



SSAT Journal 07

Autumn 2016

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Welcome

*Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*



It gives me great pleasure to introduce this autumn term's SSAT Journal. How much has changed since the last edition of the journal: Brexit, a new prime minister, new education secretary, and the American election. This has been quite a year, not only for schools, but globally.

During the last term, I have enjoyed my usual visits to many of your schools, while also writing two new pamphlets for SSAT and preparing for the National Conference.

Over the summer, I wrote *SSAT on Leading*, a copy of which has been sent to you. In it, I debate with some outstanding school and system leaders the changing nature of school leadership – from headteacher to chief executive; leadership development and succession planning; lessons from business and other sectors; implications for governance; and the role of the system leader.

The importance of good leadership has been so evident in the schools I have visited since September. For example, at Hope Academy in the north west, experienced headteacher Patrick Ferguson took over a new school formed by the merger of two existing schools. The academy had had a number of heads since the merger, and there was a culture of mistrust between the leadership team and the staff, as well as disillusionment from staff and students.

The school I visited in November was unrecognisable. Its small leadership team was working closely with staff, encouraging student leadership and demonstrating the confidence that comes from success. This was down to Patrick's leadership but also a shared vision and effort from all leaders, staff and students. Patrick, as a leader, is incredibly modest – he enjoys sharing the credit

with his deserving staff. Paradoxically, that could well be a factor in his having been nominated for the Pearson Teaching Awards headteacher of the year.

During this term, some controversial research from the Centre of High Performance was published. SSAT has partnered with the CHP to deliver our new High Performance Leadership programme. Ben Laker and Alex Hill's research suggest that heads often fall back on their subject-specific behaviours; they categorise five types of head: surgeons, accountants, soldiers, philosophers and architects. Their research suggests that architects (typically history or economic teachers) have the most sustainable improvements, but are the lowest paid and least celebrated of all types.

While I think Laker and Hill's taxonomy is useful, leadership is always more complex and nuanced than a simple grouping allows. However, I do think it reminds us to reflect on our own leadership style, and also of the danger of not looking beyond our educational experience for leadership development. We must look at what we can learn from other sectors.

The articles that follow offer much to learn from. As ever, none of the ideas presented here are silver bullets, magic solutions or the only way to do something. At SSAT, we aim to provide fresh ideas for ambitious schools, and we present these ideas for you to adopt, adapt, reject but most of all, consider.

I hope you and all your staff and students have a lovely build-up to Christmas and a restful break over the holidays.

Sue Williamson



Introduction

Tom Middlehurst,
SSAT

Welcome to the seventh edition of the SSAT Journal, celebrating interesting and innovative practice from across the network.

The articles presented here include: solutions to the recruitment and retention challenge; one school's attempt to improve data-literacy for all teachers; matters of pedagogy, curriculum and leadership; and a report on the SSAT Annual Lecture in which we debated the true purpose of education.

These innovations come at a time when we know schools are under immense pressures. As curriculum, assessment and accountability changes become embedded, there are new challenges and reforms to contend with. While touring the country, doing policy updates for headteachers' associations, TSAs and staff groups, I hear a lot about the key concerns for school leaders.

- » Funding and the squeezing of budgets remains a real issue for many schools, especially those set to gain by the now-delayed national funding formula. The Worth Less campaign in West Sussex has particularly highlighted the fact that some schools cannot see where more savings can be made, without real damage to student outcomes. Our publication *Triumph in Adversity* offers some practical suggestions; but the message to the government must be that we need to invest properly in our schools to improve society as a whole.
- » The new performance measures at primary, secondary and 16+ are now in place, with finalised data being published over the coming weeks. It is difficult to try to predict Progress 8

scores year-on-year, at least for the next three years: P8 is a relative measure defined each year by the particular cohort; the new GCSEs come in from this summer; and entry patterns will change as schools adjust their curricula. Our data lead, Colin Logan, advocates focusing on good formative assessment in subjects.

- » At the time of going to press, we are still awaiting the government's response to the delayed Ebacc consultation. It is now clear that arts subjects are in decline at KS4. Our modeling has shown that for an average-sized school, a 90-100% entry of all seven Ebacc subjects would greatly limit the number of subjects on offer, particularly at a time of financial pressure. We remain convinced that the Ebacc is not right for all – although low prior attainment and economic disadvantage should not be a reason for non-entry – and will continue to argue this case.
- » Proposals set out in the government's green paper *Schools that work for everyone* would result in a big change in the system. An SSAT survey, which many of you responded to, confirmed our national surveys: some 80% of educators are firmly against expanded selection. However, the survey also showed that 15% of respondents in currently non-selective schools would at least consider using new powers to convert to selection. This would be a big change for the system. The consultation closes in the next few days, and we urge as many of you as possible, whatever your views, to respond.

Working-class girls benefit greatly from business mentors

Alan Dane,
Harris Academy Bermondsey

'It takes a village to raise a child.' So goes the proverb and the title of a bestselling book by Hilary Rodham Clinton, a woman who inspires many girls here at Harris Academy Bermondsey (HAB), a single sex comprehensive school in south central London.

This philosophy is central to HAB's success. Our educational village includes permanent subject specialist teachers in all subjects, highly skilled support staff, a number of experts from external agencies, a wide variety of community partners and parents and carers we believe are wonderful. All of them contribute to the girls' achievement and wellbeing.

Each girl would get the opportunity to work closely with an accomplished professional for at least a year

HAB's geographical 'village' incorporates the City of London, Canary Wharf and the thriving cultural quarter that runs along the Thames from Bermondsey to the South Bank. Fifteen years ago, one of our teachers, Roger Hiskey, persuaded my predecessor that the companies and institutions in this village should play their part in helping to raise HAB girls. Roger's vision was that each girl would get the opportunity to work closely with an accomplished professional for at least a year, cultivating the girls' social capital and opening



doors which might otherwise remain closed to a young working-class woman from Bermondsey, Old Kent Road or Peckham.

From a handful of volunteers in 2001, many of whom still take part, to 300 today, HAB's Mentors from Business programme is one of the biggest (and best, we believe) of its kind. The 300 mentees range from year 9 upwards, with a spinoff programme of STEM mentoring by medics and scientists starting in year 7, as well as individual tutoring by maths graduates for 50 girls.

No NEETS with business mentoring

Accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, the scheme has been a vital factor in our two successive 'outstanding' Ofsted reports, most recently in spring last year, when it stated: "Students particularly value the additional provision such as the academy's business mentoring programme. This programme enables students to attend weekly



meetings with representatives of national and local businesses. These and other meetings help them to be fully prepared for ... employment.” Ofsted, 2015 .

The programme has also been the focus of two visits by David Cameron, fact-finding when he was leader of the opposition and in 2016 as prime minister, to launch a national fund for more young people to benefit from what he described as the “inspirational” mentoring developed by HAB. Following his second visit, he told the House of Commons that every school should adopt such a scheme.

Such acclaim is not just the result of the scale of the programme or the enthusiasm of all involved; it is grounded in firm evidence that high quality mentoring of this kind improves outcomes for the HAB girls who participate.

In every year since it began, all or almost all girls with mentees have met or exceeded their attainment and progress targets. And every mentee in the programme's history has secured a place in education, employment or training before leaving us.

How it works

Mentors meet their mentees on a one-to-one basis before and after the normal school day. Two objectives, clearly understood by mentors and girls, enhance the day-to-day work of the school:

1. To support the mentee in GCSE or A-level studies. This includes identifying areas in which she is doing well and understanding how she has been successful, alongside identifying areas of difficulty and – in partnership – finding strategies to overcome such difficulties. As part of this, mentors provide advice on time management and planning, preparing and revising for examinations.
2. To provide guidance to the mentee on progression beyond GCSE or A-Level. This includes help with all aspects of researching and applying for sixth form, university and employment opportunities.

Underlying these objectives is HAB's drive to open doors and build networks for young women whose families cannot do so for them. The mentors themselves come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. In some cases, their own journey helps their mentee conceive what is possible for

her and how to get there. In other cases, it is the act of developing a professional partnership with someone from a very different walk of life that most benefits the mentee.

There are a host of reasons for the programme's success. Most notable for anyone seeking to establish or improve such provision would be:

» *Growth*

Whenever we work with a company for the first time, it starts with a handful of volunteers. This has allowed each partnership to be monitored closely, with the staff who run the programme spending time getting to know each new mentor and mentee in order to make the best matches.

» *Preparation*

Mentors, girls and parents understand the aims of the programme. Mentor and mentee are both expected to prepare for each meeting, agreeing the focus for their next session each time they meet. Mentors receive extensive training by Southwark Education Business Alliance or Volunteers Matters. These organisations also deal with DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance.

» *Marketing*

Everyone involved with HAB knows about business mentoring and its central role in our girls' success. We make sure that we talk about it to the girls and their families at every opportunity. Having a mentor is seen by the girls as a sign of being 'smart', whatever your grades and targets.

» *Evaluation*

The girls' progress with a mentor from business is monitored and evaluated. This is fed back to the companies that supply mentors, so they too can see the impact they are making. Mentee and mentor feedback is used to modify and strengthen the programme.

Fundamentally, though, the success of business mentoring at HAB lies in the satisfaction that our 300 volunteers gain from playing a significant role in transforming the life chances of our young women. And, thereby, shaping a more equal society.

Harris Academy Bermondsey would welcome SSAT members who would like to get in contact or visit. Contact: principal@harrisbermondsey.org.uk

Using ITT to buck the trend on recruitment and retention

*Angus Smith,
Cockburn School*

In a climate of declining numbers of teachers joining the profession and where schools are sometimes forced to place non-specialists and unqualified staff before large classes of pupils, an inner city school in Leeds is bucking the trend and enjoying the rewards.

Cockburn School is a larger than average 11-16 inner city secondary converter academy, a member of the Cockburn multi-academy trust. It is described by the DfE as a school that works in 'challenging circumstances'. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is significantly higher than the national average.

Since 2008, the school has made significant improvements under a vision called 'transformation to excellence'. This programme was recognised by Ofsted in 2014, who noted that it had led to "wide-ranging improvements" and as a consequence "the school is now heavily oversubscribed, reflecting the high regard in which it is held by many parents." The school is the second most oversubscribed in Leeds.

Pupils make excellent progress: in 2014 the school's value added score of 1043 placed them in the top 4% of schools for progress. The school's unvalidated 2016 Progress 8 score of 0.39 is above average and demonstrates continuous improvement in a complex new educational landscape.

Cockburn was classified by Ofsted as 'good with outstanding features' in September 2014, in one of the 40 two-day unannounced inspections. The report cited the leadership and management at the school as having "focused relentlessly on improving teaching" and that "the school's work to develop the professional skills of teachers is of high quality."

Cockburn has excellent retention of staff and when the need to recruit arises it receives large numbers of high-quality applications. So how does this school buck the recruitment trend?

Staff development

A school-led seminar programme develops staff at all



levels. Well-developed systems check on the quality of teaching; as Ofsted noted, "teachers are observed regularly and receive insightful feedback that helps them to improve their practice."

The vacancies page of the school's website invites large numbers of prospective employees to enter their contact details so that the school can notify them if any relevant positions are being advertised.

Deeply engaged in ITT

Cockburn School works with highly regarded and successful providers to engage in initial teacher training, including PGCE, SCITT, Troops to Teachers and TeachFirst. While this creates intricacies to do with placement dates, deadlines and the structuring of professional





development, it does enable a range of entry routes into teaching for trainees wishing to train at Cockburn and its partner schools.

Basing trainees at the school is just part of Cockburn's investment in ITT. An assistant headteacher and SLE for ITT leads the school provision – and is also a governor and strategic board member for some of the ITT providers, which include schools' experience in the evaluation of their programmes.

Cockburn is committed to 'working with' rather than simply hosting placements. It regularly hosts ITT training events, interviews and meetings for these providers and often calls upon senior members of staff to lead training for ITT trainees. It seizes on any opportunities to encourage more trainees and staff from other schools and organisations.

Specialist leader of education for ITT: Using the SLE role complemented the strategic development for ITT within Cockburn Multi-academy Trust. The SLE commitment to outreach work has enabled

Cockburn to work closely with a number of people to help develop their capacity to lead on aspects of ITT, and to advise a number of ITT providers on development of new training programmes. This has fostered strong working relationships and helped to build the school's reputation for high-quality ITT provision.

Equal status for trainees: Right from day one of an ITT placement, trainees have staff status – with teacher ID badges, involvement in all staff events and professional development. This is an important part of integrating ITT trainees into the life of the school as well as working in classrooms with students. By working in this way, trainees are seen as so much more than 'student teachers'.

Experienced mentoring: Mentoring for ITT is provided by experienced members of staff, mostly TLR holders, from all departments in the school. Every department shares the school's vision to train the next generation of teachers. Mentors at the school value the impact that ITT has on the school,

the pupils and on themselves as professionals. ITT trainees are seen to bring in the latest graduate expertise in their subject areas that can benefit pupils and teachers. Mentors cite how they benefit from seeing their pupils being taught while sharpening the focus on planning and assessment for these pupils. With the progress of the pupils now a shared responsibility, the mentors and trainees work in partnership to deliver results in the classroom.

Bespoke CPD for ITT: CPD for ITT trainees comes from all directions. The trainees join department subject pedagogy sessions as well as the whole-staff training and seminar programme sessions focusing on specific teacher standards. Bespoke weekly ITT CPD sessions ask trainees to collaborate and share resources and experiences, and often focus on trialling new pedagogical research and developments in their classrooms.

ITT trainees have mock interviews with senior staff; training addressing their specific needs; and a choice among developmental learning opportunities

A key part of the CPD is on preparing for all aspects of a job interview, including interview lesson planning. Trainees also have the opportunity for mock interviews with senior members of staff. The induction process

for ITT highlights how trainees perform in a job interview from day one and instils the ethos of 'transformation to excellence'. It encourages trainees to develop a growth mindset, understanding that their learning will be developmental and progressive (as with all members of staff at the school).

Retention through CPD

Leaders at Cockburn School recognise that high-quality professional development is critical to improving teachers' practice at all career stages; this is part of the MAT's retention strategy. The CPD strategy is delivered through a layered approach of whole-school development, directed development and optional development, which gives all professionals choice and ownership of their development.

- » Whole-school development: important training that all staff are required to complete. This type of training aligns with statutory frameworks, whole-school requirements and improvement priorities. It is delivered through professional development days, staff briefings and directed time.
- » Directed development: important training that individuals are directed to engage in for a specific need. Delivered either internally or externally, including coaching and mentoring where appropriate.
- » Optional development: a range of developmental learning opportunities which professionals can

select. This type of approach ensures CPD can be tailored to career stages and/or individual needs. Delivered through directed time, coaching and mentoring, and termly programmes.

The layered structure also creates opportunities for professionals to lead elements of CPD. One particular system where this takes place is Cockburn's teaching and learning communities, made up of cross-curricular groups of teaching and support staff. High quality teaching and learning is the core purpose, and it requires a collective commitment from all professionals in the organisation. The groups use a distributed leadership model which gives energy and momentum that empowers professionals to work together on curriculum, pedagogy or pastoral issues. This work drives change and improvement right into the heart of school practice.

What is the impact of TLCs in relation to retention?

Cockburn's teaching and learning communities, now in their third year, ensure that all staff are able to make an effective contribution to the priorities in the school development plan. The school has been accredited with Investors in People Gold which recognised "the strategy for developing and retaining teachers by using the teaching and learning communities in order to raise the standard of teaching enables people to take ownership of their own development and also utilises the strengths of individuals to support and develop others. It



gives people opportunities to lead and drive change." (Investors in People, 2015)

What is the impact of ITT in relation to recruitment?

Cockburn will have more than 40 trainees in 2016/17, an increase of 20% on the previous year. Almost all trainees on final placements were graded as outstanding. As a result, 25% of the cohort are now employed as NQTs at Cockburn School. Of the full complement of teaching staff, almost a third spent all or part of their training in the school.

As these NQTs access more and more CPD, the cycle begins again as they in turn become ITT mentors and host teachers in future years. One such member of staff, who having trained at Cockburn has recently been promoted to lead teacher, said: "Cockburn gave me freedom and trust during my training. I was inspired by my mentor to work hard and develop and I am now excited to mentor future trainees."

Rising above a carping inspection report

Peter Chambers,
SSAT

How a West Midlands school progressed from special measures to 'good' in under two years – and in the process defined a much broader vision of what a good school can be.

Ofsted inspected High Arcal School, Dudley, twice in less than two years. The contrast in the inspectorate's findings make interesting reading.

In December 2013, their findings included:

- » Achievement, particularly in English, is inadequate.
- » Disabled, SEN and more-able students make inadequate progress.
- » The academy has not made effective use of the pupil premium.
- » Teaching is inadequate.
- » Teachers do not make sufficient demands on students.
- » Behaviour requires improvement.
- » Leaders have an overly generous view of the academy's effectiveness.
- » Plans for improvement fail to focus on raising standards.
- » Leaders do not make good use of information to challenge... lack of progress.

Their conclusion? Special measures.

In November 2015, their findings included:

- » Rates of progress in all subjects, including English and maths, have improved significantly.



- » Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are closing in all year groups and all subjects.
- » The most-able disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than their peers.
- » Teaching is consistently good.
- » Teachers in all subjects use assessment information effectively.... As a result pupils make good progress.
- » The principal and senior leaders have effectively communicated a culture of high expectations.
- » They have established rigorous systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- » Middle leaders are effective... well-supported to take a key role in monitoring the quality of provision... to inform actions for further improvement.

Their conclusion? 'This is a good school.'

What caused such dramatic changes in such a short time? A rigorous and accurate assessment in 2013 that told the school some home truths it was not previously aware of and which it then actioned, with striking results? Or a fair and accurate assessment in 2015 that reflected work the school had already been undertaking two years before, but which had been ignored in the earlier inspection?

Even if the first explanation were correct, it would be hard to image such a range of dramatic changes in such a short time. In fact, the principal and leadership team had already identified and were working to overcome some of the issues identified, though this was not recognised by the 2013 Ofsted team (who were all additional inspectors [AIs], which would not have been allowed later).

And, for example, High Arcal like many other schools had been caught out by Ofqual's decision mid-year that too many Cs were being awarded. "That year, 39 of our students got Ds in English, which was a massive dip in results for us," comments Jo Manson, who was principal at the time (she retired in April 2016). "The inspectors definitely made their minds up before they arrived." This is (was) a well-known complaint by schools, but in this case it was reinforced by the fact that the inspectors had looked at only five English lessons (against eight for maths) and had commented positively about those English lessons on the day.

Follow-up communication from DfE did not help. The school was told they had no capacity to improve – "but we knew (before Ofsted arrived) there were things we needed to do," Jo Manson adds. "We felt they were questioning our capacity and trying to push us into a multi-academy trust." New headteacher Jo Bull explains: "We have formed alliances with other schools, that has always been our policy – but on our own terms."

Getting over their disappointment with the 2013 inspection outcome, "we just said 'right, let's get on with it'."

They also knew they would have to restructure the senior leadership team, as the two deputy heads in 2013 were both about to leave the school, for different reasons. But some very good assistant

heads had already been identified to appoint in the roles.

Getting over their immediate disappointment with the 2013 inspection outcome, Jo Bull adds, "we just said, 'right, let's get on with it'."

High Arcal's intake: some facts

- » 55% boys, c90% of whom are white
- » 38% eligible for pupil premium
- » over 30% lower ability (Fischer Family Trust)
- » 22% SEN
- » 6% mental health issues
- » 20 looked-after children (LAC).

Because of the high levels of deprivation in the school community, this large 11-16 comprehensive is a Teach First partner school.

A lot happened in the ensuing two years, and the announcement of another Ofsted inspection in 2015 came almost as a relief. Indeed, as the principal explains, "the moment we met our allocated HMI we knew we were ok. When Mel (the lead inspector of the most recent team) came in, very early on she said, 'you want to come out of this with 'good', don't you.' And at every termly visit, she said things like, 'this is improving, but we'd like to see more of this.' One of the additional inspectors during a monitoring visit said they couldn't understand why this school was in special measures only two years before."

Putting the whole episode into perspective, she adds: "How Ofsted's approach has changed is interesting. Perhaps partly because Progress 8 is coming, it's so much fairer. What they are looking for now is: is the school improving? Are children making more progress than before? They now look at all the positives that contribute to progress. Before, it was all about 5A-CEM."

A closer team making best use of the data

Deputy head Dave Cooke is responsible for teaching and learning, and for self-review. He oversees the assessment system, ensuring all three deputies liaise very closely together on curriculum and data.

For each performance measurement, they all have access to lists of who is to report, with what





frequency, and who is in charge of resulting action. “How we all fit together – it’s a leadership and management issue,” he says. The key point is unrelenting focus on data – about progress, attainment, and attitudes to learning. Teachers input data about all students’ current performances and anticipated outcomes, which is analysed for subject leaders by a knowledgeable data team overseen by the senior deputy.

Every 8-12 weeks, each teacher chooses five students who will benefit most from short interventions on specific aspects

Any concerns lead to intervention. Every 8-12 weeks, each teacher chooses five students who will benefit most from short interventions on specific aspects. It’s a self-review system, with Jo Bull attending all review meetings.

At 7.30 am and 3pm every day subject teams run sessions for key intervention groups. All the information from these interventions is coordinated so the principal can access it at the touch of a button. “That’s the kind of school we’re in – you can’t ever take your eye off the ball,” says Dave Cooke.

A leadership manual, which was launched in September 2015, incorporates all the Ofsted review points and those from the school’s own self-review. Each half term the whole leadership team follows a

map of all the school’s CPD programmes. “We had already highlighted before Ofsted arrived that we needed to work on stretching the more able, and some aspects of learning and marking,” he adds.

Jo Bull comments now: “Looking back, 2013 was awful, but it made us put everything under the microscope and ask, ‘is that really working?’ Our middle leaders have been transformed. They no longer need to be spoon fed by us.”

Interestingly, in addition to successfully addressing the issues raised by the 2013 inspection, High Arcal has put a huge amount of effort and imagination into better meeting the needs of all its students, whatever their strengths or issues.

Staff Morale

The first thing the leadership team looked at was staff morale. They conducted a survey of all staff’s opinions on student behaviour, and discovered “a build-up of issues that were not being dealt with, or not quickly enough,” Jo Bull concedes. So they made wholesale changes to the communication system, to emphasise that all staff should feel the school was supporting them. Now the school has a red-amber-green system to categorise and respond to issues:

- » red requires immediate action from senior leaders
- » amber is the responsibility of middle leaders
- » green is the responsibility of the teacher.

GH ARCAL SCHOOL



They also published the school's expectations of staff and students: 20 expectations of students, and 26 of staff. For example: students are met at the door of the classroom by their teacher, who checks their uniform and equipment and gives them a task to do on entry (TOE). "We made our expectations very clear on what High Arcal is all about and how we want classrooms to be managed," Dave Cooke explains.

Encouraging a wide range of talents

Spotting and encouraging talent is not just about high-ability students. For example, all students take three sciences and study two foreign languages at KS3. Head of MFL Debbie Bennett says, "we take them out of school in groups of five to give them a really good experience with languages. We make it fun, for example working with a chef to cook paella. The message is that you can benefit from knowing a language even if you don't leave this country."

The school has also fostered some unusual athletic achievements, including an international kickboxer

in year 8, motocross riders, and a girl who is British and European champion boxer. Another student who 'came from a difficult place' recently achieved a place at an academy of dance, drama and music.

They are encouraged by former students who come back into school to talk about their careers and achievements and to enthuse the students. These include a young businessperson who had been a participant on Dragons Den, a boxer and a sports agent, as well as a former student who gained a place at Cambridge University. They're seen as good role models.

High Arcal is committed to a wide range of foreign trips for students, in which all can participate. Head girl Megan Weaver says "I went to Austria skiing for a week two years ago. It was amazing, I loved it. You all gel together. I was in year 9 and I made friends older and younger than me, we were like a big family of 40 kids. This year I'm going to France, twice!"

Year 10 student Maurice Reed notes, "last year was the 100th anniversary of WW1, and we went to France and Belgium and saw the trenches, museums, Menin Gate with the names of all the soldiers who died. I think it's a good thing. Next week we're going to see the Hadron Collider near Geneva, and later I'm going on a gifted and talented trip to China."

Year 8 student Maxwell Dutoy is impressed by "the fact that we get to go to so many places other than where we are. It's amazing really." On the inclusivity

Awards are given for

- » achievement
- » attendance
- » overcoming difficulties
- » international achievement
- » leadership (which has been a focus of High Arcal for at least 10 years).



of such activities, head of house Kelly Preston gives an example: “we took some Asperger’s students on our trip to Spain last year, and an ADHD girl came with us to the Atlas mountains of Morocco.... After seeing young people their age with no water or electricity in their houses, they come back with a different outlook, greater appreciation of what they have here. When presented with other cultures, it develops their understanding. Some of our students left clothes, colouring books and plasticine for the students in the Moroccan school we visited.”

Teacher Debbie Bennett adds: “if the money’s not there at home for the student to come, we’ve managed to find it. No-one’s excluded.”

Students are encouraged to undertake charity work, and many do. Each of the houses adopts a charity each year. In addition, students contribute regularly to Operation Christmas Child; they fill a shoebox with small gifts and it is sent out to Syrian refugees. Each form usually fills one box, but some students contribute full boxes on their own.

Careers – inclusivity a key feature

With GCSE options and careers advice and support, as with so many other aspects, High Arcal devotes particular attention to students with difficulties.

When choosing their options in year 8 (for the three-year GCSE) bespoke interviews are held for every student. And looked-after children get particular attention when it comes to advice on creating their CVs for life after school. Lead student

support manager Vicky Rownes says: “we target potential NEETs in years 9 and 10 with a red/amber/green process, which determines how often they have a personal chat with their careers teacher.”

In years 10 and 11 every student has a Connexions (now National Careers Service) interview (those who are most unsure get their interviews first). Each year 50-60 students have work placements, in addition to all year 10s undertaking one week’s work experience at the end of the summer term. The KS4 open evening finds the school hall and corridor full of stands for employers and training providers. High Arcal also takes advantage of open days at colleges, and tells parents about them. The day before SSAT’s visit, one student who wanted to do hair and beauty had a trial at the college to see if she liked it.

Also part of High Arcal’s careers programme are life skills classes in, for example: cooking; shopping; washing; ironing; and managing gas, electricity and water services. All these efforts are designed to promote independence and resilience. And the emphasis is on helping students make their own decisions, not deciding for them or pushing them into a course of action the teacher thinks desirable. As Vicky Rownes says, “we guide them to come up with solutions to their career aspirations and associated needs.”

We took some Asperger’s students on our trip to Spain last year, and an ADHD girl came with us to the Atlas Mountains of Morocco

Year 8 student and school council member Maxwell Dutoy comments “the teachers are really supportive about what you want to do in future, and they show you different routes to get you where you want to go. I want to be an aeronautical engineer. I took computer science, engineering level 2, German and art. The teamwork of being on the school council can add to your CV and statement.”

“From year 7, they really push you forward,” Megan Weaver adds. “There are so many opportunities you get.”

Behaviour, learning difficulties and mental health

Deputy head Sukhjot Dharni gives an example of the approach to behaviour problems. "Analysis of referrals may mean that a student is quickly moved to the personal learning centre, which we have set up for challenging and vulnerable students. It's an internal package. Then, when appropriate, they are reintegrated into the mainstream."

Since this system was introduced, exclusion rates have fallen 50%.

In addition to the personal learning centre (PLC), there is a student support centre (SSC) for students who have particular learning difficulties, but who do not have a statement of SEN or an EHC plan. Some students use both PLC and SSC, as Jo Bull explains: "Very often, there's a learning issue behind the behaviour issues."

Between 20 and 40 staff voluntarily attend developmental sessions relevant to their responsibilities or professional needs. For example there are sessions on de-escalation, motivation of challenging boys, specific students, body language in class, and relationships between staff and students (using Australian education consultant Dr Bill Rogers' research).

"Six percent of our students that we know of are under CAMHS," Sukhjot Dharni comments. "At the core of High Arcal has always been support." Yet, Jo Bull recalls a discussion with one of the AIs in the earlier Ofsted inspection: "When I discussed our caring approach with one of the original Ofsted team, they looked a bit scornful. But I said we use 'care' in both soft and hard senses: yes, I care that these students have the opportunity to move forward. But also, I care that they will achieve."

Inclusion: LGBT

High Arcal has three transgender pupils, who have gone through successfully with the help of the school's six learning mentors. "We're so proud of that," says Jo Bull. "One of them could not read or write in year 7, but has progressed to the point where they are now thriving at college and have won an award for resilience."

It was very difficult for one boy at first when he decided to become a girl, and then her family disowned her. Lead student support manager Vicky Rownes attended gender counselling with her, and

"in the end, she came to the school prom in a dress and was accepted. Her name was legally changed and we changed all the school documentation to reflect her reassignment." Through-out the school this student is known as 'she' now. And, Debbie Bennett adds, "there has been no exclusion by other students."

Megan Weaver in Y11 is a member of a mental health awareness group. "If you see someone with Asperger's is struggling, you help them; if someone was being bullied, you'd stick up for them. I don't know why, but all of the students are really accepting. It's just part of this school. Each of us has been inspired by older kids."

Analysis of referrals may lead to a student being moved to the personal learning centre for challenging and vulnerable students

Sanctuaries

The school ensures there are suitable sanctuaries for all students who might need them. These can include Kelly Preston's office, particular classrooms or mentoring sessions in various locations. The school's 'AS base' provides help and support, or just a quiet moment, for other students as well as those with Asperger's. Every morning Vicky Rownes manages a small group of students, such as a boy with ADHD who needs calming down, getting into his uniform and reducing his anxiety. However, most of the time students on the autism spectrum take part in the main curriculum. Following several assemblies on autism awareness, there's now a tolerance among the other students.

The approach works. Permanent exclusions are low, in line with national averages, by contrast with neighbouring schools. The number of students receiving multiple term exclusions has reduced, thanks to the bespoke nature of provision for these vulnerable students.

All students see their form tutor for 20 minutes each morning and 10 minutes each afternoon, to check with them anything they are worried about, sort out any barriers to learning, and get them ready for the lessons ahead.



Exploring the issues

PSHE includes an enrichment day every term, looking at different issues for each year group. For example, in year 7, it might be body image, self-confidence and self-worth; in year 10, British culture, different religions, the values of modern society. The school also covers e-safety (with parents as well as students) and has workshops on anti-radicalisation. Parents on the e-safety course can gain a Level 1 qualification. A group of 10 students led by year 10s, called the SAFE team, promote e-safety around the school.

The personal learning centre, which focuses on behavioural challenges, has weekly sessions on social skills, and the staff explore with the students issues arising from current affairs and stories in the news. “These students tend to be very set in their opinions,” Vicky Rownes explains, “so we work to get them to see life in a different way. They might dismiss all of a particular group with one word, such as burkhas. We explain the different beliefs people hold, and bring in understanding of different cultures. We talk about their lifestyle, what the people from war-torn countries have been through, and contrast it with what we have in our country. Unpicking the differences.”

Instilling tolerance towards other cultures also helps within school, of course. Student Maxwell Dutoy says, “one of the good things about school is other students are so accepting. There isn’t really much serious bullying, though we do get some tit for tat. The form tutor then gets you both in the room to talk about it. If the message doesn’t get through to the kid, the issue goes to the head of house. That system works.”

Eight students from years 8 to 11 were asked: “If you have difficulties in learning, do you get extra help?” An instant chorus of eight voices came back: “Yeah!”

High Arcal now has five student support managers, who have been successful in getting previous school refusers to come in full time.

Students attest to this success. Year 11 student Chelsea Bridges says: “I never used to like school, and had only 60% attendance. I never had any



interest or will-power. But the new attendance officer would phone my mum and say, ‘get Chelsea out of bed’. Then I got speaking to the teachers and realised how important it is, these five years – going to school. Now I realise I have to stand on my own two feet. My attendance has gone up to 86.3%, but I think if it was not for her I’d still be back at 60%.”

“Attendance is being cracked down on this year,” adds Y10 student Maurice Reed, “and a new rigmarole has been put in place: if you’re not in by 9am you get a one-hour detention. It encourages people to make it to school quicker.”

Peer mentors

In weekly nurture groups, students peer mentor other students, and talk about the difficulties they and others are facing, either in small groups or one-to-one. “These students often respond better to other students than they do to us,” says PLC manager Mandy Murphy.

Vicky Rownes agrees: “and some will bring in someone who is upset they have seen outside, to get us to help them.” Often, they have experienced similar unpleasantness in the past themselves.

Kelly Preston comments: “they’re very open – honesty is a big part of their culture – so you can get to the bottom of what’s happened. You deal with the punishment if any, then draw a line under it. The teacher models how to give and accept apologies and then move on.

“Once one child has talked to us about a problem they or another child has experienced – and feels reassured, and satisfied with our response because the situation has been dealt with properly – they tend to tell others. This is an example of good gossip: word gets around that we can be trusted.”

Explaining the culture of mutual support among the students, Maxwell Dutoy says: “It’s easier to help

others if you've been through something yourself. My nan and my auntie both died from cancer. A kid in my class had a cancerous tumour, so I really try to help him, because I think it's the right thing to do."

Another student, Narayan Semby, says: "I suffer from anxiety issues. I was bullied at primary school, but here I get a lot of support, a lot of people have helped me. In year 7, I hated coming to school, but now in year 8 it's a wake-up call. Miss Rownes has also helped me a lot. I could go to her whenever I needed something."

Outside Agencies

The school works very closely with Dudley's educational psychology service, using a 'passport to learning' strategy devised by the service. It also uses the local Cherry Tree Learning Centre, which supports children age 5-16 with any physical or mental medical issues. And the school uses Dudley's 'excellent' SEN support service, which includes autism outreach.

Among other external agencies High Arcal uses are:

- » Respect Yourself, a council-run service in Dudley aimed at preventing teen pregnancies and promoting safer sexual behaviours
- » Family Intervention Team, who work closely with the school's parent support advisor and student support managers
- » Barnardos
- » Family and Adolescent Support (FAST)
- » Sandwell Women's Refuge Centre
- » Just Straight Talk, which supports transition to post-16
- » SWITCH for substance abuse support
- » a wide variety of local businesses to provide short-term work experience and mentoring.

A group of North Dudley schools work together, for example on managed moves between schools. "If the move doesn't work we have them back," Kelly Preston notes. "And we take theirs where required."

Other options include college placements; some students coming into school later and staying later; and 'home' tuition (which may be in the home or a youth club or library). A wide variety of students may benefit from these arrangements, including those with illness or behaviour issues, and year 11s who need 'to push on' to get their GCSEs. The arrangements are reviewed every six weeks, to see what else can be done.

Staying later at the end of the school day is referred to as 'session 6'. Some young people hide their learning needs, and session 6 can be useful in plugging gaps without attracting other students' attention.

Supporting all students

All in all, High Arcal does a lot to try to help students with a very wide range of particular needs.

One trainee teacher, at the end of a placement at the school, commented on how much the teachers at High Arcal care, their genuine relationships with students, and that he had "never seen so much."

And overwhelmingly, the students appear to agree. SSAT, in discussion with eight students from years 8 to 11, asked: "if you have difficulties in learning, do you get extra help?" An instant chorus of eight voices came back: "yeah!" Head girl Megan Weaver added, "teachers do try really hard, especially to support students with disabilities, and give extra help."

"They're supporting people to be the better part of themselves," Maxwell Dutoy comments. "It's hard to put into words how much teachers do to support and help. Miss Rownes listens to anything that might be upsetting students and gives an idea of how we can deal with it."

"That's what's so good in this school," adds Megan Weaver. "No matter who you are, there is a place for you and you're accepted."

Headteacher Jo Bull concludes: "because we don't shy away from tackling barriers to learning – which sometimes can seem impossible to break down – our students make good progress. Having our core purpose recognised in the 2015 Ofsted report was extremely uplifting. The welfare of all our students will never stop being at the centre of our decision making."



Finding time to develop expertise – through everyday practice

*Matt Webber,
Richard Challoner School*

‘Experts don’t rise to the occasion, they default to their preparation’

This is a slight distortion of Archilochus’ original quote (and I’m not sure who is responsible for this particular modification). But the idea that expert performance is borne not out of some intangible, mysterious surge towards excellence in the heat of the moment, but instead results from many hours of careful preparation, should resonate with anyone involved in teacher learning and development.

Expertise in teaching, as in any other field, is based on preparation. Not in the sense of poring over a scheme of learning and scribbling in a planner, but preparation in the sense of deliberate practice – the sort which is focused on developing and refining habits that have a positive impact on outcomes.

Except that our preparation – our practising and rehearsing of the act of teaching (and all of its constituent parts) – is not done in a training setting. Even

teachers at the very beginning of their career rarely get the luxury of running repeat drills on the equivalent of the athlete’s practice field, or testing out novel modifications in the safe environment of the software programmer’s sandbox. Rather, our practice takes place live in the classroom, every day. Viewed with a despondent resignation, this appears as a problem. But viewed positively, this means we have the opportunity for every lesson we teach to contribute to the cumulative development of our own expertise.

And yet this idea that our everyday practice offers an everyday opportunity for professional learning and development isn’t necessarily widespread, and certainly isn’t fully realised. As I’ve touched on previously¹ and others have explored in more depth², this may be in part down to a lingering (and unhelpful) conception of professional development. This is that CPD is something that happens once or twice a term, when all the staff sit in the hall and listen to someone speak at

them. Even if the ideas being thrown at the tired teachers happen to be good ones (which isn’t guaranteed, particularly given the tendency such a format has for encouraging gimmick over developing deep understanding), how much of it sticks? With a particularly charismatic delivery, some of it might. But still we have the problem of the disconnect that such a model promotes, encouraging as it does a separation between the idea of teacher learning opportunities and a teacher’s classroom experience.

What’s stopping you?

For those teachers who do recognise the potential richness of the learning opportunity presented by the unfettered access to regular, iterative practice in their own classroom, surely the most frequently cited barrier is time. This is certainly the view most commonly expressed by our staff when surveyed about their perception of the challenges preventing them taking charge of their own professional learning and development.



That view is endorsed by the findings of a report published by the Education Policy Institute in October 2016. One of its three key findings is that long working hours are hindering teachers' access to CPD. Of 36 jurisdictions, England ranked a lowly 30th in average number of days spent each year on some key forms of CPD. England's teachers spent an average of four days on certain forms of CPD in the previous year, including courses, observational visits, seminars and in-service training. This is far lower than the average of 10.5 days across all jurisdictions considered.

Workload is a significant barrier to accessing CPD, according to 60% of teachers in England, compared to an average of 49% across all jurisdictions in the study.

So this year at Richard Challoner, we are taking steps to help teachers find time.

Finding time for professional learning and development

Part of helping staff to find the time is helping them to

see the need to find time, and this is cultural. As frequently as possible, as both a repeated global message to all staff and as a discussion with individuals, we are reiterating our directive about moderating the workload associated with written feedback³. Importantly, this message now nests within a bigger mantra, borrowed from Dylan Wiliam (as so much of our current work is): sometimes we have to stop doing good things in order to do even better things.

Encourage staff to consider their impact not just on the students they teach now, but all the students they will teach from now onwards

As a profession, we are too often consumed with doing the very best for the students in our classes in the here and now – planning lessons, running support sessions, preparing

resources, assessing work. Instead, we're saying to staff that we want them to make judicious decisions to, for example, spend an hour on their own learning rather than preparing a resource that, this week, a class can cope without. In doing so, we're embedding an expectation of continual improvement that encourages staff to consider their impact not just on the students they teach now, but all the students they will teach every day from now onwards.

Supporting the shift in the cultural paradigm are changes to the actual systems that we use to support professional learning and development. Last year, a key focus was on changing the way we use classroom visits⁴ and then laying the ground for our new coaching-oriented appraisal process. This year, we have followed the lead of a number of other schools in taking the decision to find time where we can prioritise teacher learning and development within the school day. This certainly bolsters the message to staff in terms of showing that



we value the learning of our staff highly, but it also provides a very practical mechanism for bringing staff together outside the framework of our existing twilight and Inset day schedule.

This means that one morning per half term the school day doesn't start for students until the beginning of period 2, buying us a good hour of uninterrupted time (at the fresh end of the day) for staff to work together in learning communities of 6-8 people. Throw in a few hours-worth of time from the twilight programme and a bit of an Inset day here and there, and these learning communities start looking like the heaviest investment we've ever made in a teacher learning and development programme. It is already going a long way to helping people over the hurdle of 'finding time'.

Using the time

The work that all our teachers are engaged in within these learning communities is underpinned by the ambition for all staff to develop expertise as a result of committing to long-term, iterative development anchored in everyday practice. Across a range of pedagogical areas, individuals and small groups within each learning community are using cycles of inquiry to guide their practice. Each learning community has a piece of core reading that we've carefully selected, copies of which have been purchased for our learning & development library and loaned out for the duration of the year.

Our learning communities have met twice already this

academic year. During the first meeting, each group agreed the collaborative norms which will underpin their work as a group, before then setting about agreeing how best to use the core reading as a stimulus for their work. During the second meeting, these self-regulating groups set about supporting each other with the design of a first round of inquiry, with each teacher making a commitment to the group about what exactly they are going to focus on trying, with which teaching group, and with a clear sense of how they will monitor the impact of their endeavours.

Future twilight sessions will focus on refining our collective understanding of what makes a good inquiry question and looking more closely at the way in which impact might be monitored, while the meetings of the learning communities will continue on their half-termly cycle. We are working towards our 'Celebration of Inquiry' next June, when all staff will share their year's work, but in the meantime we are planning opportunities to share the work of each learning community at our mid-year review (a twilight session next term), as well as recruiting staff to share interesting findings along the way through our 15 Minute Forum⁵.

Reinvigorating our collective professional identity

An unnamed primary school headteacher is quoted in an old NCSL publication⁶ as saying, "research engagement offers the prospect of reinvigorating our collective professional identity and self-esteem." We've

been cautious with our use of the word 'research', given its (perhaps unjustified but still unhelpful) associations with impenetrable academia and a level of abstraction that can be hard to translate to a classroom context. The inquiry that is the focus of our learning communities is undoubtedly research of the form defined by Lawrence Stenhouse: systematic enquiry made public.

And it is invigorating, to say the least!

- » Teachers are standing by the photocopier talking about the book they've read.
- » Teachers are drinking tea on the playground during break duty and discussing deep aspects of their practice.
- » Teachers are sitting eating their lunch and sharing opinions on articles that they've shared following the earlier discussion by said photocopier.
- » Teachers are arranging peer observations to support each other with monitoring the impact of a new idea.

As long as we can ward off the fatigue that invariably takes hold as the term draws on, there is a great deal to be excited about...

Building capacity for school improvement in multi-academy trusts – from the inside out

*Professor David Hopkins,
University of Bolton*

This paper describes, illustrates and critiques the growth of the academy movement in England as a strategy for school and system transformation. It argues that if the move to academisation in England is to have a transformational effect in terms of student performance, the opportunities provided by structural autonomy need to be strategically developed and reliably implemented from the ‘inside – out’ – ie, by the academies and academy chains themselves.

The key arguments are:

- » If the aspirations of the academy movement are to be met, there has to be an unrelenting focus on capacity building for school improvement as well as structural change
- » the importance of putting the learner first and developing a school improvement strategy that works from the inside out
- » the key elements of this approach - whole school design, the school improvement pathway and the underpinning teacher development
- » reflecting on how best to build capacity for school improvement at the regional and system level.

The importance of capacity building

The dramatic expansion of the academies programme in England has been the major structural reform in education during the 21st century so far. Academies are self-governing non-profit charitable trusts directly funded by the



Department for Education (DfE) under a master funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Crucially, they are independent of local authority control. As Becky Francis (2015) notes, “Five years ago there were about 200 academies, today there are well over 4,000.” This reflects a global policy trend towards school ‘autonomy’ – the Charter School movement in the USA being the prime example. Ironically, this is despite the international evidence from PISA and other studies that there is no correlation between decentralisation and achievement.

Academy chains, operating more than one academy are either umbrella trusts or more usually multi-academy trusts (MATs). The MAT is a single legal entity with two layers of governance: the overarching academy trust is governed by foundation members, and there is also a board of



directors or governors. In terms of individual school governance, the academy trust could establish a local governing body for each academy, appoint the members of it and decide what powers to delegate to it. Alternatively, the academy trust might decide to set up an advisory body with no delegated powers, which reports to the academy trust's governing body. Whichever option is adopted, control remains with the MAT.

What is distinctive about the development of academies in England is the concomitant growth in academy chains. As Robert Hill (2015) notes: "At the end of July 2015 there were 846 multi-academy trusts in England. To put this in perspective there were 391 MATs in March 2011. So that is a pretty rapid rate of growth."

This, however, as Hill also points out, tells only part of the story. The growth in MATs is a function of the explosion in small groupings of schools – 729 MATs have five or fewer schools. This reflects a shift in government policy in circa 2012, away from a dominant group of relatively large MATs towards a proliferation of very small ones.

Early reviews of student performance in academy chains, particularly given shifts in policy, were ambivalent at best (Machin and Vernoit 2010). More recent research is also less than enthusiastic about effectiveness, but does give some clues as what to do. Two examples illustrate the point:

» *Chain Effects* (Hutchings, Francis and Kirby 2015) published by the Sutton Trust assesses the impact of academy chains on low-income students. Two conclusions stand out:

- There is very significant variation in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, both between and within chains; and chains differ significantly in attainment against different measures.
- Those chains that appear most successful are the ones with the greatest school improvement experience, a clear mission and a sustainable approach to growth. These seem to be the oldest and best-established chains.

» The DfE conducted an analysis in 2015 of the performance in value added terms of 100 local authorities and 20 of the larger academy chains. As Henry Stewart (2015) comments,

"only three of the academy chains have a value added that is above the national average." Of the top ten in the combined list only two are academy chains; ARK Schools and the Harris Federation, two of the longest established chains; they come in ninth and tenth.

It is clear from this evidence that simply becoming an academy is not a panacea and there are good reasons for this. Many so-called 'failing schools' have been turned into academies following that designation and the improvement process inevitably takes time, particularly given the rapid expansion of the movement.

However there is a more profound issue at work here, alluded to in the reference to school improvement in the Sutton Trust report. Chris Cook (2015) in his commentary on the DfE analysis says: "One thing that has emerged from thoughtful education writers in recent months has been a concern that we need more 'capacity building'. This means (a focus on) the nuts and bolts of how schools work and how they are managed, rather than changing who runs schools mechanically when they are troubled."

Structural change cannot improve outcomes

This point is echoed by Robert Hill (2015) in his blog *Standards + Structures = A Strategy*. Here Hill argues that structural change cannot by itself improve outcomes; there has to be an equal focus on school improvement strategies as well as systemic management, so schools can learn from each other. It is now clear that the most effective chains have thought about, evolved and systemised their approach to school improvement. Hill (2015) has analysed and reflected on the practice of our best MATs and has articulated 10 principles that need to underpin the school improvement strategies within academy chains.

- » They know their academies well quantitatively. Their core purpose means that these MATs adopt a culture of high expectations, set demanding targets and monitor progress.
- » They know their academies well qualitatively. It's a question of a MAT not just knowing the metrics but understanding how progress is or is not being made.
- » They adapt strategies to an academy's context. The best MATs understand where each academy is on its school improvement journey, and have

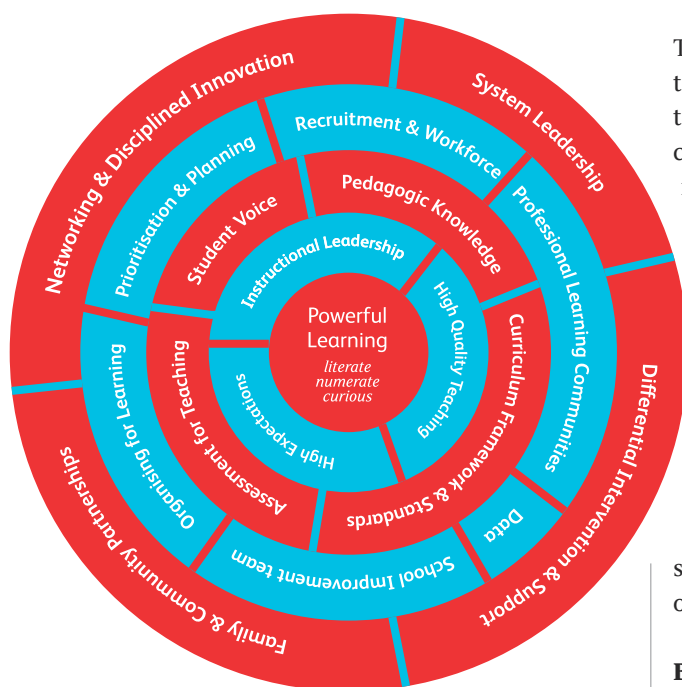


Figure 1: Powerful learning school improvement framework

pinpointed precisely the issues that need to be addressed.

- » They deploy expertise strategically. Effective MATs broaden the leadership experience of their best and emerging leaders.
- » They coach improvement in teaching and learning. Improving the quality of teaching and learning is integral to improving the performance of pupils and students.
- » They use inquiry-based learning as the flywheel to accelerate improvement. This is the flip side of the coaching coin.
- » They empower their middle leaders. MATs miss a trick if they limit the practice of distributed leadership to senior leaders.
- » They evolve and apply some non-negotiables. Most MATs insist on some degree of operational consistency in areas such as financial, business and data systems, school policies and HR.
- » They work with and learn from other schools. MATs appreciate that they need the stimulus and learning that comes from engaging with outside schools and practices.
- » They know their impact. Highperforming MATs can demonstrate the impact they are making on improving academies within the chain.

This requires strategies that not only continue to raise standards but also build capacity within the school and system (Hopkins 2013). One cannot just drive to continue to raise standards in an instrumental way, as happens in many academy chains; one also needs to develop social, intellectual and organisational capital infused by an unrelenting commitment to student learning. Building capacity demands that we replace numerous individual and idiosyncratic initiatives with a coherent and effective school improvement strategy that reflects the moral purpose of the academy chain. This requires putting the learner first and then developing, as we see in the following section, a strategy for school improvement or capacity building from the inside out.

Building capacity for improvement from the inside out

In building capacity for school improvement a new MAT needs to focus on ensuring that learning conditions are created within the schools that enable every young person to reach their potential – wherever that may lead. This requires the school and MAT to have a clearly articulated and shared view on the strategy that they adopt for capacity building and school improvement.

The model shown in Figure 1 illustrates an action framework designed to help both those working directly in schools and those within the MAT to more effectively manage the realignment of top-down and bottom-up change over time. This approach also introduces successful change by moving from the inside out rather than the ‘outside in’.

The main features of the approach are as follows.

1. In the centre is powerful learning, which represents the school’s goal that every student will reach their potential, together with a definition of achievement that embraces standards of literacy, numeracy and learning capability (curiosity). Such a learning focus reflects the framework for personalised learning pathways described at the end of this section.
2. Effective schools are not simply an amalgam of disparate elements. There are some essential features that need to be in place – the foundations upon which the narrative of school





improvement is built. Without these, a school will be unable to achieve or sustain excellence. These three features, represented in the second ring of the diagram, are:

- the importance of instructional leadership
- the quality of teaching
- a culture of orderliness and high expectations.

The MAT encourages each school to build its own distinctive narrative for improvement around them.

3. The next ring is comprised of those essential ingredients of effective classroom practice necessary for powerful learning:

- the teacher's repertoire of teaching and learning strategies
- the organisation of curriculum in terms of frameworks, progression, enquiry and standards
- the way that learning is assessed in order to inform teaching
- the ways in which students are involved in developing their learning skills.

4. The organisational conditions supportive of high levels of teaching and learning are the key elements in the next ring:

- collaborative planning that focuses on student outcomes
- professional learning committed to improvement of classroom practice
- regular use of data, enquiry and self-evaluation to improve teaching
- the recruitment of teaching staff and the

deployment of the whole school workforce

- the identification of a school improvement team to provide research and development capacity
- the way in which the school is organised to most effectively promote learning.

5. The broader systemic context of the school is represented in the outer ring of the diagram, showing four opportunities enjoyed by all schools and their MATs:

- the opportunity to network with other schools in order to share good practice and engage in disciplined innovation
- the way in which schools embrace and respond to the needs and opportunities provided in their locality through parents, carers and communities
- new opportunities for heads to engage in broader forms of 'system leadership', where they take on a variety of roles in supporting other schools
- the opportunity to engage in more purposeful reflection on the effectiveness of the school's provision, using both Ofsted and the MAT's own quality assurance processes.

Underpinning this framework is the critical distinction between 'outside in' and inside out working. Most school reform, especially in England now, assumes that change comes from the outside–in. The logic goes something like this: a high quality policy is developed and then implemented, with the assumption that it will impact upon the school and be internalised through the school's planning processes. In turn, it is assumed this will impact on classroom practices and will therefore positively affect students' learning and achievement. It is as if the drive comes from the outer circle of the diagram and permeates the various layers, hopefully reaching the powerful learning of students in the centre. As we all know, sadly this is rarely the case.

The evidence suggests that in those schools that have made the jump from 'good to great', the linear logic of policy implementation has been inverted. Instead of doing outside–in better, or more efficiently, they start from the centre of the circle and move outwards; these schools begin at the other end of the sequence, with student learning. It is as if they begin by asking, 'what changes in student learning and

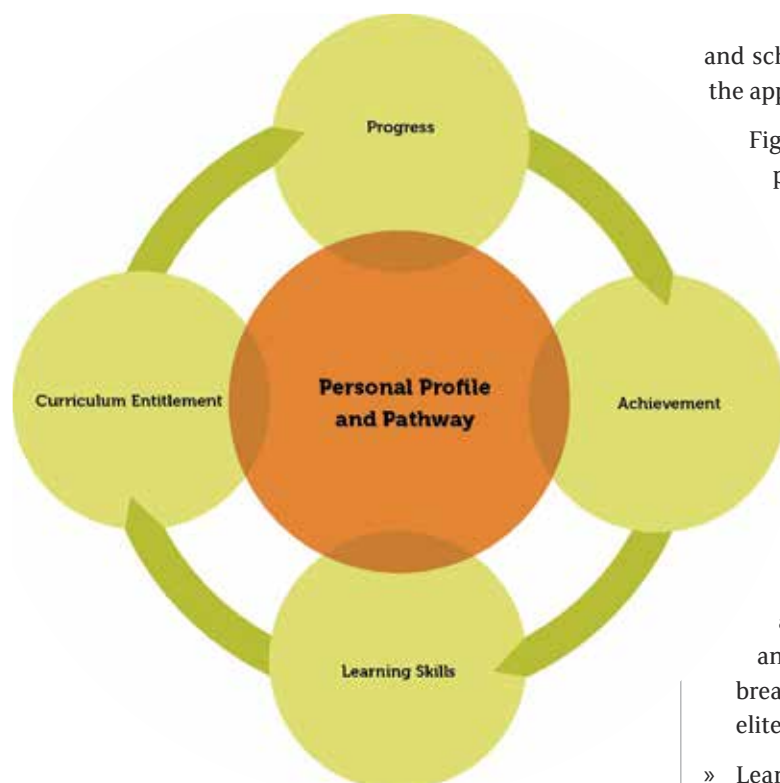


Figure 2: Personal profile and pathway

performance do we wish to see this year?’ Having decided these, they then discuss what teaching strategies will be most effective at bringing them about, and reflect on what modifications are required to the organisation of the school to support these developments. Finally, they embed within their school improvement plans those policy initiatives that provide the best fit with the school’s vision, values and goals for enhancing student achievement.

It is these schools, ironically, that also appear to be the most effective at interpreting the national reform agenda. The underlying purpose of the powerful learning framework described above is to generate this degree of confidence and agency in schools and MATS. In so doing, it exposes the paucity of simple autonomy as a recipe for systemic educational reform. It is this framework that provides the scaffolding for inside-out working.

Inside-out working is predicated fundamentally on putting the learner first. This implies treating every student as an individual and with respect, recognising that they have a unique set of gifts that it is our privilege to nurture. This aspiration is not fanciful idealism: it can be achieved through the rigorous application of the personalised learning

and school improvement strategies that underpin the approach described in this paper.

Figure 2 exemplifies a personal profile and pathway that applies the moral purpose of putting the learner first and working from the inside out. There are four key aspects to the personalised learning pathway that describes a learner’s entitlement and provide a framework for action and quantification:

- » Progress: all will make at least expected progress; with the aim that the majority of every cohort make greater than expected progress.
- » Achievement: all will achieve in line with national norms and the great majority will outstrip this; breaking down the connection between elite schooling and the elite universities.
- » Learning skills: all have a unique and personalised learner profile that will enable them to take control of their learning, understanding their areas of strength as well as areas to develop.
- » Curriculum entitlement: all have a curriculum guarantee that includes access to additional experiences such as, debating, service learning and leadership, which will enrich their time at school and strengthen their view of themselves and their place in the world.

This framework and associated strategies have been validated by research and practice in achieving success for learners whatever their starting point (Hopkins 2007, 2013). These strategies and the overall approach are described in the sections below. This is not however, an instrumental or technocratic approach to capacity building; it also needs to be rooted in the school’s and MAT’s values, reflecting their moral purpose.

Key components of the inside out approach

Space precludes a detailed exposition of the ‘inside out’ capacity building approach (see Hopkins 2013). Three of the key components are the whole school design, the school improvement pathway and the primacy of teacher development.



Leadership

As has been seen, outstanding schools are driven by a moral purpose ensuring that all learners reach their potential both academically and socially, within a humanising school ethos. Such leadership will have a total and persistent focus on high quality teaching and learning, a rigorous, coherent and enquiry-led curriculum, and developmental performance management. Leadership will be shared within and across schools through the use of school improvement teams.

Personalised learning

These schools also personalise the learning experiences of all students. This includes, as seen above, the creation of personalised learning pathways, the active use of personal tutoring and the acquisition of a range of learning skills. There is a commitment to assessment for learning and the provision of personalised support that embraces the voice of the learner. These strategies are designed to ensure that students have high quality learning experiences, make excellent progress and are motivated to achieve the highest standards.

Curriculum frameworks

High performing MATs have an unrelenting focus on literacy and numeracy within a wide-ranging curriculum entitlement. Crucially this involves a strong focus on vocational education, ICT and coding. This also includes the active use of learning platforms and new technologies, the creation of personalised curriculum pathways and the facilitation of cross-curricular enquiry-based learning expeditions. These frameworks are designed to ensure curriculum progression, cohesion and rigour that will enable learners to acquire the appropriate skills and qualifications that lead to employment, further education and higher education opportunities.

Figure 3: Six core elements

Whole school design

The most effective MATs deliver on their moral purpose for student achievement by the adoption of a whole-school design that comprises six core elements, implicit in the framework described in the previous section and as outlined in Figure 3. At the heart of this model of school improvement are the values, entitlements and guarantees referred to previously, which give the schools their distinctive ethos and that are reflected in the key components of the whole-school design. These six elements are the essential features of an outstanding school and each is underpinned by a set of proven practices that will be consistently adopted across the MATs family of schools (Hopkins 2001, 2012).

The important point is that these are not a set of prescriptive practices to be implemented slavishly. They are a set of principles to which all sign up – a sort of covenant – with the ensuing practices being co-constructed. In some instances, the MAT

High quality teaching

In outstanding schools, high quality teaching is ensured by a common framework for teaching and learning being adopted across the school, with professional development being influenced by 'instructional rounds' that result in a deeper understanding of the link between teaching and learning (Hopkins, Craig and Knight 2015). This will be driven by evidence-based strategies for improved learning and teaching and the development of best practice through collaborative working.

Partnerships

Schools within a MAT should also promote partnerships that increase capacity and improve outcomes for learners, schools and families through strong parental involvement, active community and employer connectivity, and excellent student progression, 3–19 and beyond. In designing and developing partnerships to support this progress there will be a strong emphasis on understanding community needs and the effective facilitation of collaborative working at all levels.

Accountability

Accountability for the highest of standards is a fundamental aspect of an effective MAT's ethos. In this regard, there is an expectation that schools will share a commitment to meeting the most demanding of external accountability measures. Of equal importance is the need to rigorously address internal accountability measures through the adoption of effective practices in assessment and data management. This includes developing robust systems and processes to embed effective practices in school self-evaluation, and tracking students' progress on a regular (typically, six-weekly) basis.

will be proposing strategies and materials that have already been developed as part of action research with other schools. Converter schools will contribute their own practices to the overall model and sponsored academies will be encouraged, where existing practice lacks impact, to adopt one of the trust's proven approaches. In that way, the best of practice will be identified, developed and then shared across the MAT.

Progressing on the school improvement pathway

As is now evident, this approach to school improvement is based on proven research and practice (Fullan 2011; Hattie 2015; Hopkins 2013). One of the critical features of the strategy is the adoption of a phased approach to school improvement. Whether the school is a converter or sponsored academy, the intention is that all those in the family of schools will be on an improvement journey that leads to excellence, shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: School improvement pathway

As a result of recent and ongoing school improvement work (Hopkins 2013, Hopkins and Craig 2016), there is now specific knowledge about the combination of strategies needed to move a school and a system along the performance continuum towards excellence. When systems and schools use this knowledge strategically they make significant and rapid progress.

Each of the four phases of the performance continuum includes five improvement dimensions:

- » curriculum
- » teaching
- » learning
- » assessment/data and accountability
- » leadership.

Key issues that emerge at each step along the pathway are identified and described, and a series of questions then helps progress development, by helping school leaders to complete an honest diagnosis of their school's current performance, and prepare a plan for progress towards excellence.

The milestones in the diagram illustrate the progress to be made, and the descriptions in each cell are deliberately stark in order to generate discussion. The critical point is that the school leadership needs to make a realistic and accurate diagnosis of their current performance.

Figure 4: School improvement pathway

It is only when there is accurate self-evaluation that a precise plan for continual improvement can be developed. At times, and often because of hubris, a too positive assessment is made. This leads to elevated expectations: the wrong strategies for professional learning are identified, which are incompatible with the learning needs of the school's students. It should also be recognised that in reality, any school's characteristics are not confined to just

one column and that the overall profile may draw from a number of columns recognising the relative strengths and weaknesses of any school, but rarely is the spread across all the diagram.

The following provides a very brief summary of the appropriate intervention and support and the characteristics of each school type at each phase of development.

Getting on to the improvement pathway

Schools that are 'getting on to the improvement pathway' lack the capacity to improve. They need a high level of external support and direction in order to get the basics in place and to establish the preconditions for success. Within these schools a number of early interventions and changes need to be made which have a direct focus on basic organisational issues.

Schools on the journey to good

Schools that are 'on the journey to good' need to refine their developmental priorities, focus on specific teaching and learning issues and build capacity within the school to support this work.

Getting to outstanding schools

'Getting to outstanding' schools need in this phase of their journey specific strategies that ensure the school remains a 'moving' school, continues to enhance pupil performance and engage in networking with other schools in the MAT and beyond. The key issues here are about sustainability, succession planning and moving to consistent system/MAT level teaching and leadership approaches to developing staff at all levels.

Outstanding schools that sustain excellence

The signal characteristic of 'outstanding' schools and schools that do sustain excellence is the way in which they continue to search for excellence internally and support other schools in their own journeys of improvement externally.



There is now clear evidence of the characteristics of those schools that have moved along the improvement pathway and sustain excellence (Ofsted, 2009). These are the characteristics that all MAT schools should endeavour to display and be working towards:

- » They have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently and never relaxed.
- » They excel at what they do, not just occasionally but for a high proportion of the time.
- » They prove constantly that disadvantage need not be a barrier to achievement, and that schools really can be learning communities.
- » Their achievements do not happen by chance, but by highly reflective, carefully planned and implemented strategies that serve these schools well in meeting the many challenges that obstruct the path to success.
- » They gain the trust of parents/carers and the support of the community, and are constantly looking for ways to improve further.

The primacy of teacher development

The key strategic question is: how does one reliably deliver on aspiration over time and across a range of schools for students to achieve their potential? The last decade and a half of educational research has given us some robust answers (see for example: Fullan, 2011; Whelan, 2009; McKinsey, 2007, 2010). Four stand out:

- » It is now clear from all the international comparisons of school systems that 'the quality of a school or system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.'
- » In most Western countries the variability between schools is far smaller (34%) than the variability within schools (64%). The implication being that there is a great deal of variance that individual teachers have on student learning.
- » The most powerful teacher effects are related to the way teachers establish, implement and monitor the conditions for student learning in the classroom in a precise and reflective way (Hattie, 2009).

- » There is in addition a strong leadership effect related to the way a culture of teaching and learning is established within the school.

The implication for the MAT is that if the aspiration of personalised learning is to be realised, then schools need to be places where teachers and leaders learn as much as students. This is why the most outstanding MATs place such a high premium on teacher and leader development based on the following principles:

- » All development is focused on the professional behaviours that reliably enhance the progress of students.
- » Teacher and leader development is best achieved through the extension of individual professional skill within a collaborative setting. It also depends on the school and trust seeing professional growth/ development and accountability as opposite sides of the same coin.
- » Every teacher and leader within school is on a professional development pathway that leads to the extension of professional practice, is amenable to accreditation and can lead to the acquisition of a higher degree. The SSAT is currently developing this opportunity in conjunction with The University of Bolton.

The Teacher Development framework that the SSAT is developing with the University of Bolton is built around the following components:

- » Every teacher and adult works towards the award of either the Trust Certificate in Teaching Learning or Professional Certificate in Teaching Learning as part of their probationary/ induction programme at the school.
- » Successful completion of the Professional Certificate gives access to the trust's customised Masters programme that has been designed to specifically support the school improvement strategy described in this paper.
- » The Leadership for Powerful Learning module that focuses on the contribution leadership makes to the progress of student learning becomes part of the MAT's leadership development strategy.
- » Opportunities are also available for those teachers and senior leaders wishing to pursue their professional practice at Doctoral level.

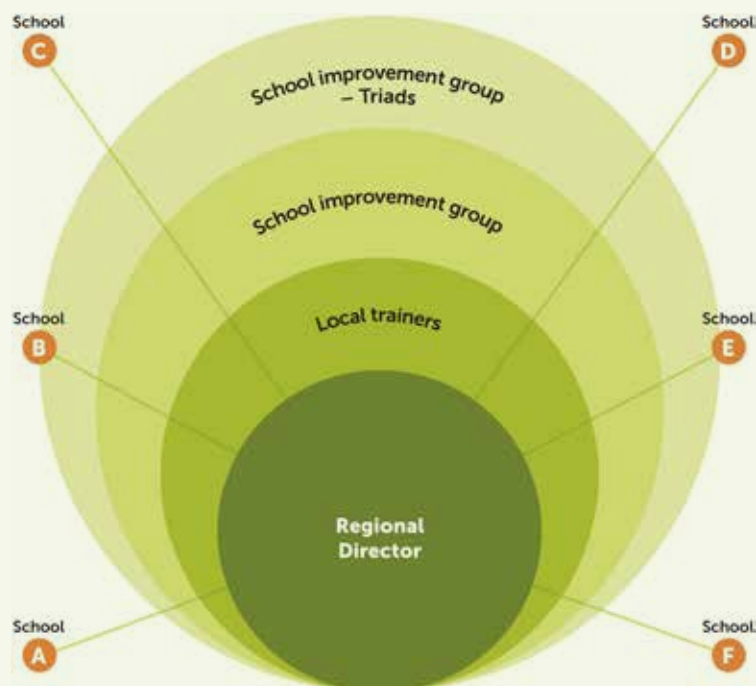


Figure 5: School improvement pathway

Building capacity at the regional and system level

In outstanding MATs, capacity is also built at the regional level to ensure that all those in the trust's family of schools progress as rapidly as possible towards excellence. Figure 5 illustrates how this works:

- » Central to regional capacity building is the regional director or executive principal who provides leadership, develops the narrative and acts as the trust's champion in that geographic area.
- » One of their key tasks is to build local capacity by training a group of lead practitioners in the MAT's ways of working, materials and strategies.
- » The training design used to develop trainers is the Joyce and Showers (1995) coaching model.
- » These trainers then work with the school improvement teams in each school to build within-school capacity and consistency.
- » Inter-school networking allows for authentic innovation and the transfer of

outstanding practice, thus building the capacity of the network as a whole.

The three key aspects to this strategy – school improvement teams, staff development processes and networking – should provide the focus for much of the training for executive principals or equivalent within the MAT, as they play their critical role in systemic improvement:

The *school improvement team* is cross-hierarchical, and could comprise 2-6 people in comparatively small schools, to 6-10 in large schools. Though one of the team is likely to be the head or principal, it is important to establish groups that are genuinely representative of the range of perspectives and ideas available in the school. School improvement team members should also not come together in any already existing group within the school, such as the senior management team or a heads of department group; this is to minimise the problem of 'pooled rationalisations'.

Figure 5: Regional capacity building model

The school improvement group is responsible for managing school improvement efforts on a day-to-day basis within the school. They are supported



through a core-training programme, through networking with school improvement teams from other schools and by external consultancy support and facilitation. The establishment of such a team creates the research and development capacity for the school while also retaining the existing structures required for organisational stability and efficiency. It also unlocks staff potential that is often stifled within formal structures, and opens up new collaborations.

The design of staff development that leads to enhanced levels of student achievement needs to be based on the following six principles:

- » Make space and time for enhancing teacher enquiry and creating a 'professional practice'.
- » Utilise evidence from research and practice in developing a range of teaching strategies that impact on student learning.
- » Study the impact on student learning and use data formatively and habitually.
- » Invest in school-based staff development, both deductive and inductive, for extending teachers' repertoires.
- » Link the classroom focus with whole-school development and embed teaching strategies within curriculum plans.
- » Use this emerging professional practice as a basis for networking and system-wide capacity building.

At the basic level, networks facilitate the sharing of good practice; at the highest level they can act as agents of system renewal. The emerging typology of networks along this continuum looks something like this:

- » At its most basic level, a network could be regarded as simply groups of teachers joining together for a common curriculum purpose and for the sharing of good practice.
- » At a more ambitious level, networks could involve groups of teachers and schools joining together for the purposes of school improvement with the explicit aim of not just sharing practice, but of enhancing teaching, learning and student achievement throughout a school or group of schools.
- » Over and above this, networks could also

not just serve the purpose of knowledge transfer and school improvement, but also involve groups of stakeholders joining together for the implementation of specific policies locally (and possibly nationally).

- » A further extension of this way of working is found when groups of networks (within and outside education) link together for system improvement in terms of social justice and inclusion.
- » Finally, there is the potential for groups of networks to work together, not just on a social justice agenda, but also to act explicitly as agents for system renewal and transformation.

This typology not only provides a way of categorising networks, but also demonstrates how they have an explicit role to play in systemic change. As academisation matures as a structural change strategy in England, MATs and their networks will undoubtedly aspire to collaborate as agents for system renewal and transformation. We have only just embarked on this phase of our journey!

Conclusion

It is clear from international benchmarking studies of school performance (Hopkins 2013) and the evidence quoted in this paper that:

- » Decentralisation by itself increases variation and reduces overall system performance. There is a consequent need for some 'mediating level' within the system to connect the centre to schools and schools to each other – academy Chains and MATs can provide this function.
- » Leadership is the crucial factor both in school transformation and system renewal, so investment, particularly in head/principal and leadership training, is essential – hence the use of frameworks such as the whole-school design and improvement pathway to guide action.
- » The quality of teaching is the best determinant of student performance, so any reform framework must address the professional repertoires of teachers and other adults in the classroom – thus the focus in high performing trusts on the progress of learners and the development of teachers.
- » Outstanding educational systems find ways of learning from their best and strategically

use the diversity within the system to good advantage – this is why capacity needs to be built not only within trusts, but between them, increasingly at the system level.

Implications: questions to consider

For practitioners: What are the key leadership and pedagogic strategies that will enhance the progress and reduce the variation of performance between our students?

For policymakers: What are the policy levers that will reliably ensure that academies build capacity, can work from the inside out, reduce the variation in school/student performance and become agents of social equity and justice within our system?

For researchers: How can we effectively develop frameworks and specifications of practice from research evidence that will enable our teachers and

leaders to more effectively create the conditions for powerful learning in their schools? And, further, assist policymakers in creating frameworks for educational equity within our system?

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How a 'brilliant residential' can create whole-school change

*Kim Somerville,
Brilliant Residentials*

Learning Away began working closely with 60 primary, secondary and special schools in 2009, to demonstrate the positive impact of high-quality residential learning. The schools have developed and tested a wide range of residential programmes, for example working to boost GCSE attainment, support transition, or inspire KS2 writers. All have been inclusive and affordable, and the experiences have ranged from camping in the school grounds, to staying in Hampton Court Palace.

The impact of the Learning Away experience, which had funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, was evaluated over a five-year period using over 12,500 pre- and post-residential surveys completed by students, parents and staff, as well as over 100 focus groups. Independent evaluation by York Consulting, published in 2015, commented: "Learning Away has shown that a residential learning experience provides opportunities and benefits/impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting."

It added: "The impact is greater when residential are fully integrated with a school's curriculum and ethos."

As most teachers who have been on a school trip with an overnight stay know, residential provide the unique opportunity and experience of living with others. This transforms relationships and develops a strong sense of community and belonging between staff and students involved. Sir



Tim Brighouse has commented: "Over their first 16 years children are in school for about 15-20% of their waking time, with the enormous balance in their homes or the community. That's why home background and good parenting are so important - but it's also why time spent in school matters, and why we need to make the most of it. Having a residential at once raises the time available for influencing the child to 100%, at least for the duration of the trip."

The Learning Away evaluators found that this sense of community supports a wide range of positive social and learning outcomes, long after the return to school.

So what are the impacts and benefits of having 100% of a pupil's time available for these few days? And how does this experience translate into short, medium and long term outcomes for them?



Impacts of Learning Away

- » Improve students' engagement with learning: the different learning environment and deeper relationships on residential contributed to improved engagement with learning, including positive changes in behaviour and attendance. Four in five secondary students indicated that the residential had made them realise that what they learn at school is important to them.
- » Improve students' knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of ways: in long-term
- » Support students' achievement: teachers saw the impact of residential on achievement in school through:
 - increased progress in learning
 - improved confidence and motivation
 - students having a better awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and knowing what to do to improve
 - a more collaborative approach to learning.

Sixty-one percent of students who attended one of the partner school drama residentials achieved higher than their predicted grade, compared to 21% who did not attend. "The sense of being 'in it together' and mutual encouragement went a long way towards supporting weaker performances and producing a higher attainment for some of the less confident or able candidates. This was something which could almost certainly not have been generated in a school setting" (staff focus group).

- » Foster deeper relationships: students developed social skills, including the ability to form new

relationships on residentials. These skills, and the relationships they supported, were sustained back in school. "The student-teacher relationship built in a week on residential is similar to that of a relationship built over an entire year in a normal class situation" (staff survey). "In school you see teachers as scary and strict, but on the residential trip they're so much nicer. You see them as normal human beings" (secondary student focus group).

- » Improve students' resilience, self-confidence and wellbeing: increased confidence was the most common outcome of residentials identified by students and staff. Students were more willing to ask for help, try something new including 'scary things', push themselves and participate in class; they also had more self-belief. Four in five KS2 pupils and almost nine in ten secondary students said they felt more confident to try new things they would not have done before the residential.
- » Boost cohesion and a sense of belonging: the sense of community and the memorability of experiences on residentials helped boost cohesion and a sense of belonging among participants, both at the time and after. Staff and students put this down to teamwork, stronger relationships and getting to know people with whom they did not normally work.
- » Provide opportunities for student leadership, co-design and facilitation: student involvement in their design, planning and





delivery enhanced residential experiences. Impacts were particularly notable for student leaders, who said leadership experiences improved their organisation, presentation, communication and listening skills; and their independence and maturity. Prior to the residential only 40% of secondary students felt that they could be role models to others; after the residential this figure rose to 67%.

- » Smooth students' transition experiences: in partnerships focusing on primary-secondary transition, staff from both phases stated that a residential was "worth half a term" in terms of gains students made in acquiring skills and relationships helpful for the secondary school environment.
- » Widen and develop teachers' pedagogical skills: teachers said residentials gave them time to reflect on their practice, and their teaching became more experimental and flexible; they were more willing and confident to take risks and try new methods. "My teaching is much more kinaesthetic, more practical, more moving around, it's trusting the kids a little bit more" (staff focus group member.) Nearly four in five staff involved felt that Learning Away had a 'significant' or 'transformative' impact on their understanding of their students' strengths and limitations.



Learning Away have launched a #BrilliantResidentials campaign which urges schools to make a cultural shift away from viewing



high-quality residential learning as an enrichment activity. Instead, it should be firmly embedded as part of each young person's entitlement. The Learning Away website www.learningaway.org.uk now hosts over 100 good practice case studies, alongside material to help 'make the case' for residential experiences and a series of practical free resources for teachers and visit leaders.

Factors in a successful residential

Learning Away's checklist can help to develop your next high-quality residential. These residentials are school trips with at least one overnight stay, which are:

- » designed and led by teachers and, where appropriate, students
- » inclusive and affordable for all students
- » deliberately and collaboratively planned to meet students' specific learning needs
- » planned so that learning is embedded and reinforced back in school
- » part of a progressive programme of experiences

- » designed to include a wide range of new and memorable experiences
- » designed to allow space for students to develop collaborative relationships with both peers and staff
- » evaluated rigorously
- » supported by senior leadership and school governors.

The campaign is supported with further Learning Away 'legacy' funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Learningaway.org.uk
 @LearningAway
 #BrilliantResidentials

Data at the heart of the classroom enables you to control your direction of travel

Peter Atherton,
Minsthorpe Community College

In 2012 the college embarked upon a fresh whole-school data strategy that put classroom practitioners at the centre of data analysis. This followed consultation with teachers to find exactly what information they required in order to help them operate effectively, both on a daily basis and over the school year.

The resounding messages that came back were that the college needed to help enable its staff at all levels to become less reactive and more proactive in their use of data. Staff also wanted greater consistency, and the ability for the data analysis to be engaging, visually appealing and have a more intelligent application.

So we moved towards creating easy-to-use and effective data analysis at classroom level that was fair and equitable to all staff.

The college gave me the freedom to evaluate existing processes and, where appropriate, to create and embed new ideas. These ideas were then developed over time into a suite of analysis



tools that all staff in the college could relate to. We did aim to become proactive with data and make the solution no longer a case of “here’s a system, make your processes fit it”, but instead “here are our processes, these are the outcomes we are looking for, how can the analysis best help give us insight and be used to ask informed questions?” The college also improved and embedded the existing ‘intelligent accountability’ process into these new analysis tools, providing a direct link between the data and where action points are recorded. Teachers were then able to access a single document for review and intervention.

The data analysis cycle now seamlessly supports self-

evaluation and the whole-school drive for improvement from the classroom up. It allows information to be analysed from student level up to whole-college headline figures, with a single, interactive document.

The college needed to help its staff at all levels to become more proactive in their use of data

The four main data analysis strands are visually appealing, and all the analysis of any particular item prints to a single A4 sheet of paper. They all in some way reference and benchmark against national data such as



the national subject transition matrices; and they are all driven by buttons and dropdown menus that are intuitive to use and navigate. New teaching staff and visitors to the college often comment that they are “blown away” (or words to that effect) by the simplicity and the power of these tools – and the fact that they are so well used in the classroom and beyond.

Detailed information that enables appropriate strategies

Leading up to these developments, staff had gathered detailed information about the students in their classes, so as to devise appropriate strategies for them. This led to the creation of a class profile; staff could choose their class from a dropdown menu, and the tool would automatically pull in a raft of contextual and prior attainment information about that class. Initially this was an important timesaver which allowed more time for planning. After a short time the class profile was significantly enhanced to include information about not only student targets but also the proportions of students who

would typically make 3 and 4+ levels of progress in a similar class nationally.

Student and class information files give teachers an instant picture of the class dynamics, and can be used to identify targeted students easily yet discreetly

After the first year, in time for September 2013, a seating planner was created and integrated into the class profile. This then enabled teachers to plan strategies for their groups and seat them appropriately at the same time. Teachers could use prior attainment, gender, or other information such as pupil premium to organise their classes and plan early interventions from the start.

While the class profile has revolutionised the planning process at the start of the school year, the other side of the coin was to create systems that provided strong

opportunity for review of data and accountability. Initially this was described as a mini-RAISE, but in reality it is no longer that. Assessment point analysis (APA) tools were created that put progress (transition) matrices at their heart but also contained the ability to filter down to classes, pupil groups and interventions. This is all done on a single page which all staff can access. The accountability process has then been built in, to allow staff to make comments on their classes electronically, which are then discussed with their line management up to SLT level.

The final piece of the jigsaw was to create physical folders called student and class information files (SCIF), which teachers populate with their class profiles, seating plans and other relevant information. This gives them, and visitors to their classroom such as supply teachers, an instant picture of the class dynamics; it can be used to identify targeted students easily yet discreetly.

In 2014 Ofsted inspectors were impressed with the data analysis





systems they saw at Minsthorpe, stating that they were “the best example of a data system with widespread classroom use we have ever seen.”

Shift in staff mindset

The most important hurdle to overcome was the initial shift in mindset so staff would become proactive with using data at all levels. The college's transformation in its attitude towards data was brought about by making the analysis as user-friendly as possible – having it all in one place without losing the ability to use the data to ask informed questions. In addition, staff were no longer required to remember passwords and sets of instructions on how to get to the reports, so the burden of researching information was greatly reduced and the benefits of using the data much more evident.

Finally we had transparency and consistency across all departments, and a real sense of data ownership. In turn, this softened the barriers to data use that may have existed and

enabled staff to work proactively with the data. Crucially they could now assess how their professional judgments in the classroom and the starker quantitative view of data linked together, enabling them to ask their own questions with greater immediacy and impact.

While education policy and the data used to measure it continue to shift, essentially, for a teacher in a classroom, there will be little change. Students in the class will have some sort of starting point; they will probably have targets, either as a minimum, an aspiration (or both); and the teacher will be tasked with progressing them from the starting point towards and beyond the target.

Our messages from this experience are that it is important for schools to ask:

- » how proactive they feel they are being with their data
- » to what extent (if any) unnecessary data practices exist

- » whether school leaders feel they are effectively getting the data into the hands of the right people at the right time.

Data ownership should always begin with the classroom teacher before moving to different levels.

We also believe that, in a time of relative curriculum and assessment freedom, schools should evaluate and, if appropriate, develop their own in-house skills. Only then can they adequately measure in the way that they want to so that they can follow their curriculum ideals through quantifying them. By building a platform of skillsets within their support staff, schools can more readily ‘future proof’ themselves against shifting goalposts and enable themselves to take any direction of travel they wish.



Computing across the curriculum: finding out how it can work

*Steve Richards,
Eastlea Community School*

Near the end of the summer term 2016, all students, teaching and support staff at Eastlea Community School stopped normal lessons for a day and took part in an experiment to answer the question: is there a useful role for computing technology across the wider school curriculum?

The event involved introducing a number of BBC micro:bits (small, inexpensive, battery powered computing devices) into subjects across the whole school. These are not 'computers' in the usual sense, rather they are platforms that can be programmed to measure environmental factors such as temperature, direction and movement and respond to these in various ways.

On the day 930 pupils, 100 teachers and support staff used their micro:bits across a range of subjects. This vast number of devices had been supplied to us by Microsoft to be given to the staff and children as part of our relationship with them as an 'associate showcase school'. (For most schools, only year 7

students had each received one of these)

- » In science, experiments took place measuring forces due to acceleration.
- » In textiles, micro:bits were incorporated into a belt that spelled out the word "FASHION" – used in a show later that evening.
- » In English, they were used to demonstrate types of metre in poetry.
- » In PE, they were incorporated into tachometers, scoring systems and 'catch counters'.

Setting up the event

Preparations for the event included a 10-minute slot in a curriculum team leaders' meeting a month beforehand. I outlined the idea for using micro:bits, explaining that we wanted to gauge the potential benefit of applying this technology across the curriculum. A quick demonstration involved a vice principal being guided to program the device, making it into a 'star jump counter' (and then a few star jumps

demonstrating it working). This helped bring subject leaders on board, once they saw that using the device was not a daunting task. (I also believe this act of mild self-humiliation went some way towards disarming resistance to the idea).

*Mild self-humiliation
can go some way
towards disarming
resistance to a new
idea*

We already had considerable experience of using micro:bits. Our year 7 cohort was one of the first in the country to have received their micro:bits earlier in the year, and we had received some media attention as part of the initial BBC micro:bit launch. By the time of our technology day, our year 7 had become micro:bit experts!

On the day, three short assemblies took place for each year group, 8 to 10. They were then split into groups of about 15 and assigned to individual subject teachers around the



school. Curriculum leads were given the micro:bits and batteries for the allotted groups of children and teachers in their charge. Three year 7 children were then assigned to each group to act as experts and facilitators for the activities.

The event was broken into three sessions. Morning was spent working through some of the tutorials available on the BBC website and developing ideas about how the micro:bits might be used to support learning in some subject topic. The session before lunch was about developing applications within each group; and the final session of the day was for using their inventions and evaluating impact.

At the end of the day we watched our children (and staff) carry off their micro:bits into the sunset. (Most of these did make a comeback in the autumn term to allow some of our children to take part in the BBC Big Food Survey, so I am fairly confident that the majority of these are still being put to good use). In any case, there was no cost to the school, as year 7 bits were provided by BBC and the rest of the school had them provided by Microsoft.

Year 7 children were assigned to each group to act as experts and facilitators

The only cost to the school has been in subsequently obtaining a few class sets (some 50 micro:bits in total) to be used and kept in school, as it's essential to be able to guarantee



that we will have access to them whenever we need them. The devices themselves are cheap enough for schools to buy a few class sets to keep, and we have found they are extremely useful.

Assessing the educational value

It all seemed, on the surface at least, to be very successful. A visitor from the Raspberry Pi foundation later commented in their blog that "this was amazing, and certainly the most impressive cross-curricular use of computing I've seen in a school".

Yes, we had made a big impact, enthusiasm and engagement among staff and students had been excellent – but what of the actual educational benefit? Is there any real advantage to integrating computing into other subjects that are not obviously connected to computing?

To find out and attempt to capitalise, the plan is now to repeat the idea of the technology day but in a more controlled way. Class sets of micro:bits will be used (instead of individual

devices owned by the students themselves). The focus will not be on using devices but on teaching and learning in the subject, using devices to support learning and boost engagement where and when it might be appropriate.

As we go through this, it's important to try to question what it is that we hope to achieve and avoid gimmickry. I believe that cross-curricular computing can help increase engagement by activating lesson concepts in different ways, such as by providing a practical effect or new methods to add kinaesthetic activities to lessons. Ultimately this should raise engagement.

Understanding how this effect can best be evaluated will be as important as successfully integrating micro:bits' use into a few 'ordinary' lessons. We are relishing the opportunity to explore further over the coming months.



Mindful music: attention, awareness and teamwork skills for greater wellbeing

*Martha Wright,
Mindful Music*

How does level of self-control affect our learners?

Imagine you are sitting in a staff meeting vital to the work you are about to do and your colleague is giving a presentation outlining the most important parts. Suddenly, you realise that you haven't heard anything they've been saying, you have zoned out and your attention has been elsewhere. There is not much you can do now but try to pick up what is happening, but this is not easy. This is a regular scenario in lessons for children with low self-control.

The wandering mind is a natural state that we all slip into from time to time, and as Goleman (2013) reminds us, it has its purpose and benefits. Consider the dog that spends his walk merrily following the various scents and calls of nature – this is the purpose of the walk. The freedom to enjoy the scents as they arrive is what makes it more enjoyable; and sniffing out his surroundings is a way of spotting potential danger.

But wandering becomes a problem when the distractions



take over. Say the dog is so engrossed by a sound he rushes off and becomes lost? Becoming lost was not a conscious choice; it was a result of an impulse. Now consider children: for those who struggle with low self-control the wandering mind regularly takes over and becomes a barrier to their learning and wellbeing.

In other words, children with low self-control struggle to direct their attention purposefully. Without the basic emotional intelligence baseline of awareness, they are not able to see or control the relationship between their impulses, choices and consequences. So they

become trapped in cycles of behaviour detrimental to their wellbeing. This affects their learning, it affects the way they build relationships with their peers – and it affects their ability to observe, understand and live with the systems that society creates to maintain communal wellbeing.

Childhood self-control predicts adult wellbeing

It is therefore unsurprising that self-control is an even stronger predictor of adult wellbeing than IQ or economic background. Recently Moffitt et al. (2011: 2693) took a sample of 1,000 children to analyse



and found that “self-control predicts physical health, substance dependence, personal finances, and criminal offending outcomes”. Furthermore, Daly et al. (2015: 1) analysed employment data and found that children with low self-control are in later life 40% more likely to be unemployed than their more disciplined peers. In terms of academic attainment, Vidal Rodeiro, C. et al. (2012) found self-control to be a ‘significant predictor’ of academic attainment in secondary schools.

But the good news is, self-control can be taught. Petrides et al. (2006) reviewed a sample of primary school children and found that higher emotional intelligence was related to prosocial behaviour and reduced disruption, which would improve conditions for learning. Self-control is an element of emotional intelligence; and at the heart of emotional intelligence is awareness. These are the fundamental components for self-control, which allow for the ability to act in line with the wellbeing of others and the world in which we live.

Mindful Music is an approach to teaching self-control for greater wellbeing. Our focus is on developing awareness, attention and teamwork skills, particularly in children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mindful Music responds to Hirschi and Gottfredson’s (1990) findings that self-control is malleable during the first 10-12 years of life. More recent studies have shown that meditation and



mindful exercises can improve self-control in both children and adults (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). Our programme has been developed to address this need in society.

The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention

Mindfulness means deliberately paying attention to the present, with open curiosity. The role of music in this context is to help us develop the skills needed to live mindfully. We use music alongside solution-focused reflection tools to support children in their development of self-control for greater individual and communal wellbeing.

Music gives access to mindfulness

We have found that making music allows our learners, and the adults who work with them, to playfully access and experience this mindful approach to being. Through our sessions, we have seen classes reflect on the more difficult emotions we experience in our lives, such as anger, and create remarkable musical compositions together through

listening, taking turns and expressing themselves. Taking best practice from the early years, our sessions develop by taking lead from the learners. For example, a simple starting point using percussion to demonstrate different emotions led to three very contrasting compositions by our year 3 classes. One used call and response samba patterns to demonstrate surprise, another chose chimes and varied dynamics for fear, and another class chose drums and stamping for anger.

Furthermore, working with teachers, teaching assistants and the midday meal supervisors ensures that we can continually support children in their emotional development. Not only during the music session, but throughout the school day. One example which highlights this is the feedback we received from a teaching assistant who had been part of songwriting sessions based around acceptance and expression of emotions; she told me that “instead of moaning about each other, the children now come up to me in the playground asking to talk about their own emotions.”

As educators, we are only too aware of the value research, practice and reflection have in enabling us to develop our understanding of our impact on other people. When considering affecting a change in society, Scharmer (2009) identifies the need for a shared motivation to solve a problem before referring to Lewin and Lippett's (1938) tried and tested action research model. And as Fullan (2002) reminds us, we need to be sharing our findings to create a lasting movement for social change.

As Bar-On (2006) points out, emotional intelligence is not a new idea. It has been considered as a tool for human success since Darwin (1872) referred to it in his study of adaptation and survival. More recently, education research organisations such as The Jubilee Centre (Arthur et al, 2015), SSAT and The Young Foundation (2014) have been doing research and informing educators on the best practice

in teaching of emotional intelligence in schools.

However, there is more work to be done in order for all children to receive the input needed for lasting positive change. We are excited by the outcomes that we have been able to measure, and this will continue to inform and inspire our work with schools.

As we continue to measure what can sometimes appear to be immeasurable, we are developing our programme with expert input from our team of voluntary music therapists, Sencos, neurologists and psychotherapists. You can join or follow our journey at www.mindfulmusic.london.

A view from one of our schools:

"We were very excited to be able to be involved with the Mindful Music project – it was just the initiative we were looking for. While behaviour is managed well at our school, we had identified one year group in

particular that needed a lot of support in building self-control and developing an awareness of team working. The things we were doing – the same old systems and processes – just weren't working with this group of children. The research-based approach to Mindful Music enabled children to engage with approaches to self-awareness and reflection that we could not have done by ourselves. Children who had been difficult to engage in collaborative activities really started to understand how to work well with others. There is still work to be done, but the impact on pupils' understanding and behaviour after just one term was impressive." Dr. J. Lane, Headteacher, St Francis De Sales R C Junior School - July 2016

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Year 6/7 transition: combining the best of primary and secondary

Peter Chambers,
SSAT

‘Easing transition’ does not begin to cover the ambition, scope and early success of Hadley Learning Community’s approach to children’s moves from early years to primary – and, especially, primary to secondary

Hadley Learning Community (universally known in the community as HLC), Telford, Shropshire, is an all-through 3-16 age local authority school with 450 pupils in primary and 900 in secondary. Also, as part of HLC is a special school, located about a mile from the main campus, known as Queensway HLC for 60 pupils with a significant diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders. Both primary and secondary were awarded good at their last Ofsted inspections, but HLC secondary is among the top 100 schools in the country for progress based on their value added score from primary through to Y11 outcomes.

Team 6/7: primary-secondary transition

“Children are coming into year 7 who have had a very different diet in primary,” says HLC principal Gill Eatough. “We have to make sure the secondary practitioners build on that.” She quotes (disapprovingly) an English teacher from an anonymous secondary school: “We’re starting Beowulf today.” One child responded, “we did that in primary,” to which the teacher replied, “we do it differently.”

So HLC introduced Team 6/7, a two-year transition from primary to secondary which contains elements of both but gradually enables students to thrive in the very different secondary setting. Filling out some of the context, Gill says, “in years

6-7, many kids are not fluent readers: they are above the SEN level, but in a grey area where they’re struggling. Our education system is driven by the notion that you do this at this age, that at that age.”

Paul Roberts, head of secondary at HLC, started Team 6/7 “after it hit me that any kid coming into year 7 below the old level 4 just cannot access the secondary curriculum. The education system in this country has overpitched the striving for perfection. The secondary-ready gap also includes those with high detention rates and exclusions. A lot of kids were not fitting in.

“At my previous school, Shireland in Smethwick, we saw that adding some elements of the primary structure to the early years of secondary was helpful. Here, it was no big deal to us to introduce Team 6/7, because we’re working with primary all the time.”

It was no big deal to us to introduce Team 6/7, because we’re working with primary all the time

Basically, the young people in Team 6/7 start with only modest changes from the primary arrangements they are familiar with. Core subjects continue to be managed by one teacher in the ‘home’ classroom, for 18 hours a week, with the students then going into secondary classrooms for particular subjects such as music, science and D&T as well as form PPA. And of course there are whole-school



assemblies with both primary and secondary. In Team 6/7, the children socialise as one group.

The teaching methods gradually progress over the two-year period from a 'primary' to a 'secondary' mode. This is helped by the fact that secondary teachers can sometimes learn a lot from their primary colleagues about broader approaches to teaching. As primary deputy head Samantha Armstrong puts it: "a secondary teacher might know a child is rubbish at maths but not that they're good at English, whereas a primary teacher might see more of the child."

How are children selected to go into Team 6/7? The 40 places are provided mainly for those most needy, either emotionally or academically. It is interesting to note, says primary head Erica Aston, that no data can measure children's emotional intelligence.

Faye Williamson, who is responsible for managing Team 6/7, points out HLC has about 25 feeder schools, with many statemented students, usually 7 or 8 in Team 6/7, which was initially funded by the government's catch-up premium of £500 for each child who was not previously achieving level 4 "caters for students who do not necessarily have special needs, but have reading proficiency below the expected levels. How to select them? Tests are just snapshots and not reliable, so we get the primary teachers' statements and comments from parents. Some now specifically ask us to 'give him/her that extra year to get ready for secondary'.

"In the first year, there was a transition process. I visited all the primary schools, met teachers and pastoral staff, found out about the pupils who had

been in care or looked after – got to know who all the vulnerable children were. We had six open evenings with small tours of the school and answered questions, mainly the basic ones about where to come on the first day, location of the toilets, how to put money in the food accounts, etc.

"We had one of these last night. The parents had been unsure about the school's ethos and aims, and the national curriculum. I explained about our thematic curriculum. It is age-appropriate (we don't want to baby them), so it doesn't have modules about volcanoes or the Romans. Instead we get them tackling big questions, like 'does everybody have freedom?'"

The teachers working in Team 6/7 put a strong focus on literacy, and specialist teachers are used for PE, performing arts, etc. "It's a mini-school, but not a separate identity," Faye explains.

It's a real privilege to see them transform, which usually starts around Christmas

"There's a lot of dyslexia, dyspraxia, EAL, ADHD and autism among these children, so we deliver lessons that are interactive and use a lot of teamwork and paired work in the two classes of 20. Actually, that's just good teaching. This is not just about improving performance, it's about building the child holistically as a person.

"It's a real privilege to see them transform, which usually starts around Christmas. We work with Bristol University and its spinoff, effective lifelong learning inventory (ELLI), which uses a list of seven skills for learning. The special needs department also uses this with their kids. If we do all this successfully, we will be helping to make them successful adults."

ELLI's seven skills for lifelong learning:

1. Changing and learning: A sense of myself as someone who learns and changes over time.
2. Critical curiosity: An orientation to want to 'get beneath the surface'.
3. Meaning making: Making connections and seeing that learning 'matters to me'.
4. Creativity: Risk-taking, playfulness, imagination and intuition.



5. Learning Relationships: Learning with and from others, while also able to manage without them.
6. Strategic awareness: Being aware of my thoughts, feelings and actions as a learner, and able to use that awareness to manage learning processes.
7. Resilience: The readiness to persevere in the development of my own learning power.

One of the benefits of Team 6/7 is reducing the stress the young people experience in moving from Y6 to Y7. In the traditional setting, says Faye, “as a primary teacher you reassured them – but you didn’t really know what they were getting themselves into.”

Confidence building

So building the students’ confidence is a vital part of Team 6/7, Faye explains. “We reinforce having a go. They come in with their hangups and not very confident. Academically, reading is the biggest drive, and we have a new TA focused in phonics, who is good.

Awareness of how the Team 6/7 approach works is being spread throughout HLC: “I’m part of a TLC (teacher learning community), and have been asked by three colleagues to teach a lesson to members of staff as well as to pupils, to demonstrate what we’re doing in Team 6/7. I regularly meet secondary teachers to discuss our approach, the skills and the strategy, and the pupil profiles we develop, including any behaviour problems and how they learn best. The TLC creates an open door for teachers to visit and observe each other; we have one hour off timetable every two weeks to further our professional development.

As a primary teacher you reassured them [about moving into secondary] – but you didn’t really know what they were getting themselves into

“Teaching is being more creative here. You need to break up the monotony, and also break down the elements of the lesson. We use the Kagan methods. Students teach each other, standing on their own two feet and becoming leaders of their own learning. These kids are not the brightest, but they’re developing independence, by contrast with

being sat with a TA all the time in their primary schools.”

Students attest to the need for, and value of, Team 6/7

SSAT spoke to four pupils now in Team 6/7. All were positive about their experiences so far, though they admitted to feeling “a bit nervous” about the transition, even though it was more gradual than usual, into secondary. They were also highly articulate, yet two had spoken little or no English on arrival at HLC and its nursery between four and eight years ago. Martin Kubica, whose family came from Poland, said he enjoys singing and Spanish lessons in the secondary setting, and “I’ve got used to the secondary classrooms.” Jakub Lal, who spoke no English on arrival at the school four years ago, commented, “that will help us. Our groups are good because they are mixed year 6s and 7s.” Martin added, “when they’re not ready to go to year 7, Team 6/7 helps people in class who need more support.”

Later, year 10 student Kaydon Ward gave his perspective: “they [the staff] want to make it feel normal for you when you transfer. Year 6 kids get to know secondary staff and their teaching ways. So even in primary, for some subjects such as music or French, you come here and meet the secondary teachers. Also, year 7s can help year 6s, more than I can in year 10.”

Another Y10, Luis Farr, also approved the induction days for primary pupils: “after that, I couldn’t wait to come. The teachers make you feel really grown up.”



Students also contribute to the support

Students also help with the transition period. Head boy George Dormer, in year 11, says: “One of the big things is the year 6 open evening. We talk to the pupils and parents about what it’s like at HLC.” And throughout Team 6/7, says deputy head girl Emily Whiston: “if they’re lacking friends, or having trouble with a certain person, I might try and sort it myself by introducing them to new friends. Or I might ask someone in the senior leadership team or the student support manager to help. We get a lot of recognition from the staff for helping in this way.”

Independent research by a deputy head from a Worcestershire all-through school, as part of her NPQH placement, has endorsed Hadley’s approach to primary-secondary transition. It concluded among other things that students having been to HLC primary appear to have “a massive advantage” in their performance in secondary.

There is a negative, of course, as Paul Roberts freely admits: “You then have to manage the transfer from year 7 to year 8. We found there was a slight dip in attainment in the first half term of year 8. So we added more TAs and modified the style of teaching more in line with years 6 and 7. Faye (Williamson) uses more scaffolding. And we have done a lot of work with the staff, both academic and pastoral.”

Erica Aston puts the primary perspective on this: “teachers in secondary tend to see teaching reading and writing as a primary school’s task, but of course it isn’t that simple. Team 6/7 is dealing with that. It is also managing some rare but really difficult behaviour, because students have strong positive relationships with one particular teacher during these two years.”

Faye Williamson recalls a visit from Ofsted within three months of the start of Team Y6/7. She and her colleagues were really nervous, but “the inspectors loved it!”. The secondary Ofsted report stated “Team 6/7 enable those identified as having weak literacy and numeracy skills to be taught by specialist teachers ensuring that they settle well and meet the school’s high expectations for behaviour and attitudes to learning”. Paul Roberts concludes: “It’s worked because I’ve got blooming good staff!”

Early years - primary too

A similar approach is taken in transition from early years into primary, though without the formal two-year interval.



Reception and year 1 classes (which both had their best results this year) are moderated together, looking at children’s work – the levels (in old money), the strengths and weaknesses of each child. Kirsty McGee, early years team leader, gives an example: “with our open-door policy, for a kid who is underperforming in September the previous year’s teacher goes in and has a word, perhaps even showing them a particularly good piece of work they did before.” Samantha Armstrong adds: “the teacher will say, ‘remember this? It was your best bit of work.’ We constantly challenge and question. It shows high expectations.”

In preparation for each transition, now starting at nursery level, the teachers make home visits – with translators where necessary, and with big teddy bears. They seek to identify any special needs and emotional issues. After this introduction, says Kirsty, “the parents are then happier to talk. Many are proud that their child will be coming to HLC.”

This year the process enabled them to identify and plan for a child coming in with cerebral palsy, “to make sure that we have all the facilities, so that from day one she feels we value her and can meet her needs. Also the families’ needs.”

This innovative and remarkably thorough approach to transitions within and between schools is typical of HLC, according to Malcolm Boulter, chair of governors since it started 10 years ago: “It’s the whole education, not just exam results and other statistics. It’s developing the whole child – this school is particularly good at that. I don’t know how, but the staff manage to find the time.”

SSAT ANNUAL LECTURE 2016

What do we really need from school education?

“SSAT is very clear about the purpose of education: making things right for young people,” said Sue Williamson, SSAT chief executive, in opening the 2016 Annual Lecture and Debate, with “a focus on closing the gap, making sure each young person is successful.” A corollary to this, she added, was: “Our passionate belief is that schools should lead the education agenda.”

SSAT Annual Lecture 2016: What do we really need from school education?

Some 130 delegates and guests, with five Y13 students, took part in the annual lecture and debate on 21 September at the BT Centre in Newgate Street, London. Among those presenting were Neil Carmichael, Chair, Parliamentary Education Select Committee; Steve Leahy, Principal, The Leigh University Technical College; Trivium 21C author Martin Robinson; and the students from Bow School and Heathfield Community College. Discussing valuable contributions from the floor was a panel including Dame Sally Coates, director of academies, south, for United Learning and chair of the Coates review of education in prisons; Kenny Frederick, education consultant and doctoral candidate at Brunel University; and Colin Logan, SSAT senior education lead.

Welcoming attendees, Fiona Miller, Partnership Manager for BT Education and Tech Literacy, said of new technology: “Tech is shaping our world, generating solutions to society’s challenges.” She also noted that it can help to tackle disadvantage, as “all jobs in the future will require digital skills,” which are enabling students to work more independently of teachers, and to work collaboratively.

Event chairman Tom Middlehurst posed two key questions that the meeting would address:

1. What does a high quality education system look like, and what is its purpose? Neil Carmichael, chair of the Education Select Committee, would contribute their seminal conclusions on this issue.
2. How can we achieve it, at a national and local level? Tom added a vital element of this question is the distinction, as identified by Dylan Wiliam, between the intended curriculum and the real curriculum – which is the actual lived experience of young people.

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THE PURPOSE AND QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Neil Carmichael
Chair, Parliamentary Education
Selection Committee

Mr Carmichael emphasised the need to make sure we understand what the digital economy and e-learning are all about. Schools need to be fully equipped with the technology, and have the vision to make it work, he pointed out.

Business' interface with schools is not strong enough in many places. He recalled a recent visit to a factory in Leipzig, East Germany, which makes Porsche cars with a multitude of options. Its managing director showed Carmichael a computer screen displaying the company's suppliers – Bosch, Pirelli, etc – “but it also included schools, colleges and universities in that supply chain,” he noted. “That's the mentality we need to have. We need a really robust interface with the providers of jobs. We need to improve the interface so that schools understand what the world out there is like.” This is central to the Education Select Committee's (ESC's) “purpose and quality” investigation.

**“WE NEED TO IMPROVE
THE INTERFACE WITH THE
PROVIDERS OF JOBS, SO
THAT SCHOOLS UNDERSTAND
WHAT THE WORLD OUT
THERE IS LIKE.”**

So the committee's functions include promoting the interface between all stakeholders beyond government and Whitehall: policymakers, customers and clients (pupils and parents). “We think about where education is going, the changes in education and society. We cannot stand still, we must think about the future.”

ESC's ‘purposes of education’ inquiry has noted the huge changes in education between the 1970s and the early 21st century, which had not

been accompanied by any proper discussion on the purposes of education. “We had constant incremental changes, not strategic changes with foresight.

“The government is also now obsessed with measurement, with the well-known perverse outcomes when some schools think their aim should be to send every child to university. Too many students get A-levels and so on but are not ready for work. They lack the aptitudes, willingness or familiarity with the workplace. We need good careers advice: the committee was right to challenge the government to increase incentives to improve career development.”

And while there is a great deal of talk about social mobility, the national curriculum does not include life skills that would enable young people to build their confidence. This is needed at an early stage in their school lives. “We should make sure we do provide statutory PSHE, because it is linked to social mobility.” Without that, “parents and kids are not able to deal with situations they find themselves in, which leads to some dreadful outcomes. And too many struggle, leaving school at 18 without adequate maths and English. Simply repeating GCSEs is clearly not doing the trick.”

Another ESC concern is: what does a good multi-academy trust (MAT) look like? “It's not just a matter of accounting and financial control. Can young people make career choices? Does the MAT give them the freedom, let them make those choices? And, like UTCs, enable them to get there?”

The purpose of schooling, he maintained, is to “excite joy, and enable young people to make the choices that are appropriate to them.”

Carmichael quoted approvingly professor Mary Beard's comments to ESC: “The question you are trying to address, ‘what is education for?’, is one of history's great unanswerables.” But still, she said, it might help if we took “a braver look at what we are doing.”



The outputs from education, the ESC has agreed, should be imaginative, brave, well-equipped people. “This has to be in our mind in addressing the purpose and quality of school education. You cannot talk about Ofsted, Ofqual or the national curriculum without having in mind what kind of education system you need in the future.” The committee plans to publish a pamphlet from its recent conference on this subject, which will include coverage of the digital economy and outdoor learning, as “a sense of discovery is important, and we need to do more.”

The ESC enquiry also aims to tie in a linear approach to education: young people should go through the various stages of education without ever forgetting that “we are always going to be learning. We have to encourage a culture of being inquisitive, knowing we don’t know everything and wanting to know more.”

Steve Leahy **The Leigh University Technical** **College, Dartford**

The UTC is in its third year, and several of its post-16 students already have jobs with BT, with the prospects of careers in technology and engineering: “the two to four years at Leigh are leading to jobs for them,” Mr Leahy noted. “UTCs are much maligned, but if they are managed carefully they will be successful. Students come to us to prepare for the workplace, not necessarily to pass exams and go to university.”

Leigh UTC has a full programme of business meetings for its students with representatives of small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and large organisations. “We counsel the students, and every two weeks they have discussions with up to 40 businesses, talking about the skillsets required. We work with students on real-life activities, but

also include communications skills and maths – delivering contextualised maths for all students at level 3. Our definition of progress is to take students at 14 and get them able to have a STEM-based career.

“But in fact our thinking is that 14 may even be too late to start. Many will already have studied for GCSEs at 13. So we’re working with primary schools, using project-based learning – these kids are good at it. We want to encourage students from younger age groups; next year we will have feeder schools for the UTC, with an 11-14 STEM-based curriculum and broad, balanced choice. So, if they change their mind and decide this is not for them, they can go back into other education without loss of progress.”

But mostly companies are taking on Leigh’s students who have confirmed their decision that they want a STEM-based career. “Students go to visit companies; this arouses their interest and enables us to build up their confidence and competence. Apprenticeships services cover level 2 at 16, then level 3 and level 4, in a smooth transition. We’re working with 12 SMEs, who get to know the students through work experience. They work as apprentices four days a week, and with us for the other day.”

Martin Robinson **Author**

“I’m the grit in the oyster,” said Martin Robinson in starting his contribution to the debate. Referring back to the focus of the education select committee, he said, “there’s a big difference between education and training. Education is not about creating a ‘better world’, or ‘better workers’. We don’t know what’s going to happen,” so cannot predict what skills will be needed. He felt the choice today, as represented by commentators, seemed to be between “numbingly utilitarian and hopelessly utopian.”

Instead, “we should be trusting our children, so they can create their future.” He would rather see education as “an initiation into the conversation of mankind and an enquiry into what it means to be human – an adventure, not a journey... we never know if, or when, we will arrive at the pinnacle of education.... Education should be playful, full of ideas.”

So, “factory schools – no; office schools – no. No spreadsheets or suits. Who really wants schooling

to fit you for an office? This scenario deprives teachers of their humanity.

“School structures are not the answer. Grammar schools? Academies? It doesn't matter. What matters is what happens in the classroom. That is the realm of the thoughtful, intellectual, logical curriculum. So much of curriculum design in schools is not thought through. Teachers should be doing half of what they are doing now.”

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Finally, he referred to his recurrent theme of the trivium, the classic approach to education: “know stuff; question and think it through with logic; and communicate it.” More than that, he added: “make it playful, joyous. Let teachers off the leash.” The liberal arts, he believes, should mean “education for freedom, and of freedom.”

The view from here – sixth form students

Imran Hossain and Daniel Fisher from Bow School, and Lukas Hogg and Milly Dawson from Heathfield Community College gave their views on the purpose and quality of school education.

Milly: “Education is (indeed) the engine of our economy,” she said, but that is not all. “The role of education is to bring young people together. The purpose of an education system should be that we develop a meritocracy so that success is given to those who work for it.”

She argued that social capital is beyond government's control. Better-off families give their children an advantage: there is a 27% gap in GCSE attainment of rich and poor people: why? Work experience is the most desirable factor that 66% of employers are looking for in recruiting staff – again, only 20% of businesses provide it and the better off find it easier using their contacts to ensure their

kids can do it. Everyone should be treated equally.

“And 36% of sixth formers feel poorly prepared for the next stage in their life: schools should integrate us into the society we are going to inherit. This exposes a clear fault in our education system. Everyone should be educated equally.”

Lukas: asked, “what does society need from the individual? Courtesy; relevant skills; acceptance of each other; emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. A good education. Everybody can contribute to our society. But today the driving ambition we seem to hear in schools is everyone should have A*s.

“Grammar schools for the academically gifted, ok.” But also practical, creative and technical skills are important and should be developed in our pre-eminent schools, he said. “I'm dyslexic, and even though I can't spell pre-eminent I can have views on what success in education looks like.”

Imran: began by quoting Nelson Mandela: “education is the most powerful weapon.” He added: “The ideal education teaches us how to live fulfilling and happy lives, but many schools do not adequately prepare young people for life. How can schools do this if students are not happy in school?” He quoted a study that claimed one in six young people experience mental health problems at some point: “they (schools) should teach how to manage anxiety and stress, which have a negative effect on performance.”

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On another issue, he asked, “why do grades matter if they don't affect performance in the workplace? Currently, grades are the only determinants of one's future – is this fair?” But his own experience had been positive: “I came to England from Italy in 2014. Education has been great for me. The teachers here are just amazing. One often stayed at school until 8pm, to help students with anything they needed. Education should encourage people to love

learning. In general, that's not happening; it's all about grades."

Daniel: began his presentation with the bold statement, "never stop learning! That should be the focus of the education system: encouraging debate. But as it is, know-it-alls are rewarded by the exam focus on regurgitating information. I'm most engaged in class when the teacher says, 'what this means is...' I've come out of philosophy classes knowing less than when I went in – and that's good! We have to get to the bottom of these questions."

Purpose and quality: open debate

Former chair of SSAT Nick Stuart opened the broader debate by saying, "we don't know what jobs people will do in the future, and most people will have four or five jobs in their careers." So in this uncertain context, creativity, imagination, openness to new ideas and tolerance of others' ideas will be important.

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"We should not have a curriculum so overcrowded with today's knowledge. Instead we should be developing communication skills, imagination, creativity. As a seven-year-old said to me recently, 'even the little people can do Shakespeare'."

Meera Chadha from ARK pointed out: "There is a lot of debate about skills for work and creativity being at odds with each other. But that's not necessary, both are needed in the work environment."

Ben Kuria of Limited Resource Teacher Training noted that education depends on the needs of those who are learning as well as those of society. We should take into account learners' aspirations and recognise the different perspectives on education.

Martin Robinson took up this point, saying that we should educate people as individuals as well as



members of society. On project-based learning, he disagreed with Steve Leahy, saying while it looks very different in primary and secondary phases, "the secret of creativity is constraint: you need to learn three chords before you can play a song." PBL is usually done too soon in education, he believed: "you should start with individual work, then pairs, to learn the basics. Only then should you go to projects."

But sixth-former Lukas agreed with Leahy; he felt that individuals could respond better to creativity when it was introduced earlier in their schooling: "younger people can mix more and are more open to new ideas."

Education is not the only thing that happens to children, Neil Carmichael pointed out. "We should make sure they can experience things outside school that free up their imagination. You can teach in a boring way or in an exciting way; that applies to any subject. For example in history, the teacher could ask: 'what would have happened if that hadn't happened?' He agreed with Milly, when she said "it's not just what we learn, but when we learn."

He believed it was vital that school leaders should have the confidence to do something different than what they are expected to do by policymakers and regulators. Perhaps emboldened by Carmichael's support, Milly added: "I look at other people who are lost" – strong support from a sixth former for the need for school leaders to have the courage to change.

PANEL: HOW CAN WE BEST IMPROVE PERFORMANCE?

This panel comprised Dame Sally Coates, director of academies, south, for United Learning and chair of the Coates review of education in prisons; Kenny Frederick, education consultant and doctoral candidate at Brunel University; and Colin Logan, SSAT senior education lead.

Sally Coates

Having previously worked with relatively well-funded London schools, Sally Coates noted how much harder the financial environment is for many schools outside the capital. She is now working with 17 academies, located from Northamptonshire to Dorset, and a corollary of lack of funds is a greater difficulty in recruiting and retraining teachers.

Consequences of failure

But she experienced a bigger shock when chairing the review of prison education: “I saw the results of education failure. Kids grow up in care, have very poor literacy, no qualifications, often permanently excluded... all leading to a life of crime.” She recalled a boy in year 11 at school, “an A* pupil. But he did something criminal, got arrested and sent to Feltham young offenders’ institution. He was capable of A-levels, and I went to see him.” But he was not able to take any of his GCSE exams, because of lockdowns and disturbances in the prison. When he got out, he went back on the streets. He’s now 18, and back in prison after an attempted murder.

This shocking history is all too prevalent, Dame Sally said: 65% of kids who grow up in care end up in prison; and 90% of people in prison have the educational attainment of an average 11-year-old. So she welcomed the white paper on alternative provision in prisons.

Social mobility “stuck”

At the other end of the scale in one sense, she said, “we don’t meet the needs of the most able; they often get lost in comprehensive schools as there are not many of them. We have to up the standard.” However, she did not believe the answer should be via selection. She did not want to bring back an expansion of grammar schools, and “I’m against

selection by the back door.” In her previous school in Hammersmith, “we had 65% of students on pupil premium, while the school up the road had 7%. And some MPs send their kids to state schools – but very middle-class ones.

“Social mobility is stuck. Schools are not equal, and even though some working-class students may get to the top universities and achieve the top grades there, they don’t generally get into banking or the like,” she maintained.

Yet while Dame Sally agreed with the need to value the development of young people “as human beings, who love the arts,” she recognised the vital necessity for them to be prepared for the world of work. To this end, every teacher should know the routes through to different careers. Her salutary experience with young prisoners had emphasised the severe underfunding of schools in approaches that could enable young people to have healthy, successful careers rather than descending into criminality and incarceration. “Why spend £13 billion pounds on reoffenders?” she demanded to know. “We need to put money into the early years, the development of really good professionals to deal with the mental problems some young people face.”

And finally, she said: “the headteacher is all-important. We don’t invest enough in them.”

Kenny Frederick

A headteacher in Tower Hamlets for 17 years, Kenny Frederick focused on mainstream teachers. “So many dedicated young teachers are coming into the profession – and they’re leaving, because we’re killing them,” she declared. “An awful lot of teachers are being told what to teach, and how, with compliance, control, measurement and checking all the time. That is why teachers are leaving. All the time, they’re worried about Ofsted, the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the deputy head grading them – if not publicly, then secretly.”

What she advocates instead is ‘teachers’ rounds’, in which the visiting teacher describes what they have seen, but does not evaluate it. Together the

two teachers reflect on the observations. “Get them to talk about teaching and learning. Give them a language to do that. And give them the time to do it. Teachers need to be lifetime learners.”

Instead, at present their energies are consumed by child protection issues, mental health and poverty. “And on top of that they are worried about ‘progress’ every half term. They are terrified of being seen as ‘not a good teacher’.” Ofsted wrongly focuses on what teachers are not doing, not on what they are doing, she added.

Colin Logan

Referring back to Neil Carmichael’s criticism of 30 years’ incremental change and focus on systems and structure rather than teaching, Colin Logan said “Ofsted is being much less prescriptive now. I think there might be a chink of light if we make the most of it.” He was shocked to find that some heads “are pleading for a [replacement] assessment system.” One school he knows is using the KS2 levels from 2015, reinterpreting them into the 2016 context. “That’s wrong. We should be the ones to come up with a system for our own school, or group of schools. We’ve got to let these old habits go.”

He also deplored the “race through key stage 3, so schools can focus as soon as possible on GCSEs. Instead they should look at their programmes of study, and identify the knowledge, skills and understanding they want students to acquire, with a formative and summative balance of assessment.”

He emphasised the need for “data smart” approaches, now that Ofsted has moved away from over-reliance on data. “Focus on the students currently in school; data informed is more appropriate than data driven. Try to develop mastery, rather than a relentless race through the levels.” And, while he believed that Progress 8 was the “least bad” indicator available, he exhorted school leaders and teachers: “don’t try to generate targets. At best, they will just be a distraction.” Instead, “what you can (usefully) do is identify individual targets in individual subjects when students enter KS4 – and not before.

“We need to change the way we think and operate,” he concluded. “Take back some control. Reclaim professionalism. Demonstrate that we have the knowledge and skills to decide what works. We’ve got to get away from all those ingrained ideas about expected progress and tightly formed flight paths” through young people’s school careers.

Improving performance: open debate

Students Daniel and Imran then joined Sally Coates, Kenny Frederick and Colin Logan, who stated that headteachers should be saying to their school governors, “I don’t think we should do this (eg obey a government diktat), so with your permission I won’t.” Kenny Frederick agreed: “We should stand up and question, say no sometimes. Some heads are terrified of speaking out. – But you have to, for your staff, for the students, and for the community.” She pinpointed one cause of the problem: “ministers listen more to their SPADS (special political advisors) than they do to education professionals.”

Student Daniel commented, “the best teachers are mavericks. Our school is in one of the highest areas for child poverty in the UK. Our teachers focus on helping kids out from an early age. You can speak to teachers, they care and they will support you. They don’t just focus on education. One maths teacher I had took Fridays off to talk to us. I had been terrible at maths, but he got me to work hard and I increased my results by two grades.”

Imran felt there is too much focus on grades, and much of it comes from employers. “Teachers don’t have the time to explore everything, because they have to help you get the best grades. If we want change in education, we have to change society first.”

Colin Logan felt the quality of discussion in education was improving, and “if you’re a maverick in a successful school, you’re pretty fireproof. Teachers teach best when they do it the way they are most comfortable with.”

Looking beyond purely academic subjects, Sally Coates emphasised the importance of PSHE, and teaching about parenting. However, this is best taught out of class, she felt, including the use of a wide range of activities such as debating and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Summing up, SSAT chief executive Sue Williamson said accountability has its place, but “the balance has gone too far. Above all, we want teachers to be innovators, and students to be inspired.”

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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.