive salaries” and recommended that “The Department should extend its work to challenge all academy trusts that are paying excessive salaries and take action where these cannot be justified. The Department should write to the Committee and update us on the results of this work.”

So how should we go about setting the pay of the senior executive leader? If you are governing in a SAT, there seems little reason not to take as your starting point the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). The very top of the leadership scale is £109,366 outside London and £116,734 in inner London. The STPCD allows governing boards to add up to 25% to the top of this salary where the challenge and responsibilities

of the particular role warrant it and in exceptional circumstances to go above that. There is no doubt that being the senior executive leader of any school is a challenging role, but this is public money and trustees need to have a very clear rationale for going above the top of the range for someone leading a single school.

In smaller MATs (2-5 schools) the STPCD can still be used to provide a framework as it does provide for those leading more than one school. The larger the MAT grows the less relevance the STPCD framework has, especially if the CEO is not the substantive head of any of the individual schools. It has become a different role and different criteria may need to apply.

In setting pay the trustees need to

consider the organisation in the round, which includes making an assessment about how many sites there are and how many pupils and how complex an operation that is. How will parents, staff and external people view the remuneration package? How does the CEO’s salary compare to the lowest paid members of staff?

Look at the picture in relation to what MATs of similar sizes are paying, but there needs to be a caveat here – benchmarking can be a useful tool, but that is all it is. As the PAC said its 30 March report.

“If the payment of such high salaries remains unchallenged, it is more likely that such high salaries become accepted as indicative of the market rate.”

Setting the initial rate for the post is one thing, what happens at annual appraisal time? Trustees need to ensure they set appropriate objectives and success criteria. How does any annual performance rise for the CEO relate to what the rest of the staff receive? In a letter of 21 February to the chairs of academy trusts, Lord Agnew said:

“I believe that not all boards are being rigorous enough on this issue. CEO and senior pay should reflect the improvements they make to schools’ performance and how efficiently they run their trusts. I would not expect the pay of a CEO or other non-teaching staff to increase faster than the pay award for teachers.”

The role of MAT CEO is challenging, but these are publicly funded institutions and salary levels need to reflect that fact. In the previous edition of the magazine I wrote about the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles): Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership –all of which come into play when determining executive pay.

NGA is producing guidance on MAT CEO pay.

CHARITY GOVERNANCE CODE

Sam Henson, Head of Information

MAT governance is not always the easiest of things to work out, and it is fair to say that not everyone gets it right first time. In fact, the nature of MATs, as organisations that evolve over time, both in terms of growth and maturity, mean their governance structures are likely to go through periods of significant change at various point in their journey.

In order for MATs to be as informed as possible about what may work and what may not work in their own context, it is important that they keep an eye on wider practice, not limiting learning to the education sector alone.

As a MAT is a charity, the charity sector is a good place to start, and does offer much in terms of cross sector practice that is easy to transfer to an education setting. The revised Charity Governance Code, developed by the sector, contains a lot of good practice that trusts can apply.

The code comes in two versions, one for smaller organisations and one for larger organisations. It offers anyone involved in governance in any context aspirational targets for improving governance. While the code sets an ambitious standard, it also offers achievable, practical goals based around seven principles: organisational purpose; leadership; integrity; decision-making, risk and control; board effectiveness; diversity and openness and accountability.

Each principle carries its own section within the code, with a brief rationale, key outcomes giving you an idea of what that principle looks like once followed and recommended practice to help meet it. While the code is a non-statutory publication for the charity sector, it's strongly endorsed by the Charity Commission and already seen by many as the standard to reach.

While MATs are exempt charities, meaning their principal regulator is the

Department for Education, rather than the Charity Commission, the code sets the bar for not just effective, but good governance; helping to promote the "attitudes and a culture where everything works towards fulfilling the charity's vision". This will be very pertinent for academy trusts, especially MATs seeking to see their vision realised not just on a central level, but throughout the trust.

Each principle is directly relevant to MAT governance; while some outcomes and practice are more nuanced, much of it raises key issues that those involved in MAT governance will be familiar with.

Principle four - decision making, risk and control

The rationale shows why this is important in a MAT context – "Trustees delegate authority but not ultimate responsibility". A key characteristic of strong MAT performance is delegation. Under key outcomes, the code shows what this looks like done well – "Where aspects of the board's role are delegated to committees, staff, volunteers or contractors, the board keeps responsibility and oversight". In practice what does this mean? The code very practically shows us. Firstly, the board "describes its 'delegations' framework in a document which provides sufficient detail and clear boundaries" – this is the scheme of delegation, an essential tool for effective MAT governance. Then the board makes sure "committee members recognise that the board has ultimate responsibility". How many times have we seen this simple fact ignored in trusts? Those governing at local level not realising they are a committee of the trust board with some delegated functions which can change. The trust board has not (and cannot) delegate accountability and therefore retains ultimate responsibility, giving it the ability and right to change its structure

and alter delegation at any time, but the problem arises when those at a local level don't realise this and don't like it. The practical advice, if followed, will address this before such a situation can arise.

Principle five – board effectiveness

Principle five of the charity code raises another good example of something which is having a negative impact on some trusts. Key outcome – "All trustees have appropriate skills and knowledge... and can give enough time to be effective in their role".

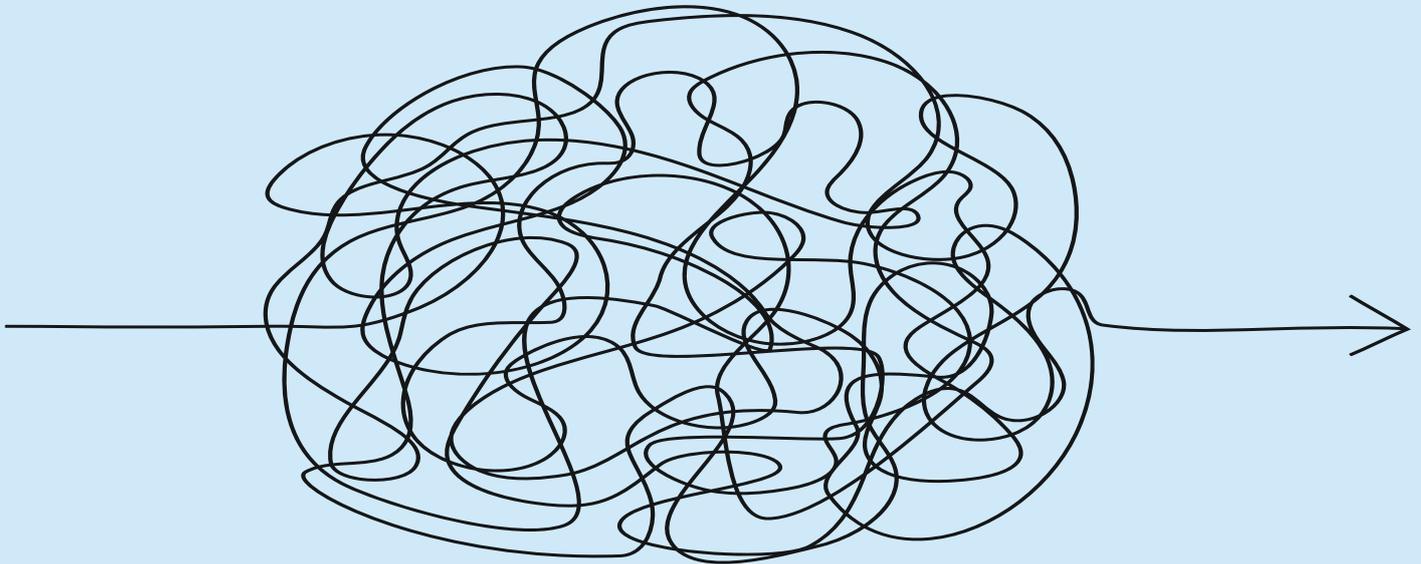
We know that skills and competence has been a big focus for governing boards, but sometimes the focus on time gets lost – a board of extremely busy highflying individuals will not always suit a school governance context. We also know that having skills in one sector doesn't necessarily translate to making someone useful in a school governance context – do you really have to have a lawyer on every MAT board?

We have also seen MAT boards composed of prominent business skills but very little in terms of education knowledge and experience. The recommended practice includes "The chair ... plans the board's work and meetings, making sure trustees have the information, time and space they need to explore key issues and reach well-considered decisions...The board has, and regularly considers, the skills, knowledge and experience it needs to govern, lead and deliver the charity's purposes effectively". Simple, easy to follow, practical advice.

While you might not go as far as formally adopting the code, the principles it offers will form an excellent starting point for ensuring your MAT maintains a focus on achieving good governance.

WHO SHOULD LEAD THE HEADTEACHER APPRAISAL IN A MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST?

Tom Fellows, Research and Information Officer says the lines can sometimes get blurred



Headteacher appraisal can get a little complicated in multi-academy trusts (MATs). The bigger a MAT becomes, the more likely it is that leaders at a school level (sometimes called ‘heads of school’, but referred to here as ‘headteachers’) will have one or more tiers of executive management above them.

To complete their work effectively, executive leaders (such as chief executives, directors of secondary or primary, or executive headteachers) will need to oversee the work of leaders in individual schools and to hold them to account. However, the board of trustees and, if applicable, those on local academy committees also have an interest in the performance of the headteacher.

This can sometimes blur lines of accountability, with headteachers finding themselves answerable in several

directions. Despite the confusion, there has been little research exploring how headteachers of schools in MATs are performance managed and what particular challenges this might presents.

The National Governance Association (NGA) touched on some of these issues as part of a wider project looking at headteacher appraisal in state-funded schools in England. This research, which was carried out between June and September last year, consisted of a survey of 1164 chairs of governing boards (with 181 responses from those governing in MATs) and interviews with 10 chairs of governors, external advisors and headteachers (which included interviews with individuals across three MATs).

How MATs performance appraise their headteacher

It is not possible to generalise the

findings to all MATs in England because the sample taken was not necessarily representative of MATs across England. The questions were also designed for single schools which may have deterred many schools in MATs (particularly where those governing were not involved in headteacher appraisal) from taking part.

However, with nearly 200 MAT respondents, the data does highlight some interesting trends. Perhaps unsurprisingly, amongst the MATs covered in the survey, all of the respondents reported that their school followed an ‘objective-setting’ model focused around an annual appraisal meeting for their headteachers: the headteacher’s performance would be assessed against objectives from their previous appraisal cycle (usually over one academic year) and new objectives would be set for the next appraisal cycle.

More surprisingly, however, the respondents in MATs generally followed practices outlined in current or historical appraisal regulations for maintained schools. 127 MATs conducted their headteachers appraisal in the autumn term, with 123 setting between three and four objectives for their headteachers. Furthermore, rather than being led by other executives within the trust, 145 respondents reported that their MAT still recruited a panel of between two and three trustees/local committee members to appraise the headteacher. Finally, although under no legal obligation to do so, 136 MAT respondents noted that their organisation appointed an external advisor to help with the process.

The potential for tension and confusion around who 'leads' the headteacher appraisal processes

The survey data suggests that, amongst large numbers of MATs that responded, academy committee members/trustees have responsibility for the performance management of their headteacher(s). However, themes emergent from the interviews suggest that it is not always this clear cut in practice. As outlined previously, individuals from three different MATs were interviewed as part of NGA's research. In two of these cases, interviewees reported uncertainty around who was responsible for conducting the headteacher appraisal, with some confusion as to whether this should be led by other executives or those governing.

Across all of the MATs covered in the interviews, the annual appraisal consisted of a meeting between three or more individuals with a different stake in the process; including those governing, executive leaders, the headteacher (who was being appraised) and (where applicable) the external advisor. However, the order and importance of these meetings varied from trust to trust.

In MAT case one, the executive headteacher, vice-chair and chair of academy committee met to discuss the headteachers performance before inviting the headteacher to give a short presentation. Following this presentation, the panel made a decision concerning the

headteachers performance and decided upon their objectives for the coming cycle.

In MAT case two, most of the decision making was done via a meeting between the headteacher and the chief executive of the trust, with the headteacher then meeting the chair of their local academy committee and the chief executive for a final appraisal meeting.

Finally, in MAT case three, the appraisal process consisted of a meeting between the headteacher and an external advisor followed by a meeting between the external advisor and appraisal panel. Following these two meetings, the headteacher was informed of the decision made concerning their performance and objectives; with the appraisal panel never actually meeting the headteacher face-to-face.

This inconsistency shown between trusts in terms of decision making, and the range of individuals involved in the headteacher performance appraisal process, has sometimes led to confusion over roles and responsibilities within certain trusts. Indeed, when the chair of trustees from case one was asked whether they led the headteacher appraisal process, they replied:

"It's a good question that and if I'm completely honest I don't really know. For an academy, the head teacher is basically responsible jointly to me ... but also to the executive head teacher of the academy".

Similarly, the headteacher of MAT case two showed a lack of understanding concerning who was responsible for their performance management.

"I think it is the Chief Executive [with] ... the Chair of the LGB ... more in an advisory role. Although ... the decision [is] actually made ... [by] ... the Chief Executive".

In both of these examples, key individuals involved in the process were either unclear about their role in the process or that of others.

The importance of clear delegation, communication and an understanding of roles and responsibilities

Overall, the data above presents two issues facing MATs. Firstly, the survey findings suggest that many MATs are

continuing to follow similar practices to maintained schools, despite this not necessarily being appropriate. Secondly, and potentially more importantly, the qualitative evidence points to confusion and tension in some MATs concerning whether those governing or trust executives should 'lead' the headteacher appraisal and a lack of understanding around where those governing and executives fit into the process.

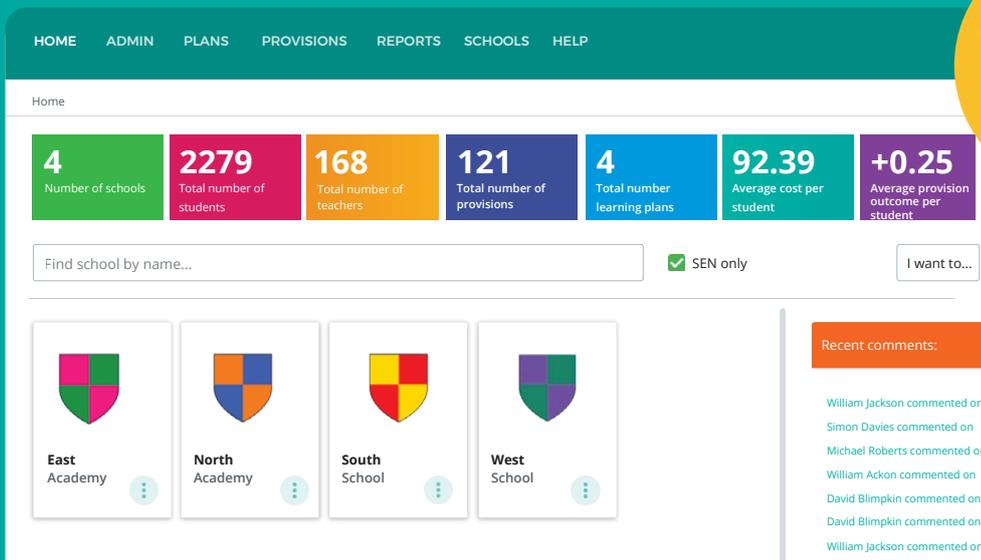
While accepting that appraisal processes will have to be tailored to the individual needs of each academy trust, it is NGA's view that headteachers in MATs should be line managed, and therefore appraised, by other executive leaders above them. This is not to say that those governing (at both trust board and local committee level) should have no input in the performance appraisal of the headteacher, but ultimate authority for staff management should lie with the lead executive of the trust. To carry out their role, and to be held responsible by the trust board for the performance of all schools within the trust, the lead executive must therefore have direct line management over each headteacher or, in very large MATs, other executive leaders who, in turn, performance manage the headteachers. This situation is fairer for headteachers who then have a single line of accountability rather than being answerable in multiple directions.

Finally, this project also flags up wider issues in terms of communication and the importance of clear delineation of responsibilities through a scheme of delegation. Roles and responsibilities in the appraisal process should be clearly outlined in a trusts scheme of delegation and communicated clearly to all relevant stakeholders.

Further reading

This article is based on a new research paper, *Taking Headteacher Appraisal Seriously: A report on the current headteacher performance appraisal landscape in English schools*, published by the NGA in March 2018. The full report and executive summary can be downloaded at: www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Research

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DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES TO MAXIMISE IMPACT

Clare Collins explains how NGA designed its new funded development programmes to be valuable for the volunteer governance community

A quarter of a million people are investing freely their time, energy and capabilities to drive school improvement through volunteering on governing boards.

It is important that they are equipped with the knowledge, insight and confidence to be effective in their role and this is why we're delighted that in January, the Department for Education (DfE) awarded a contract to the NGA to deliver funded governance development programmes for chairs, vice chairs, future chairs, clerks and some governing boards.

With the programmes commencing in the spring, NGA's team has been designing governance development programmes which blend learning methods and seek to maximise impact.

No one size fits all

Funded development is available for boards governing more than one school i.e. multi academy trusts or federations, or governing boards where the school is in an in opportunity area and is judged by Ofsted to 'require improvement', or any board governing a 'good' or 'outstanding' school which is classed as 'coasting'. This development for boards programme is intended for those who are governing in circumstances that are more complex, and therefore the 'one size fits all' approach would not be appropriate. Therefore, we have opted to deliver bespoke training to every board that participates, tailored to their own needs, and designed to complement their existing knowledge and experience. This programme will use an online board appraisal to evaluate the board's strengths and areas for development, and this will help inform and enable targeted intervention such as where knowledge gain is required, where

skills need developing or where board behaviours need to be addressed. A NGA consultant will help analyse the appraisal report, and the creation of a governance action plan that is both realistic and will also impact positively on governance practice and therefore pupil outcomes.

The components of successful training

In designing the content of our programmes for chairs and clerks, a key consideration was ensuring that the programmes are valuable and accessible to everyone who wants to take part. By working with a network of local partners across England to deliver training wherever there is demand, we are able to include face-to-face training in our programmes, and for chairs, without adding an additional charge. For the accredited clerks programme, because the funding from the DfE is lower, we have to make a small charge in order to maintain the face-to-face element.

Our experience in delivering training to governors and trustees is that face-to-face learning is really highly valued by participants. Meeting to discuss how to put theory into practice, sharing experiences with colleague participants and with the support of a knowledgeable facilitator is often the beginning of relationships which lead to on-going collaborative learning and in some cases to the development of peer review networks.

By using our team of quality assured consultants to facilitate face-to-face elements of the programmes, participants will benefit from direct access to the wealth of NGA's expert knowledge of policy and best governance practice.

Acknowledging that those that work in

governance are busy people, participants will also receive access to in depth e-learning via NGA Leading Governance portal enabling governance development at a time and pace convenient to their other commitments. Other components of our development programmes include a 360° online appraisal, one-to-one mentoring, and a school based project.

The future of funded training

The DfE investment in these governance development programmes is planned to be £1.45m in both 2018/19 and the following financial year, across a number of providers. Whether that sum is enough will be illustrated by the demand that is generated from governing boards, and if the funding runs out, it will strengthen the case for further investment in developing governance.

High quality training for both governing boards and senior executive leaders is crucial in improving the effectiveness of governance. By taking part in these important development opportunities chairs, clerks and boards can feel confident that they are able to fulfil their role to the highest standard, thereby ensuring the best outcomes for children.

Secure your funded place

Go to www.nga.org.uk/LeadingGovernance to see the full eligibility criteria, programme content and to register your interest.

OFSTED INSPECTION OF MULTI-ACADEMY TRUSTS

Fay Holland, Policy and Information Officer, asks what can we learn from focused inspections and what might the future hold?



The debate on whether Ofsted should have formal powers to inspect multi-academy trusts (MATs) is one that has been rumbling on within the education sector for several years now. Both the current Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, and her predecessor, Sir Michael Wilshaw, have expressed the view that the inspectorate needs more powers to inspect MATs centrally in a similar way to individual schools.

At present, Ofsted conduct ‘focused inspections’ of some MATs; these inspections comprise a ‘batch’ of school inspections and accompanying discussions with the central team and those involved in the MAT. However, MATs are not required to allow inspectors access to their central structures beyond what is necessary for the inspection of an individual school. At the time of writing, 19 MATs had received focused inspections.

The findings from Ofsted’s focused inspections of MATs is published in the form of a letter to the chief executive setting out the main findings and some recommendations. This raises questions straight away: why is the letter

not addressed to the trust board as the accountable body, and is it appropriate for recommendations to be made to the chief executive about improving the board that holds them to account?

Putting this aside for a moment, what insight can we gain from the letters about how governance functions in these MATs?

Lack of clarity

The vast majority of focused inspection letters comment on the clarity, or lack thereof, of the MAT’s scheme of delegation. Not having an effective, well understood governance structure was frequently associated with failure to address underperformance in schools; neither trustees, academy committee members, nor executive leaders can fulfil their roles effectively if they do not fully understand what those roles are.

In six of the letters, reference is made to trustees taking decisive action to tackle ineffective academy committees by replacing them with a form of ‘improvement board’ or taking back delegated responsibilities.

Trust boards have the power to appoint and remove committees at any time, be it a board committee, a cluster committee, an academy committee or an academy council. While this can sometimes be a challenging and unpopular move, especially if this power has not been properly explained during the due diligence process, Inspectors indicate that it had worked well in many cases. It is likely to be easier to do this in a MAT where the governance structure is well understood and it is accepted that the trustees have ultimate control, meaning there will not be autonomous governance at local level.

Including this an option in your scheme of delegation and making sure

you have communicated to all relevant parties means it is less likely to come as a surprise if things are not going well.

Effectively holding the chief executive to account, and having clear systems for performance managing heads of school, was also frequently referenced across the letters. Often, this was related to a lack of clearly identified priorities and targets in trustees’ strategic planning: if you don’t know what you are trying to achieve, how can you be sure that your lead executives are making progress towards achieving it?

Inspectors were critical where strategic plans failed to address key priorities for improving pupil outcomes across the MAT or where the board had not taken responsibility for monitoring the impact of the trust’s work.

Doing so, of course, relies on robust, accurate self-assessment and getting the right information from executive leaders; both of these things were highlighted as a key determinant of effectiveness in several instances.

What might the future hold for MAT inspection?

Forum Education recently published a report on this subject, informed by discussion at a roundtable event for MAT chief executives. The report proposes a MAT inspection framework which takes “the MAT’s own account of how it is organised, including its vision and strategy documents” as the starting point. Those who contributed to the report “universally agreed” that MAT inspection should not result in a graded judgement. Rather than seeking to identify ‘best practice’, it suggests focusing on ‘effective practice’ in recognition that there is not a singular right way to achieve best outcomes for pupils.

We know that MATs are complex



and dynamic organisations which can change fairly rapidly. Those involved in the roundtable favoured a model where MATs and Ofsted were engaged in a “dialogue over time” rather than inspection providing a snapshot view. It was suggested that inspection should take place over six months or a year to allow for a developmental approach and an accurate assessment of sustainability and capacity to be made.

The report suggests that governance should be central to any framework, including consideration of the “skills, knowledge and understanding of the trust board as a whole”, clarity around the committee structure and its impact, and “how well the executive team are supported and held to account”. There is an increasing body of knowledge about MAT governance in the sector on which Ofsted could draw.

Contentious

One of the more contentious suggestions is that Ofsted should look at the impact of financial management and decision making in MATs. These aspects are not

part of the inspection framework for individual schools and currently oversight of academy finances is carried out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This would be a significant departure for Ofsted and there is a question of whether it currently has the expertise to carry out such a task, not to mention the possible overlap with the ESFA’s role. NGA supports the idea that MATs should be subject to formal inspection as an entity; this would reflect the fact that the trust is the single organisation that is accountable for the education of all pupils in every school within the MAT. At a recent Community MATs networking event, the trustees and clerks in attendance unanimously supported the idea. Inspecting MATs could also reduce the burden of inspection for individual schools with some aspects of leadership and management being scrutinised centrally.

At NGA, we have long been calling for the lines of accountability in MATs to be better reflected in the Ofsted reports of individual schools; all too often, reports on schools within MATs omit

to comment on the effectiveness of the board of trustees, instead treating the academy committee as if it is the overall accountable board for the school.

There are some strengths to the focused inspection model, as it allows areas of strength and weakness across schools in the MAT to be identified – the report’s suggestion that inspectors consider how clear the trustees’ and executive leaders’ ‘line of sight’ to practice on the ground is a good one.

Necessary skills

Of course, any inspection should be carried out by inspectors with the necessary skills and knowledge, therefore we would hope to see Ofsted drawing on the expertise accumulated by NGA and others working on MAT governance. Changes to legislation would be required for Ofsted to have the powers to formally inspect MATs so change to the system cannot happen overnight, but NGA will continue working to ensure that the voices of those governing are central in shaping any future framework.

‘THE VALUE OF BEING ABLE TO TAKE TECH WORRY AWAY HAS BEEN PRICELESS...’

The Constellation Trust believe they made the right choice in working with RM Education as their ICT partner

The Constellation Trust is a forward thinking and innovative Multi-Academy Trust based in Hull. The Trust is made up of 2 secondary schools, 6 primary schools and a pupil referral unit which all aim to provide the best learning opportunities for pupils. Although each school has its own unique identity, they benefit from working in partnership to share good practice and have a joint central service support team.

Trevor Taylor is the Director of Operations at Constellation Trust and has been working with RM for 10 years since the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Trevor completed a full tender exercise to identify the best long term provider for their IT support solution and RM were appointed as an interim service provider at Sirius Academy during the interim period.

Choosing the right ICT partner

Prior to this, the use of IT across the school was very limited and there was no system in place for logging and prioritising IT issues. As is often the case, staff were reluctant to embrace the new processes but RM helped staff to become familiar with the call logging system which in turn helped the school to better prioritise their IT issues.

“We met with all of the ‘big players’ that we thought might be able to provide the services we needed and shortlisted two, including RM. Most of the other providers wanted to rip out our previous systems, flatten everything and start again but with our budgets and 1500 pupils to consider and just one 6 week summer break to complete the work, this

wasn’t feasible for us.”

When asked why the Constellation Trust chose RM to be their ICT partner, Trevor answered that cost and a tailor-made service were both important factors.

“Cost was a big factor, there was a significant cost difference between RM and other providers. We wanted a tailor-made service so engaging with RM was a no-brainer. They were very accommodating in helping to shape the ideal service for us.”

The whole RM team working together makes a difference

As part of their IT support service The Constellation Trust receive a full reactive support desk, with a range of proactive updates and services from their Remote Network Manager. The remote team carry out 180 daily checks run at 3am to ensure as many issues as possible are picked up and resolved remotely where possible before the school day even starts. Trevor has found there to be many benefits from having this support service in place.

“RM’s support means I can sleep at night. RM are out there on the education front and are specialists in what they do. I really like the wrap around service with the extended team in India doing updates overnight meaning there is no interruption to lessons. It’s a total care package.”

Trevor explained that RM support the personal development of their IT technicians and this combined with the overnight proactive checks has resulted in less impact in the classroom. They now have fewer calls logged, no interruption to teaching as updates take place outside of

school hours and confidence that IT will just work when they start a lesson.

“Teachers have enough to do without having to worry about the technology working. The value of being able to take that worry away has been priceless.”

“David Brooke is our UK-based Technical Operations Manager and he sorts out any higher level issues but now there is a real lack of problems. In the past we used to log so many calls but now that we’ve got to the point that IT just works. We log very few calls these days.”

“I’d say we’ve seen an 80% reduction in support calls.”

Trevor mentions that his RM Relationship Manager, Louise, is key to the successful delivery of ICT across the trust. “Louise has shared learnings from other schools that meant the pain for our Trust has been reduced.”

“We understand each other and although I’ve made her life quite difficult at times, she cuts through problems like a hot knife through butter. She talks my language, we don’t talk in technical terms unless we need to. She deserves to get rewarded because she’s incredible.”

Trust-wide consistency

The Constellation Trust aim to deliver consistent ICT across all of their sites and currently have RM Flex, RM Unify, Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint as the standard suite across all of their schools. Trevor has found that having a consistent infrastructure in place has really helped to improve communication and collaboration between the schools.

“Having consistency makes a big difference when you want to do



something at a trust-wide level. We wanted to be able to communicate with the schools on one platform and for there to be collaboration and consistency of teaching resources between schools in the trust. Before introducing RM Unify there was very little communication between the schools and they all existed on their own systems.”

“We’re hoping that this consistency will have a positive impact on teaching and learning and will help to raise attainment. Especially in our primary schools, we’re hoping that having the

same tools in primary will help transition to secondary schools and in turn support the raising of literacy levels.”

A recommendation to other Trusts

As well as saving around one third on his IT support costs compared to his previous BSF provision, The Constellation Trust have found RM’s services to be good value for money.

“The IT support we get from RM is absolutely good value for money. You receive a professional service that gives

peace of mind and the reliability of technology that works.

I would chose RM every time. It gives you the all-encompassing wrap around package and you know that RM have got your back if the worst happens.”

“To other Trusts looking for an ICT partner, I would absolutely recommend RM. They are reliable, thorough, talk the right language, affordable and there’s longevity in the partnership for as long as you want it to be there.”

To find out more about this service please visit www.rm.com/ITchanges

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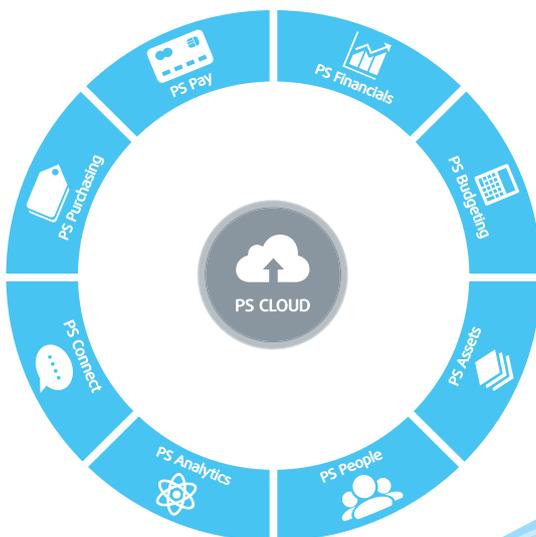


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THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING KEY NORMATIVE BEHAVIOURS

Highlighting positive behaviours, instead of letting them go unnoticed, can be a powerful motivator, says Doug Wise



Here is one of the best pieces of advice I've been given: Never forget about the students who, without fuss or bother, just get on with stuff.

We all know these students, and we can recognise them with ease, but they can, nevertheless, still be easy to lose sight of at times. And not just because – in the moment – poor behaviour can be draining, but also because of the natural negativity biases we possess.

Often, it's far easier to recall those who we've had to move in the seating plan or add to the detention roster – particularly at this frenetic time of year. However, fortunately for me, I recently attended a series of rewards assemblies in which the total number of house points accrued by each year group was reported on. Even to me, the main headline was clear: the majority of students in each cohort had obviously been working hard.

In schools up and down the country, by and large, the majority of students behave as they should: they arrive on time; they complete their work; they transition

between lessons without much of a fuss. If we choose to focus on and promote these positive behaviours – instead of letting them go largely unnoticed and taking them for granted (as I'm prone to do) – we can create powerful normative cues that can help to influence those who might otherwise choose not to comply with expectations.

Ultimately, most of us have a herd mentality. Despite the allure and romanticism of the rebel without a cause archetype, we tend to crave social acceptance. We choose to conform because we want the security and comfort of belonging. And this is why it's particularly important for us all to not only clearly define the parameters of acceptable behaviour, but to also regularly promote the standard through unambiguous normative messages.

Highlighting in tutor time or assembly, for example, that most students (or whatever the exact percentage happens to be) routinely arrive to lessons on time should help to positively influence those who might otherwise be persuaded to

wander the corridors for an extra couple of minutes because they've witnessed some of their peers do so previously. The danger with focusing too heavily on the relatively small number of students who fail to do so is that others might be influenced into believing that lateness is more widespread than it actually is and, therefore, that it is at least partially acceptable.

There is, of course, no panacea for bad behaviour and there will always be tough days. However, by working hard to explicitly raise the profile of desirable norms – arriving on time; completing work; transitioning between lessons without a fuss – we can help shape and support a positive school culture and make it just that little bit harder for (at least some) students not to conform.

Doug Wise is a teacher of English and an Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning)

HOW IS YOUR INTERNET SPEED?

Jo Jerome from Schools Broadband says schools need to consider ultrafast broadband to cope with new technologies

According to industry experts, the tech sector is now a million times more advanced than it was in the year 2000. And there's nowhere keener than the world of education to find new ways of delivering learning and new ways of helping teachers cope with an ever-growing administrative workload.

Whether it's through virtual and immersive experiences, or platforms to personalise learning, we are on the brink of a world where it will be the norm for students to visually immerse themselves in their subject matter in a way they have never experienced before.

Whilst many schools are at the early stages of using EdTech, developments are already having a big impact in the classroom and with that comes a big impact on the amount of internet bandwidth schools now require.

Video Streaming

Take commonly used technology like video streaming; the popularity of this is already demanding more bandwidth than it used to. For example, an HD video stream uses 2Mbps (that's Mega-bits per second) of data whereas a 4K video stream (that's ultra-high definition, soon to become the norm in schools) uses nearly twelve times that.

As 4K video streaming becomes the norm, together with the adoption of more cloud-based services, schools can expect to experience a lot of extra pressure on their current internet connection as more of these services are adopted.

Ultrafast Broadband

To enable access to high bandwidth content, BT and other carriers are steadily

rolling out the next generation of UK broadband known as Ultrafast. This is a replacement service for FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet) known as superfast broadband. And Schools Broadband, the industry's leading Internet Service Provider, will be one of the first ISPs in the country to offer their new ultrafast G.fast broadband service to schools.

Free G.fast for one year worth over £4k

Schools Broadband is currently BETA testing their new ultrafast broadband service and is recruiting schools to join their BETA Test Community. As part of the test, your school will receive free installation and free no-obligation G.fast broadband for one year. This also includes one year of DfE compliant web filtering and award-winning network security. In-all this is a package worth over £4k to schools completely free for a whole year.

G.fast will work at speeds up to 330Mbps download and 50Mbps upload. So, if yours is currently an FTTC connection you can look forward to more than four times faster speeds! Contact 01133 222 333 to see if the G.fast network runs past your school.

Download a DVD in 40 seconds

Some of you may be familiar with an FTTP connection. That's Fibre directly to the Premises (more expensive) Currently this offers the same speeds as the new G.fast offering, but soon will have speeds of 1Gbps download and 220Mbps upload. To put that in perspective, 1Gbps is actually 1024Mbps, meaning you could download an average DVD in just 40 seconds!

Planning for the not too distant future

When thinking about a new Internet Service Provider (ISP) you will need to make sure your provider has the technology to upgrade you to new tech as it become available. In such competitive times you really can't afford to be the school that gets left behind. David Tindall of Schools Broadband says any Schools Broadband school will have the ability to upgrade to new technology as soon as it is available. David Tindall commented: "We have invested over three quarters of a million pounds in the past two years in our network, filtering and security products to ensure we can do exactly this."

Tindall says Schools Broadband sees all its primary schools moving to Ultrafast connectivity in the future, using a minimum 330Mbps download, and all its secondary schools using full 1Gbps Leased Lines.

Making the right investment

Last year you'll recall the Department for Education reviewed its position on web filtering as part of the "Keeping Children Safe in Education." This meant far more stringent filters were required to prevent children from accessing harmful or inappropriate content when using school networks.

This requirement has shaken the schools' ISP industry, and this together with a requirement for greater and faster processing of acceptable content has led to Schools Broadband leading the way in ensuring their network and filtering platforms are fully comply with the latest DfE requirements.



Their new web filtering servers run ten times faster on their new platform with the ability to add more content filtering servers as required. Tindall explains this is important as it will allow schools to make use of 1Gbps and 10Gbps broadband services as they become available. And those responsible for budgets take note as it also means there will be no need to replace your firewalls, everything is cloud based and scalable.

Multi Academy Trusts

Managers of multi-site school networks will love the fact Schools Broadband provide a single pane of glass view giving the ability to make changes to all school filtering policies across multiple sites at the click of a button. Imagine the cost savings there.

Filtering from Schools Broadband provides schools with world-leading technology that protects users from inappropriate online content. It provides default reports allowing schools to

incorporate or change the reports, to fit in with their school's e-safety policy. This will ensure schools are fully compliant with DfE/Prevent Duty, monitoring and reporting regulations.

To find out if G.fast is available to trial in your area, contact Schools Broadband on 01133 222 333 or email info@schoolsbbroadband.co.uk.

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Geoff Barton, General Secretary – ASCL

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A FINANCIAL SOLUTION TO PUT YOUR TRUST IN

Mandie Kirk, Capita SIMS, introduces SIMS Finance

As the pressure on schools to maximise their budgets and reduce expenditure continues, the need to apply a sharp focus on financial performance has never been greater.

The rise of academies and multi-academy trusts (MATs) has further intensified this need for tight control on finances, with schools looking to manage their finances efficiently and effectively.

A new financial solution

In our work with schools and academies, we regularly receive feedback for the desire to consolidate data and present the most essential elements in a way that reduces confusion and provides clarity.

It's not enough to present rows of data without a way of translating the language of numbers into something that can be interpreted easily – meaning that visual, intuitive and customisable representations are the way forward.

We're of the opinion that when presenting financial data to key stakeholders for informed decisions, keeping everything clear and straightforward is the best approach, which is why we're delighted to introduce SIMS Finance.

At the heart of better budgeting

The main aim of SIMS Finance is to help academies and MATs achieve greater operational efficiency by providing them with greater control of their financial management.

Whether your organisation is one or multiple academies SIMS Finance sits right at the centre, pulling data in from all required sources and providing a concise and consolidated view.

Customisable dashboards and shortcuts to frequently used reports and tasks mean finance and business managers can

It's not enough to present rows of data without a way of translating the language of numbers into something that can be interpreted easily

quickly identify areas for improvement, while also analysing budgets, cost centres and even accessing individual invoices.

With the capability to take the whole purchase ledger procedure online, SIMS Finance gives schools the ability to make their financial authorisation process much smoother, replicating paper processes in a friction-free, digital environment.

Built to feel like an accounting tool

SIMS Finance benefits from having been designed with the support of academies and their leadership teams to create a solution stripped of complexity, yet focused on the best possible user experience. We understand that all academies and groups have their own unique needs, so we've designed SIMS Finance to be flexible, customisable and fully tailored to your requirements.

Like any other small, medium or growing business, academies lie at the centre of a complex network of suppliers and customers: IT infrastructure and maintenance, facilities management and capital expenditure, teaching equipment and text books – not to mention staff, recruitment and training costs – all come together to create a complicated web of incomings and outgoings.

By taking a high-level overview of financial performance across academies and

MATs, finance managers will have more opportunities than ever to identify and capitalise on powerful economies of scale.

The future with SIMS Finance

By integrating with data already held in SIMS, senior leaders and business managers will be able to calculate their staffing costs for the whole trust and be able to drill down to details for staff by type and with appropriate authority individuals can cross-reference against proposed costs to stay on track and within budget.

And thanks to being a fully cloud-based solution, SIMS Finance provides you with access to your finances anytime, anywhere, without the need to worry about backups or upgrades. You can even create automated reports for stakeholders in your MAT group and deliver them the details they need via email at a time to suit them best.

Find out more about SIMS Finance by visiting our dedicated product page or call 0800 170 1736 – register your interest to receive the latest news and be kept up to date with any developments..

THE GREAT EXCEPTION



Ian Stock believes that to become a more credible profession, we need to redefine teaching in terms of its soft skills, considered judgements and personal qualities, not its supposed ability to churn out identikit results

A couple of months ago, I hired a small local company to do some home improvements for me. As discussions progressed, the suspicion grew in my mind (later confirmed), that I had taught the owner some twenty years previously when he was eleven. He was a likeable lad, but he always struggled at school, flitting from one to another to keep ahead of trouble – and ending up with only very modest qualifications. Not one of our successes.

And yet here he was twenty years later, having trained in four trades while working nights to fund his courses, running his own company and employing a dozen people. He is doing very well for himself.

Is he the failure the education statistics have him marked down as – or a roaring success? I know what I think. And can the education system claim any credit whatsoever for what has happened to him? It's a moot point.

Let's face it: teaching simply isn't a proper profession – not in the way Medicine or Law are. If it were, we would have had more control over my pupil's life-trajectory, and would know what we had done. Except we can't: life just isn't like that. There are just too many pathways, the chains of cause-and-effect too dense and contrary ever to know what effect we had; we need to accept it.

Introducing Daisy Christodoulou's book *Seven Myths about Education*, Dylan Wiliam confessed: if only we could make education more like those other learned professions, then we would be able to deliver reliable outcomes, and gain significantly in professional credibility.

That is one reason why the profession has been shoved in the direction it has: knowable outcomes prove just what a good job we're doing, thereby showing what jolly good sorts we all are – oh and a bit more respect (and pay) would go down very nicely, thank you.

To be fair, Wiliam admits he has changed his mind – but the wider aspiration of making education more predictable certainly has not gone away: there are too many reputations and careers now hanging on the premise that we can prove, and claim credit for, what we do.

The term 'intervention', now used to describe the actions of teachers, is a direct steal from the language of medicine. It might be appropriate in a profession that functions by means of direct, retrospective physical or chemical interventions in known bodily mechanisms – but it is much less so in the case of a profession that uses imprecise psychological stimuli speculatively, for no single clear purpose. We certainly cannot claim to have 'healed' anyone – at least unless we assume that they were actually ill in the first place. Is a lack of education really an illness?

There are two main problems with teachers aspiring to be like doctors: 1) Medicine is by no means as rigorously objective as many seem to think and 2) teaching simply isn't like Medicine.

The suggestion seems to be that medics operate in precise, technical environments and they are the owners of a large body of specific technical knowledge and expertise that can guarantee outcomes; it is this that gives them their professional

kudos. But consider the following:

- It is not possible to quantify pain. In any case pain-receptiveness differs from person to person and even in the same individual over time.
- It is therefore impossible to measure changes in the amount of pain, except by the subjective self-reporting of the patient.
- The standard level of statistical confidence employed when trialling new drugs is only 95% - which is a recognition that no drug works all of the time, or in the same way for everyone.
- The placebo effect is a non-quantifiable phenomenon which has to be allowed for when attempting to establish causality in all medical interventions.
- Different patients may be prepared to accept different treatments and trade-offs, depending subjectively on their circumstances.
- It is impossible to quantify the quality of care that a doctor or nurse dispenses. This is down to their soft skills, though it is painfully obvious when these are lacking.
- What is considered an illness is in part a social construct, and determined, by amongst other things by personal expectations and political agendas.
- Patients may present with symptoms that are indeterminate or non-specific. Doctors cannot always diagnose by simple reference to technical knowledge. Sometimes it is intuition or subjective hunch that leads a doctor to follow a particular



line of enquiry. This may be the result of prior experience as much as anything more precise.

When one starts considering such factors, it becomes clear that medicine is nowhere near as – pardon the pun – clinical - as it might seem. While it is absolutely necessary for the medic to be in possession of a large body of specialist knowledge (and the self-discipline to

know what to do with it) this is not sufficient to define the professionalism of the role. There are those even today, who consider medicine to be as much an art as a science, and from recent encounters, I can say that diagnosis and treatment is certainly by no means as straightforward as the lay person might choose to believe.

So before we fix our sights on emulating the medical profession,

we might want to reflect on how that profession actually works. The same is true for the legal profession: while the body of written law is clearly both vast and knowable, the number of cases that fit precedent perfectly is relatively few; this is why argument, judgement and evaluation comprise an important part of advocacy.

Yet despite the foregoing, those who (doubtlessly in good faith) wanted to

boost the professional credentials of the teaching profession have taken the view that mere technical excellence will do the job; it won't.

Unlike medicine, 'success' in education operates entirely in the context of social rather than natural phenomena, the outcomes of our work cannot be measured against objective measures such as mortality rates (and even in that case, the precise causes of death are not always clear). Education has no single agreed objective: its effects are both too diverse and too long-lasting to be measurable. My former pupil's experience is just one example of that. What's more, it is impossible to separate the effect of the teacher from the myriad other influences on any one life.

And yet educational researchers and (especially) managers continue as though none of the above is so; they claim the ability to isolate the predictable, repeatable effect of

individual 'interventions', take credit for the 'outcomes' that result, and pass Go collecting rather more than £200 on the way. Unfortunately classroom teachers have had little choice but to play along.

The only way they can do this is to assume that educational outcomes are after all, finite and measurable. And that means exam results.

I have absolutely no issue with the importance of exams – but it is utterly wrong to claim they are the same as Education. At best they are a retrospective validation of a process undergone – which is not at all the same as saying we know the real, intellectual-personal effects of that. Exam results are a social construct; intellectual development is not. The value of exam grades is purely as a currency – and just like a currency they are worthless if they are not backed by real wealth.

Ignoring this has done nothing to increase the professionalism of teachers; in fact it has done precisely the opposite

– to turn them into mere operatives.

The mistake has been to assume that professionalism derives from a body of defined knowledge. In fact, as we can see from Medicine, it derives from the ability of skilled individuals to interpret and deploy their knowledge on a case-by-case basis. It relies on the ability of the individual to evolve their own ways of doing so most effectively in the context of their individual personalities and lives. This is precisely what school teachers have been deprived of in the lust for 'results'.

To become a more credible profession, we need to redefine teaching in terms of its soft skills, considered judgements and personal qualities, not its supposed ability to churn out identikit results. In my book *The Great Exception*, I examine how this might be done. In the process we would regain real professional credibility – and even, in the process, re-learn what it really means professionally to educate someone, as opposed to simply process them.

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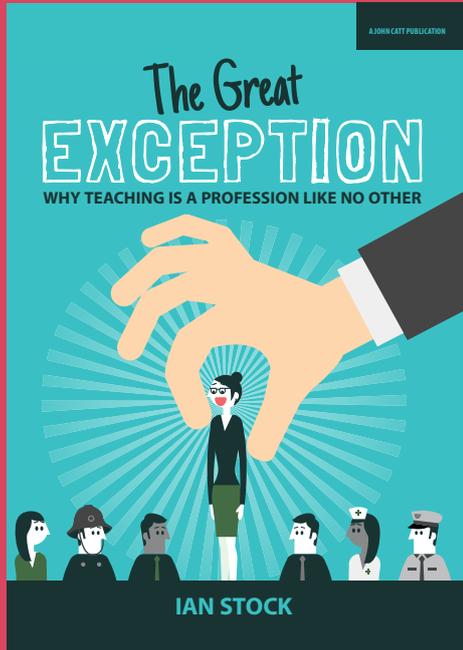
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