



# SSAT Journal 04

Autumn 2015

**ssat** the schools, students  
and teachers network

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# Welcome

from Sue Williamson,  
Chief Executive, SSAT



Speaking recently at the Leading Edge network's leadership conference, where the theme was courageous and confident leadership, I recommended *Leading*, the book by Sir Alex Ferguson with Michael Moritz. Sir Alex was very clear about his job – it was 'to make everyone understand that the impossible was possible. That's the difference between leadership and management.' I think this definition of leadership applies to the best school leaders.

Over a number of years Mark Farrar, principal of Reepham High School and Sixth Form College in Norfolk, has developed a staff team that by working together – and with the students – has created a truly inspirational school, as I saw on a recent visit. Mark, like Sir Alex, has a strong work ethic and moral compass.

He also keeps his concerns about accountability, Ofsted and the like within the confines of his leadership team. Teachers are allowed to focus on the important matter of continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. They do not over-complicate things – simplicity is the key. As usual in the very best schools, they do not think what they are doing is particularly special or innovative.

This edition of SSAT's Journal is full of articles from schools that are determined to give every student in their school a quality education,



and to improve practice. I am always inspired and challenged when I read the journal - I hope that you agree. And, if you have not yet had an article published, that you will think of a nugget that you might share with the network.

There will be many examples of innovative practice at SSAT's National Conference – Quality and Equity – 3-4 December 2015. We do not have Sir Alex, but we have school leaders like Ani Magill, Stephen Munday, Tom Sherrington and Marva Rollins sharing their ideas as well as lots of school-led workshops.

Enjoy the journal and see you in Manchester.

**Sue Williamson**  
Chief Executive



# Introduction

*from Bill Watkin,  
Director, SSAT*

**The period of calm and stability to which so many aspire, whether policymakers or school leaders and teachers, does not yet seem to have arrived in our schools.**

All the reforms introduced over the last five years must now be implemented: new curricula designed, new schemes of work written, new assessment frameworks developed and refined, and new lesson plans and resources prepared, in the light of the new national curriculum and the reformed GCSE specifications.

In addition, further changes have been introduced in recent months: the legacy GCSEs will no longer be counted if taken early by Y10 students in 2017; teachers now have statutory responsibilities with regard to the Prevent agenda and FGM; the coasting schools category has been reintroduced; the role of the regional schools commissioners is to be extended.

There is, of course, greater certainty now about some issues. We know, for example, that AS and A-levels will be uncoupled and that there will be a transitional period while this is phased in across the curriculum. We know that the Commission on assessment without levels will not be providing a template for schools, though it may help with a national bank of questions. We know from Ofqual which subjects will be reformed and which will cease to exist.

On the other hand, we are still awaiting further details about other issues. The consultation on the requirement for all pupils to study the full Ebacc suite of subjects has yet to be launched. The definition of a coasting school in 2016 will have to wait until after the results have been published. And the requirement for those who do not pass their national tests at the end of KS2 to resit them in year 7 is still a source of some uncertainty.

But whatever the changing landscape looks like, it is always a privilege and a pleasure to visit schools across the country where there is a relentless focus on high quality teaching and leadership, aspirational outcomes for learners, unflinching care for the emotional and mental well-being of all young people, and an inspiring sense of community.

Throughout this edition of the SSAT Journal, there are examples of the moral imperative at work, of schools' determined and creative strategies to ensure that students get the very best from their education, as they prepare for adult life and the workplace.

We are very grateful to Arcadis for their support with the design and production of this publication.

**Bill Watkin**  
Director

# Mental health: how to stop schools worrying about it

Rachel Nash,  
Maltby Academy

Mental health is in the public eye like never before – and not before time. The former Coalition's *No health without mental health* report (2011) cited evidence showing that half of those with lifetime mental health problems first experience symptoms by the time they are age 14, while 75% of those with lifetime mental health problems experience symptoms before their mid-20s. The report aimed to put mental health on an equal footing with physical health.

Mental health is no longer seen as a problem falling exclusively to health services to understand and deal with; it is now increasingly recommended that schools implement their own services. With the ONS Survey (2004) reporting that 1 in 10 children aged 5-16 had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder, the DoH's *Future in mind* report (2015), and reports by the DfE, *Counselling in schools and Mental health & behaviour in schools* (2015), the government is clearly seeking to place schools at the heart of mental health delivery. Mental well-being is in fact referenced in the new Ofsted Framework (2015) among the descriptors for personal development, behaviour and welfare.

## Increasing pressure on schools

Indeed, many would agree that in the early 21st century, schools have become even more the hubs of communities. Greenberg (2010) states, 'By virtue of their central role in lives children and families and their broad reach, schools are the primary setting in which many initial concerns arise and can be effectively remediated' (p28).



In addition, schools often represent one of the biggest local employers. Like all responsible employers they have not only to be accountable to their stakeholders and service users, but also a duty of care for the well-being of their staff, particularly at a time when mental illness is being cited as the biggest cause of sickness absence in the UK (Davies, Chief Medical Officer, 2013). With a recent BBC investigation claiming that 83% of teachers surveyed had reported workplace stress, Weare (2013) talks about stress-related illness and burnout of teachers, and states, 'in promoting mental health in schools, we have to start with the mental health and well-being of teachers themselves' (p129-130).

Concurrently, Casey's work for DCLG (2012) on the Troubled Families Programme shed light on the growing issue of multi-systemic, cross-generational issues facing families including antisocial behaviour, domestic violence and, again, problematic mental health.

## The challenge

The challenge for schools and academies is how to implement a service which is all-encompassing, given that their primary role is as educators, not mental health professionals, with limited funding.





The case for sustainability is even more problematic: externally funded services are often vulnerable to cuts in funding, whereas directly employing staff means that schools take on the related HR risks as well as having to work out what expertise and related support is necessary. Yet the reality is that with stretched resources and high caseloads, statutory social care and CAMHS services are currently only reaching those on the verge of clinical mental disorder and care proceedings.

#### **Case study: A learning trust approach**

The Maltby Learning Trust (MLT) has taken the proverbial bull by the horns. It is a multi-academy trust of five local schools (one secondary and four primary) in an area of Rotherham with some districts among the most 5-10% deprived nationally. It has a long tradition of working proactively with the wider school community, including procuring mental health services to support the community. In the context of shrinking public resources, the trust took the bold step of investing in and creating an in-house service, Rotherham Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST), to take a borough-wide approach to whole-school mental health interventions. The initial aim was to work with schools to create dedicated teams within school communities which employed and co-ordinated specialist, multi-disciplinary staff to work with

children, young people and families as well as school staff. Its vision was to draw together practitioners employed directly by Rotherham MAST, other schools and external agencies to oversee bespoke packages of support and evidence-based interventions which would improve mental health sustainably.

Rotherham MAST is actively working to create mental health support which students, staff and families can rely on, as part of a cultural norm within the schools. Since its inception in March 2014, the team has acted as an agent for over 20 primary and secondary schools across Rotherham, and with the local authority, to recruit multi-disciplinary mental health practitioners and to support the mental health needs of school communities. While these practitioners spend most of their time working on an outreach basis in schools and family homes, they all meet once a week to share learning and good practice and to receive necessary peer support; also supervision on a monthly basis. Rotherham MAST is also considering how it can network other practitioners in schools who are working in isolation, to benefit from this shared learning.

The service is led by a strategic leader with a background in counselling, multi-agency/cross-sector collaborations and service development,



management, training and business. The leader works as part of the extended senior leadership team and is managed by MLT's chief executive. This gives schools the confidence to develop a package of support appropriate for their school community, with a leader who can supervise mental health practitioners across a range of roles and who will liaise with borough-wide initiatives.

With a history of working closely with schools, the leader is familiar with the realities of daily school

life, and can facilitate links between pastoral staff in schools and Rotherham MAST practitioners at Tier 2 (CAMHS Strategic Framework) or Wave 3 (SEND) level. This is a vital factor: in reflecting on counselling in schools Luxmoore (2014) states, 'It'll make its special contribution but that contribution will only ever be as part of what goes on in school. The counsellor will be one of many people offering support - never the only person.' (P49)

Rotherham MAST will potentially play a key role in creating better pathways between different levels of support to ensure that children and young people get the right level of support at the right time.

### Evaluation and funding processes

While Rotherham MAST remains a not-for-profit arm of MLT, and absorbs some full-cost recovery expenditure, it is aware that the packages of support schools are purchasing is predominantly funded through pupil premium. Rotherham MAST therefore collects a raft of outcome measures, utilising both evidence based and bespoke evaluation systems, to evidence both quantitative and qualitative data, and produces reports for its stakeholders to demonstrate impact.

### Services being offered and developed by Rotherham MAST include:

Students: counselling, group work, PSHE material and peer mentoring

Staff: counselling, training including SLT and governors and supervision

Families: home-based individual support, parenting groups and workshops

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# What do we need to do next? The marginal gains approach in school

*Mark Emmerson,  
The City Academy, Hackney*

**A high expectation culture is at the heart of any successful organisation. This is not a new concept; indeed, it has been the cornerstone of every research finding across the globe into what delivers excellent educational outcomes. In schools and academies up and down this country we hear slogans about ‘fulfilling potential’ and ‘being the best you can be’. But who defines that potential? And what sets the limit on ‘the best you can be’?**

What about being the best? The best in your locality, the best in the borough, the best in the country...the best in the world? Clearly there can only ever be one school that is the best in any particular context. But what is also true is that only school leaders who have ambitions for their school to be the best will lead their school to that level of achievement.

I read an article in 2009 that made me re-examine my own expectations and approach to leadership. I had been the headteacher of an Ofsted rated ‘outstanding’ school for eight



years and was now principal designate of The City Academy, Hackney; a school that was yet to open. With the luxury of a moment on the Tube to read the free magazine Sport, I saw an article on the British cycling team, who, fresh from their success at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, were preparing to swipe more golds at the 2009 World Championship.

I was not a keen follower of cycling but was struck by the impact the team had at the Olympics and particularly interested in the leadership of Dave Brailsford. His expectations were and are unrelenting. In the article, he was quoted as saying: ‘We want to win. Everything. When we started out, it wasn’t cool to state outright that we were going to do everything we

could to win and really mean it.’ Subsequently, as director of Team Sky, he set them the goal of winning the Tour de France within two years.

For Brailsford, setting out a clear unequivocal vision of being the best forced an agenda: an analysis of every aspect of the team’s recruitment, training, technology and management. Three core principles were woven into the culture of the team: firstly, the bottom line was about winning and every action the team took needed to be with that in mind. This ‘action alignment’ also stretched to the interactions of everyone in the team. He established a set of ‘winning behaviours’ which became semi-contractual for all his staff. If they committed to the approach, they could expect



total support; if they didn't, they were out.

Secondly, they adopted a philosophy of 'compassionate ruthlessness'. He wanted his team to be very, very supportive. He would not tolerate bullying management, leadership or coaching as he rightly said that, in any organisation, this inhibits performance in the long run. However, if he noticed performances dropping or an athlete losing desire, then it would be time for them to move on. He said, 'We're not friends. I respect every single rider and they are fantastic people, but I don't go for a pint with them.'

Finally, the concept of 'aggregation of marginal gains'; a term he coined to explain the search for continuous, incremental improvements in order to gain an advantage, any advantage, over other teams. All the top teams have great riders, first-rate bikes and excellent training programmes so Dave figured that, with those things in place, you can compete and maybe get a lucky win or two. But to systematise and normalise

being the best, he believed that each one of the essential components of a top cycling team had to be just a little bit better than the competition.

In this vision of elite sporting performance, I saw great parallels with school leadership which is and, probably always has been, competitive and performance driven. The difference now is that results are public, transparent and much more accurate, to the extent that reputations, which were once difficult to shift, can now be shaped, built and destroyed annually. Right or wrong, it is the landscape we operate in and the comparisons, through the Pisa tests, are now global.

The approach we have used in our academy has mirrored many aspects of the approach adopted by the British Cycling Team's elite performance groups. We set out our vision early: we wanted to break the mould, to be a 'world class' educational establishment. That forced some very important discussions about what success looked like and how it could be achieved.

### **Fear turned to drive**

When you have set out not just to be outstanding in Ofsted terms but to be exceptional, to be world class, the bald ambition of the statement is very scary. In many respects, such brash ambitions run counter to our intrinsic desire to manage expectations and to achieve the targets we set ourselves. I had a number of sleepless nights thinking about how we could deliver anything close to the stated vision but, apparently, I was not alone. Brailsford delivered a presentation to our students where he disclosed that his self-doubt had him waking up in a cold sweat asking himself why he'd ever said they would win the Tour in two years when no British rider had ever won it before! 'In the dead of the night I thought we were going to be a laughing stock', he said. From somewhere, the next morning, this fear turned to drive.

There were good reasons for us to try and establish the highest expectations. Nearby we have some excellent local schools, in the top 10% of added value





nationally; indeed, one of the highest performing inner-city secondary schools is barely a stone's throw away. Perhaps setting out a world-class vision for our academy was presumptuous, perhaps it was too ambitious...or perhaps it was not ambitious enough; after all the cycling team was aiming to be the best in the world and we stopped short of that aim. It certainly did focus our minds though and we knew that we had to replicate all the best practice we knew of in schools ...and then improve on it.

### **Winning behaviours**

In a large secondary school, managing the complex nature of human interactions relies on a common set of behavioural expectations, defined around acceptable boundaries and driven by a common goal. If positive behaviour, common courtesy and mutual trust can become routine then teaching and learning become much more effective. We are extremely consistent in our high expectations of behaviour with both staff and students, having codes of behaviour which are simple, effective and very important to the culture of the school. I was surprised to hear that one of the Sky team's 'winning behaviours' is that all individuals in the team are open and honest with each other face to face. We independently had a

similar principle; we expect our staff and students to address any issue directly face to face with their colleagues. Staff should never send negative emails and are expected to be as up-beat and positive with students as possible.

### **Compassionate ruthlessness**

In our academy, we place enormous emphasis on integrity, compassion and support for the students – but this never means accepting excuses.

If we are to help them succeed, then we need to enable them to perform well in their examinations. Winning behaviours mean equipping students with the character traits necessary for academic achievement as well as the softer skills which give them the tools to carve out successful, happy lives for themselves in the future.

A good set of exam results is very often the springboard for students; so we are unapologetic about our rigorous focus on academic excellence. One simple example of this, in practice, is the absolute requirement that students do the best work they can and if that has not happened, they will re-do it, with support if required. This very simple strategy has enabled previously underperforming groups, such as disadvantaged students, to achieve much better in-class progress.

### **Aggregating marginal gains**

Many leaders are concerned only with the strategic and leave the detail to others. Indeed, it is not possible to drive every element of practice in a school with over 120 staff and over 1000 students. It is, however, possible to establish continuous improvement as a driving strategy for the school, setting parameters around what improvement looks like. For example, we insist that any improvement should simplify or reduce workload and have more impact on learning outcomes than our current practice. We do this because we believe the most precious commodity in any school is teacher energy and the continuous erosion of energy will only lead to a reduction in performance.

The systems that support teaching, assessment, behaviour, intervention and parental engagement have all been drawn from where we have seen excellent practice. We have refined and improved them and left to one side those that are complicated, onerous and therefore unsustainable.

Some of the more interesting (and indeed more mundane) marginal improvements we have instituted at The City Academy, Hackney are identified in the table.

| Marginal Improvement                                   | What it achieves                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 levels of progress target for all                    | Simple common high level expectations for all                                                |
| Common target sheet                                    | Same in all books so students better understand expectations                                 |
| 4 levels of progress target for performance management | All staff expected to achieve 90% 4LOPs average.<br>Aligns targets with student expectations |
| All staff are personal advisers                        | Teachers and other staff engaged in common endeavour                                         |
| All policies on one side of A4                         | Key policies easily accessed, remembered and implemented                                     |
| Data team of 4                                         | Data collation & presentation done for teachers, who analyse and act                         |
| Behaviour code                                         | Clear rewards and sanctions, applied in and outside school                                   |
| Behaviour team of 6                                    | Support staff who mentor and run detentions, freeing up teachers                             |
| Staff code                                             | Promoting positive and professional relationships                                            |
| All students use exercise books                        | Notes are in one place and easy to revise from                                               |
| Students line up in Y7-10                              | Students are settled on entry and lesson starts without interruption                         |
| Academy 6-point lesson plan                            | Common RPT structure. Rigour, Precision and Thoroughness                                     |
| Report cards in planners                               | Students don't have to remember separate report cards                                        |
| Targets in planners                                    | Students don't have separate written target sheets                                           |
| Detention grid in planners                             | To avoid double-booking detentions                                                           |
| Detentions centralised                                 | Heads of subject and house can share and rotate                                              |
| SLT all teach                                          | Expectation modelling, and understanding demands on teachers                                 |
| Silent corridors                                       | A library atmosphere and no unnecessary disturbance to learning                              |
| Tutor time once a week                                 | No excessive movement each day, no lost teaching time                                        |
| Simple 3-point literacy policy                         | Key strategy - full sentence answers and standard English oracy                              |
| 3-point numeracy policy                                | Key strategy - never use a calculator first                                                  |
| Boarding school                                        | Residential for vulnerable students for one week during GCSEs                                |
| 1 to 1 Maths/Eng Intervention                          | Tutoring using pupil premium money                                                           |
| No mobile phones in school                             | Distractions, cyber bullying, videoing in school etc.                                        |
| Family dining                                          | Students eat in tutor and house groups                                                       |
| Colour coded dining                                    | Dining zoned by colours of trays to avoid congestion clearing up                             |
| Parent days                                            | Parent days instead of evenings to allow more time for discussion                            |
| Parent surgery                                         | No appointment drop-in to meet senior staff                                                  |
| Self-evaluation reports                                | Act as principal's report to governors; updated termly                                       |

## Outcomes

Are we realising our vision? Well, yes and no. In 2014, we achieved an added value score of 1081.3. This was the second highest progress score nationally and the best of any mixed school in the country. However, it's about continuous improvement, and the 2015 results were less impressive with an unvalidated Progress 8 figure of approximately +1.0. That is still very good but falls short of our ambition to be 'the best'. So we have forensically analysed our strategies and in the era of comparable outcomes, we realise that although our students' UMS

(uniform mark scale) scores were better this year, their grades were lower.

The process begins again, looking for those small improvements that will move a few more students from A to A\* and ensure that every child achieves their target grade. We know that progress is not always linear and we all have to learn from our past experiences. One great year followed by one very good year is, in our terms, disappointing. We will only truly realise our vision when we have a school that consistently achieves world-class

outcomes and where success is wholly sustainable.

As Dave or any elite sports coach would agree, the first win is actually the easiest. Sustaining that level of performance and continuing to improve when everyone else is trying to catch up is the hardest thing.

The question for every striving leader in every organisation is 'have we done all we can?' The answer in schools will always be 'no' – so the next question inevitably is: 'what do we need to do next?'

# Approved by Ofsted: a curriculum for all

*Stephen Gray,  
Redborne Upper School*

**Students at Redborne Upper School in central Bedfordshire start at year 9 in a three-tier system, which gives the school something of a collegiate feel, with over 25% of the 1500 students being post-16.**

One of the features of our curriculum has been flexibility. We operate a five block option system at both KS4 and A-level, and our principle of constructing option blocks after students have expressed initial preferences has led to very high student satisfaction ratings. Academic aspirations are generally high, but we are a school with a genuinely comprehensive intake and we have a curriculum to match.

We also, unusually, have a school farm on site. But our range of KS4 subjects encompasses level 2 Latin/Classical Civilisation, as well as City and Guilds Agriculture. Indeed, traditional academic subjects feature strongly in our offer. History is typically the most popular subject at GCSE and we enter about twice the national average proportion of the cohort for triple science. We also have a very strong tradition in the arts and technology.

## **Broad vocational offer**

In addition to those students studying agriculture or GCSE environmental and land-based science on-site at the farm, about 15% of our cohort take part in day-release programmes, organised in conjunction with Bedford College, to study subjects such as hair and beauty, motor vehicle technology and construction.

We were aware that some schools have been accused of using vocational courses to 'game' the system. While some of the courses studied did boost the headline threshold measure, others did not, and



this was never our primary reason for including the courses in the curriculum. Motivation is always difficult to quantify precisely, but we felt that the day-release programmes were a way of energising students who might be reluctant learners in the classroom, and making them feel more positive about education as a whole. It also offered a clear progression route in an environment that was already familiar to students for whom an academic education post-16 was not likely to be appropriate.

Certainly the skills involved in vaccinating young lambs or in weighing recalcitrant pigs are very different from those that might be more typically developed in a classroom environment. For students who might otherwise feel excluded from the educational process, they give opportunities to shine and demonstrate real responsibility,



including the possibility of part time employment on 'feed and clean' duties at weekends and in the holidays. Every Christmas we enjoy our free-range turkey that has been reared (and slaughtered!) at the school and then hand-plucked by our team of willing volunteers in the days leading up to the end of term.

### **Maintaining flexibility**

The election of the coalition in 2010 brought with it a radical new agenda and in particular the introduction of the Ebacc. Unlike some other schools, we maintained our focus on flexibility and we did not force students to take up the Ebacc. We felt that our policy was vindicated when, in 2013, 97% of our students achieved the five-subject level 2 threshold on the last occasion that this was measured under 'old rules'.

The 2014 reforms added new pressures, but we kept up our offer to provide a balanced education that was genuinely in the best interests of students. This was, after all, what the rhetoric of the coalition government was saying that we should do – so we took them at their word.

We have been a grade 1 school since a section 5 inspection in 2008, and therefore for some years there has been speculation about whether this year's results would be good enough to stave off the 'phone call of doom' for another year. The concept of exempting outstanding schools from

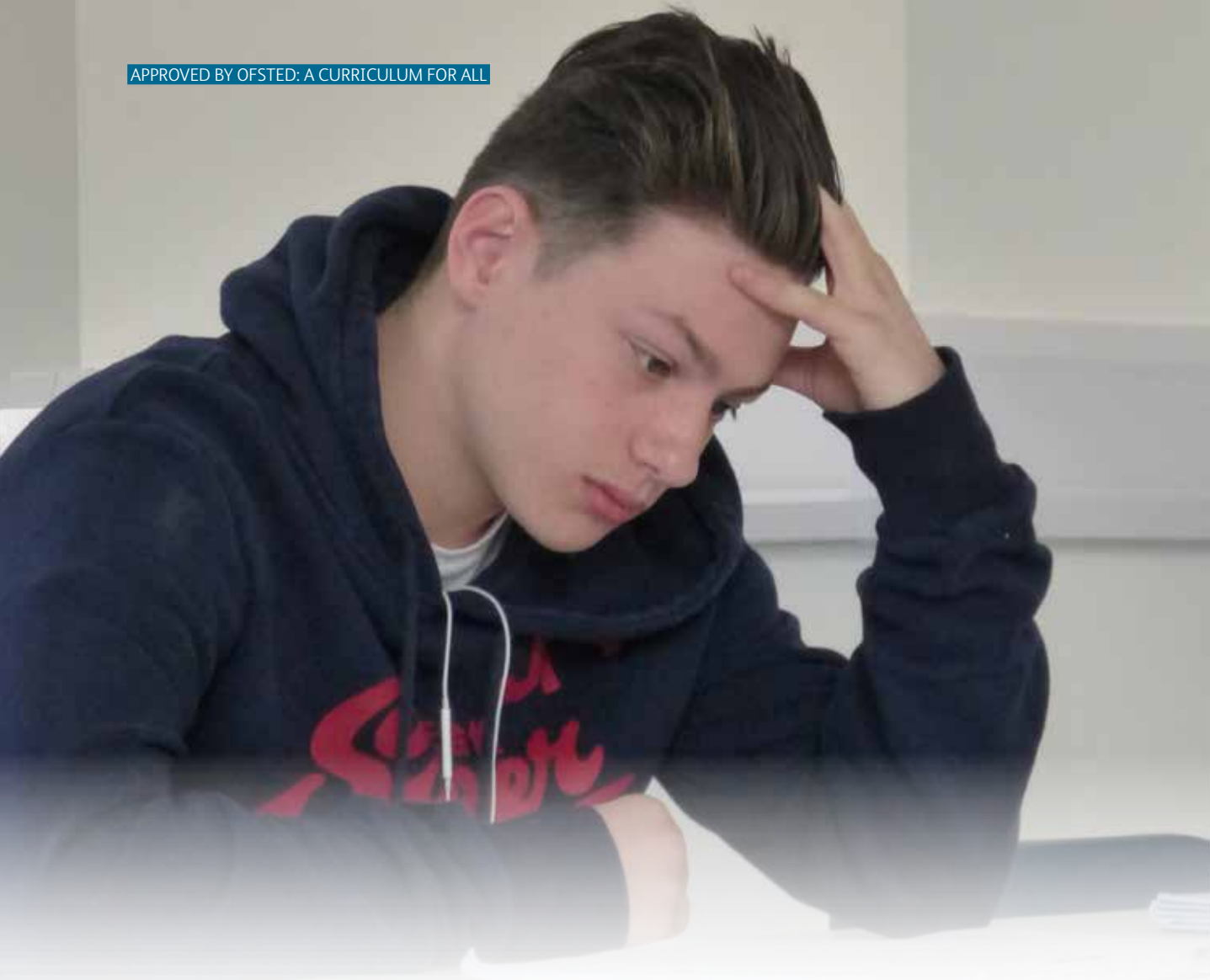
routine inspection was, I am sure, designed both to target resources efficiently and to reduce pressure on schools which were performing well and had the capacity for effective self-improvement. The paradox of this arrangement is that you can be, as we were, in limbo for a period that was longer than the standard interval between inspections.

### **Shifting goalposts**

The status was raised to 'red alert' when we looked at the data for 2014. Unexpectedly, the government had changed the qualifying rules for the OCR nationals in the summer of 2012. As an upper school we had already started teaching our year 9 students the legacy specification in ICT nine months previously. So for league table purposes, our ICT results would count in both 2013 and 2015, but not 2014. Suddenly, with no actual change in student achievement, we could see that the 'sea of green' on Raise Online was about to turn blue.

Luckily, we have an exceptionally skilled data manager who was not only able to alert us to this, having a provisional Raise on our desks for the start of the autumn term, but also produced versions with ICT both in and out of the calculations, and as a result the blues became green again. We could also show, using some data from the depths of the FFT site, that on a like-for-like, all-subjects calculation, our students who had taken vocational courses typically out-performed students nationally.





### **Professional dialogue**

So when the call came, we were well prepared. It was to be a section 8 monitoring visit rather than a full section 5 inspection, with a particular focus on pupil premium. It was a very intense day, but what was gratifying was the extent to which this was a genuine professional dialogue – questions were probing, but there was a willingness to engage with the data analysis that we had carried out and to accept that the official statistics were not the whole story.

Above all, we felt we were dealing with an inspector who had recently led a school and who understood the rationale and values behind the decisions we had made. He emerged from the conference room only twice – once at the insistence of one of our students who was desperate to show off the Redborne racing car on display in the foyer and talk through our latest exploits on the racetrack, and then to spend part of his official break visiting the farm, where he could see at first hand the value of our vocational provision. He was keen to emphasise

the independence of Ofsted, something which has been reinforced by the latest contributions by Sir Michael Wilshaw on the EBacc debate.

### **Outstanding does not mean perfect**

The report that emerged was balanced and drew attention to many of the features that we were very proud of, while broadly endorsing areas for action that we had identified ourselves. It was accepted that outstanding did not mean perfect, but that we had the capacity to identify and act on key areas for further improvement.

### **A different cloud**

The main cloud on the horizon now is not Ofsted or progress 8, but finance. In common with many schools, we have been hit hard by the changes to the budget and it may be that a combination of our own financial situation and that of others may mean that the vocational collaboration may fold. But the farm remains a crucial part of our school community and our curriculum offer. And, unlike the turkeys, we do at least have some knowledge of what fate awaits us.



# Pulling out all stops can succeed with the most challenging groups

*Breffni Martin,  
Fir Vale School Academy Trust*

**Fir Vale Academy is a unique school in Sheffield with approximately 1,050 students. We have over 95% EAL students, nearly 50% FSME6 and we are sitting in one of the most deprived wards in the city with 48% of families on the IDAC (income deprivation affecting children). There are 38 languages spoken in the school and the larger ethnic groups were originally Pakistani, Yemeni and Somali, an interesting but generally cohesive mix. We have always been heavily oversubscribed, (480 applications for 210 places in 2014).**

In 2011-12, the context of the school began to change. We experienced a trickle of Roma Slovak people arriving in the crowded terraced streets opposite the school. By 2012-13, the trickle had grown to a stream into all year groups; and by 2013-4 into a veritable flood, especially into Y7. More and more families arrived, bringing with them the problems of drastic overcrowding and social unrest in the community. This sudden influx also had a significant impact on the primary sector; some of our feeder schools are now over 80% Roma Slovak.

The school was challenging enough in its original context but the increasing Roma population brought a raft of issues, which were at first alarming and took up a huge amount of time for the pastoral and support teams. While predominantly delightful, these students presented with a level of need that I had rarely come across, even when teaching in some of the most deprived areas in the country.

Most of the Roma students did not speak English, or only a smattering. Many could not read or write and had never been to school before. Some did not have the basic motor skills to hold a pencil. Many, both boys and girls, had a very quick trigger to aggressive physical responses, due in the main I believe to their difficult cultural backgrounds. Initial assessments showed a disproportionately large number of these students had serious behavioural issues, often associated with SEN, trauma or mental health issues.

**A disproportionately large number of these Roma Slovak students had serious behavioural issues, often associated with SEN, trauma or mental health issues**

Yet this was the group of students who were supposed to achieve 5A\*-CEM, or preferably the Ebacc, before they left us at the end of Y11.

Fortunately one of the strengths of the school is our absolute belief that every child should leave us prepared with the necessary skills for the world of employment in the 21st century. It was now imperative that we provided these young people with an education that gave them opportunities to develop as members of our society, no matter what the barriers to their learning.

One thing was certain, we needed to change the nature of what we were delivering as a school – or we would never reach any government floor target in the future.





### So what did we do?

We knew we had key strengths we could use:

- » an outstanding EAL department
- » staff who were up for the challenge of every teacher being a teacher of SEN, EAL and literacy
- » a strong pastoral team, many of whom lived in the community.

### After intensive planning, we came up with a structure to engage and challenge these young people using appropriate curriculum pathways:

- » We launched a 'culture of progress'. Using the available data more imaginatively, we created a combined progress score for each student across all subjects but with a double weighting for maths & English for all KS3 students. This fed into a 'league of success' (progress), which is displayed every half term. This became very competitive and we began to see more Roma names appearing as they moved up from S and P levels onto NC L1, L2 etc. It became 'cool' to succeed.
- » A strategic ELD (English language development) strand within the EAL department included dedicated English booster class withdrawal. The students were placed in vertical classes for total immersion in the language, from three to six months depending on progress. They were withdrawn for PE, DT etc.
- » We decided to invest in a significant reading withdrawal programme in Y7 and Y8 for the Roma intake. This had impressive results.

- » We identified our first group of Roma G&T (high achievers) who are now at Sheffield University on Saturday mornings. This was widely celebrated.
- » Zero tolerance was revisited – no excuses for poor behaviour or lack of respect.
- » We made the appointment of Roma Slovak pastoral staff a priority, to do small group mentoring.
- » A community engagement programme aimed to get Roma parents attending parents' evenings. We are still chipping away at this but we're gradually winning.
- » For a small group of Roma students who were not school ready and had anger management issues, we invested in off-site provision which included basic English and maths – but also two hours of kick boxing each day, linked to self-control and expectations. This proved to be amazingly successful and we managed to reintegrate even the most difficult students back into school.

**Two hours of kick boxing each day proved to be amazingly successful; we managed to reintegrate even the most difficult students back into school**



### **Biting the bullet**

However, we also needed significant curriculum changes and restructure. It meant biting the bullet in relation to a slight reduction in APS. We had always done very well on APS and similarly with Progress 8 and wanted to maintain that; but we now had some 20% of students whose attainment would always be very low and we needed to create opportunities for them to achieve.

We came up with a new curriculum pathway in KS4 for this group, which we called 'vision to vocation' (V2V). It was very much a blended learning approach begun in Y9. We decided that they would continue with GCSE English, maths and core science if possible. They would all also do ECDL over three years-- to try and ensure that they had a good IT qualification. We then sourced a range of stand-alone level 1 courses that could if necessary flow into level 2 for the more ambitious V2V students (with subjects such as art, childcare, music, citizenship, drama & dance & ASDAN). Most of our V2V students are Roma, and creative subjects engaged them in a way the traditional curriculum would never have done. We also gave them a placement out of school one day a week linked to a vocational qualification. At the end of 2014 the first V2V cohort graduated with a raft of meaningful

qualifications, and 20 out of 22 students moved straight onto college courses. This was followed by similar success in 2015.

In June 2015 Ofsted arrived and despite our extremely challenging context and 58 students out at alternative vocational provision, we came out as 'good' in every category and outstanding in student safety.

### **The future**

Having established a curriculum and structure that allow all of our students to achieve, we now face the toughest of challenges. Exam reform is removing or altering many of the courses that our less able and Roma cohort can access. (The emphasis on 100% Ebacc is just a joke, not considered viable in a context such as this.)

So we will continue to offer courses that will not count in the league tables – but with moral purpose we will follow our ethos and vision of every child achieving, despite whatever their background and ethnicity. We will have to weather the storm between keeping that relentless focus on teaching and learning and sustaining our standards while at the same time maintaining a blended meaningful education that puts our young people on a pathway to success.



# Developing and embedding a culture of teaching and learning

*Rebecca Poole,  
Teddington School*

**Teddington School is a large, heavily oversubscribed comprehensive in the London borough of Richmond. The school expanded from 11-16 to 11-19 in September 2014.**

The school is a 'good' school. So why the need to change? In Ofsted's report of February 2014 there was an action point which signalled the need for change in teaching and learning to ensure that students did not engage in fidgeting or off-task chat.

This one line set the agenda for a fundamental shift in culture within the school. If students were showing disengagement, what was happening in the classroom which was failing to ignite and sustain the imagination and passion for learning of all the students?

Under the leadership of a newly appointed headteacher, Teddington examined every system and routine in the school, refining them to ensure they met the needs of all students.

A key component in this whole-school reform was to make teaching and learning central to the school's improvement. At the heart of the changes was the understanding that the middle leadership of the school would need to be the change agents – culture setting could not rest with the senior leadership team alone.

## **Year-long programme to develop middle leaders**

The first step was to implement a year-long programme of middle leader development. This was facilitated by an external consultant, adhering closely to the priorities of the school's development plan. All these leaders had to understand how

to observe a lesson and evaluate what they were seeing within the context of the Ofsted framework for teaching and learning. This also necessitated quality assurance and consistency. To this end, the senior leadership team regularly paired up in lesson observations.

A new performance management system was rooted in the principles of high trust and high accountability. The training programme also aimed to ensure that all middle leaders could accurately evaluate their own performances and then create appropriate action plans.

Development of a shared understanding and language of teaching and learning helped to develop pedagogic strategies. The CPD programme formalised collaborative practice. Learning walks gave opportunities to identify good and great practice and to then promote these strategies through TeachMeets. Staff were very eager to share their practice through this forum, in which they could share expertise about the school's own children in its own context.

Assessment for learning and differentiation gave structure to many of the pedagogic strategies. Bloom's taxonomy provided a useful framework for setting challenging lesson outcomes and enabling practitioners to think more daringly about what to cover in the course of a lesson.

We began to see a change in culture. Where once doors had remained closed, classroom practitioners started to share and both literally and figuratively open the doors on their practice.



### At the heart of this change lie some key principles:

#### Teaching principles

Teaching should be innovative and engaging, with a principle of 'every second counts'

Developing questioning strategies helps ensure student engagement and reduce teacher talk.

Framing lesson plans and outcomes within the context of Bloom's taxonomy leads to higher order thinking skills.

Lesson planning should contain milestones to check student progress, often through the employment of assessment for learning strategies such as think/pair/share, random questioning and think time.

Directed improvement task (DIT) marking can identify strengths and areas of development for

the student to improve the work, thereby helping them become familiar with assessment criteria and tools for improvement.

#### Systemic principles

Structures need to be put in place to ensure that good practice is systematically identified (learning walks, regular walk throughs by senior and middle leaders).

Staff should be given a platform to showcase successful strategies to colleagues.

Lesson observations and feedback should be configured around two key points: the teaching principles and strategies which lie at the heart of school improvement; and the Ofsted criteria for making 'outstanding' informed judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.

Dialogue around effective teaching and learning should be actively promoted and facilitated through a variety of forums – this acts as the glue of change and professional development.

Staff need to be given regular opportunities to collaborate and develop shared and innovative pedagogies, both within and beyond departments.

The expertise of external consultants is often needed to ensure the maintenance of standards and that the teaching and learning dialogue stays abreast of national changes. These consultants also help in standardisation and external validation.



### Where next?

As the school sets out on the second year of its transformation, the CPD offer has become increasingly differentiated.

Staff can pursue different avenues of interest and developing expertise:

- » the Masters qualification, in partnership with St Mary's, Twickenham;
- » the implementation of an NQT+1 programme to ensure that colleagues in their second year of teaching continue to be supported and developed;
- » an innovation group of teachers working on collaboratively developing new pedagogies in the classroom.

The leadership of these groups has been distributed across a team of practitioners keen to develop a whole-school approach to teaching and learning practice.

Strong leadership with a shared moral purpose is crucial to redefining the school culture. Middle leader training now also includes deputy middle leaders to ensure succession planning and consistency, with leading on teaching and learning as the overarching theme.

Two members of the middle leadership team are also on one-year secondment onto the senior leadership team, with a structured development programme and responsibility for driving a particular whole-school initiative.

The school is increasingly becoming more outward looking, keen to collaborate and network with other schools in the area to develop expertise and support the needs of all children in the locality.

In conclusion, the school is set on a course to instil a love of learning, resilience and mastery of skills and talents in students, which will equip them for happy and successful adulthood.

# Choosing, developing and evaluating our new KS3 assessment model

*Josephine Smith,  
Kesteven and Sleaford High School*

Kesteven and Sleaford High School (KSHSSA) is an 11-18 selective academy in Lincolnshire. With 760 self-motivated, hard-working students on roll, we realise we are really lucky that they are so receptive to all opportunities we offer them. Teaching is a pleasure and the high standards our students achieve are testament to their innate ability as well as their efforts. This year our year 11 students achieved a shadow progress 8 score of +0.5.

That doesn't mean to say there aren't challenges for staff working in such a school. With their backgrounds, our students should do really well and they are very aware of this. They are tough on themselves, but sometimes in a harmful way. They tend to be self-critical when they don't achieve the highest grades and frequently compare themselves unfavourably with each other. This undermines their belief in capacity to fulfil their own potential, no matter how often we talk of growth mindsets and resilience.

## **Meeting personal potential**

When the government announced that schools were able to develop their own key stage 3 assessment systems, in place of the outdated national curriculum levels, we realised we had an opportunity to use assessment to redress the balance. We could show our students that achieving was really about meeting their own personal potential.

Rather than climbing the ladder rungs of 5c,5b,5a,6c... our assessment system now sets KS3 students the challenge of meeting their own individual targets and ensuring that any feedback



given by teachers enables them to reflect on whether they are on track.

Simple calculations sit behind a system which is then hopefully very easy for students to interpret. Using grades 7.0-7.9 in year 7, 8.0-8.9 in year 8 and 9.0-9.9 in year 9, we set pupils a minimum expected progress grade and a target grade and guide. And we encourage them to keep meeting or exceeding it.

## **An adaptable system**

These calculations will need to change as government redefines data at either end of a student's secondary school career. For that reason we hope that our system is flexible enough to adapt to changing curriculum and government policy. At the moment a student's KS2 average level and their expected and better than expected progress grades for GCSE are used as the markers at the start and end point of their assessment. Using government data we calculate what expected progress would look like for any student. We came up with charts showing minimum expected progress rates. Teachers and students found this helpful.

The average grade across all GCSE subjects achieved at the KSHSSA varies each year between a





high B grade and a low A grade. So then we worked backwards. To signify a KS3 student working towards this GCSE grade we set the average KSHSSA KS3 assessment grade as .5. So in year 7 an 'average' KSHSSA student would be working at 7.5 and would continue to be expected to work at 8.5 and 9.5 before heading towards B+/A-grades at GCSE (or the new 6 or 7 GCSE equivalent).

### Assessment descriptors

This .5 marker gave our subject leaders a starting point for their assessment descriptors. They were asked to describe in assessment terms what an 'average' student at the school (ie one who would go on to achieve grade B+/A- at GCSE) would look like in their subject. Then we asked them to describe what a student who might go on to achieve an A\* (or a 9) in their subject might look like. After poring over new GCSE syllabuses, revised KS3 curriculum detail and helpful resources like the Pearson Progression Scales, subject leaders came up with their own assessment maps. These charted, across strands in their subjects, what students needed to demonstrate at each grade. These are available for every subject area on the curriculum pages of our KSHSSA school website for parents and other interested parties to view. They took time to create and prompted some really considered thinking and debate about what the very best KS3 student learning might look like; something I'm not sure the national curriculum levels ever achieved.

### Consistency across subjects

Unlike the national curriculum levels we feel there is now consistency across subjects. Gone are the days where we needed to explain to a year 7 parent

why their child might be a level 3a in French but a level 6 in maths even though they would most probably achieve an A grade at both in GCSE.

Why not drop levels altogether?

We will happily concede that our system isn't 'assessment without levels'. Some might argue we have missed the opportunity to abandon numbers, grades, targets and levels altogether. Our staff working party, which worked on this new system over a period of six months last year, considered all the options including the innovation grant winners, researching their suitability for our setting. We kept returning to several fundamental objectives.

We wanted:

- » to be able to use assessment to check students were achieving their individual potential (as well as being able to track progress against school and national expectations)
- » to be able to report to parents in a way that made clear what their child was able to do and what they needed to do next to keep developing in any subject area
- » the information on student progress to be easy to analyse at department and whole-school level (the decile system is working well for this)
- » our system to be flexible enough to adapt to inevitable government data changes
- » a system that would generate discussion about skills and development among teachers and students, rather than simply being about climbing to the next rung of the level ladder.

### Bringing students and staff with us

Having piloted the system last term, we are confident we have a model that is fit for purpose this academic year. It even works within our chosen live data reporting subscription (we use Go4Schools).

So far, response from pupils has been positive; the student council tested our thinking and engaged in really sound debate about the system's likely strengths and weaknesses. A series of staff briefings and year assemblies made sure that we were able to address any queries. And the fact that so many teachers had participated in the original working party meant there were lots of staff to reassure others and explain how it worked in practice.

We know we will need regularly to review the calculations on which progress is set and train every new member of staff at the school to work within the system. But for the moment we feel we have a system that will serve students well.

# Effective Maths: working with colleagues from Shanghai

Matt Britt,

*Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred  
and Harris Primary Academy Mayflower*

When Harris Federation took over what is now Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred in January 2014, as executive principal I inherited an academy which had been graded as Requires Improvement and where achievement and attainment in mathematics had been weak for some time. Teaching and learning were inconsistent and teachers unsure of their methodology, or how to plan for an effective sequence of mathematics teaching.

Harris Primary Academy's newly appointed principal, Tracey Boanas, had been with me in a previous school where she had led on mathematics. We both worked hard in the first year to raise attainment in maths to the point where our Level 4 results were 10% above the national figure by the end of key stage 2, although our data for pupils attaining Level 5 was stubbornly fixed at the national standard. To achieve rapid improvement, we introduced effective marking, using Greg Wallace's marking for improvement approach (<http://www.effectivemarking.co.uk/>).



We worked alongside teachers to get them to agree and understand their data and assessments and to use this understanding to shape more effective and focused teaching and learning. Tracey put in hours of Inset and team and 1-1 support in planning; together, we supported interventions targeted at vulnerable groups across the academy.

While this achieved an initial impact, with an uplift in the outcomes at KS1 and KS2 in maths in 2014 as well as an overall 'Good' grading in every category from Ofsted by May 2014, this pace of support was not sustainable in the long term. We also wanted an approach where no child was left behind and where every professional

felt confident in teaching maths. In July 2014 Ann Berger, ex-HMI and newly appointed primary director for the Harris Federation, invited us to become involved in the DfE-backed London Thames Maths Hub.

## **Learning from Shanghai**

This project began with two of our staff members, Tracey and a young teacher, Christall Adams, spending two weeks in a Shanghai primary school learning about the methodology and philosophy behind their curriculum and approach to the teaching of mathematics.

Tracey recalls: 'on returning from Shanghai, Christall and I immediately implemented some of the changes in our weekly planning sessions; this included the use of missing-





number calculations and using the balance sign in different positions in the number sentence. Using the Effective Maths approach and the lessons learned from Shanghai, the teaching of maths in Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred has come alive. Teacher and pupil confidence has grown considerably.'

The academy, supported by the Harris Federation, went on to train its staff and began to embed the 'Effective Mathematics' approach, with Greg Wallace's support. This, combined with the Shanghai approach, created an emphasis on mastery in maths. We also aimed to use the best assessment for learning practice from the UK, to ensure maths teaching delivers success for all pupils.

In March 2015, two colleagues from China visited Chafford

Hundred and worked alongside teachers in year 3 and year 4, planning and delivering lessons collaboratively over a period of four weeks. Every teacher at Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred was able to see the Shanghai teachers in action; every lesson was recorded and is available to staff. The children in years 3 and 4 made exceptional progress.

#### **Overcoming barriers**

Interestingly, the Shanghai teachers overcame language barriers and any cultural differences, such as behaviour expectations, with ease. Another tool was the lesson study approach, where teachers are observed by colleagues who then feedback to them to reshape and design the lesson, improving and refining practice.

During the time the Chinese teachers were here, Chafford Hundred hosted many visiting

teachers and senior leaders from neighbouring schools. At the conclusion of the month's visit, Lin Lei, a maths teacher from the Shanghai Primary School of Xuhui District, gave a demonstration lesson to a class of 30 pupils, watched by 40 teachers from other schools and academies as well as staff from the Harris Federation, DfE staff, minister Nick Gibb, and Debbie Morgan of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Maths. The lessons mainly taught multi-digit multiplication for pupils from years 3 and 4.

'I found the children in British primary schools very confident, irrespective of their math (sic) performance. They were very interested in learning and willing to learn,' Lin Lei said. She added that teachers from Shanghai and their partners in local schools have been



exchanging views and sought solutions to deal with problems English pupils experience with mathematics during the exchange programme.

Jin Xiangjun, another teacher from Shanghai, praised the British pupils' attitude of active learning. He said he was asked to give more questions when students finished the questions he offered on the whiteboard. 'Once the British students learnt a new calculation method, they were very excited and happy,' Jin said.

Both teachers said teaching and calculation methods in Britain were very different from those employed by Chinese teachers in China. They hoped teachers from both countries could enhance communication and British teachers could improve the teaching of 'jiujiu times table' (multiplication table from

one to nine) in the curriculum of primary schools.

'It has been a very successful programme, which we hope can continue,' said Nick Gibb. 'We want to learn from Shanghai and Shanghai teachers and how they teach young children mathematics. That's the real purpose of the Shanghai exchange.'

Mrs Boanas spoke to all delegates about the impact of the project and how much she had learnt from working with her Shanghai colleagues. The DFE maths team will be visiting Harris Federation again to gain a more in-depth understanding of its approach to primary maths. Next year, Tracey and her team will also be rolling out a programme of teacher research group lessons with maths subject leaders from neighbouring schools and other Harris primary academies.

Our ambition now is to develop a curriculum and approach which, as in Shanghai, ensures that no child is left behind and that all learners feel successful as mathematicians. In order for that to happen we are thinking about applying the mastery approach into years 5 and 6 as well as introducing it across year 1. We are in the process of employing a teacher from Shanghai here and creating a team of maths specialist teachers who can deliver and train.

Finally Christall, our young teacher who accompanied Tracey to Shanghai in September, has stepped into the mathematics leader role at the academy and is now a key driver in the move to embed effective mathematics securely across every year group.

# From RI to outstanding

*Christine Kemp-Hall,  
North Ormesby Primary Academy*

**If you always do what you've always done then you'll get what you've always got. That unoriginal thought came back to us in May 2013, when we were categorised by Ofsted as requiring improvement. What we got wasn't nearly good enough.**

We had previously converted to an academy in October 2012 and during our due diligence an external consulting company told us our expectations of average point score across the key stages were too low – and we needed to double them!

This put us all in a bit of a panic. We are in an area of very high social deprivation, with FSM hovering around 70%, very many incidences of involvement with external agencies such as social services, and around 60% mid-year transfers. We convinced ourselves we were up against the odds.

We'd fallen into the trap of making excuses – we allowed the outside environment to influence the internal environment of the school. Typical of this was that staff were often heard to mutter phrases such as 'our children will never be able to do that.'

We needed to change.

## **Where to start?**

The problem really was where to start. We'd been plodding along thinking we were doing OK and relying on contextual value added to support our case. We had trouble employing staff as nobody wanted to work in such a challenging environment or area. The children were constantly changing, making target-setting almost impossible. Being held accountable for progress in these circumstances was worrying.



It was around this time that I came across Sir John Jones, a former headteacher from Kirby in Liverpool. Listening to him talk about his experiences suddenly lit a fuse in me that I'd been getting things wrong and needed to take more notice of my gut instinct. John talked about teachers being 'weavers of magic' and suddenly I realised that's what was needed to drive us forward.

I got John to come and talk to our staff. After he left we found ourselves discussing his final phrase, a twist on an original quote by Maya Angelou, 'Children may forget what you said, they may forget what you did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel.' We decided as a staff that's we needed to go back to. We needed to teach more with our hearts, we needed to walk a mile in the children's shoes, sit in their seats in the classroom and imagine how we'd feel by 3pm having spent a day in school. We came to the realisation we needed to stop making excuses. The best we could do for our children was set extremely high standards,



raise their aspirations and make the curriculum engaging, exciting and enriching.

We agreed as a staff to put together a curriculum that would address the children's experience deficit:

- » we'd do things as a whole school
- » we'd actively pursue youth social action
- » we'd engage heavily with technology to equip children to be 21st century digitally literate citizens
- » we discussed growth mindset and changing the language we used
- » we would always talk about learning and progress
- » we established a twitter account (the best thing we ever did to begin to engage parents) so we could share our curriculum with parents through the day and give children and parents something to talk about
- » we held 'Inspire days' and invited the parents in to participate in the curriculum
- » we developed a text messaging service to enable better communication.

And we developed our mascot 'Tim' (today I'm mastering), who is our role model for all the pupils. In fact Ofsted, when they revisited, noted that children were intrinsically motivated to be like Tim and didn't need any external motivation to learn well at school.

### **Changed behaviour among staff, children and parents**

Gradually we started to see change. Staff were enjoying teaching. They were doing less planning but involving themselves more in producing resources and fun, engaging activities. They were giving feedback in a meaningful way, which was having a positive impact on progress. Children were enjoying learning and discussing it, they were doing homework, reading for pleasure.... Attendance started to creep up and parents were engaging more with the school, attending events, tweeting us and messaging us.

The senior leadership team embraced technology and led by example. All staff were given iPads to enable better communication. SLT carried A5 versions of the Ofsted inspection framework around with them, to check that everything we did measured up against the outstanding grading. We looked at CPD as a way of growing all staff – not just those who may have been struggling or needed that bit of extra support. Governors supported our actions and ensured we had the right resources to deliver what was needed.

We used the 'so what' test with everything we did: e.g. we're holding a lunchtime homework club – so what?

The 'so what' was that by holding the club, children who hadn't been doing homework started to do it – many said the reason they didn't do it at home was they didn't have the equipment or materials and they didn't have a place to do it. So by our becoming





enablers, the children could participate and their learning and progress improved.

If the answer to 'so what?' was that we couldn't see or identify any impact, then we stopped doing it. We took some brave steps; we didn't know if what we were doing would work but it felt right.

#### **Ofsted's next visit**

Moving on two years: in May 2015 the phone call of an impending visit by Ofsted came again. This time we knew we were better than 'requires improvement'. We had an upward trend in results, we were well above national figures with our outcomes from early years and Y1 phonics, we were at or above national outcomes at the end of KS1 and beginning to climb above national figures at end of KS2. We felt we had something special. In an area as challenging as ours, with rising numbers of safeguarding issues, increasing numbers of children with English as an additional language, continual inward and outward movement of pupils, increasing expectations at a national level... we were beginning to buck the trend.

We have a steady staff now who are enthusiastic and well trained. And most parents engage well with the school and understand our passion to drive

up standards. But most of all we have increasing numbers of children who love learning, read for pleasure, do homework, and are well rounded citizens who engage in youth social action and enjoy coming to school. They demonstrate a passion for enquiry and a level of independence often beyond their years. We have a 'growth' mindset and a very positive attitude to learning.

And everyone is extremely happy to be part of an 'outstanding' school.

To those who are facing the challenges we faced, I would suggest remembering to:

- » be brave and take some risks
- » work smarter – don't keep doing things if they're not working
- » apply the 'so what' test to everything you do: if it's not making an impact stop it or change it
- » get buy-in to the vision
- » teach with the heart.

Above all: have fun and weave your magic.

# Writing for purpose: an action research approach

Ruth Pineda,  
Biddenham International School  
and Sports College

**This year, the head of English at Biddenham and I have been leading a whole school ‘writing for purpose’ initiative. Our focus has been on developing students’ capability along with staff confidence and expertise in teaching students to pay more attention - to how they wrote as well as what. This project has been informed by academic literature and small-scale research in school.**

Our motives were threefold:

We shared concerns about the quality of students’ writing in our respective subjects. We wanted to address the gap between students who arrive in Y9 with well-developed writing skills and those who don’t – because the ability to communicate effectively in writing can be the deciding factor in the opportunities students can access as young people and adults.

A visit from our HMI had identified extended writing as a key focus for school improvement.

I was keen to apply the methodological knowledge gained as an MEd alumna and member of SUPER (School-University Partnership for Educational Research) to support school improvement in relation to literacy.

Drawing on action research methodology, our initiative followed three phases: investigation; action and intervention; review and evaluation (figure 1).

During phase 1, we analysed a sample of pupil premium-attracting students’ writing from across subjects to identify common areas of strength and weakness. We also consulted heads of

department and senior leadership team members, which helped us to set improvement targets.

Phase 2 involved developing the CLIK strategy, which was designed by teachers in consultation with students as a reminder of the features of high quality writing for purpose (figure 2). The strategy aimed to address common areas of students’ weakness across the prior attainment spectrum.

The CLIK strategy also uses research from the USA on the positive impact of self-regulated strategy development on students’ writing. It was designed to help students ‘self-regulate’ by giving them a framework to self assess, correct and improve their own writing. Similarly, we believed the strategy would be a useful framework for teachers’ effective feedback in relation to writing.

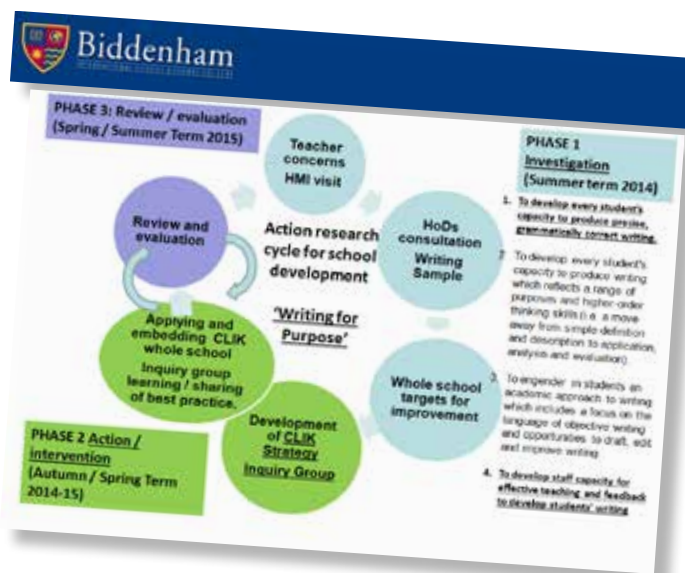


Figure 1: Action research approach to 'writing for purpose'

# WRITING FOR PURPOSE

Before you start and when you finish, **CLIK** and flick!

- 1 Have you used **C**apital letters accurately and consistently?
- 2 Have you taken care to use **L**anguage precisely?
- 3 Have you used connectives to sequence and reinforce your **I**deas?
- 4 Have you used **K**ey words appropriately?

Figure 2: CLIK strategy designed by teachers with Y9 and sixth form students

CPD workshops introduced CLIK to the whole staff and the strategy is now displayed in every classroom. Workshops raised awareness of the link between writing and achievement, reported on common areas of weakness in our students' writing, and helped develop staff knowledge of the components of quality writing and how to use CLIK to support effective feedback. Workshops were followed up with a second writing sample and sharing of good practice.

Further developments include staff opting into an inquiry group with a focus on writing for purpose (Figure 3) and one of our MEd teacher researchers drawing on CLIK to explore how student voice can add value to improvement initiatives.

## The impact of CLIK

From the start we were keen to monitor and evaluate the impact of the initiative and more specifically CLIK. The second writing sample, conducted three months after CPD workshops, provided useful data for examining the impact on students' writing and teacher feedback. Ongoing consultation with HoDs, SLT and students has also been valuable in helping us assess the impact across subjects and classrooms.

These findings were reported to SLT and HoDs:

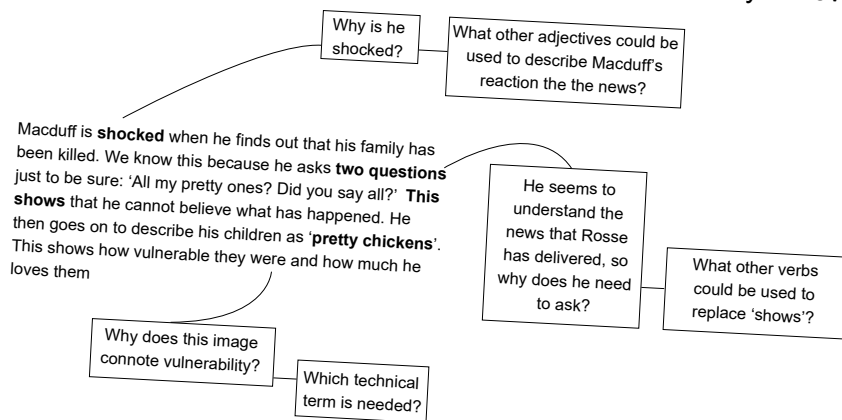
- » CPD workshops raised teacher awareness of the importance of writing for purpose.
- » Where it was evident that there had been an explicit teaching and learning focus on developing writing skills, student progress was clearly observed.
- » Students at the lower end of the prior attainment spectrum who had been given meaningful feedback on writing made more notable progress than students at the higher end.
- » Student self and peer assessment and teacher feedback linked to CLIK was evident across a range of departments. However, CLIK is not yet embedded in practice across the curriculum.
- » There continues to be considerable in-school variation in practice, which needs to be addressed if students are to make significant and sustained progress in their writing across subjects.
- » There is scope for greater stretch and challenge as well as 'scaffolding' in relation to the writing exercises students are being set in class, in order to meet the differentiation agenda.

## What next?

We are now more aware of the challenges associated with leading whole school improvement and the importance of strategic planning in overcoming these challenges. Specifically we are reflecting on how to better capitalise on directed time, CPD and the work of MEd teacher researchers.

Significantly, conversations with students involved in our MEd teacher researcher's project have highlighted a gap in how CLIK is understood and adapted by teachers and how it is perceived and applied by students. We would like to explore, in collaboration with students, how whole-school teaching and learning initiatives can more effectively involve students as stakeholders, problem solvers and communicators.

This year, I've tried hard to get my Year 10 students to 'craft' their writing (as opposed to mechanically churning out content). If they are to do this successfully, they need to slow down and focus on the fundamentals: in this case, reporting and analysing verbs. One of the ways I've tried to encourage them to do this is by providing small blocks of writing that need to be upgraded. The example below is from a worksheet I created after I'd marked the essays above.



Using a resource like this tends to work best when the students can collaborate – GoogleDocs is great, but pens and pieces of paper work just as well. Admittedly, this isn't necessarily exciting stuff/ It's important stuff though, or so I believe. For students to write well, at least in this context, they need to be prepared to slow down, to take things back to basics; they need to understand that good quality writing is often the process of hard work and a lot of concentration.

Figure 3: Extract from the writing for purpose inquiry group reflective blog (posted by head of English Doug Wise)



# An action research programme that improves standards of learning and teaching

*Laura Kestell,  
Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan,  
Abergele, North Wales*

**In October 2014, after a disappointing Estyn (Welsh inspectorate) grading which cited the need to improve the standards of teaching across the whole school, Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan embarked on the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP).**

Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan is an English medium, 11-18 mixed comprehensive with over 1200 learners, 27% of whom are entitled to free school meals and almost 50% living in one of the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. In the 2013 Estyn Inspection in which one of the recommendations was to improve the quality of teaching across the school, Estyn observed that there was not a clear enough understanding of the features of good teaching and learning.

In January 2014, the new headteacher soon realised that in order to pull together all of the elements of learning and teaching; a high impact strategy was needed. Having consulted a number of other schools that had been on significant improvement journeys, he

concluded that TEEP had a lot to offer in providing a whole-school teaching and learning programme.

Full staff training began in October of that year with 11 members of staff going forward to complete the Level 2 training in March, 2015.

**What is TEEP?  
Say goodbye  
to quick fixes.  
Say hello to  
transformational  
learning and  
teaching.**

(TEEP, 2014)

In 2010, SSAT had become the custodians of TEEP, an action research programme designed to help teachers improve their classroom practice, which continues to grow in terms of the numbers accessing the programme. TEEP encourages teachers to think about the process the learners undertake rather than focusing on the end product. It addresses the core business of an educational institution, the learning. It is not designed to be a lesson planning tool, rather a holistic

framework that should influence every aspect of school life. The TEEP model combines all the key aspects of learning and teaching. It focuses on helping teachers to understand what effective teaching and learning behaviours are, and how to use them in their own practice.

What impact has TEEP had on the learners' progress?

I chose to implement TEEP in our school as the focus of my action research project in the iNet/SSAT Developing Leaders programme.

I set these key questions before embarking on the research:

1. Can TEEP help to encourage independent learning skills?
2. Has the TEEP model raised standards of learning for year 8?
3. What are the other benefits to using TEEP in the classroom?

Information was collected using learner questionnaires, a review of tracking point data, and continued observations within the classroom.

One tutor group became the case-study class for the purposes of the project. In order to obtain quantitative data and ascertain

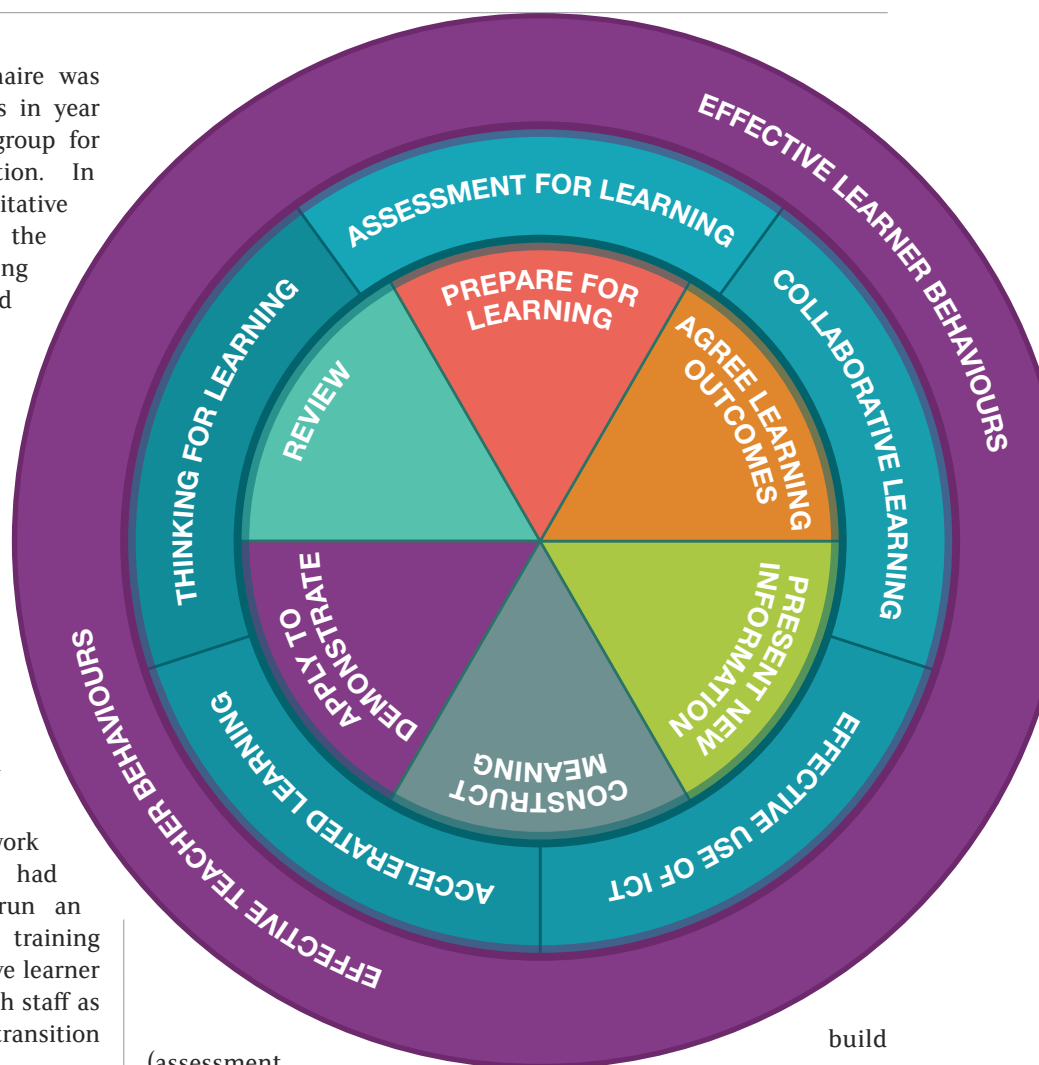
opinions, a questionnaire was distributed to learners in year 8 – the target year group for our TEEP intervention. In addition to the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires, tracking point data enabled me to monitor levels of progress made by the learners experiencing the new initiative.

In order to obtain some qualitative data, I felt that it was important to collect evidence of process and final product work to establish any developments in learning that had taken place.

In addition to the work with year 8, I also had the opportunity to run an accelerated learning training session and an effective learner behaviours session with staff as part of the school's transition programme.

It is worth noting what changes were made to classroom practice following the different stages of TEEP training. The major change implemented was curriculum based. In previous years, units of work were put in place without much thought given to skills progression – eg, what do the learners already know, what new skills do they need to acquire and what can they do next? The plan for the year became much more unified and enabled the learners to build and develop skills in a logical way, as opposed to metaphorically jumping around which tended to happen in the past.

Individual lessons following the TEEP planning cycle gave much more attention to AfL



(assessment for learning) and collaborative learning as well as the construct and apply aspects of learning. The teacher began to ensure learners fully understood tasks during construct activities before setting them free to demonstrate their understanding. Using collaborative learning as a tool, the teacher could stand back and observe more of the learning that was taking place – and so identify areas where learners needed additional support and/or challenge.

#### **What impact do the learners feel TEEP has had on their learning?**

One typical student's comment was 'Lessons are cool, fun and interesting' But we needed to

build up a 'big picture' of learners' opinions on the changes that had taken place within the curriculum. So a questionnaire was distributed, with questions designed to ascertain whether learners were aware that they had opportunities to work collaboratively and to give them an opportunity to voice what they had enjoyed over the course of the year. It also provided an opportunity for them to feed back any ideas they may have or improvements they could suggest.

All of the learners agreed that they regularly get to work in groups in their lessons and that the groups do not always consist of friends but enable them to





work with different people. Comments included: 'Working in groups makes me more confident'; 'I got to work with people I wouldn't normally work with'; 'Miss lets us interact with others'.

The learners were also asked to comment on whether they felt that they had been able to try different activities over the course of the year: 65% agreed that they had. Obviously, there should be a change in activities from one year to the next; but the teacher wanted to establish whether the learners were aware of different activities specifically linked to the TEEP training. Many learners demonstrated an awareness of learning different skills but some were able to go further and describe new

activities: 'We've got to do things that were more challenging than last year'; 'Lessons have been more advanced'; 'We work in groups to create songs and remixes, and the opportunities are endless...'

Following the implementation of TEEP, 88% of learners in the class met or exceeded their target.

The change of curriculum bought in as a result of TEEP training enabled learners to make significant progress and demonstrate a higher level of understanding in their work. A greater focus has been put on the process as opposed to the end result.

This project's results far surpassed our expectations.

They demonstrate enabling learners to have more control of their learning (in this case, through the TEEP cycle) leads to a successful learning experience where enjoyment and engagement in tasks allows learners to excel.

The introduction of TEEP has revitalised my attitude towards learning and teaching and has enabled me to understand better what makes an outstanding lesson. Learners are engaging more with their own learning and are, on the whole, achieving much more of their full potential. I am now charged with the task of ensuring TEEP is established across all schemes of work for all learners in my care.

# Core maths at Leigh UTC

*Harroop Sandhu,  
The Leigh UTC*

**‘Everyone needs to be confident and comfortable using numbers. At present not enough young people leave school or college with the numeracy and maths skills they need for both work and life. England has been falling behind other countries’ maths performance, with only a fifth of pupils in England continuing to study maths at any level after achieving a GCSE – the lowest of 24 developed countries. The UK must do better and provide opportunity for future generations to compete in a global market for highly skilled careers’ (Maths for All, ACME).**

Research suggests that employers are particularly concerned about their employees’ ability to spot errors, analyse statistics and even make basic multiplication and arithmetic calculations. What employers need is for their workforce to have the ability to think mathematically and to confidently apply mathematical techniques in a variety of unfamiliar situations.

In addition, one of the reasons why students leave higher education without completing their qualification, or fail, is that they are not well prepared in key skills before they start. HEIs therefore have to identify knowledge and skills gaps, and support students with, for example, remedial courses in mathematics in the first year.

## **So what is the solution?**

It is true to say that not all students are suited to studying A-level maths. In response to this, DFE has launched the core maths qualification with an ambition to fill the needs of both higher education and the workplace. It’s a two year course leading to



a level 3 qualification, similar to an AS. It caters for the full range of post-16 students.

Designed to teach pupils how to use and apply maths in real situations, is targeted at students who have gained at least a C grade in maths. The main objectives are:

- » Deepen competence in the selection and use of mathematical methods and techniques.
- » Develop confidence in representing and analysing authentic situations mathematically and in applying mathematics to address related questions and issues.
- » Build skills in mathematical thinking, reasoning and communication. (*Core maths qualifications: technical guidance*, DFE)





**Five exam boards are offering qualifications that meet these criteria:**

- » each has a terminal assessment, and one board contains a coursework element
- » 180 guided learning hours are recommended
- » up to 80% of the content is higher level than the 2015 GCSE
- » at least 20% is level 3 content.

**Our approach**

At Leigh UTC, with our engineering and computer science specialisms and working closely with business partners we are only too aware of the impact on employers of a shortage of potential employees who are confident in applying and communicating maths. This is particularly acute among those in the STEM field. So all our students in year 12 and 13 are required to study maths at level 3. It quickly becomes obvious to students that it is imperative that they study maths at level 3 in order to excel in their specialisms.

In addition to this, students can then use core maths as the maths component of the Tech Bacc. This is aimed at ambitious, talented students that want to pursue a technical career, and gives them the opportunity to be stretched through high quality,

rigorous qualifications. So it provides a first-class alternative to the more traditional A-level route, ensuring candidates have the technical ability employers want.

**Is maths really for all?**

We are all only too familiar with the sigh of relief from a proportion of our students when they have finally gained a C grade in GCSE maths, relieved that they now no longer need to worry about continuing with the subject. We have to overcome this. But just as we need to shift students' mindsets to continue to study maths, we also need to ensure that we as teachers have high aspirations for our students. The task is not impossible, though course content and how it is delivered are critical to success:

- » It is a false assumption that pupils who struggle with traditional maths will find problem solving even harder
- » Even able students struggle to apply their maths in unfamiliar contexts
- » Low-level thinking includes memorisation and carrying out procedures without making connections, which is the way more traditional GCSE maths lessons tend to be delivered.

The main emphasis of core maths is to use maths as a tool to analyse problems and justify decision

making. Students are exposed to data and statistics every day - but how often do they (or we) question the validity and assumptions?

The qualifications cover areas such as statistics, financial maths and modelling – for example: learning how to build a financial model to understand an investment; analysing trends in population growth; or calculating ways to improve a process.

Rather than the real life context being the extension, it is at the heart of the learning.

### **An ‘early developer’**

As an early developer Leigh UTC is one of the few centres in the local area delivering the core maths qualification. The whole department teaches core maths as we have some 40 students taking the exam. We have also begun to share expertise with other centres that are either considering delivering it or have started to teach it this year.

The staff delivering core maths are rejuvenated by the fresh approach to the subjects, which has had a positive effect on their teaching in other courses.

This year all year 12s and 13s have enrolled in core maths, and will complete the course in either one or two years. We have allocated five hours a week to the course, though a proportion of this time will be used in completing set work linking to the maths within the specialisms.

The engagement levels have been very high because the maths is strongly linking to the students’ main specialisms and ‘real life’ maths. Recent lessons themed on income tax, the Rugby World Cup and looking at the validity of statistics in the media have all promoted high levels of discussion.

The course has given students confidence and mathematical reasoning enables them to put forward strong arguments within topics that they feel passionate about. We have even had students completing A-level maths intrigued by what fellow students are learning in core maths.

### **Resources and assessment**

We have found the online resources provided by the exam boards and the core maths support website to be well written, and they often provide solutions and teaching strategies. When exploring particular topics, students have been fascinated by the efficiency of transferring their knowledge to spreadsheets.

Because of the number of students taking the course and teachers teaching it, we have also found Google Drive an effective platform to share



resources.

As this is a new qualification, assessment materials are limited to specimen papers and there are no published grade boundaries to measure your students against. However, I recommend becoming part of a core maths network, based on your geographical region, to share resources and assessment materials.

### **Some tips**

Make students aware very early on of the relevant mathematical links to the other courses that students are taking.

Do not make it optional for students. Make it compulsory for particular groups of students otherwise retention will be low.

Make all stakeholders aware of the benefits of a level 3 maths course, no matter which career pathway they are taking.

Allocate enough time in the timetable to allow the course to work effectively.

Try and get students that study core maths to share their experiences with others.

Do not teach it like a traditional maths lesson, as students will disengage.

Incorporate ICT as much as possible.

Communicate with other centres about assessments and resources.

When choosing a board, look at the maths content that is already in the other subjects your students are taking, to ensure maximum overlap.

Start teaching core maths with a topic that is not traditionally on the GCSE specification.

If you are struggling to recruit enough maths teachers, it may be useful to know that some centres have successfully utilised teachers from other disciplines, such as science or psychology, to deliver core maths.



# Why we chose a MAT: the power of collaboration and system leadership

*Alan Yellup,  
Wakefield City Academies Trust*

**Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT), established in August 2013, is now entering its third year of operation. A month past our second birthday, we have 15 open academies with six further conversions due by January 2016. A board of directors oversees the work of strong central business/admin, finance and education teams. The education team comprises 39 full-time specialist staff, including four NLEs, who actively support schools on a daily basis. Our teaching school alliance supplies additional capacity through specialist leaders of education.**

Our values, and experience of raising standards, are firmly rooted in Wakefield City High School. A once-failing inner city school with one of the lowest ability profiles nationally has recovered to the point where it is a beacon school, a leading edge school, a national support school, an SSAT consultant school, a national teaching school, and an Ofsted 'outstanding' school three consecutive times in the last decade.

My belief in the power of school-to-school support and system leadership stems from positive experiences with the SSAT as a consultant head, steering group member for Leading Edge; and East of England Raising Achievement and Transforming Learning (RATL) programme co-ordinator. In particular, the 'by schools for schools' philosophy underpinning the successful RATL programme left an indelible impression which has guided my approach to pursuing excellence.

## **The road to sponsorship**

Following outstanding Ofsted judgements, Wakefield City High School obtained foundation

school status before becoming a fast tracked converter academy in 2011 – which was accompanied by a DfE invitation to sponsor challenging schools.

Becoming a sponsor required little consideration: given our antecedents, it was a moral imperative. Amidst the gloom of oppressive accountability measures which had disproportionate impact on vulnerable schools, we could offer hope and encouragement in overcoming considerable challenge and significantly raising standards and changing community culture.

However, deciding on the type and nature of sponsorship did prove problematic. Discussions were lengthy and sometimes heated on whether we should go for collaborative partnerships, umbrella trusts or multi academy trusts.

Each option had its particular features. Collaborative models appeared consistent with our ethos and 'by schools for schools' philosophy, and avoided legal and financial complications. Umbrella trust models afforded similar arrangements, although an overarching board could exercise a degree of influence where schools remained resistant to change. But multi academy trusts, with responsibility for the employment of staff and all land and assets under a single funding agreement, seemed a daunting prospect.

## **Reasons for choosing a MAT**

Despite these concerns, we chose a MAT model. Key to arriving at that decision had been our experiences of successful support in schools where, standards having risen quickly, they fell back after our departure. Proven strategies had been discarded and complacency returned. Of all

malignant education viruses, I would argue that complacency is among the most destructive, along with lack of belief and low expectations.

It became clear, early in our planning, that a MAT was a completely different beast in terms of infrastructure requirements to deliver successful and sustainable school improvement.

WCAT established several key decisions that we believed essential to deliver high quality education support in accordance with our vision, values and modus operandi.

These were adopted from those proven to be highly effective in Wakefield City Academy's extensive support work.

### Key decisions included:

Working by invitation - not 'empire building'

A focus on challenging vulnerable schools

Education the prime motive

Non-negotiable leadership style, ethos and culture

Context driven support – no 'one size fits all'

Building confidence and esteem, and retaining dignity

No blame, positive cultures, but never shirking tough decisions

Retaining local governance

Supporting not preaching

Openness and transparency

Providing career progression and personal development

Establishing networks in all fields to share best practice

Achieving efficiencies

Focus on core subjects, leadership, data usage and student behaviour

Extensive active support, proportional to expressed or observed need extensive support before, during and after Ofsted inspections.

### Structure and organisation

To match rhetoric with action, WCAT had to be built on strong foundations. It would need to recruit and retain skilful and experienced centrally employed staff.

Key features included:

- » Wakefield City Academy as a constituent academy, not the sole support provider
- » recruitment of full time, centrally employed teams for: education (primary and secondary); business, administration and finance
- » some consultants would work cross phase
- » education support from the National Teaching School Alliance in non-core subject areas
- » some services e.g. marketing, media relations and problematic HR, were outsourced
- » schemes of delegation would be tailored to each category of school, with earned autonomy
- » local governing bodies would have local authority; overall responsibility remained at trust board level
- » each academy would retain its own identity
- » finance at local level, overseen and supported from the centre
- » IT systems providing real-time information across WCAT
- » a 'top slice' 5% of general annual grant revenue funding to provide substantial financial resource for underwriting high quality support and development
- » economies of scale would further supplement GAG existing funding.

### Achievements to date

- a key achievement has been the extent of progress made, enhancing students' life chances and staff working conditions in a climate of greater optimism, support and professionalism
- standards have risen in all academies within the chain across a wide range of KPIs
- academic achievement
- increased attendance (students and staff)
- improved dress and conduct
- budgets brought under control
- pride restored within schools
- pride restored within communities.





However, outsiders are more likely to judge us through Ofsted's focused inspection report. In a three-day in-depth scrutiny, four HMIs looked at our systems; performance data; level of support provided to schools; effectiveness of communications; development plans and schemes of delegation and section 5 inspections of four academies.

The report proved a resounding endorsement of our work and ambitions. Comments included: 'WCAT has articulated its vision across its family of academies very successfully', and, 'Two years into its development, WCAT is making a positive difference to the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils within its academies.'

The keys to successful sponsorship are: staying true to your values and support methodologies and refusing to be deflected by potentially energy-sapping distractions.

One of the latter was Ofsted's focused inspection. It was challenging and time consuming, and deflected us from other urgent business. Nevertheless, it was conducted professionally and

proved developmental. Would I wish to experience it again? Actually I would.

Running a MAT is both exhilarating and exhausting. I remain convinced of its immense power to raise standards in a sustainable way.

### Lessons learned

The path to success as a sponsor needs careful navigation around a few pitfalls. Common challenges include:

- the pathology of underperformance often not understood or accepted
- ineffective leadership, with insularity and denial
- 'the enemy within' - obstructive behaviour from staff resistant to change or suffering damaged pride
- pessimism
- negative portrayals of some MATs
- fear and mistrust born of prior heavy-handed top down (and sometimes pernicious) accountability experiences.

# Eradicating the skills gap

*Sherry Coutu CBE,  
Chairman, Founders4Schools*

As a parent of three teenage children and as a businesswoman, I have become increasingly alarmed with the gap between the skills that young people emerge from school with and the skills required by companies.

Let me explain. There are currently 990,000 openings for jobs. More significantly, estimates from the Royal Society and OECD forecast that by 2020 there will be a million STEM positions; and by 2018 5.8 million 'app economy' positions.

We are in an increasingly dynamic global business environment with 100% of net new jobs being created by companies that are less than five years old. These businesses have 'high quality' jobs where employees report 80% job satisfaction, compared to 46% employee elsewhere.

Now that we know what the projected opportunities from businesses and entrepreneurs look like, what problems do they face?

Ninety-three percent of businesses report that they struggle to fill positions related to digital skills, while 42% of employers are having difficulties finding STEM skilled employees, according to the CBI. This in practice means that they have customer orders that they cannot accept because they can't find people with the right skillsets.

Evidently, there is a massive gap between what young people are learning and what employers need them to know: the skills gap.

Among these fast growing firms, 87% said they would be able to grow their company faster if university graduates had the skills necessary to meet their customer demand (<http://www.scaleupreport.org/>).



## **What should teachers do?**

So as a teacher, how does one go about ensuring that students acquire those skills – or are even interested in such subjects – in addition to following the national curriculum?

It should all start with inspiration, and more specifically the understanding that there is a world of opportunities if one is aware of the sectors that will be relevant in the future. As a teacher, may I suggest you consider:





### Introducing role models

Here are some of the benefits:

- » A YouGov study revealed that 94% of the students prefer to hear from people actually in relevant jobs about the sectors and roles that might interest them.
- » One piece of research found that after a single event with four speakers telling their story, 54% of the children chose a STEM subject.
- » Bobby Ahmadzadeh, economics teacher at Brentford School for Girls, reported that following the above event there was a sudden surge in the number of pupils talking to him about career opportunities as well as requests to look at cover letters and CVs; the number of students interested in economics rose by 104%.
- » *A question: what percentage of the speakers you invite to your school run the fastest growing businesses within 20 miles of your school? Do you know the fastest growing businesses within 20 miles of your school?*

### Introducing after school clubs and inviting volunteers from your local community to help your students gain practical skills

Apps for Good and CodeClub after school clubs have a phenomenal impact in increasing the enthusiasm of young people, enabling them to see that they have what it takes to embrace the digital world of which they are a part.

### Arranging career fairs

Think about:

- » the companies that are invited to your career fairs – what proportion are from the fastest growing businesses within 20 miles of your school?
- » what is the typical job satisfaction of those who work in the companies you ask to your career fairs?

### Helping your pupils to find work experience

- » Think about what percentage of the companies offering work experience to your pupils are 'high growth'. Or is there a concentration of lawyers, accountants, and large companies?

### And for the governing body

Perhaps you might want to consider asking those who lead fast-growth companies around you to become governors at your school.

Time of course is limited and this is why teachers all around the country are using our easy service to help get these inspiring role models into class.

Assuming you have a date and time in mind, give a few clicks of your mouse and less than five minutes of your time.... Founders4Schools will do the rest.

Join me to help close the skills gap.

# How democratic schooling works

Vivienne Creevey,  
*Phoenix Education Trust*

**A democratic education system is one which values and respects each individual student. One where being supported to learn in the way that best suits each child is a right, not a privilege.**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the compass that guides the work of supporting and enabling the development of an education system in which all children are trusted, supported and given the respect each of them deserves. Every child has the right to speak and be heard, and when these rights are respected it transforms not only their lives but the life of their school community and society.

With this mission in mind, at Phoenix Education Trust we focus our time on providing the research, training and resources needed to support schools and embed some of the values of democratic education. The education that children receive affects everybody's lives. The trust aims to become the hub for people practising, and interested in, democratic education in the UK. It is the place for schools to gain the support they need to embark on transformative,



democratic journeys and develop their practice as they progress.

The Phoenix Education Trust view is that democratic education:

- » gives members of the school community a genuine say in decision-making
- » creates a culture of respecting difference and promoting tolerance which enables the community to work collaboratively
- » holds to the belief that sound learning and responsible behaviour are rooted in equality and respect in and out of the classroom
- » allows students to follow their own interests and learn because they want to

- » enables students to make choices which have a real impact on their everyday lives.

## **Diversity of approaches**

We find this inclusive definition of democratic education is useful because it recognises a diversity of approaches, and encourages the development of different democratic models across all sectors of education. This includes publicly funded schools, special schools, private schools and those institutions which support young people who have been excluded from formal education, such as pupil referral units.

Through our interventions, schools progress on their democratic journey by developing practice best suited to the needs of their community.



Examples of the diversity of forms that a democratic educational ethos and collaborative culture can take include:

- » developing an effective representative system such as a school council, or alternative student leadership structure
- » involving students in the staff recruitment process, even to the extent of their independently running an interview panel and having a vote
- » students taking it in turns to chair their class's circle time, during which time even the teacher has to raise their hand
- » classes having discussions and agreeing strategies for how to improve behaviour within the group
- » enabling students to study according to self-managed learning principles and access expertise from staff and other students to learn what they want
- » enabling students to make real decisions about selecting resources and the spending of allocated budgets.

We live in a time of challenge: unemployment is high, voter turnout is low, technology is progressing at rapid rates and there is demand, at all levels from the corporate to the personal, to define one's own needs and have

autonomy over how those needs are met.

### **Schools' wider roles**

Students spend 27% of their waking hours in school and teachers spend around 42% of their time there. Schools play a crucial role in the development of citizens, not just through academic learning, but through the students' overall experiences and the core capabilities developed during their time in formal education.

Schools are under increased pressure to achieve academic results, and at the same time faced with issues of behaviour management. This combination presents a major challenge for teachers and students. In many schools students adopt an 'us and them' mentality, with power dynamics of pupils versus teachers and other authority figures which significantly influences everyday life. They often feel that what they are learning isn't relevant to their lives, and often leave school unprepared for the world of work and with a worrying apathy towards society and the political processes.

Society needs creative and adaptable life-long learners who will be active citizens and play a positive role within our democracy. There are schools throughout the country that practise elements of democratic processes to varying degrees. The missing link at the moment is in terms of support services for these schools and lack of opportunity to gain acknowledgement and connect with each other.

### **Training and resources**

Case studies from democratic schools illustrate the journey of disengaged young people who were able to regain a passion for

education and became actively engaged in society through their experiences. For example, co-operative schools have grown massively in the past five years, from none to over 550 schools, explicitly committed to working according to a co-operative ethos.

Grant funding by the Phoenix Education Trust has led to some excellent projects, which have enabled the trust to develop a wide range of training activities and resources for schools in developing their democratic ethos.

Any form of democratic education is about a pathway towards organisations working together, a way of communicating which empowers and leads to effective outcomes, not just happy, satisfied young people but happy teachers. Teachers who have good relationships with their pupils, who are encouraged to use a democratic approach in their teaching, assessment and behaviour management.

Equally a democratic approach involves engagement from all members of a school community, beyond pupils and teachers to include parents and governors. When the whole school community contributes to improvement, listens and is listened to, there is a genuine opportunity for positive transformation.

Ultimately, it's all about teachers' and headteachers' desire to equip the pupils in their care with the skills, qualities and attributes to be active citizens who contribute to the communities they live in. After all, teachers have the most privileged job in the world, helping to shape the lives of young people.

# Better access to careers labour market information for schools

*Sally-Anne Barnes, Jenny Bimrose and Deirdre Hughes,  
Institute for Employment Research,  
University of Warwick*

**In the current volatile world of work, people need access to reliable and relevant information about the jobs market, which is undergoing rapid, dynamic change. So high quality labour market information (LMI) is critical to effective careers education and guidance.**

In particular, young people need support to navigate their way through increasingly complex labour markets and understand how those labour markets are changing. Only by gaining high quality, reliable information about education and training opportunities can they make successful transitions into, and through, the world of work.

Recent research, undertaken on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, found that schools and colleges now seek high quality, reliable LMI because they recognise only too well that the school-work transition is being redefined and reconceptualised (Bimrose et al., 2014).

Technological developments such as online provision have brought about a revolution in LMI products and services for careers, which will continue to evolve with easier and better access to the internet. The challenges for users is to find high quality, up-to-date, reliable and relevant LMI that addresses their concerns and particular circumstances. For example, the LMI needs of a year 7 student will be significantly different from those of a year 12 student.

Whatever their age and stage, students need access to exemplary LMI that is presented in an attractively compelling and accessible way. The 'LMI for All' initiative starts to address these challenges ([http://](http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/)



[www.lmiforall.org.uk/](http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/)). Its overall aim is to give access to core national data sources that will help individuals make better decisions about learning and work. It is funded and managed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), with the development being led by the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick, with technical partners Pontydysgu and Raycom.

## **What is LMI for All?**

LMI for All is an online data portal, connecting and standardising existing sources of good labour market information, which can be accessed free of charge using an application programming interface (API). In practice, this means that major data sets, such as the labour force survey, annual survey of hours and earnings and the employers skills survey (to name a few), have been pulled together and connected using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). Currently, it holds an official index of approximately 28,000 job titles, which provides an intuitive method for searching and accessing the data.



**LMI for All provides free information, which teachers and students can easily explore, on 28,000 job titles.**

So, using these data sets and carefully selected other data, a wide range of information is available on:

- » employment and unemployment trends
- » replacement demands
- » occupational forecasts
- » weekly pay and hours
- » changes in pay by occupation
- » geographical location of jobs and travel to work distances
- » first destination of graduates.

For each occupation, the official description from ONS is available, along with information on skills, abilities, interests and knowledge from O\*NET (US data that has been mapped to UK occupations).

LMI for All has been developed to provide robust and current data to help answer some of those common questions that young people ask when they start thinking about a career:

- » Who works in that occupation?
- » What do they do?

- » What qualifications do they have?
- » How much do they get paid?
- » What are the future prospects in that occupation?

However, the data need to be mediated through a careers application or web interface, which can be designed to help a student to set and narrow their search parameters by occupation, skills, educational level and/or geographical area. The LMI for All API can provide access to data relevant to your students and support an exploration of the data that can start to answer those questions.

#### **LMI for All powering apps and web interfaces**

Website providers, like iCould, RCU, Plotr, National Career Service, SACU and Active Informatics currently use LMI for All data to power parts of their websites.

#### **Careerometer: a careers widget**

Mediating the information from the LMI for All portal requires some interpretation of exactly which data sets are required to support particular year groups of students. To demonstrate what is possible, Careerometer has been made freely available by the UK Commission. This is a customisable careers widget, which can be embedded in your website with minimal technical expertise. It can be used by students and teachers to search for key information on jobs. It is easy to use for students who want to compare the features of different jobs. Just type in a selected occupation, and you will be presented by headline data for that specific occupation, including data on pay, weekly



hours of work and future employment prospects. Then, this can be compared to up to three other occupations chosen by the student or teacher through a search using the Careerometer.

Careerometer builder is freely available at: <http://www.lmiforall.org.uk/widget/builder/>

Even with basic IT skills, the data parameters can be changed to enable users to focus on a particular region. The colour scheme and the number of comparable occupations can also be changed. The programming code is already being used by educational establishments to teach coding to students. If you have some IT-savvy students, why not get them to look at the programming code and change it?

### **The future of careers LMI**

While the existence and distribution of high quality LMI is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition to meet the objective of enhancing individuals' ability to navigate the processes of career decision making. The careers interfaces that can be developed from LMI for All does not replace careers teachers and/or advisers. Students will need help in making sense of the LMI and will typically require support with further exploration. As with other types of information, LMI must be meaningful and resonate with the particular contexts of individuals to be transformed into knowledge, so careers professionals will continue to have a key role in supporting young people with their career decisions and transitions.

## **LMI for All does not replace careers teachers and/or advisers.**

Research is currently underway to produce case study examples of the ways in which different organisations can harness LMI for All.

### **Further information**

The UK Commission is committed to the long-term maintenance of LMI for All and recently commissioned IER to update and maintain the data and technical platform, as well as supporting schools and colleges wishing to develop apps and web interfaces that interpret and visualise the LMI into practical usage, for use at the individual level.

### **To find out more, contact:**

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Helen Beck, UKCES project manager  
[Helen.Beck@ukces.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Beck@ukces.gov.uk)

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# Free schools: time for every good school to get involved?

*Kate Weeden,  
New Schools Network*

**Every school leader is all too used to hearing the statistics about schools in England: we have some brilliant schools in our country, but there are not enough good places to go round. In many parts of the country, parents have no option other than to send their children to schools that are not their first choice. In total, across England, 1.4 million children do so, and one in four parents say that given the option, they would have picked another school for their child.**

In addition to this, official estimates suggest the school age population will rise by nearly 900,000 to 7.9 million by 2024, which would be the highest since the 1980s.

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that the free schools policy has been so quickly embraced. In the past five years, over 400 new schools have been opened or approved to open across the country. Now that the government has announced plans to open 500 more free schools, there is an unprecedented opportunity for new schools to flourish

and answer some of the big challenges facing schools in England.

## **Varied founders**

Free school founders have been incredibly varied: they include parents, teachers, community groups and charities. It has been teachers and schools that have been the main driver though, with 68% of free schools being set up by groups led by teachers, existing successful schools, academy chains, or other existing education providers.

What all proposers have in common is a high level of commitment. The application process to set up a new school is rigorous. Groups have to demonstrate a high level of educational expertise and prove the school is both wanted and needed by local parents. To get approval from the DfE, proposers must submit a 100-page application and go through a tough interview process, at the end of which they will find out whether or not they have been successful.

It is hard, but with the certainty that another 500 of these new schools are wanted, has the time come for every good and outstanding school to consider

whether they could set up a new school?

## **What are free schools? A reminder**

Free schools are newly created schools within the state system. When set up, they are much like any other academy, having the same freedoms in curriculum and budgeting, and the same systems of accountability through Ofsted, the DfE and the EFA. They are free to attend and open to all children. They do not charge, they do not make a profit, and they do not select their pupils on the basis of ability.

In practice, it is difficult to speak collectively about free schools. Each one has been set up to respond to the specific needs of their community, resulting in a wide range of pedagogies, curricula and approaches to behaviour.

For the most academic young people, for example, free schools like the London Academy of Excellence have driven up standards and helped more students from deprived backgrounds get to Oxford, Cambridge and other top universities. Other free schools, such as King's Leadership Academy in Warrington and



School 21 in East London, have drawn inspiration from successful charter schools in the USA. These schools focus on developing character traits that young people need to be successful and resilient in later life.

A growing number of free schools are being set up by existing academies which are looking for a way to expand the impact that they are having on young people. Some schools choose to replicate their existing model in a different area, whereas others use the process as an opportunity to expand into a different phase of education. In particular, a number of secondary schools have created primaries, and vice versa, to create an all-through model and tackle the loss of learning children often experience during

the transition to a different phase of education. Free schools now account for 33% of all-through schools nationally.

#### **Meeting different needs**

Existing trusts are also using the free school policy to open schools that cater specifically to children with needs that are not met in traditional, mainstream schools. Merchant's Academy in Bristol, for example, are in the process of creating a new special school for pupils with autism, after the specialist unit within their existing school became oversubscribed. In other areas, we are seeing clusters of schools coming together to create a joint solution for vulnerable children who need alternative provision. For example, the East Birmingham Network have set up two new schools for pupils who have been excluded or

are at risk of exclusion, to help them develop the academic and behavioural skills necessary to be successful in further education and the world of work. Developing a multi-academy trust can bring with it a huge range of benefits. Chains like Dixon's, the Inspiration Trust, ARK and the Harris Federation are able to provide high-quality services that may be harder to access as a single school. They allow schools to develop subject specialisms, and share that expertise across the trust.

For teaching professionals, chains may offer more opportunities for promotion and career development. They can offer better economies of scale, and allow good schools to reach more students.





### Are free schools successful?

While only a small proportion of free schools have been inspected by Ofsted, the outcomes so far have been positive. At the time of writing, 25% of those inspected are rated outstanding – significantly above the national average – and a further 50% are good. What's more, free schools are 10 times more likely to be opened in the poorest local authorities than the wealthiest, meaning that this success is having a positive impact on some of the most deprived communities in England.

More generally, the policy itself is delivering new schools faster than any other school building programme and, according to the National Audit Office, at significantly less cost to the taxpayer than previous initiatives.

### Setting up a free school

It is only if successful existing schools open new schools that we are going to be able to meet

the twin challenge of meeting rising demand for school places and improving educational standards across the country. We believe it is the responsibility of great schools to make sure that more children get to share the benefits of the brilliant education they have to offer.

Teachers and headteachers who are frustrated by the constraints of the national curriculum, who think that things can be done better than they are in their existing school, and who have great new ideas about how to improve education can get involved in setting up a free school wherever one is needed. Where teachers and headteachers have a different vision – perhaps including more music, more outdoor activity, bilingual lessons, a longer school day, all-through education or using different models of teaching – free schools give them the opportunity to realise their ambitions and change children's lives for the better.

The New Schools Network has worked with more than 70% of the free schools that have opened or been approved. We offer a range of free support to applicants, helping them to complete the application form, and preparing them for the demands of the DfE interview.

The next chance to apply to the DfE for a new school will be in March, so if you are thinking about how you could expand, then speak to one of our experienced advisers about your plans by calling 020 7537 9208.



# STUDENT AND TEACHER TRAINING

Contact: [info@debatebate.com](mailto:info@debatebate.com)

## MAKING YOUR CLASSROOM OUTSTANDING

Debate Mate offers a range of high-quality, professional training courses to suit both primary and secondary teachers from across the curriculum. Our training has been developed to support teachers in using debating in their classroom to create independent critical thinkers, who are able to confidently articulate their ideas.

We are the single largest debating organisation in the UK and we work with over 7,000 young people every week, across over 460 schools. We run after-school clubs and we also deliver a highly successful in-curriculum programme, teaching all subjects through debating.

### WHAT DO OUR TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOPS PROVIDE YOU WITH?

- A comprehensive course delivered by experienced teachers and specialist debating coaches
- Training on how to apply debating to a variety of curriculum areas to get pupils engaged in your subject
- Support in adapting schemes of work to embed debating across the curriculum
- A specialised plan for setting up an after-school debating club in your school, including the option to train your students to be "debate champions"
- A 180 page manual containing resources, lesson plans and exercises to support your use of debating in your classroom.

### EXAMPLES OF BESPOKE PROGRAMMES

#### Kickstarter:

A group of schools in the Blackpool region contacted Debate Mate to deliver training to introduce debating in the area. Delegates from over 20 schools completed bespoke Teacher Training focusing on how to run a club and a competition. Staff collaborated on planning CPD to deliver back in their own schools. Students then participated in either a half or full day of training before competing in the Blackpool Cup. Debate Mate training created a sustainable and embedded culture of debating across the region.



#### Curriculum Planning:

Debate Mate worked with William Tyndale Primary to promote debating across the entire school. Every teacher participated in training and was then assigned a member of Debate Mate staff to help embed debating across the next scheme of work. To ensure the training had the maximum impact, Debate Mate staff facilitated debates in school and team taught with teachers. This model was replicated at the start of each half term and led to a culture of speaking and listening across the entire school.

*"We need to broaden the horizons of disadvantaged children by increasing access to those activities proven to nurture their curiosity, motivation, self-control, discipline and grit. Social enterprises such as Debate Mate have shown how rewarding it is to set up debate clubs in high disadvantaged state schools."*

*-Tristram Hunt MP*

## WHAT WE OFFER

### STUDENT TRAINING

Full day or half day student training introducing students to debating, developing skills or preparing them for competition entry.

### DEBATING PROGRAMMES

After school debating clubs, full day tournaments, weekend or holiday clubs.

### TEACHER TRAINING

Full day and Twilight courses held in our offices in London, Birmingham and Manchester. £299 per delegate.

### BESPOKE TRAINING

Full day and Twilight courses held in school, adapted to suit your needs. Training can include team teaching, curriculum planning and whole school CPD.



# The SSAT and Arcadis 'Funding and Finance Seminar': a report

*Melanie Hilton,  
Arcadis*

**When it comes to finance, schools need to think differently about what they're doing and how they're doing it. Schools are encouraged to prioritise effectively and question the norm - this was the key message from a joint SSAT and Arcadis event on school funding and finance in October, attended by 40 school business managers and finance directors.**

SSAT's Bill Watkin, in a comprehensive overview of the current educational context, noted that there are such significant changes afoot that it's a mystery how schools and academies will cope. Many in the audience said they felt unable to accurately budget more than a year ahead due to constant changes in policy. It was agreed that they need to be aware of all of the current initiatives, so that they can make decisions about what to prioritise.

Mark Gibson of the Education Funding Agency suggested academies should consider:

- » What are our strategic aims and objectives?
- » What are the projected pupil numbers?
- » What effect does the curriculum have on the budget?
- » What level of income will the academy receive this year and in following years?
- » How will staffing and premises costs affect the budget?
- » How will the capital programmes affect the budget?

To support schools and academies with this, EFA have developed an efficiency toolkit covering

effective procurement, financial benchmarking, strategic financial planning and workforce planning.

## **Challenges and pressures**

The financial outlook for academies is dire: many are setting deficit budgets and, having already been forced to make redundancies, feel it is likely they will have to make more within a couple of years. However Mark Gibson offered assurance that help may be made available in the future.

Among the delegates' key concerns:

- » changes to National Insurance and pension contributions
- » recruitment challenges, which mean that schools are having to pay more to recruit any teachers, let alone the best ones
- » a lack of acknowledgement from government that a recruitment problem even exists.

In some locations, the opening of free schools is reducing numbers at other institutions and creating inadequate pupil funding to cover operations – at least in the short term until the secondary basic need issue becomes more prevalent. As a result, generating enough income per student while maintaining or improving quality is becoming ever more challenging. In addition, insufficient funding for capital and maintenance projects means that schools are having to spend out of revenue budgets to cover these costs.

## **Challenging the norm**

An unwelcome message from Julie Lombardo of the Creative Education Trust was that reduced funding is now a fact of life. So if schools, academies and trusts continue to operate in the same way that they



always have, financial deficits will be inevitable. This, in turn, would be likely to adversely affect educational outcomes and future funding.

Instead, in order to deliver high-quality education at a lower cost, Julie Lombardo stressed that business managers and finance directors must challenge the norm. Many structures were put in place when money was not as tight as it is now. So, she said, review all aspects of operation and don't be afraid to tackle previously contentious issues head-on:

- » Review the timetable, calculate excess capacity and non-contact time, assess the SLT's teaching commitment.
- » Evaluate the deployment of teaching assistants – at a time when some research has challenged their effectiveness, how is their use and impact measured in your school?
- » Consider the way that your pastoral support is delivered. Is it effective?
- » Review the structure of operational support staff – consider flexibility within contracts of employment and use whatever freedoms you have (eg academies).
- » Consider a cluster approach to staffing to improve efficiencies and cost effectiveness.

In addition, maximise your buying power; consider partnering with other schools and organisations to both block purchase and jointly fundraise. And don't be afraid to review service contracts and question the value for money of everything. It's not hard-nosed; it's for the good of your students.

### Things you would/could change

Finally, delegates wrapped up the session with a practical discussion on ideas that could challenge the norm, make them more innovative or efficient, or help them to be more effective in their roles.

As Julie Lombardo emphasised, embrace the challenge and be bold – don't accept the status quo!

### Suggestions included:

Secure additional resource and split out roles, allowing the school business manager more time to think strategically;

Ensure that headteachers/principals have a business background or receive commercial/financial training in order to be able to really appreciate the challenges of the organisations they are running;

Invest in a curriculum planning tool that informs budget planning and ensure integration of systems such as HR and financial software packages;

Allow school business managers to spend a day working from home or with the phone turned off to cut out interruptions;

MATS: as you grow, invest in a qualified accountant;

Use students/work experience/apprentices to run leisure facilities and/or lettings;

Return to centralised budget approval, rather than delegation to department heads, in order to keep a better grip on finances and necessary funding.

# Some member schools' exam successes, 2015

## **GCSE success story, Dartford Grammar School:**

100% gained 5+ A\*-C including E/M, 65% of grades at A\*/A, and an Attainment 8 score of over 70. As an International Baccalaureate school, all these boys will go on to study at least one language to the age of 18.

## **Wigan UTC engineers set for success:**

100% of students achieved A\*-C on their OCR National Engineering qualification. And in STEM subjects, 80% achieved A\*-C in maths, helping set a platform for their studies over the next two years.

## **Outstanding GCSE results for Altrincham Grammar School for Girls:**

all students entered gained at least 5 subjects at A\*-C, including English and maths; 98% were graded from A\*-B, and 50% of all examinations were graded A\*. There were also 18 girls (10%) who passed all nine subjects at A\* and 90 girls (52%) who passed all nine subjects at A or A\* grade.

## **Ringwood School celebrates excellent A-level results:**

provisional results show a 100% pass rate A\*-E grades in 35 different subjects (A-level and vocational platforms), 23% of grades awarded were A\*-A, with over 77% of grades in the A\* - C range

## **Tolworth Girls' School bucks the trend:**

achieving some of the best results ever, especially in maths; given that it is in a selective borough, its A\*/A grades were outstanding.

## **Outstanding A-level results at Coloma Girls' School:**

overall pass rate was 100%; 29% of grades being A\* or A. Results in maths, the sciences and modern foreign languages continue to flourish.

## **Record results at St Paul's Academy:**

29% of students achieved the English Baccalaureate qualification; 72% achieved 5+ A\* - C grades (including English and maths); and 74% achieved 5+ A\* - C Grades.

## **Bexleyheath Academy:**

for the ninth year in a row, KS5 outcomes have seen record results. However this year has seen by far the largest improvement at both years 12 and 13.

## **The Quest Academy – Coloma Trust, Selsdon:**

100% pass rate at A-levels. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of all grades were A\*-C and 33% were A\* to B. Quest has also recently received two awards from the Good Schools Guide, and was recognised as being in the top 12% of English sixth forms for value added.

## **Academic excellence across diverse subjects at Westminster Academy:**

over 70% of students achieved grades A\*-C in the core subject areas, English, maths and science. Over 97% of students achieved A\*-C in Additional and Further Science, reflecting the Academy's links as partner school of the Royal Society of Medicine, and sessions at Imperial College's Reach Out Lab. Principal Smita Bora paid credit to those who have supported students along the way: 'Staff, parents, our sponsors, governors, volunteers and business and community partners have dedicated an exceptional amount of time to providing the academic and extra-curricular opportunities necessary for opening doors to higher education and beyond'

## **Best Results at Ormiston Venture Academy, Great Yarmouth:**

in this town with high levels of deprivation, the results were the best achieved with an outstanding result of 61% 5 A\*-C including English and maths.

## **Best results ever for Ormiston Chadwick Academy:**

increased the 5A\*-C with English and maths by almost 10 percentage points from the predecessor school. In 23 out of 25 subjects, results dramatically. Principal Tuesday Humby, said 'Every single student has left the academy with the qualifications they needed to get into college.'

### **Crossley Heath:**

this was the best year ever for the number of students attaining the top grades in their A-levels – 70% of grades were A\*, A or B, and 14% an A\*. The vast majority have secured a place at their first choice university.

### **UTC Reading students head for outstanding futures:**

collected their results for the first time, 65 students will be progressing to university, apprenticeships or employment. These UTC students take BTEC qualifications in computer science and engineering, complemented with A-levels; many have achieved high UCAS points and will be progressing to university. Joanne Harper, principal, said 'We are absolutely delighted with the results from our first graduates. A particular highlight is the average grade per vocational qualification of D\*.'

### **Tolworth Girls' School bucks the trend:**

achieving some of the best results ever, especially in maths; given that it is in a selective borough, its A\*/A grades were outstanding.

### **Ormiston Horizon Academy, Stoke, celebrates sharp rise in GCSE results:**

57% of students gained five or more good GCSE grades including English and maths, a 13 percentage point increase on 2014's results. Achieving nearly 70% A\*-C in both English and maths, the academy has made record-breaking progress this year.

### **Students at de Ferrers celebrate outstanding A-level results:**

Steve Allen, principal, said that all performance indicators show an improvement on the 2014 results. 'These are wonderful results, made possible by fantastic colleagues and committed students who deserve their success.'

### **Record GCSE results again at Cliff Park Ormiston Academy:**

55% of students gained five or more GCSEs at grade C including English and maths; 73% achieved 'expected progress' in English and 72% in maths. 'I am delighted that our students have gained the results they deserve and that our high standards have been maintained', said principal Robert Sherington.

### **Capital City Academy:**

At A-level, students performed a third of a grade better on average than the previous year, and the number of A\*-B grades increased by around 15%. Seven percent of grades were at A\*, and the academy recorded its first student to achieve 4A\* grades. Of students on vocational programmes 81% achieved Distinction.

### **A-level success at Ravens Wood School:**

another 100% pass rate, with 58% of all examinations taken at grades A\* to B 85% were passed at grades A to C, and 13% A\*. These are the highest results ever achieved at Ravens Wood School.

### **Harris Academy Purley:**

A student from Harris Academy Purley has won a place at Cambridge!

### **Best ever A-level results for Lutterworth College:**

many students gained the top grades at A-level: while 99% of students gained A-level pass grades, 52% of all grades were A\*-B and 75% of all grades were A\*-C. Headteacher Ben Solly commended these results from 'incredibly hard' work to ensure students were well supported by their subject specialist teachers.

### **St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy Sunderland:**

100% of students achieved three or more A-levels; for the fourth year running over a quarter of all entries were graded A\*/A; 50% were at the grades A\*/A/B; and 19 students (16%) achieved three or more A\*/A grades or equivalent.

### **Ringwood School celebrates excellent A-level results:**

provisional results show a 100% pass rate A\*-E grades in 35 different subjects (A-level and vocational platforms), 23% of grades awarded were A\*-A, with over 77% of grades in the A\* - C range

### **Richard Rose Academy:**

A-E grades are up as well as points. Students and staff are pleased and all students are due to secure places at university. Outstanding A-level results at Coloma Girls' School: overall pass rate was 100%; 29% of grades being A\* or A. Results in maths, the sciences and modern foreign languages continue to flourish.



# Mock ‘weighing’ that really can make the ‘pig’ fatter

Joanne Tyler,  
*Dartford Grammar School*

There is a quote about measuring performance that says ‘weighing a pig doesn’t make it fatter’. The supposed criticism is directed at those who believe that measurement is the quintessential element in making progress and improvement. This view has been used to criticise schools that are ‘upping’ the frequency of formative assessment – in the view of the critic, to the detriment of learning.

As we all know, weighing the pig doesn’t make it fatter, but using the data obtained effectively could well make it pile on the pounds...

## **(Mock) weighing the pig**

Walking-talking mock examinations are a relatively recent phenomenon which has influenced an increasing number of schools, which have fed these exams into their year 11 programme. Essentially, students undertake a past exam paper, usually in addition to their formal mock examinations, and they are ‘talked through’ it by a teacher.

We have extended our formal ‘walking talking’ mock examinations to the year 11 assessment schedule for the

humanities following their success in the core subjects in 2014.

The primary aim is to create confident, independent learners who are well-accustomed to the exam situation they are going to face in the summer, by giving students opportunities to encounter the most realistic practice in examination structure, timings and questions.

The approach also enabled us to track student progress between their official mock examinations in December 2014 and the walking-talking mock examinations in February 2015, and utilise this data to inform active intervention.

I was well aware of the various views on the effectiveness of these types of exams, including some cynics, so I was driven to ensure that the walking talking mocks in geography were purposeful and effective. There is an array of resources online including blogs, Twitter feeds, TES teaching resources, even YouTube clips with filmed examples of teachers actually ‘walking’ people through exams. These proved invaluable when preparing my own walking talking script.

## **Fattening the pig**

Once the ‘pig’ had been weighed, came the all-important ‘fattening.’ On the surface, results didn’t look much different from the December mock exams – still a mixed bag of many As, a few too many Bs and the odd D grade.

However, I made use of Microsoft Excel and its analytical features such as ‘pivot tables’ to speed up the laborious number-crunching task and to gain averages, residuals and levels of progress made. This demonstrated progression which would have been otherwise masked, including a 12% improvement in the A\*/A grades achieved.

As a form of active intervention, I have led the development of a whole-school strategy on monitoring pupil progress and effective intervention in the form of a department-wide action plan. This action plan identifies three groups of students; “high risk” (students who are performing two grades or more below target); “moderate risk” (students who are performing one grade below target) and “high flyers” (students who are performing at one grade above target, or have



made significant progress), and identifies EAL, AEN and pupil premium students using a key.

This enables personalised interventions to support students across the ability range, and to ensure progress in students with different needs. For example, because we identified an excess of students with EAL needs in the “high risk” category, we generated resources to help students practise their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) and undertook practice questions which awarded marks for SPAG.

### **Reducing the number at high risk**

It was encouraging for staff, students and parents to see that a number of students who were placed in the ‘high risk’ category in December had made significant improvements and now featured in the ‘moderate risk’ category. Although some students were still performing two grades below their target, they had made progression by one grade or more in the six weeks. For example, year 11 student Toni progressed from a C grade in the December mocks to an A grade in the walking

talking mocks. He explained the value to him of the walking talking mocks: ‘The teacher went through the techniques of how to answer the questions which ultimately helped my understanding of how to answer the questions accurately in order to get the full marks.’

Performance had regressed in a small number of students who had become complacent after the promising results they obtained in December. This raised a need for close monitoring, active intervention in the form of additional support in skill deficiencies – and communication with parents.

### **Clear focus for the six weeks before exams**

This detailed level of analysis of mock and walking-talking mock data allowed us to prioritise our focus areas. We formed the department aims for the six weeks leading up to the GCSE exams:

- » Support the high risk individuals to eradicate C and D grades.
- » Reduce the within-department variation in residuals and levels of progress made.

- » Meet the school’s A\*/A target of 64%.

Come results day we were all, staff and students, waiting eagerly to see how we had performed. We were delighted to see we had succeeded in meeting two of the three aims. Staff, students and parents agree that the introduction of the walking-talking mock examinations had a large, positive impact on motivating the weakest students to make greater levels of progress than we had seen previously.

An example of this is that in the year before their introduction, of the 8% of students failing to achieve an A\*-C grade in their mock, 6% also failed to achieve an A\*-C grade in actual exams. However, this year we have seen that of the 11% of students failing to achieve an A\*-C grade in their mock, only 2% also failed to achieve an A\*-C grade in actual exams.

So, will we be continuing to weigh and feed the pig next year? The answer to that is a big fat yes!

# SSAT membership networks

SSAT membership networks reach across Secondary, Primary, and SEN schools to connect like-minded leaders and teachers across the country. Bringing together collaboration opportunities, events, information and a wide range of resources, our networks provide essential support for schools, students and teachers.

## Secondary membership

As the largest and most active network of secondary schools in the country, we help teachers collaborate with purpose. Join SSAT today and you and your colleagues can start working with like-minded leaders and teachers across the country to learn from each other, share problems, spark ideas and celebrate each other's successes.

**Your membership includes:**

### Opportunities to collaborate with purpose

- A dedicated SSAT *relationship manager* for your school
- One delegate place at the *National Conference* every year
- Two series of *regional networking events* per year
- *Sharing Practice Days* at Leading Edge schools
- Exclusive access to the SSAT *online collaboration hub*
- Opportunities to *showcase your school's achievements* at SSAT events
- Opportunities to join the *Teaching Schools Network* and apply for membership of *Leading Edge*

### Indispensable tools and programmes to underpin your progress

- Access to the unique *Educational Outcomes* data aggregation tool and *Student Leadership Accreditation* scheme
- Exclusive access to *the Exchange*, the online library of case studies and research
- *Discounts on SSAT programmes* and events

### Insights, information and ideas to stimulate collaboration

- *Sunday Supplement* – delivered to your inbox every week
- Weekly *Ask the Expert* video briefings
- Insights from the network, opinion and analysis blogs and case studies on the members-only website, *the Exchange*
- *Regular publications* giving insight into best practice

**Visit [ssatuk.co.uk/secondary](https://ssatuk.co.uk/secondary) to start your membership today.**

If you have any questions, email [membership@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:membership@ssatuk.co.uk) and one of our friendly team will give you a call to talk through how membership works.

## Primary membership

The SSAT Primary Network is a rapidly-growing national movement based on the principle that a primary teachers' best supporters and mentors are other practitioners – the people who really understand the opportunities and challenges you face in school.

### **Your membership will help you to:**

- Highlight the work of your school, leaders and teachers through speaker invitations, publications, the national *Educational Outcomes Awards*, and our *Directory of Expertise*
- Influence the profession and policy work with influencing groups and get involved at SSAT's *Annual Lecture and Debate*
- Connect with other schools for inspiration and support at *Transformational Leadership Days*, regional *Teaching and Learning Days*, and the *Middle Leaders Group*
- Be supported with *new curriculum and assessment* through partnerships, free resources and funded training
- Stay up to date with the latest information at briefings, *Time to Talk workshops*, and with *Primary Matters email updates*
- Take advantage of data, expertise and resources including the *Educational Outcomes* database, our *Directory of Expertise*, and *the Exchange*, our online library of case studies and research

**Visit [ssatuk.co.uk/primary](https://ssatuk.co.uk/primary) to start your membership today.**

If you have any questions, email [primary@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:primary@ssatuk.co.uk) and one of our friendly team will give you a call to talk though how membership works.

## Special schools membership

The SSAT Special Schools and SEN Network joins up special schools and specialist providers to support their teachers, support staff and leaders. This national forum shares ideas and professional opinion, models good practice, supports learning and drives the improvement of pupil outcomes.

### **We help school leaders and their teams transform pupil aspirations into achievement with:**

- Access to *extensive email networks*, giving you instant and practical advice from other school leaders
- *Regional networking events*, where practice is shared and solutions developed
- The opportunity to become part of the *Special Schools and SEN Headteacher Steering Group*
- *Introductions to other members* who share your challenges
- Fortnightly *SEND news and resources by email*, including national policy guidance including and the latest opinion from SEND interest groups

**Visit [ssatuk.co.uk/sen](https://ssatuk.co.uk/sen) to start your membership today.**

If you have any questions, email [sen@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:sen@ssatuk.co.uk) and one of our friendly team will give you a call to talk though how membership works.



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Produced with the support of  **ARCADIS** through a partnership  
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built assets

SSAT (The Schools Network) Ltd, a private company limited by shares.  
Registered in England and Wales. Company number: 08073410. VAT number: GB 135 221 255.  
Registered office: 5th Floor, Central House, 142 Central Street, London, EC1V 8AR. Printed on 100% recycled paper.