



SSAT Journal 09

Summer 2017

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

Contents

1	Welcome <i>Sue Williamson, SSAT</i>	23	The journey to becoming a multi-academy trust <i>Anne Campbell, Parkside Federation</i>
2	The future of education policy: analysing post-election language <i>Tom Middlehurst, SSAT</i>	27	An all-through school: benefits and challenges <i>Philip Sanderson, Kings Priory School</i>
4	How 'the geek' helps us build wellbeing and autonomy <i>Sarah Ledger, Acklam Grange School</i>	31	Tapton School's focus on mental health: how it's working <i>Steve Rippin, Tapton School</i>
7	Wrestling with responsibility: a different perspective on workload <i>Nicholas Robson, Holland Park School</i>	36	Teachers' '5 a day' can improve their performance and students' outcomes <i>Martyn Reah, Eggar's School</i>
10	Employer engagement: meeting the challenges <i>Nick Chambers, Education & Employers</i>	38	Key factors in effective A-level delivery: a debate <i>Bill Watkin, Sixth Form Colleges Association</i>
13	System leadership and globalisation: two of the ways SSAT is fulfilling its 30-year mission <i>David Hopkins, Institute of Education</i>	41	The happiness of pursuit, not the pursuit of happiness <i>Dr Nash Popovic, University of East London</i>
15	FLAC: a shared language for teaching <i>Annie Eagle, The Romsey School</i>	46	Apprenticeships in schools: why bother? For some very good reasons <i>Ray Henshaw, Minsthorpe Community College</i>
18	Performance development for high trust and high professional responsibility <i>Janice Allen, Falinge Park High School</i>	49	How 'No pen Friday' is easing workload issues <i>Steve Taylor, Robin Hood MAT</i>
21	Destinations: the new frontier for measuring school performance – and how to make your data work for you <i>Alex Kelly, Unifrog</i>		

Welcome

Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT



Last month's general election and its resulting hung parliament provided some focus on education, particularly on the state of school budgets, but in my opinion not enough. Headteachers and governing boards have had to make very difficult decisions about staffing. I am a chair of governors – we have balanced the books, by seeking funding from local business and paring the staffing to the bone. But there is no contingency funding. The three-year forecast is a nightmare.

At SSAT we're looking for ways that we can help schools to generate income and savings, and we will be writing to you as soon as we have finalised agreements. Do look at our publication, *Triumph in Adversity*: it was sent to every member school and has some excellent ideas for generating income and making savings.

There are also serious concerns about workload. This has not been addressed at all in the general election debates, but I can see more work being dumped on schools without much thought on the implications for workload. On 30 June 2017 we held a conference, *Reducing Workload, Creating Time* which provided practical solutions and ideas for reducing workload. We will be circulating the outcome to members. We are losing too many good people from the profession, who are simply worn out, and fed up by the lack of recognition.

I am constantly amazed by the quality of the teaching workforce. As a judge for the Teaching Awards – Life-

time Achievement Award – I have visited five schools to hear about the work of the nominees. It has been a wonderful experience to meet the five teachers who are as passionate about their work now as they were on the day they started. The motivation for them all is the young people they teach. Hearing the evidence from children is an emotional experience – teachers make lives. Parents tell us that teachers give them the support they need to support their child. The new government needs to recognise the contributions of the profession and praise their achievements.

We have held three Educational Outcomes Awards events, which have enabled us to recognise schools' successes. It has been a pleasure to present the certificates to representatives of the schools, who are keen to say that it is a team effort. I would like to thank you for all the hard work you do with the young people in your care. We know it's not just about providing high quality teaching in the classroom – it's taking the time to listen to students, organise activities and trips... and doing your utmost to ensure that every child has the opportunities they need to succeed. It is also about developing the next generation of leaders.

Recently we also held the first event for the 125 teachers in our SSAT Leadership Legacy Project. It was an inspirational day. I am confident that we had 125 future headteachers in the room. We are already considering how we can extend this programme in the next academic year.

Have a great summer holiday – we look forward to working with you next year. ■



The future of education policy: analysing post-election language

Tom Middlehurst,
SSAT

Tom Middlehurst sorts the meaningful statements from the blather

Following the election result in June and the subsequent minority government, what can we expect from Sanctuary Buildings over the coming months? The mainstream press has been quick to point out that many of the Tory educational manifesto pledges were dropped from the Queen's Speech – noticeably new grammar schools and scrapping infant free school meals for wealthier families – but arguably it's not quite so simple.

In the main body of the Queen's Speech, only two sentences were afforded to education – highlighting three policy areas – 'good schools' for every child, 'fairer funding' for schools, and a 'major reform of technical education'.

So what can we tell about what was in the speech, and moreover, what wasn't?

Good schools – free schools

The government have reiterated their aim of opening new schools in order to create more school places, through the free school programme. Toby Young, chief executive of the New Schools Network, which advocates the development of free schools, has upped the target of new schools from 500 to 750 by 2020. And the prime minister, weak though her position may be, has been championing the concept of free schools since as early as 2001, when she was shadow education secretary.

More school places are needed, but whether opening new schools is the most efficient way of creating more system capacity is debatable. The principle of MATs with good and outstanding schools opening new schools is likely to be continued by this government.

... and grammars

So what of the future of new grammars? On the one hand, they were noticeably absent in the Queen's Speech. Even with DUP support (Northern Ireland is fully selective), enough Tory MPs have publicly spoken out against grammars (including ex-SoS Nicky Morgan) that the government would struggle to get legislation through the Commons.

Yet in the policy document that accompanies the Queen's Speech and gives more detail about the policies, the language is interesting – and familiar. When talking about good school places for all, the document describes a 'great meritocracy' in which 'everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow'. This is the language of the previous green paper, *Schools that work for everyone* – and does not feel like a departure from the ambition for increased selection. Indeed, the green paper talks about new 'centres of excellence' within MATs, which – although not operating exactly as grammars do – could bring in new grammar-style schools without primary legislation.

A report released in June by social research institute NatCen showed that just over half (53%) of the public support the expansion of grammars. Therefore a policy that would not require legislation to get through a (tricky) parliament, but that is supported by most of the electorate, would be an attractive proposition for the government.

The reaction from MATs has been mixed; with some already trialling centres of excellence, some coming out firmly against the ideas, and others in a Cold War situation of not acting first, but feeling pressured to if one opens in their area. So the future of increased



selection may lie less in the hands of policymakers, and more in the hands of those leading the academy system.

Funding

It has been widely acknowledged that the joint campaign for sufficient school funding – started in West Sussex and supported by (among others) SSAT, the Heads' Roundtable and the unions – has been a great success in raising public awareness and making school budget cuts a key issue in the election. Tory campaigners reported difficult questions on the doorsteps about education spending, with the party line of 'more money than ever before' unconvincing in areas where teaching assistants have lost their jobs, parents are increasingly asked for contributions, and schools are threatening one-day closures.

There is therefore a widespread belief that the government will increase school spending. However, again the language used in the policy document is telling: 'since 2010 the schools budget has been protected in real terms. This government has committed to increase the school budget further.' There is no concession that flat cash per pupil has meant real term cuts.

So what does the government's 'commitment' mean in reality? The Tory manifesto pledged £4bn to schools – but it remains unclear where this will come from and where it will be allocated. Under a new funding formula, this will likely be used to cushion schools losing out, meaning that no school will actually lose cash – but it is unlikely to plug the gaps already there or meet future costs. By some estimates, with costs continuing to rise, this would lead to cuts in real terms of 3% between 2017 and 2022.

And what of fairer funding? The government are committed to introducing the new formula, but with the election delaying the response to the consultation; it remains to be seen how this will look. While there is much to celebrate about the success of the campaigns so far, we must not allow complacency, or for discussions of 'fairer' funding to replace a focus on *sufficient* funding for all.

Technical education

With schools policy relatively light in the policy

document, the largest sector for reform is likely to be the skills and technical sector. The government will be keen to look at the most successful UTCs and encourage more schools to work in partnership to raise the status and profile of technical education. We will also have implementation of the Sainsbury Review and the introduction of T-levels.

Any technical education reform should be linked to a new industrial strategy, with courses that meet the requirements of local and national employment opportunities.

However, as the government is also championing the Ebacc for all (although not as a formal target), a cohesive approach to technical education may prove difficult. The impact of Ebacc subject entries will gradually begin to affect A-level and T-level choices. If performance measures discourage secondary schools from offering a range of technical GCSEs, how can we increase their take-up post-16? As with grammar schools, the government will need to think through how these two different focuses work.

A period of calm and stability?

As we have often pointed out at SSAT, just last academic year the then secretary of state Nicky Morgan promised headteachers 'a period of calm and stability' in educational policy. I think we can all agree this hasn't happened... but might the absence of new education legislation actually bring in this period now?

So much about the future remains uncertain. But right now, we have: a government which can't bring about legislation that doesn't attract a broad majority; no primary legislation on education for two years; an education secretary who was largely welcomed back by the profession for her focus on school improvement; and an inspectorate keen to dispel myths about inspection, thereby empowering school leaders to make autonomous decisions aimed at improving their schools and the education system.

The time has never been better for the profession itself to really lead the direction of travel, to have its demands met by central government, and to make the school-led system a reality. ■

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Tom also facilitates various SSAT member headteacher, principal and senior leaders' collaborative email forums. To sign yourself and your staff up the forums, please email your SSAT relationship manager or RMTeam@ssatuk.co.uk.

How 'the geek' helps us build wellbeing and autonomy

*Sarah Ledger,
Acklam Grange School*

Sarah Ledger, Assistant Headteacher, Teaching and Learning, Acklam Grange School, Middlesbrough, explains the approach that improved quality – and retention – through staff autonomy

On a recent Thursday evening I was shopping and bumped into a colleague and her son. I was introduced to the boy as 'this is Sarah, mam's friend from work' and within seconds of this introduction the child turned to me and said: 'We've just been out for tea. I've finished my SATs today and mam won teacher of the week. Did you know that?' The answer was that of course I knew. We discussed the winner in SLT and in fact I had nominated the colleague. What she had won was our 'Geek of the week' which is a weekly trophy that SLT present to any member of staff for something we or a fellow colleague believes deserves recognition and celebration.

The thing is, not until my colleague and her son had pointed it out to me had I realised how significant this is for our staff. I then began to reflect upon this and other things which we're trying to do and began to umbrella all of it under the buzz phrase 'recruitment and retention'. What are we doing to retain great staff?



'The geek', as we like to call the trophy, was introduced by our deputy head a few years back and it's presented every Thursday in whole-staff briefing. He is handed over and then the recipient spends the week dressing him up to reflect them, their subject, their hobbies or just to generally have some fun. The thing about it though is that choosing the recipient is often the longest agenda item at SLT the evening before! We discuss the nominations at length and take a real pleasure in digging into the brilliance of our staff and deciding who should win. This highlights an interesting development: it is getting more and more difficult to choose because our staff are getting stronger and stronger.

We take a real pleasure in digging into the brilliance of our staff and deciding who should win 'Geek of the week'

One of my personal objectives in the development of teaching staff is to lessen 'teacher variability'. Now, this isn't about watering down creativity, or a whole school didactic approach to teaching and learning, far from it! It's ensuring that the overall quality of all teachers is of the highest standard possible, so every child is guaranteed a quality education regardless of whose classroom they're in.

So how do we do that? Apart from 'the geek', how are we focusing on quality while also ensuring we retain and recruit strong staff without squeezing the creativity out of them?

How we aim to retain staff through personal and professional development

Our development programme, called AGS Inspire, is the engine

that drives all staff development. It is run every Tuesday between 3.15-4.00pm and 4.00-5.00pm, offering teaching and other staff a variety of voluntary development opportunities. The SLT T&L team publish the calendar, and staff simply sign up to what they feel they would like to develop, gaining credit points for their appraisal as they go.

The programme for AGS Inspire tends to follow national, school and personal development priorities. The personal development priorities strand is the trickiest to design, but arguably the most important. The calendar is closely linked to the whole school quality assurance cycle, meaning that teachers' individual development points are reviewed

and then a package is offered to support these developments. Teachers partake in various sessions and then their progress is reflected upon via the next QA cycle.

A recent development, in terms of staff retention, has been our coaching programme, which again is aligned to the QA cycle. Most colleagues who have signed up for coaching have done so voluntarily; staff have seen the benefits of these structures and have requested them.

Keeping T&L at the heart of everything

The essential faculty and year team meetings, also mapped out on the QA calendar, have a key T&L focus which the faculties themselves decide upon. The school priorities are presented, but the faculty leader has full autonomy in the content,

delivery and makeup of those Monday sessions with only one specification – information giving is at an absolute minimum; everything where possible should be given out beforehand, to allow for pre-reading and thought; T&L investigation is the one priority. Frequently therefore our Monday faculty meetings are filled with questions based on the pre-reading or TLR postholders delivering on such topics as spaced repetition and interleaving in English while lead practitioners might address vocabulary developments in maths.

To ensure quality, the middle leader and SLT link person discuss the content and delivery calendar, ensuring that TLR postholders, lead practitioners and 'AGS shining and rising stars' are actively involved in the planning and delivery of each session. So while SLT have taken a step back to develop middle leader autonomy, the next step is to begin ensuring personal development, accountability and autonomy of the next layer of leadership.

Personal development is not just about the development of our teacher pedagogy and approach; also our understanding and mindfulness of ourselves and our own health and wellbeing. The idea, appeal and importance of 'clinical supervision' was something new to me before joining Acklam Grange (which shows the rarity of this approach to personal development as this is my fifth school). Recently, our headteacher and HR department have introduced 'clinical supervision' for staff, giving opportunity to spend vital time focusing on our own needs and talking through how to fulfil them. I had my first session recently: from a leadership point of view it energised me, and has since made me more productive.



Accountability, quality assurance – and autonomy

At a recent meeting I attended, a speaker cited a study showing autonomy as the number one reason why people stay in any organisation. This makes sense, doesn't it? All human beings want to feel in control of their own destiny, and any educated being has the need to be listened to, and to see that their desires and opinions are catered for. But this clearly isn't happening in some schools. Whether it be the accountability processes, uncertain expectations, ever-changing curricula or an authoritarian approach to school leadership... teachers, in some institutions, are clearly feeling they lack autonomy. So, what are we doing at AGS to try and combat this?

One of the struggles of an accountability environment is how best to balance the need to ensure quality and lessen teacher and leadership variability while also ensuring the wellbeing, health and autonomy of all staff within a school. Successful and empowering accountability structures ultimately lead to the job getting done – everyone knows what's expected of them and how to get there safely and securely. However, accountability (or rather, the way it is implemented) often has a bad reputation for stifling creativity and limiting productivity; it can be the biggest sticking point in staff recruitment and retention. (Ask yourself this: would you like to stay in your school with the current accountability structures in place?)

We began to develop and promote middle leader autonomy primarily through the quality assurance of teaching and learning. When driving a school from 'requires improvement' to 'good' (which

is the journey we have travelled) it makes sense for the SLT team to keep a firm hold of quality assurance. While we were on this journey, SLT undertook all faculty observations and gathered every book and scheme of learning for close scrutiny.

The process at this stage of our development had to be thus. But while it ensured rigour and purpose, and lessened variability, the one thing it neglected was middle leader autonomy and development. If the middle leader is the engine room of the school – the production force that turns SLT policy into practice – then to be successful they must be equipped and healthy enough to achieve, and feel valued. Therefore, once we had received the seal of 'good' from our inspector friends, the first area we chose to develop in order to enhance the health of our middle leader engine room was the quality assurance of teaching and learning.

How can I evaluate the quality of the school's provision if I haven't evaluated the ideas, needs and passions of my colleagues?

I'm sure our QA of T&L is a very similar process to those in countless other schools around the country. But one notable difference is perhaps that we aligned the development of the new system to a middle leadership development programme. This ensured that the middle leaders not only had a say in the process, but could sign up to a programme dedicated to developing successful QA processes. Examples included: how to ensure the curriculum we envisage as leaders is happening within the classrooms? How do we lessen teacher variability across

our faculties? How do we make an action plan a live document focused on individual development areas?

How might we further improve staff wellbeing?

I think my next step is to listen to and evaluate the views of all the staff at school, ensuring every colleague is heard with a view of creating personal development profiles which align T&L developments and appraisals in a more fluid form. We have created a culture in school where staff are open and I think feel comfortable to speak openly, but this is something I certainly need to develop. How can I evaluate the quality of the school's provision if I haven't evaluated the ideas, needs and passions of my colleagues?

We must create schools that nurture and progress everyone within them, while also ensuring the best academic outcomes. During an AGS Inspire session months ago

I was asked what my moral purpose is. I know a lot of educational theory but my response without thinking was "To make sure our great teachers don't want to leave; and to stop children sticking chips up their noses!"

If we recruit, invest, train and retain great teachers, fewer and fewer children will find themselves sticking chips up their noses. And more and more will flourish, making sure towns like Middlesbrough prosper. ■



Wrestling with responsibility: a different perspective on workload

*Nicholas Robson,
Holland Park School*

Nicholas Robson, Deputy Head, Holland Park School, shows how external demands are not the crucial factor in teachers' work-life balance

I have just been introduced to the world of education on Twitter and it's not helping my work-life balance. Retiring to my bed from the slings and arrows of emotional teenagers, impenetrable accountability measures, and GCSE exam questions that even I find taxing, I just cannot resist the temptation. However heavy-eyed I might be, whatever physical craving for slumber I might have, just one thumb-flick through the wit, wisecracks and research the day has brought, I tell myself. I might even find a decent lesson idea for tomorrow...

Learning when to switch off has ever been an issue for teachers. Unlike surgeons, whose work is complete at the final stitching up, or athletes who are given professional guidance about the importance of rest, the teacher's work is never done. Much blame for this is levied at the government, at school leaders or at Ofsted. Claims are that reforms, inspection and the never-ceasing march towards higher standards are at fault and that, instead of creating better lessons, teachers are merely being required to *evidence* better lessons.

Some of these claims may well be justified, but when one high profile figure recently described marking as being 'unnecessary administration', a thoughtful debate suddenly became a farcical one. We are now swimming in guidance published by Ofsted and the DfE telling us what not to waste our time on. Ofsted's clarifications mean that they seem now to expect no documentation from the classroom teacher, only that we teach. Even the word 'marking' has been sidelined for the word feedback (which may be oral as well as written). ➤

For obvious reasons, it is less easy to summarise the actions of school leaders (which necessarily vary from school to school) but one recent report¹ suggested that over a fifth of outstanding schools have a committee devoted to managing workload. I suppose it would be facetious to ask how much time such a working group demands of its members.

Questions that challenge us

For me, whatever the external demands on teachers, it is that which is inherent in the job that causes the greatest strain. The days are long gone (if they ever existed) when one might waltz into school 10 minutes before the bell, only to skip out with the children shortly after 3 o'clock and feel the warm pleasure of a good day's work. We are confronted by a host of questions that challenge us to raise our own expectations as practitioners; questions that disrupt and disturb ready self-satisfaction. Rather than merely being contented by our own performance, we are rightly asked:

- » How much progress has been made?
- » How did we create an exciting and inspiring atmosphere?
- » What improvement in literacy and numeracy did students make?
- » In what sense was the lesson a powerful exploration of themes pertaining to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural?

No longer is disruption seen as the result of teenage disenchantment: it is the product of our poor management and relationships. No longer is the limitation of independent study an inevitable function of adolescent indolence: the fault lies with our own incapacity to inspire, motivate and challenge. There is now no such thing as poor parenting: only poor schooling – according to this worldview.

In this world, it is unsurprising that social media is awash with concern about workload. Forget paperwork; it is accountability that causes us consternation. Now the institutions that govern us have shrugged their shoulders and shown us their spotless hands, we have to acknowledge a truth we have probably known all this time: it is attitude and expectation (not an endless list of tasks or unnecessary administration) that prompts our professional travail.

Yet we would be misguided to yearn for anything different. To wish for a different world is to regress into a world of excuses, where underperformance bred by disadvantage goes unchallenged. And not

only do we need to be careful what we wish for, we should also be cautious about the tone of our demands. The recruitment crisis is well documented – fewer and fewer graduates are deciding on a career in teaching. The disquiet and din of our outcry has done little to ease this situation. That is not to say we should be unrealistic, but we should be fearful of doom-mongering and the effects of ill temper on the reputation of the profession.

Harmful headlines

'Demanding workload driving young teachers out of profession'

The Guardian, 14 April 2017

Workload 'pushing young teachers to the brink'

BBC News, 14 April 2017

More than 97 percent of teachers say teaching is bad for their health

TES, 13 April 2017

An effective response to the matter of workload, therefore, needs both to understand that workload is perceived to have significance for many in the profession and also to refuse to compromise on standards and delivery for young people.

First, since no whole-school or nation-wide solution will sink the workload warship, resolution must begin with the individual. Ross Morrison McGill's incisive blog on work-life balance published just a few weeks ago² claims emphatically that work-life balance is too important to be left in the hands of Ofsted or school leaders. I wholeheartedly agree. It has to be up to individuals to organise their workloads. Other than the burden of scheduled teaching, how marking and planning fits in with one's personal commitments should be a matter of individual preference and convenience. That is about maturity and trust. So long as quality is delivered, it should

Individual action, not institutional initiative

At Holland Park, there is a single staff meeting scheduled a week (twilight staff development); teachers are free to organise their planning and marking as suits their commitments.

Those new to teaching, often still in flat-shares in inner London, work at school and leave work at work; those with other commitments are free to dispense their duties straight after school, only to pick up those remaining tasks later in the evening or at weekends.

A principle of data-entry deadlines at 9am suits early risers, night owls and those who prefer to leave room for daylight before the due date.

not matter where or when the requisite non-contact investment is made.

Second, efficacy, not longevity, is the key to quality investment in time. Long hours of after-school teaching are unnecessary if high quality teaching is delivered during the school day. Homework clubs that not only ensure completed tasks, but also develop in students the skills to learn at the local library, have a fertile and long-lasting impact beyond the hours of the contact time. Michaela School's Katie Ashford is right when she claims longer hours are not always the way to express our devotion to students³. Building in at least a little sacrosanct time where school is closed during the holidays allows students and teachers to refresh and revitalise the spirits. Locking school, switching off emails and preventing work at key points during the year assist us all with our organisation – and force even the most obsessive of us to at least obsess elsewhere.

Efficacy, not longevity, is the key to quality investment in time

Third, we need a better perspective on accountability. The philosopher Bernard Williams entirely reshaped the widest understanding of responsibility in 1981 when he wrote his classic article *Moral Luck*. He gives the example of a truck driver behind the wheel fatally running over a child who walks out into the road at the last minute and without warning. So many people, Williams claims, would wish to say to the driver: it's not your fault. Yet, despite his comforters' pleas, the truck driver is unable to escape his inner

torment. Quite right, says Williams. It was his hand at the wheel; his role in the death is different from the onlookers who merely witnessed the tragedy. Williams claims that the truck driver is not to blame, but also that he does not entirely escape regret and even responsibility.

This distinction between blame and responsibility is an important one for us as we begin to reflect on our attitude to accountability. Teachers have been held accountable for a great deal: parenting, engagement, behaviour, social, medical, educational needs – even radicalisation.

Not blame, but responsibility

Of course, to demand of ourselves the impossible and blame ourselves when the impossible is not realised is likely to end only in damage to our professional self-worth and a connecting decline in our performance.

And yet, it is true to say that the best of teachers really do counteract deeply entrenched social barriers, they really do open up young minds to tolerance, justice and the wonder and beauty of the world in which we live. It is to this standard that we should strive. There will be many occasions on which we fall short of the highest standards; but on these occasions self-flagellation and censure are unlikely to yield better future performance. Instead, regret, reflection and resolve – acknowledging the challenge of the situation and the fact that different actions from us might have resulted in a different outcome – takes seriously the weight of our professional responsibility and fosters a culture of self-betterment.

This is a more nuanced perspective of accountability. It recognises that even in challenging circumstances where blame cannot be apportioned, there is still overriding responsibility for the outcomes that have been reached. This approach is about taking seriously the power and potential of our roles as teachers, and about continuing to burn with the fervour of ambition for young people's success. It is about being able to switch off from fears and failures that haunt us late into the evening and inhibit our creativity and confidence. And it is about the belief and optimism that makes teaching the exciting and dynamic profession we all enjoy. ■

- 1 Teacher Workload Survey 2016: Research Brief February 2017 goo.gl/9Hc3F1
- 2 goo.gl/dasPtV
- 3 goo.gl/ao9s6E

Employer engagement: meeting the challenges

*Nick Chambers,
Education & Employers*

British teachers' perspectives on the comparative efficacy of different work-related learning activities provide the basis for a useful toolkit, writes Nick Chambers, CEO, Education and Employers charity

Over the last generation, various UK governments have in different ways encouraged, enabled, even required state secondary schools and colleges to adopt teaching approaches and provide careers activities to better prepare young people for working life. These examples of work-related learning, ranging from the technical and vocational education initiative of the 1980s to the statutory requirement for work-related learning at key stage 4 and the 'inspiration agenda'

of the current decade have become mainstream elements of British educational experiences.

However, the type of activities promoted through such initiatives have been inconsistently evaluated with relatively little distinction, in research or policy, between activities and how young people can be expected to respond to them.

A 2016 study, 'Towards an employer engagement toolkit: British teachers' perspectives on the comparative efficacy of work-related learning activities' by Education and Employers' Director of Research Anthony Mann and colleagues explores professional perceptions of the comparative value



of different employer engagement activities. It explicitly investigates what schools staff think about the impact of those activities in terms of employability skills, attainment and student progression. The study is based on two premises: that different activities might be used by schools staff to achieve different goals for young people; and that students can be expected to respond to different activities in differing ways.

What 390 secondary school staff think about work-related activities

The study explores the perceptions of 390 secondary school staff about the value of 16 different work-related activities that students commonly undertake between ages 12-16. The aim was to enable more effective use of such resources through intervention toolkits. The report asks whether it is possible to distinguish between activities which aim to improve students' ultimate success in education and the labour market, and so enable a more strategic approach to their use in schools and colleges.

The methodology used to explore these questions is unusual. It effectively 'crowd sources' the informed perspectives of hundreds of secondary school staff. The study presented respondents with a list of 16 common activities and secured their views about their comparative value in achieving 10 different academic, employment or aspirational objectives. It also distinguished between five different types of young people: low achievers, borderline achievers, high achievers, learners with special educational needs, and disengaged and/or unmotivated learners.

Respondents were asked for their perspectives only on activities which took place within their schools. The full sample group comprised staff members from UK education institutions including non-selective state schools, selective state schools and independent schools. In all, 390 individuals with experience of working with students at key stages 3 and 4 completed the survey.

The study uncovers a widespread belief that many of the activities are effective in achieving different outcomes and supporting different types of student. All 16 activities were on at least one occasion listed among the five most effective activities; 12 of the 16 activities were endorsed as being an effective means of achieving different outcomes, on one or more occasion, by 70% or more of respondents with experience of the intervention.

The broad findings included:

- » Effective provision involves use of a variety of different activities – with an emphasis on real-world experience (direct engagement with workplaces and employee volunteers).
- » Different groups of young people are felt to respond in different ways to different types of activity.
- » Different outcomes are better achieved by use of different activities.

Looking specifically at the activities most valued by informed practitioners in securing different outcomes, responses can be clustered around three key themes: sustained engagement with working in the world; career exploration and recruitment skills; enterprise competitions.

For example, enterprise competitions were felt to be especially effective in developing problem-solving and communication skills while student volunteering was valued most highly in developing self-management.

Turning to different student types, the study finds that different types of young people are felt to respond in different ways to different types of activity, with responses clustering around two themes. Sustained engagement with the working world was perceived to be more effective for lower ability students; while career exploration and recruitment skills worked better for higher achievers.

Advice for practice

The typical young British adult leaves schooling having engaged with employers on fewer than two occasions over their secondary education (Kashefpakdel et al. 2016). The evidence presented in the paper suggests that this is not enough. To a strong degree, teaching staff believe that participation in most of the activities discussed in the study helps young people achieve important outcomes within and after schooling. The activities can be clustered within three primary thematic groups – see below.

Sustained engagement with the working world

Activities*	Felt to be particularly effective in outcomes:	Felt to be particularly effective for students:
Work experience	Self-management	Low achievers
Community volunteering	Accessing part-time work	Borderline achievers
Mentoring		Disengaged learners



Career exploration

Activities	Felt to be particularly effective in outcomes:	Felt to be particularly effective for students:
Career talks Career fairs Workplace visits Job shadowing Mock interviews Psychometric testing	Understanding of the world of work Career thinking Decision making	High achievers

Enterprise activities

Activities	Felt to be particularly effective in outcomes:	Felt to be particularly effective for students:
One-day enterprise competitions Long-form enterprise competitions Learner enterprises	Problem-solving Team working skills	Any

* Activities in **bold**, which routinely give students first-hand encounters with workplaces and working professionals, are most highly regarded by schools' staff

In addition, a fourth category is of activities relating to teaching and learning (including curriculum teaching, learning resources, financial education and WRL qualifications). These were highly valued individually, but not in a clear pattern in relation to particular outcomes or groups of students.

Teachers collectively argue in this survey that students should not be treated as a homogeneous group. Their differences – notably by achievement level – mean they respond to different activities in different ways.

Work experience presents a specific challenge to schools, policymakers and researchers: of all 16 activities studied, it is by far the most highly regarded. Schools' staff see it as one of the five most effective activities across 12 of 15 categories of outcome and student type. Indeed, on nine occasions it appears in the top three and on five occasions is endorsed by more than 70% of respondents with first-hand experience of observing its impact on young people.

Such positive perceptions tally with other published data (Mann 2012; QCA 2004) from both teaching staff

and students. Quantified analysis, however, has only in a very limited way been able to identify positive impacts from participation in work experience in terms of either educational or economic outcomes (Hughes et al. 2016).

Work experience decline

With student participation in work experience at key stage 4 declining rapidly since 2010 (Archer and Moote 2016; QCA 2004) important questions are raised about what may have been lost by young people and the extent to which related, less demanding activities have been able to take its place.

With regard to the design and planning of careers provision, the consensus of the 390 surveyed British teaching staff suggests:

- 1: Students should take part in a variety of different work-related activities.
- 2: Priority should be given to activities involving real-world workplace experience.
- 3: As a minimum, students should take part in at least one activity over KS3-4 in each of the following:
 - » sustained engagement with the working world, including work experience, community volunteering and mentoring
 - » development of career exploration and recruitment skills, including career talks, career fairs, workplace visits, mock interviews and job shadowing
 - » skill development through enterprise activities such as one-day and longer enterprise competitions.
- 4: The needs of higher and lower achievers should be considered separately. Students should not be treated as a homogeneous group. They are different – notably by achievement level – and can be expected respond to different activities in different ways. ■

The full publication can be downloaded free:
goo.gl/jsEhSc

More information about the study:
jordan.rehill@educationandemployers.org

For a free library of research resources related to employer engagement in education:
goo.gl/hWehsC

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System leadership and globalisation: two of the ways SSAT is fulfilling its 30-year mission

*David Hopkins,
Institute of Education*

David Hopkins, Professor of Educational Leadership, University of Bolton, and Professor Emeritus, Institute of Education, University College London and University of Nottingham, reflects on his own experience of SSAT and its forebears

It seems like only the other day that the City Technology Colleges Trust, later to become SSAT, was founded and unleashed such energy, innovation and leadership across our school system. The transformation of our secondary schools in the nineties and subsequently is a direct result of the vision of Lord Baker and Sir Cyril Taylor in the late eighties. It is fitting that we are now celebrating their signal contribution to the reform of our education system some 30 years on.

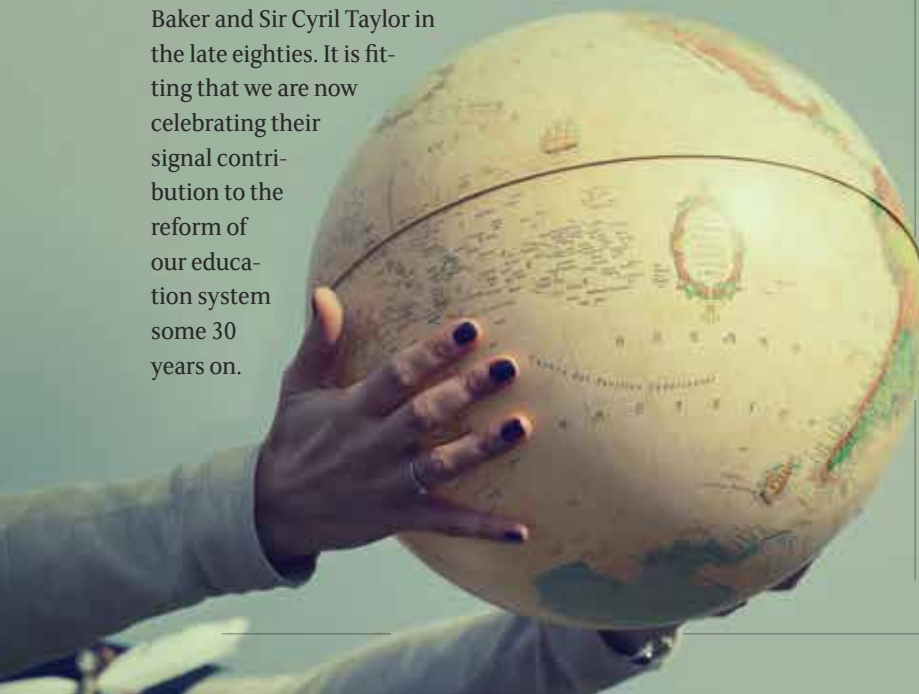
In offering this personal reflection I would like to reflect on two initiatives with which I was personally involved as a consequence of my involvement with SSAT and its international offspring – iNet.

The first was the emergence of **system leadership**. In the early 2000s, as director of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU), I was attempting to develop policies that continued to raise standards but within a systemic rather than a top-down context. I was heavily influenced by the example of schools in the SSAT network that were leading the system, from

whence came the term ‘system leadership’ and its implications.

John Dunford (now Sir John), then the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, in an address to the SSAT national conference captured the essence of the argument like this: ‘The greatest challenge on our leadership journey is how we can bring about system improvement. How can we contribute to the raising of standards, not only in our own school or college, but in others too? What types of leaders are needed for this task? What style of leadership is required if we are to achieve the sea-change in performance that is demanded of us?’

Because system leadership was an ‘emerging practice’, there was the danger of confusing the idea with more conventional forms of activity. So, while most school leaders were involved in some form of collaborative activity or networking, this was categorically not the same as system leadership. System leadership, I began to learn from SSAT, implies a significantly more substantive engagement with other schools in order to bring about system transformation. Specifically, it is a form of leadership where a



headteacher or principal is willing and able to shoulder wider system roles and in so doing is almost as concerned with the success and attainment of students in other schools as they are with their own. These leaders, through their involvement with SSAT, began to understand that in order to change the larger system one has to engage with it in a meaningful way.

The second reflection relates to SSAT's commitment to the **globalisation of school and system reform**. I was fortunate enough to become the inaugural HSBC-iNet Chair of International Leadership based at the Institute of Education, London. In a nutshell, iNet's mission was to spread these system leadership practices globally. Its influence, informed by SSAT's pioneering work, spread rapidly. Through iNet, SSAT promoted a global policy agenda focused on a small number of key drivers such as the personalisation of learning, increasing the quality of teaching, using the pressure for accountability more formatively, utilising system leadership and placing increased emphasis on the role of the school (and networks of schools) in making the journey towards transformation.

Under the banner of *Transformation and innovation - system leaders in the global age*, iNet sponsored a workshop for 100 outstanding principals, known as the G100, in Beijing in October 2006. At the end of the workshop the principals collectively co-authored a global communiqué that held the following truths as being self-evident:

1. Vast inequality exists within schools, between schools, and between school systems in the world. Such inequality is morally unacceptable and practically detrimental to the common good of all hu-

man beings. While social, economic and political factors are the primary causes, effective school leadership and classroom practices can significantly ameliorate their negative effects on student achievement.

2. Global economic integration and the advancement of information, communication, and transportation technologies have shrunk the world into an interdependent and interconnected village. Harmony in this village is vital to the continuation and further prosperity of the human race.

3. Children are differently talented and schools should strive to cultivate different talents and help all children realise their potentials. Our privileged task as educators is to help them expand their horizons; their understanding of what it is possible for them to achieve.

4. School leaders are at the forefront of educational innovation and transformation. They can have a powerful impact on the quality of education their schools provide for their students. Further, working together they can transform their systems.

5. Education systems and schools in different cultures have developed effective practices and policies. These practices and policies may be unique to their own contexts, but are invaluable sources of inspiration for others. Leadership has the ability to mould these drivers for transformation to the context of different schools and school systems.

The G100 concluded its communiqué by stating the aim: 'Ensure

that moral purpose is at the fore of all educational debates with our parents, our students, our teachers, our partners, our policy makers and our wider community.

'We define moral purpose as a compelling drive to do right for and by students, serving them through professional behaviours that "raise the bar and narrow the gap"; and through so doing demonstrate an intent to learn with and from each other as we live together in this world.'

This then is some of the legacy that Lord Baker and Sir Cyril have bequeathed our educational system, both nationally and internationally. That final quote from the G100 about moral purpose embraces for me the essence of what they were striving for. I hope that this reflection captures a little of what they have achieved for our systems and indicates my personal gratitude to them. It would be inappropriate to end however without also acknowledging the contribution of Dame Mary Richardson, whose vision for schooling found a global reach in her inspired leadership of the HSBC Education Trust; Elizabeth Reid chief executive during my association with the Trust; and Sue Williamson, then the SSAT director responsible for iNet, now chief executive of SSAT. They all helped translate Lord Baker's and Sir Cyril's legacy into a living and transformational reality. ■

A booklet with many more 30th anniversary greetings and thoughts on SSAT's contribution and values, and a timeline of its 30-year history to date, is being sent out to members with each copy of this SSAT Journal.



FLAC: a shared language for teaching

Annie Eagle,
The Romsey School

Annie Eagle, Deputy Headteacher, gives the detail on how The Romsey School uses learning walks as part of its approach to both student and teacher development

The Romsey School ethos revolves very much around the wellbeing and development of the whole child in addition to their achieving the best outcomes possible. The school can be described as a true comprehensive; despite being in Romsey (an area of relative social and economic advantage), it draws around 40% of its cohort from less affluent and more culturally diverse Southampton. Our students collectively speak over 40 languages. We have an autistic unit for statemented children on site, and the support enables most of these students to be included within the main school.



On appointment as deputy head in January 2014, one of my remits was to evolve the school's own language for learning, pursuing metacognition as one of its key aspects. Two years on, our language for learning includes seven habits of mind (creativity, collaboration, self-management, reflection, curiosity, empathy and resilience).

We have now shifted our attention to a shared language for teaching. Our vision is to develop a culture that constantly reflects on and improves practice; very much along the lines of 'teaching like pros' (Hargreaves and Fullan).

The intervention

As a school we have developed FLAC, a shared language showing the essentials for great teaching. FLAC encompasses the four broad branches of pedagogy which have a strong evidence base of significant impact on learning experiences and outcomes:

Focused learning

Students being deeply engaged in learning which is meaningful and challenging.

Learning to learn

Overtly teaching students how to learn using the language for learning in our lessons (see our habits of mind).

Assessment for learning

Students understanding 'what great looks like' in each subject. This includes high quality teacher questioning and excellent feedback.

Challenge

Each student is stretched above their starting point, using higher order thinking skills.

This FLAC approach has become the broad bedrock of our clear expectations for teaching at Romsey School. As we are aiming to professionalise the profession, we do not tell colleagues how to meet these success criteria (we want to avoid the micro-management approach); we leave that open to staff creativity. Instead we use FLAC as a reflection tool for further improvement.

We also use this language for teaching:

- » when planning lessons
- » as a success criterion for learning walks (details below)
- » as a basis from which to set objectives for school and department action plans
- » within the planning for professional learning and performance management of individual colleagues.

Learning walks involve informal classroom visits of around 10 minutes each. These are drop-in, so teachers are not given notice. While there, we show positive behaviours by smiling, joining in with the learning and not writing notes or using clipboards.

It is important not to over-emphasise the paperwork – it is the post-lesson discussion that offers the most value for reflection and improvement

Learning walks must always find more positives than areas for development. During the visit, we listen to the teacher, talk to students and consider FLAC. This is then followed by a reflective chat with the colleague, during which we ask the colleague for their reflections on how they felt the lesson went. We then agree with, or develop, their reflections. We model this as a conversation where the colleague leads with their own reflections (with roughly 80% of the talk time) and we clarify further and question (with roughly 20% of the talk time). Ultimately, the outcomes of the conversations, ideally co-constructed, are three positive aspects and one practical idea which would improve the lesson.

Throughout the learning walk process, we endeavour to model our own habits of mind, while encouraging this in the visited colleague. We use the dialogue from the discussion to fill in the learning walk form and hand a copy to our colleague (if they choose, for their performance management). It is important not to over-emphasise the paperwork – it is the



post-lesson discussion that offers the most value for reflection and improvement.

Anticipated impacts of FLAC and learning walks

These new (to us) approaches have not been going long enough for thorough assessment yet. However, in an initial staff survey, 84% of teachers said that use of learning walks based on FLAC were more developmental than the previous model of observations; and had helped them to improve their teaching. Over time, these are the benefits we hope to achieve:

- » High staff morale, improved confidence and job satisfaction, as teachers' practices are respected and colleagues are involved in regular informal conversations about learning.
- » Shared understanding of the important T&L priorities/success criteria across the school, so that we are all aiming for the same thing and we know what great learning includes over time.
- » Improved practice, bought about in a developmental manner with a recognition of learning growth from the process.
- » Really clear formative and practical targets for further improvement (established preferably through self-assessment and prompting).
- » Changed expectations and ethos around classroom visits, so that colleagues enjoy them and feel that they want to accept the challenge. It is a professional entitlement to have frequent, developmental conversations about our teaching and students' learning; the main business of schools.
- » Development of our own habits of mind, so in our conversations we have better collaboration, resilience, creativity, empathy, reflection, curiosity and self-management; and these will define our culture.
- » Realignment of the role of the middle leader as the lead professional in the faculty.
- » Over time, distribution of the leadership of learning throughout the school, to both formal and informal leaders (those colleagues and students who lead through choice rather than role).

ROMSEY'S LANGUAGE FOR TEACHING – AN AIDE MEMOIRE

This is a reflective tool. Please be reminded that there is no 'correct' way to teach these essentials, so please focus on the shaded priorities, the other sections are to stimulate ideas. *[In each case the teacher competing the form has the option of noting Yes, Somewhat or No for each category]*

Focused learning

Pupils are focused and proactively engaged in their learning. They are developing a 'thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.'

This is because...

- » The learning is challenging enough to engage pupils
- » Learning is planned to be engaging and meaningful and the content to relate to the pupils' lives
- » Pupils have clear guidance on acceptable behaviours. The 'Level Zero of the Stepped Approach to Behaviour' is used where needed and there are few signs of Low Level Disruption
- » Pupils are taught about 'on task' talking and how to collaborate. Thus the pupils are highly focused and accountable for their learning during collaborative tasks
- » Pupils know that they are held to account for their learning every lesson, whether it's in group work or individual learning activities

Assessment for learning

My pupils know what 'great' learning looks like in this subject. They know where they are performing in relation to this, and they know their next steps for improvement

This is because ...

- » The teacher has had conversations with the learners about their current attainment, what their target grades are and the steps they need to take in order to make that progress
- » There are specific written targets in feedback (books or files) which outline the 'next steps' for improvement
- » Pupils have been given a chance to reflect on and respond to written feedback and to make improvements
- » Differentiated learning objectives are employed to help pupils to know what they are aiming for in this subject. These learning objectives are tied to the success criteria for the lesson such as 'what examiners look for'
- » The learners understand the lesson objectives
- » The teacher asks a large number of questions and I check the responses of all students
- » Questioning is effective and includes higher level questioning ('Why... What if... How could... How did that make you feel... What are the disadvantages of...' questions etc.- See Bloom's taxonomy)
- » Questioning is effective and involves as many pupils in feedback as possible
- » AfL techniques are employed to identify misconceptions and 'reflect in practice' during the lesson

- » The teacher intervenes (such as to give more scaffolding) when insufficient progress is being made
- » The teacher sometimes gives tests or generates answers, even before pupils have been taught the material
- » Self and peer assessment are used when appropriate

Learning to learn

Pupils are developing the Romsey School 'Habits of Mind' in the majority of my lessons; creativity, self-management, curiosity, collaboration, resilience, empathy reflection

This is because ...

- » Learning is planned to incorporate some of the 'Habits of Mind' where possible
- » The 'Habits of Mind' are included when explaining Learning Objectives. Pupils know 'what they are learning' (subject content) and 'how they are learning it' (Habits of Mind)
- » The teacher refers to the 'Habits of Mind' when giving feedback to raise the pupils' awareness of their learning
- » The teacher shows very strong quality explanations
- » There is a balance between teacher talk and pupils being actively involved in learning
- » The teacher avoids giving the learners the answers whenever possible to develop their self-management and resilience
- » Pupils are given time for learners to talk/collaborate. Strategies such as, 'Think Pair Share', 'Learning Partners' 'Sage and Scribe', 'Add, Build, Challenge' 'Hot Seating' 'Speed Dating' etc.
- » Students are challenged to identify the reason why a learning activity is taking place in the lesson to develop their reflection and self-management

Challenge

All my pupils are stretched above their starting point and they use higher order thinking skills in their learning

This is because ...

- » Pupils' progress data (starting points and their current progress) are known intimately
- » The teacher is aware of their students in specific cohorts (PP, High Attaining, SEN, EAL, CiC etc.)
- » Each learning activity is planned to stretch pupils above their current progress/starting points
- » Differentiation is included to challenge and engage all learners through appropriate content, materials, questioning, grouping, assessments, targets, choices etc.
- » The teacher has a profound knowledge of the content that they teach and uses this to stretch pupils to think at high levels
- » The pupils are thinking at the top of Bloom's taxonomy of learning
- » Pupils know what a great learner looks like in this subject. The teacher challenges pupils to think like [Geographers, Historians, Linguists, Scientists, Mathematicians etc.] so thinking in patterns and developing 'mastery'
- » Other ■



Performance development for high trust and high professional responsibility

*Janice Allen,
Falinge Park High School*

It's not performance management, it's performance development. The standard approaches to performance management and PRP are not the answer, writes Janice Allen, headteacher, Falinge Park High School

Taking on my first headship in 2015 I faced a significant challenge. From my experiences as a deputy head in two schools I knew the best way to improve outcomes for pupils was to focus on the professional development of all my staff and to have one simple objective: to create a compelling learning experience.

The way that I hoped to achieve this was through believing in people and creating positive relationships. Between securing the position in February 2015 and taking up the post in September, I intensively studied the research and evidence on leadership and was encouraged to be brave in my approach, particularly through the work of Professor Rob Coe on what makes effective teaching and John Tomsett's writing in his books and blogs. I knew from spending time listening to staff on my weekly visits to the school that the focus of my first year had to be on leadership and learning; and that I had to make the most of the honeymoon period that a new headship brings. My challenge however in this professional culture I was hoping to create was the statutory deadline that was looming for October 31: performance management and performance related pay.

PRP: fair? Evidence based?

I had long struggled with the concept of performance related pay, particularly through my work as a deputy in an inner-city school with over 50 languages

spoken by pupils. I had come to the conclusion that using data to measure their success and to set performance management targets was significantly flawed. The progress pupils with English as an additional language make is much more nuanced than a flight path would suggest. It should take into account their levels of fluency; the progress of pupils whose reading ages were below age nine (many of my pupils had needed much finer interrogation than we as a team could apply at that time); we would be setting data targets when we had no idea what A8 and P8 would look like. It didn't seem fair or based in evidence to set a crude data measure as part of the performance management targets.

We had also decided to focus on the long term and develop our practice at key stage 3 rather than just going for the quick win with year 11. I received a number of odd looks over the course of the year when I said we wouldn't be doing Saturday sessions – or 'boot camps' as they'd been called – and that if we focused on KS3 then KS4 would in due course look after itself. It would have been disingenuous therefore for me to say these things and then set a PM data target for a group in year 11 based on their GCSE outcomes.

I was also struggling with the performance management observation cycle I had been used to and had indeed driven in some other schools. I wanted the teachers at Falinge to be consistently good and consistently looking to create compelling learning – not just three times a year. However, this deadline was looming and I had to make some decisions with my team which would set the tone for the way we were going to develop the school.



Give it time to build trust

The first thing we did was agree to set some thinking time aside. This wasn't a morning, this would be a period of one term before we made any decisions. We agreed with the staff and their union representatives that we would complete the review of targets based on the information we had in school as we were statutorily required to do, but we wouldn't set any targets until the following January. We would make sure that any targets we then set would be limited to the period January–October 2016.

This was a risky decision in the sense that we needed to be able to hold our own if Ofsted came knocking early. But we were determined as a team that we wouldn't do anything just for Ofsted. This approach to performance management could actually be the catalyst for teachers to build their trust in the leadership team of the school; and for them to invest personally and professionally in their future development.

The breathing space we created developed a dialogue across the school about what compelling learning looked like and how we could achieve a compelling learning experience. We built the learning hubs to explore professional learning from each other and research into effective teaching. And we held true to our promise that when we reviewed learning, we would provide feedback through an exploration of strengths rather

than a deficit model. It really didn't matter if something went wrong; what mattered was the conversation that happened afterwards. It's easy to be critical when we observe a lesson; but it can be destructive when that's all we hear. We needed to find a way to improve teaching from the bottom up rather than through a tick box. And I needed to make sure our performance management complemented our approach.

It possibly all sounds a little cuddly so far doesn't it, and as if that first term was just a lot of chat and pats on backs? I'd argue against that presumption (and I've had to argue the value of our performance management many times). What we were doing was creating a culture of high trust and high professional responsibility. There was an expectation that everybody should fulfil their bread and butter of the job: plan, teach and mark. There was an expectation that you should look to developing your teaching style in response to the professional development culture and the responsiveness of the pupils. While we didn't have a set way of teaching or marking (the high trust) we did expect that we would always be aiming for compelling learning (the high professional responsibility).

It made sense therefore that when we came to set our performance management targets they were focused on learning. Each member of staff, including senior staff, had to identify what they would do for three broad areas – four for those members of staff with a TLR or on UPS:

1. Create a compelling learning experience: this could be through engagement with the learning hubs, contributing to teaching and learning briefings, observing others teach and sharing their thoughts.

It really didn't matter if something went wrong; what mattered was the conversation that happened afterwards

2. Fulfil the teacher standards: identifying a specific area for development.
3. Contribute to effective assessment research and practice.
4. On Leadership or UPS: a defined role from an area of our school development plan – for example, building cultural capital with a targeted group of pupils; leading maths sessions for high attainers; pupil premium at key stage 3.

This system still has teeth

The teeth of the system (which we are always having to defend) comes from the interim reviews, the work of the hubs, the faculty reviews and the professional conversations we have built in along the way.

The first year worked well and there started to be a sense that, actually, performance management was worth doing because it related to your purpose as a teacher. In terms of contributing to the objective of creating compelling learning, we were demonstrating we were learning and refining through staff feedback. It wasn't perfect, though, and we still had staff in July who went into a panic for their interim review when they realised it was actually harder than just producing a good lesson three times a year and producing a nicely coloured graph of their children's progress or print something from SISRA analytics.

The strengths of our practice at Falinge were recognised in an audit by the Teacher Development Trust in the June of that year. The auditor commented:

'Falinge Park High School have created a developmental and supportive culture for staff, where professional learning is prioritised. It was evident on the day that there is genuine enthusiasm amongst staff for the new compelling learning vision and the collaborative learning culture, and there is definitely buy-in. The changes to performance management are hugely developmental and links well with CPD.... It was ... genuinely exciting to see such passion for teaching and learning and CPD.'



We've refined the process for this year to create a compelling learning experience through undertaking two cycles of lesson study where staff use the work in the learning hubs to establish their targets. We've also used individual pen portraits of teaching to support the progress over the year. There is a synergy between what we are developing in CPD, the practice in the classroom and how this contributes to performance management – or performance development as we call it. If it doesn't have an impact on compelling learning, we don't do it.

Pupil outcomes

So, what are the outcomes for pupils? Quite clearly removing data targets and formal lesson observations did not have a detrimental effect on teachers' motivation to get good outcomes for pupils. Oddly enough they didn't suddenly become lazy and stop trying, they didn't become worse at teaching – in 2016 we achieved a positive P8, our disadvantaged pupils achieved better than 'national others' in English and maths, and for the first time we were in line with national average for English and maths.

Of course, our good set of results could be changed this year as we all blindly go into the examinations not knowing where any of us will land. But if we don't do as well this year, we're not going to knee jerk and change our approach when there are clear improvements in teaching and learning at key stage 3 and staff morale is strong. Sometimes it needs a little courage and belief.

Data has to come in somewhere, though, and luckily we do have a member of staff with a list of long data targets based on meaningless information that are set externally. Yes, that's me. And, naturally, the reason I get out of bed in the morning is because I am driven by my data targets to do well. Do I use them all the time, are they useful, do they make me become a better leader? Well, what do you think? ■



Destinations: the new frontier for measuring school performance – and how to make your data work for you

Alex Kelly,
Unifrog

In most schools, in parallel with the joy and agony of results days someone is recording students' destinations. This process can get ridiculous. I've witnessed a head of year trying to catch a year 13 who'd scaled a fence to avoid returning his destinations slip.

In my view the big problem with destinations is that after schools

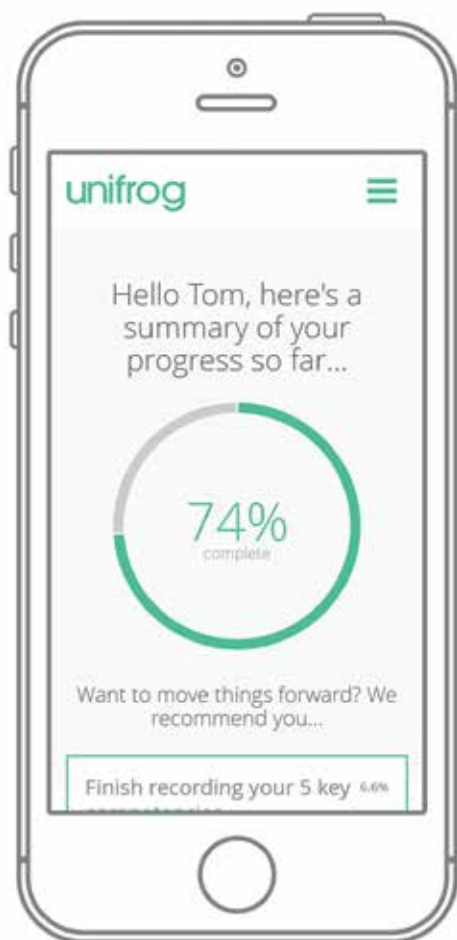
submit their data to the local authority, they wait two and a half years before they get back – very summarised – information. It is too old and too high level to be useful for school management.

At Unifrog we have developed a new tool to help schools capture and analyse their students' destinations. It has four key elements:

1. Collection

We've spent most of our development time making students' intentions (where they think they want to go), and also their destinations (where they actually go) blissfully easy for you to record. Students and teachers can enter the necessary information in a few seconds in a lovely mobile optimised interface.





2. Analysis

How do you know whether a particular destination is 'good' for a particular student? This is always going to be subjective, but to give insight we've created a 'Destinations Value Add' score to tell you how impressive each student's destination is compared to all the other students with the same results and destination.

And to allow you to do more granular analysis we have integrated students' destinations information with their characteristics (gender, pupil premium, EAL, etc), and built a powerful management dashboard.

3. Actual requirements

Noticed a disconnect between published entry requirements and what students actually get

in with? The tool records every student's actual qualifications, subjects and grades at the point of them leaving school, and the exact programme they are entering, whatever and wherever it is in the world. This means that when your students use Unifrog to compare any programme, they can see the academic profiles of students who have previously progressed into this programme.

4. Alumni

The tool securely stores alumnis' contact details, and you can continue to update students' destinations after they have left you. The database is also easily searchable so you can quickly contact exactly the type of ex-students you want to get in touch with. ■

Our new tool aims to make your destinations data work for you. If you are interested in benefiting from it please get in touch now – www.unifrog.org/contact.

The journey to becoming a multi-academy trust

*Anne Campbell,
Parkside Federation*

That journey can be long and tortuous – but worth it, as Anne Campbell, Chair, Parkside Federation Academies MAT Board, explains

On becoming a school governor again in the autumn of 2012 after many years absence, I felt a sense of elation and excitement. What is more, I had been appointed as a community governor to a secondary school (now a federation) with which I had many connections. My early career as a teacher saw service there; my three children attended the school; I had four grandchildren at the school and I had had various contacts with the principal, staff and many of the parents over the years.

Of course, a great deal had changed since I was last involved. The school had adopted foundation sta-

tus in 2004 and a foundation trust had been set up, which owned the land and buildings. The federation with a nearby secondary school was completed in 2005. A sixth form had been added to the school in 2011 and both schools had converted to academy status in 2011. The foundation trust had also been awarded the contract to construct and operate a new secondary school due to open in 2015. All the schools were within walking and cycling distance of each other, which allowed and encouraged common administration systems and sharing of resources and



common timetabling. By these means, the schools could be much more efficient than they would have been as small stand-alone secondary schools.

My first impressions were that not much had changed in management since the conversion to academy status. The academies were still organised very much as a federation, with middle leadership spanning both schools, and an executive principal who oversaw both. A new headteacher had recently been appointed at one of the academies, though lines of accountability were not clear. The governing body had not been reformed on academy conversion, and comprised four foundation governors, seven parent governors, four staff governors, four community governors and an executive principal. The size of the governing body made it difficult to reach meaningful decisions. As a result an executive group, formed of the chair of governors, the committee chairs and executive principal, was taking some of the important decisions between meetings. This had led to resentment from governors excluded from this inner body, which exacerbated the divisions that had arisen during the course of conversion to academy status.

In the summer of 2012 both schools had experienced a drop in GCSE examination results, which led, in early 2013, to Ofsted inspections regrading one school from outstanding to good and grading the other in the new category of 'requires improvement'.

Shortly after these inspections, I was elected as chair of governors. I had previously been a non-executive director on the board of a commercial technology company, and I had set up not-for-profit and charitable companies. My previous position had been a seven-year stint as chair of an NHS foundation trust. In my experience, governance is much better developed in the NHS than in the education sector: I could see that there were huge gaps and that governance was not effective for the academies. In those early days it was difficult to know where to start.

Persuading that change was needed

The first step was convincing both governors and staff that change was necessary. I attended senior leadership team meetings to discuss the changing role of governance, while at the same time trying to repair relationships that had broken down and were adding to the lack of functional governance. Joint training sessions between governors and the senior leadership team did much to improve understanding of respective roles.

The basic operation of governance needed improving – clerking was inefficient, resulting in late papers being tabled at meetings. This ultimately led to the appointment of a full-time, qualified clerk who has just been upgraded to governance manager. Governor behaviour needed to be tackled too and the introduction of a code of conduct made expectations much clearer.

In order to provide a greater impetus for change, however, I felt we needed an external input.

At the time reviews of governance were not as established as they are now, but we were able to secure two consultants, both trained Ofsted inspectors, to carry out a review of governance and leadership of the academies. Their report recommended significant changes in the structure of both staffing and governance to move the organisation from a federation to a multi-academy trust.

A small working party was set up to look at the recommendations and the best way of implementing them. Essentially, we needed to make much clearer the respective roles of the trust and that of the individual academies, and so we proposed the creation of a trust board. Through this we could carry out the statutory and legal functions while supporting and developing our academies and local governing bodies, which could work on school improvement and act as a critical friend to the headteacher.

The recommendations of the working group, presented to a meeting of the full governing body, met with a very mixed response. There was no majority in favour of the necessary changes, and many of the old tensions resurfaced. Parent governors in particular were worried about being side-lined and did not wish to relinquish their status as directors and trustees. It meant we had to return to the drawing board and redesign the representation of the academies on the MAT board.

At the second attempt the vote in favour was unanimous – but this was because the opponents, still unpersuaded, absented themselves from the decision making meeting. There was clearly some work still to do.

Leadership was also restructured, to make the academies more autonomous while still using core administration services and common systems for monitoring student progress. Each academy now benefited from its own headteacher and senior and middle management, although there was always plenty of opportunity



to share good practice and collaborate to achieve the best results. The executive principal became the chief executive officer, to emphasise his role as a business/education manager rather than a principal. An executive board was formed, which comprised headteachers and senior trust staff, including the business and finance director of the MAT. It makes decisions on the strategies for effective implementation of MAT policy.

Clarifying accountability

It became clear that we had not fully defined the roles of local governing bodies, and this led to confusion among the headteachers about their accountability. This was clarified by making the CEO accountable to the MAT board and giving him line management responsibilities for the headteachers. Local governing bodies have delegated responsibilities to improve their academies, which they do by challenging and supporting the head. They also participate in the CEO's appraisal of the head's performance and advise on performance related pay. However, it is now clear that headteachers are accountable to the CEO and he is advised (but not dictated to) by the local governors.

The federation governing body had consisted of many people with expertise, some of whom had been governors for a long time. All of them wanted what was

best for the academies though they had very different views on how best to achieve it, so there was little unanimity about the strategic direction. On the retirement of two or three of the more long-standing governors, I found some great people with business expertise and persuaded them to apply to become governors. One of them in particular, with expertise as a financial director of a major company and later CEO of one of their subsidiaries, has been extremely useful. His skill-set has been invaluable in guiding and helping to lead the trust through to its current position. We were able to inject some new blood and new skills, and at the same time benefited from the experience and knowledge of our existing governors.

The need to persuade some of our more reluctant governors that this was the best way forward for the trust led to some compromises that were ultimately judged to be unwise. As we had only two local governing bodies, we invited each of them to nominate one of their members to become a director. We later modified that to specify that nomination should be by the chair of the LGB; we found that improved the communications between the different levels of governance. We also made the headteachers of the academies directors. Al-



though the directors of the MAT made efforts to prioritise the business of the MAT over their own academies, we struggled to get the focus we needed. The headteachers in particular both wanted and needed to prioritise their time to improving their own academies, and did not have the capacity to fully participate in the business of the MAT board and its committees.

So we recruited new directors to replace the headteachers. We seemed to be adjusting and modifying our structures every year!

With a governing body that was more experienced in governance we set about putting in place some of the essential tools to improve our governance. A risk register was high on the priority list. Our newly appointed business and finance director worked closely with the chair of audit and risk to compile a list of our top risks, and actions we could take to mitigate them. The CEO now reports on the five top risks at each of our board meetings.

An issue that had been picked up by our consultants in their review is that it was not clear where decisions were taken. The restructuring of both governance and staffing certainly improved this. However, a scheme of delegation was essential, so that we were all clear which decisions were made by the members of the trust, by the MAT board, by the executive board and by the local governing body. Without this, I am not sure how MATs can function at all.

Business plans for schools

School improvement plans have been in common use in schools for some years, but business plans are a much more recent introduction. With a declining budget and a need to expand, a three-year business plan updated annually is now seen as a vital tool in the MAT's armoury. Business expertise among governors was an important element in getting this right. We are further cementing the unity of purpose among our governors and staff by revising our vision, mission and values and ensuring that all our governors, staff, students and parents are consulted. This will then drive our future strategy and enable us to produce a business plan to describe how we realise our aspirations over the next period of time.

A further impetus to change came last year when we became a sponsoring MAT, which required yet another new look at our constitutional arrangements. Ensuring that our MAT board directors were all se-

lected on the basis of their skills and expertise meant that we were unable to continue the arrangement whereby the chairs of the LGBs automatically became directors. This was not an easy change to implement. It has made us think again about the communication strategies we should put in place to ensure that each layer of governance is fully aware of decisions and policies pursued by others.

We also reconstituted our membership, which now comprises three members nominated by our foundation trust and the chair and vice chair of the MAT board. They now have a much more focused and active role.

In common with many trusts we are expanding. The incorporation of two additional schools into our MAT will also involve some changes to our articles, since one of them is a university technical college and we strongly wish to preserve this designation.

As we expand, we are continuously re-examining our staffing structures, both to keep central costs as low as possible, and to ensure that we have the wide range of skills we need to become a successful business. The challenge of working within very tight financial constraints is one which occupies the board and puts to good use the business skills which are now an essential part of our team.

Our governance structure has been built to endure. I feel confident that we have the right people round the table and a high standard of leadership from people who have sometimes honed their skills in other sectors. We have tried and tested our structures and although they have been subject to many changes, I believe they are now fit for purpose and will enable further expansion as opportunities arise.

Staff are often under pressure, but they feel supported and more confident. Their opportunities are enhanced by being part of a wider community of schools, and they appreciate the support from other academies in the group.

Students are able to take advantage of facilities at all academies within the trust, and benefit from a wider curriculum than that which could be offered in a stand-alone school.

What is really satisfying however, is that our results get better, our academies improve and more and more students are able to benefit from the top class educational experience which we offer. ■



An all-through school: benefits and challenges

*Philip Sanderson,
Kings Priory School*

Principal Philip Sanderson outlines his experience of the benefits of challenges at Kings Priory School

Kings Priory School is an all-through academy with pupils from reception to year 13, sponsored by Woodard Academies Trust, which has the ethos and vision to inspire young people to make a difference. It came into existence in September 2013 as a result of an independent school conversion of the former Kings School, Tynemouth and a merger

with the local authority Priory Primary School. Kings Priory School is the highest performing state school in the North East of England, securing 96% A-C in English and maths and 92% A*-C.

There are 45 Woodard schools, 22 of them wholly owned by Woodard, while representing a diverse range of schools: maintained, independent, academies, prep, senior, day, boarding, co-ed, single sex. This means that Woodard has a very broad knowledge of education currently on offer across the UK.

An all-through school is rather different to any other, not only because of the range and diversity of its intake, but also it represents continuous accountability with respect to outcomes, as it faces five points of scrutiny: EYFS, key stage 1, key stage 2, key stage 4 (GCSEs) and key stage 5 (A-levels).

For us this is a superb opportunity, so long as the collaboration and multiphase working (discussed later) are actually happening in a productive and professional way. That said, striving for the highest



of standards across the board also means that the success of each phase sets the next phase up for a greater challenge. For example, the better the results in year 6, the more difficult it is to demonstrate progress between end of key stage 2 tests and the GCSE results.

Similarly if everyone has been in the culture of working hard to ensure their GCSE outcomes, it puts immediate pressure on the key stage 5 (A-level) outcomes, as the average point score per pupil at GCSE lays down immediate and numerical expectations for A-level. As you can see, this cycle is never ending.

Christian values

One thing that makes a significant contribution to the outcomes mentioned above is the culture of our all-through school, which is genuinely borne out of strong Christian values that we not only promote, but aim to live out in all areas of the school. This is largely to do with how we all behave and how we treat each other. The same values, such as celebrating difference, kindness, leadership, honesty, fairness, and compassion, are often described in different places in the school – but using different language and with different examples. These will depend on the phase and department, and include not only all teachers and learners but all staff and members of our community.

Whether you are senior leader, domestic worker, teacher, accountant, site worker or caterer, the same high expectations and behaviours apply. We aim for all staff to look after little things from the word go – manners, uniform, appearance, attitude, politeness – in the most pleasant and caring way. We are at



a point where this has become normal and our values are all-through, which sets the backdrop for developing deep learners.

Make or break

One of the key developments, of course, is ensuring that the leadership works. This is what will make or break an all-through school. If it does not work – that is, leaders do not see their connection and role within the entire enterprise and really buy into the school values, vision and ambition – then there is a dysfunctional service and potential disaster. Leaders who do not promote and engage with the all-through aspect set up potential division of loyalties, line management and expectations, which can be negative hurdles in the strive for unification. But when leaders do engage it is amazing. A culture of support and nurture establishes quickly: staff realise

that their work is not restricted to recognition from a small few, but is seen through the lens of the whole organisation.

As with any change, this does not happen overnight. The benefits of all-through for most, including me, had to be seen and understood.

From a senior leadership perspective an all-through environment allows the impact, expansion and sharing of talents of the strongest leaders and governors throughout the school. For example, to have leaders responsible for data, teaching and learning, timetabling, CPD, performance management, SEND, behaviour, human resources, finance, administration, to name but a few, throughout the entire school is wholly beneficial. This is not about economies of scale, but rather economies of efficiency and utilisation of expertise, both from an educational perspective

Leaders are accountable from reception to year 13: this fosters, if not forces, the fact that they are the glue and catalyst that inspires all phases to work together to raise standards.

and from a business point of view – in that the resourcing, procurement and targeted spend are more sharply focused.

Leaders are accountable from reception to year 13: this fosters, if not forces, the fact that they are the glue and catalyst that inspires all phases to work together to raise standards.

Specialist staff, whether teaching, administrative or financial, are effectively shared across phases and in all areas, cultivating real curriculum expertise as well as an infrastructure to support it. This culture and structure then lends itself wholly to a cost effective and highly specialised professional development programme, which should be able to address prioritised areas of school improvement rapidly and sensibly.

Effective collaboration and performance management with all phases can raise educational standards quite quickly. A clear working understanding of what comes before each phase, and what comes after, is critical in ensuring not only ex-

cellent preparation is made for all pupils' next steps, but also regressions do not occur when moving from one phase to the next. For example, the standard of English required in year 6 continues in year 7 and is promoted and continued in all subjects.

Better transition

Being all-through has also allowed us to improve our transition arrangements between phases. Kings Priory School sits in an area of the North East of England that has both a two-tier system (primary and secondary) and a three-tier system (first, middle and secondary). Our school has the three-tier system within it, so the largest transition our pupils make is from year 4 to 5, as it involves a move from the first school to the middle school (which is also the only change of site).

A range of transitional activities, days and events starts early in the summer term to prepare pupils for the next phase of their education. One of the areas we are continually trying to improve is for pupils

joining the school either in-year or externally into a year group. For example, we have some places available in year 7 for external pupils. Our aim is to attempt to make their transition from another school as smooth as possible, by offering a similar programme to that for our internal pupils, so as to make faces and places as familiar as possible before a September start.

Another significant challenge is the fact that the school operates across two sites. They are only a few minutes' walk apart, but there are still catches and glitches that can get in the way of true 'all-throughness'. Two sites means two entrances, two receptions (and receptionists), a transition time for staff to leave one site and get to the other. Scheduling the timetable is not that easy.

Ordinarily you might expect sixth form option blocks to drive the shape of the timetable. However, the same staff teach throughout the senior school and the sixth form, but also teach in the first school at fixed times. This seri-



ously reduces the scheduling possibilities in the subject-specialist senior school.

Providing specialist teaching to classes in the middle school reduces the teaching commitment of those class teachers by far more than their expected PPA. This can be an advantage, in that those staff can then teach core subjects to years 7 and 8 and prevent the traditional year 7 regression. Yet from a timetabling perspective it can make setting in those year groups challenging; it makes the first, middle and senior schools inseparable. Constraints can quickly appear in one area due to seemingly unrelated changes in other parts of the school.

Shared curriculum benefits

There are many benefits, however, which can be realised by timetabling a shared curriculum across an all-through school. The very fact that some teachers and support staff work across both primary and secondary phases means younger pupils get access to specialist teaching that they do not usually get in a primary or first school. In our first school, each class has a class teacher for core subjects, but for languages, music, art, PE and some science the curriculum is delivered by subject specialists from the senior or middle schools.

Similarly pupils in years 5 and 6, who in another school would be taught their full curriculum in the same classroom and by the same teacher, have an entirely different experience. They too benefit from specialist teaching in modern foreign languages: something which many primary schools would find difficult to staff. Being taught on the same site as senior pupils means that they can also access



specialist teaching facilities in science, art, computing and design technology. Acclimatising to this environment at an earlier age helps pupils to quickly overcome the transitional barriers which can sometimes exist when pupils move into secondary school.

Younger pupils also benefit greatly from the leadership, support, coaching and often friendships and guidance from older pupils. Many older pupils enjoy hearing younger pupils read and generally helping out. We also have a bespoke leadership programme for older pupils (usually years 10-13) to run organised clubs such as maths club, STEM club, languages events, musical events and rehearsals, sports programmes and technology-related activities. Sixth form pupils often support local educational visits and take assemblies.

Our programme offers a series of specific roles within the student leadership programme to build leadership capacity and responsibility, helping prepare our young leaders for their later lives.

All-through schools can use their facilities to house and have the appropriate setting to deliver par-

ticular activities, such as science in a science lab, or cookery in a food technology room. And minibuses for example, which many primary schools do not have, can be used across the entire school, making learning outside of the classroom easier and safer.

Knowing a pupil from age four and being able to profile each cohort enables an all-through school to plan for and deliver a cost-effective but appropriately broad curriculum to respond to pupil needs.

It also, therefore, strengthens the pastoral care that the school can provide. For example, if we know at an early age that a pupil has a specific educational need, that can be shared effectively with staff who are part of the same school at points of transition and progression. An all-through school has the potential for staff to constantly improve its inclusive nature.

The above is only a very brief whistle-stop tour of our journey of all-through school education, much of it still in the category of research project. However, I am pleased to report that everything seems to be going, at this point in time, in the right direction. ■

Tapton School's focus on mental health: how it's working

*Steve Rippin,
Tapton School*

Steve Rippin, Assistant Headteacher, Tapton School, Sheffield, describes their approach to supporting student and staff mental health and wellbeing.

We were becoming increasingly aware of a small but significant cohort of students who underachieved compared to their predicted grades because of known mental health issues.

Anything we could do as a school was seen as a positive. It was time for Tapton School to live up to its ethos, 'valuing everyone, caring for each other, achieving excellence' to do the very best possible for its students.

Teachers lacked confidence

However, many teachers did not feel qualified or confident and were not comfortable supporting students with mental health issues. We had to provide training for staff and develop a whole-school approach. And it was important they felt their emotional health and wellbeing was also being given due care and attention.

When an opportunity came up to be involved in a national schools and CAMHS link pilot we jumped at it. Working alongside CAMHS, Tapton has set about a cultural change. We firmly believe this will have a positive impact in attendance, attitudes to learning, behaviour, attainment, achievement and progress. I took the role of mental health lead.





Raising awareness

As a school, our first challenge was to raise awareness and destigmatise mental health and wellbeing, through a carefully planned programme of assemblies, form discussions, PSHE lessons and newsletters. Events are spread throughout the year, rather than having a big launch which then fizzles out. Assemblies allowed for the delivery of a core message to all students and form tutors, and linked it to a number of initiatives offering support to students within school.

PSHE overhaul

Coupled with this was a complete overhaul of the PSHE programme. Instead of covering mental health and wellbeing in a few lessons, we encompassed mental health and wellbeing elements into a wide range of units of work such as:

- » transition and friendships
- » internet safety
- » options
- » relationships and sexuality.

This made the links with mental health much clearer, better connected to the topics and more relevant to life.

Signs and symptoms

We shared with students the signs and symptoms of poor mental health and wellbeing – sleep issues, lack of focus, etc. In this way, students are better able to identify at an early stage when they may be at risk of developing a mental health and wellbeing issue.

Seek support early

Many young people know they have mental health and wellbeing issues, but lack the confidence to speak with someone who is able to help them. Children and young people need to have confidence to engage with people who can help them.

CAMHS support

Developing and delivering a planned programme to raise awareness and destigmatise mental health and wellbeing across school needs support from the headteacher and leadership team. Overhauling the PSHE programme requires some thought and planning, and possibly training. Support and guidance from CAMHS at points was gratefully received.

Linking up and working with other local schools, sharing ideas and resources can be very supportive, and help to keep up the momentum.

Wide-ranging survey

While we were busy launching our mental health programme, we were also working on a student, staff and parent/carer survey in conjunction with CAMHS. This was to gain a baseline measure and discover stakeholders' viewpoints on mental health. A section of the survey allowed for free text, which proved interesting reading. The student survey was completed in May 2016 by a sample of students from all years just before final exams. We will repeat the survey this May: I can't wait for the results.

The survey was very informative, giving us a measure of mental health and wellbeing and highlighting key areas to focus on and develop. Some points raised were as expected: for example, exam pressure and stress being the number one cited cause of mental health issues. Others were more surprising, such as sleep deprivation/patterns.





The staff survey confirmed that many didn't feel qualified and were hesitant to give mental health support for fear of giving the wrong advice and making the situation worse. This led us to invite CAMHS to deliver a bespoke staff workshop to increase staff skills in specific areas identified. We included all teaching and non-teaching staff.

Tuning into students' feelings

The training helped to allay staff fears and promote the idea of 'attunement' – tuning in to students' feelings – which is very powerful and links into a number of behaviour management techniques. It also encouraged staff to engage in conversations with students that asked how they are on a more regular basis.

From this training a number of staff across all areas of school volunteered to be mental health champions, who students could go to if they wanted to chat things through. The beauty of this is that students have a wide choice in who they speak with. Also having posters with pictures of these staff around school gives a very strong message that we take mental health and wellbeing seriously and are here to support students.

However, a recent review of the number of students who have approached staff mental health champions has shown that this is not as high as we would like. We are looking at how we can foster greater uptake through prompts and recommendations by pastoral staff. We also ask mental health champions to make the first contact with students who we know are struggling with emotional health and wellbeing.

Guidance and links on school website

Students' responses to the survey showed they wanted greater support in school, and in particular staff to be available to help; also, they would like more signposting of information. This led us to add an area to the school website offering tips and guidance for self-regulation and management of mental health and wellbeing, as well as links to further information

and support out of school. The key to this is that it is available 24/7 and gives more choice.

I am looking to make this area much more prominent and easily accessible, providing information for students, staff and parents/carers. We are currently exploring linking to locally known support groups out of school. With all of this, CAMHS support has helped greatly, as they can enable us to ensure links are to reputable sites and organisations.

Form time extended

To promote the whole-school approach and to foster learning from the CPD we organised an extended form time focusing on mental health and wellbeing, for every form from year 7 to year 13.

'Epic friends'

Complementing the staff mental health champions, we developed a small group of students titled 'epic friends', who have advised us on developments and supported us in the development of ideas.

Students said that they just wanted to be asked "how are things going?" by staff

We have also looked to offer a self-help support group. We tried to extend this and offer lunchtime sessions on specific topics such as bereavement and exam stress. However, this was not well attended. Students would rather have the opportunity to speak with peers on a more informal basis, which is something we are looking into. I am keen when we do this that it is sustainable and supportive.

No emails at evenings and weekends

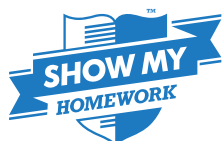
Staff mental health and wellbeing is also taken seriously. As well as reducing reporting and departmental meetings, we took the notable decision to change our email protocol: the server is now switched off between 7pm and 6am Monday to Friday, and at weekends. Many staff have commented on the positive impact this has had on their mental health and wellbeing.

There is still a way to go in our approach to supporting students' and teachers' mental health and wellbeing, but we feel we are at the forefront of developments, and are pleased to share our experience with others. ■

To find out more, please do get in touch:
srippin@taptonschoo.co.uk

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unifrog.org

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Teachers' '5 a day' can improve their performance and students' outcomes

*Martyn Reah,
Eggars's School*

Martyn Reah, Eggars School, describes the spread of this approach to teacher wellbeing

In December 2014 I presented at the SSAT Teachmeet and launched #teacher5aday. After experiencing a toxic work environment, I wanted to give something back to the profession I am so proud of being a part of. The temptation to use my newly created blog to write negatively was huge: to expose the wrongdo-

ings of a new breed of 'educators' who in my opinion ripped the heart out of a school and a community I had worked hard to be part of.

Two and a half years later many things have changed. The results at my old school went down despite the new breed's promises of a 'better' education. In fact, the new-broomers soon went, leaving a neighbourhood school in terminal decline. Great local teachers also left a school that they truly cared for. Some left the profession altogether. Thankfully some managed to move schools and, like me, work for a rare breed of headteacher who spends his time looking after his staff.

#Teacher5aday has also changed in many ways from its original inception.

On a rainy Thursday night in Manchester, just before Christmas 2014, the original idea I proposed was one of self-care [bit.ly/uked16aug01] – to look after your own wellbeing despite or maybe because of the environment you find yourself in. Based on the work of the New Economics Foundation (NEF) and their research on wellbeing, I invited teachers using Twitter to #connect, #exercise, #learn, #notice and #volunteer. Inspired by Mark Healy @cijane02 I asked them to think about their wellbeing, using the five subtitles, as the flip side of the coin of student wellbeing. That is, to consider the possibility that spending some more time on themselves might improve their performance in school and consequently improve the outcomes of their students.

Teacher wellbeing is the flip side of student wellbeing: spending some more time on themselves can improve teachers' performance and their students' outcomes

I consider Twitter the best CPD I have taken part in over the last eight years of my professional life. As Stephen Tierney @leadinglearner puts it, 'Martini CPD'. It has also provided me with a fantastic opportunity to network with others, as well as a tool to recruit new staff to our fantastic school (www.eggars.net if you are interested). In January of 2015, 66 teachers wrote and posted their pledges to improve their wellbeing using #teacher5aday as a framework. This was repeated by another group of professionals in 2016 [bit.ly/uked16aug02] and has continued to grow into 2017 [wp.me/p4VbxY-mI]. Other tweachers, from February 2015, then started sharing their #teacher5aday based activity in 140 characters extolling the virtues of self-care for very busy professionals.

In 2015 the ideas behind the hashtag developed in many ways. From an exhibition of the talents of teachers taking part in their 5-a-day activities, to many presentations at a variety of teachmeets, a personal invite to a bloggers breakfast and a #teacher5aday team slot to present at BETT which has now become an annual event. Each month there are now themes

for teachers to share their non-school based adventures. A simple search on Twitter will show how this community has developed [wp.me/p4VbxY-iE].

2016 continued in the same vein. Great professionals based in schools working with students on a day-to-day basis have continued to pledge their support as well as developing more #teacher5aday based monthly themes and ideas. The concept of the five areas for wellbeing has been translated into a school-based activity and is taking shape in the form of #student5aday introduced at her school by Jenna Lucas @JennaLucas81.

Invariably not everything has been positive in the world of wellbeing. The toxic environment I was exposed to unfortunately has become more of the norm than I had realised. I've heard many teachers sharing their stories about how they have been treated in this 'caring' profession. Hopefully, there is now a network not confined to your immediate workplace where support is available. In this free market economy of education some organisations, in my opinion, are trying to push their products to provide the solution to the recruitment, retention and workload issues. Beware the snake oil seller.

2017 has flown by and links continue to develop. Partnership work with SSAT as part of #LeadPchat has provided an interesting new style of discussion for lead practitioners old and new. Every holiday, an extended slow chat over a week has proved popular, with the most recent venture completed in partnership with the Chartered College [wp.me/p4VbxY-pd]. A #teacher5aday article has even been featured in the TES.

On reflection I'm very pleased that I decided to put my energies into something that helps teachers rather than on the negativity I experienced. To get involved simply follow the #teacher5aday hashtag on Twitter. To meet some of #teacher5aday team face to face, and to continue the conversations, come along to #PedagooHampshire17 [wp.me/p4VbxY-pi], a free CPD event for teachers by teachers. Perhaps happy teachers and happy students do equal improved results. ■

Key factors in effective A-level delivery: a debate

*Bill Watkin,
Sixth Form Colleges Association*

Former SSAT operational director and now chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, Bill Watkin, challenges former colleagues with a well-argued piece (below), in which he unsurprisingly champions sixth form colleges as the best place for students to study A-levels.

He makes some valid points, which many schools without sixth forms, and those struggling with small sixth forms, will ruefully recognise. However, schools with sixth forms will be aware of significant arguments to be put on the other side.

We think this article offers a good opportunity to debate the factors that make up an excellent sixth form. Despite all the recent and

ongoing controversy, there's much more to it than funding (vital though that is) and numbers.

See what you think.

Where should we teach A-levels? Size does matter
Bill Watkin

In an interesting development in Wales, one county council has decided to close all its English medium sixth forms and move students to a new £20m centre of education. This new centre would become home to all AS and A-level education in Torfaen, as well as offering Welsh Baccalaureate and level two and three vocational qualifications.

This makes sense, socially, educationally and financially.

Funding levels are so low that sixth form providers are faced with some invidious choices about curriculum breadth, student support services, leadership capacity and extracurricular activity. Schools are closing their small sixth forms because they cannot afford to keep them open, at almost the same rate that other schools are working out if it makes sense to open a sixth form. So experts in the field have to address two specific questions: can we make our sixth form provision financially viable? And can we find a better way to secure ever higher standards?

The government's industrial strategy has focused attention on the new T-levels and apprenticeships, with additional funding promised in this year's budget. It is clear that if the strategy is to work – and it must do, if we are to remain globally competitive – we will indeed need more young people with suitable skills, whether in the workshop, the salon or the factory floor. But we will also need more scientists, engineers, mathematicians and managers; in short, those who have followed an academic pathway from A-levels to university.





Both routes are essential and of equal importance, and we must not overlook an academic sixth form offer in our rush to boost technical education.

Most T-level teaching will happen in general FE colleges: large institutions with specialist expertise and the workshops, resources and lecturers needed. There, young people's opportunities to experience work placements and gain practical knowledge will be best served. Because that's what GFE colleges do.

Most academic teaching will happen either in a school sixth form, or in a sixth form centre or college. And this is the issue that they are addressing in Wales. Is it better to have several small, costly and narrow sixth forms in schools, or to replace them with one sixth form centre, which can be more cost-effective, offer a broader curriculum and have more specialised teaching, targeted specifically at sixth formers?

The advantages of a specialist sixth form centre are well known and well supported by evidence.

1. If you close school sixth forms, you create additional capacity in the system for the growing population of under-16s. As our

population grows, we need more school places to accommodate the growing number of children. At the moment, we are dangerously close to system overload – we need more school places. One solution is for secondary schools to send their students at the end of year 11 to a sixth form centre or college, freeing up classrooms and teachers to take on more 11-16 year olds.

2. A school with a small sixth form of some 200 students may be forced to 'borrow' money intended for its younger pupils, just to keep the sixth form afloat, so younger pupils suffer. It also has to offer only a small number of subjects, so students suffer from a limited choice of courses.
3. School teachers are, on the whole, busy teaching pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4, with only limited, if any, opportunity to teach sixth formers; their priorities are with the younger pupils and that's where they develop, quite rightly, their expertise. In fact, there is often a further layer of specialisation, with teachers becoming most skilled at teaching, for example, the most able pupils, the

lower sets, or the younger year groups. This specialisation is essential if young people are to get the best out of their teachers. As a French teacher in years gone by, I was probably best suited to key stage 4 classes of below average ability and my timetable reflected my skill-set. And that is how it should be with sixth form teaching. A-level teachers need specialist expertise, in-depth knowledge of the course content, the exam specifications and the subject. They need a team of colleagues with whom they can exchange ideas, problems, solutions and resources. They need experience and expertise in the pedagogy that is best suited to 16-19 year olds. They are much more likely to get all this in a dedicated sixth form centre or college.

4. A large sixth form centre will be able to sustain, by virtue of its numbers, some of those subjects on the curriculum which many schools are having to cut (modern languages, design technology, drama and others). It will have teams of subject teachers who can develop best practice together, while in many schools there will be just one teacher, perhaps two, with A-level classes in a particular subject.
5. Large sixth form centres act as a bridge between school and university, with students given greater responsibility for their own learning behaviours and more independence. Universities comment on how college students tend to be better prepared for undergraduate life than school leavers. And, of course, sixth form centres have a wealth of experience in giving



careers and UCAS advice, and in making choices and preparing applications.

6. Entry level requirements for school sixth forms tend to be more demanding than for a sixth form college. This means that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom have no less ability but have had fewer advantages earlier in life, are less likely to get in, or even apply to get in. Sixth form colleges, on the other hand, act as a vital lever for social mobility, opening doors to an academic pathway for more vulnerable learners.

There are those who argue in favour of small school sixth forms. Some are concerned that to close them could lead to teacher redundancies, or to longer journey times for some students. Others worry that the school's pastoral care or a student's continuity of education could be lost. Schools sometimes worry about their ability to recruit and retain the best teachers if they cannot offer sixth form classes. But these concerns tend to be borne of long-held memories of school sixth forms, and very limited experience of larger sixth form providers.

During a recent college visit, I was struck by the quality of pastoral support available to students. In a dedicated wing of the building was a team of tutors whose sole function was to be an expert tutor, offering regular 1:1 sessions with tutees, monitoring academic progress and attendance, liaising with the family and supporting UCAS applications. This wing also housed counselors, careers advisors and medical practitioners, working as a co-ordinated team to offer wrap-around care for every student.

The evidence points to a better and broader experience for young people in dedicated sixth form learning environments. It points to better use of local resources, greater cost-effectiveness, more specialist expertise in teaching, more social mobility for young people, better destinations, more subject choices and a wider range of extracurricular opportunities.

Back in Wales, Torfaen Council leader Cllr Anthony Hunt said learners would have more choice under the proposals. "It's realistic to expect that 35 to 40 Level three courses will be on offer by combining sixth form provision in one location, and this will make courses less susceptible to cancellations due to low enrolment numbers."

Executive Member for Education Cllr David Yeowell added: "The economies of bringing all sixth forms into a single centre will ensure a wider curriculum, remove unnecessary duplication and the cost associated with small class sizes."

SSAT comment:

So that's the case for sixth form colleges, well put by Bill Watkin for the Sixth Form Colleges Association. Schools without sixth forms and with no plans to open one may feel reassured by Bill's arguments. But those with sixth forms – even if they are battling against severe odds to keep them viable in the current financial climate for education – may reasonably take it as a challenge.

They may, for example, question whether his following points

apply to their schools, and if so what to do about them: having to 'borrow' money intended for younger pupils, just to keep the sixth form afloat; inability to provide the full range of skills and knowledge needed for teaching 16+ students or to offer an appropriate range of subjects; and their students failing to develop a more mature approach to learning as they approach tertiary education, training or employment.

While it is true that a very small sixth form may not be viable, many secondary schools with sixth forms are well aware of these issues and have successfully addressed them, for example by ensuring that the offer is broad and strong enough to attract a good number of students.

So yes, size does matter in sixth forms: but so do a number of other factors. And in fact schools are best placed to deliver, for example: a family atmosphere where students of different ages work together and share challenges and celebrate successes; and opportunities for students to develop both themselves and younger students through peer mentoring. In addition, evidence from our members and teacher training institutes indicates that 11-18 schools often find it easier to recruit high quality staff.

For the future, as MATs develop the sixth form 'number issue' might be resolved with one sixth form, or shared courses, for a number of schools. In effect, their own sixth form college. ■

Over to you: are you a head with a strong 6th form provision who does not agree that sixth form colleges are the best route? If so we'd really like to hear from you: RMTeam@ssatuk.co.uk



The happiness of pursuit, not the pursuit of happiness

*Dr Nash Popovic,
University of East London*

Dr Nash Popovic outlines a personal and social development programme that helps students gain greater control over their psychological processes and behaviour

There is a striking imbalance in present education between the amount of time, resources and attention dedicated to the study of the world on the one hand, and to topics that relate to personal life and experience on the other.

Young people have opportunities to learn about mathematics, literature, science, history and other subjects, but little chance to learn about themselves and the ways they can experience and relate to their environment. In the 14 volumes (over 8000 pages) of the International Educational Encyclopaedia, for example, there is not a single entry on either personal or social education, and there are only four pages on moral education. Such an attitude may

have served the purpose of education in the past, but its inadequacy in the modern world is becoming increasingly apparent.

Arguably, we have never had it better, and yet we don't seem to cope that well. According to the World Health Organization, by 2020 depression is set to become the world's most pervasive serious illness (more widespread than heart disease and cancer); every 40 seconds somebody commits suicide and many more make an attempt (Deurzen-Smith, 1994). In the UK one in four visits to a doctor is due to a psychological problem (the most frequent reason after flu and cold). Alcohol and drug abuse, as well as antisocial behaviour are also widespread.

The complex and ever-changing nature of our society, the greater cultural diversity, and the pluralism of values have increased choice and allowed more freedom, but they have also increased personal re-



sponsibility, insecurity, anxiety and confusion. Many young people have difficulty in finding their way in the maze of modern life, and are highly susceptible to peer pressure, the influence of media as well as other elements of society that may not have their best interest at heart.

Not surprisingly, school counsellors are more and more in demand, but as professor van Deurzen-Smith suggests, 'Although it is a good thing that counsellors are here to help those who have got lost on the way, it would be much better if we could get to a position from where prevention and education were the order of the day rather than crisis intervention and cure.' (1994, p.20-21).

The programme has been implemented in the third sector as well as in mainstream education

This is not to say that we need this sort of education only to prevent what may go wrong. Personal qualities are also becoming more and more important for employment, relationships and other aspects of life. A conclusion of Hopson & Scally, the pioneers of PSE in the UK, still seems relevant: '...we are living through a period of transition – and the demands on young people and adults will be similar. People will need to be adaptable, flexible, and more personally competent than at any other time in our history' (1981, p6).

In a nutshell, education that is focused on, broadly speaking, psychological and behaviour elements of

young people's lives (such as learning how to manage emotions, motivate themselves, make decisions, cope, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts) is no longer a luxury but a necessity.

What has been done

Since 2008, our mission at Personal Wellbeing Centre has been to develop a programme that will address the above challenge by introducing personal and social education as an individual school subject to secondary schools and sixth form colleges. The programme has since been implemented in the third sector (with young offenders, single mothers with disabled children, refugees, HIV+, the Muslim youth and the unemployed) as well as in mainstream education (London Park School, Haberdashers Askes, Tower Hamlet College, University of East London). In this paper we will mainly focus on our experience of working in inner-city secondary state schools, highlighting some of the key challenges and successes, and outlining what has been learned so far.

Main challenges and how to overcome them

The main challenges we have encountered when implementing the programme in secondary schools were: maintaining sufficient discipline in the classroom, motivation, and a lack of teachers' time for preparation.

Maintaining a minimum level of discipline in the classroom was one of the major issues in inner-city schools. When the presenters had at least a few uninterrupted minutes to explain what the session or





activity was all about, most pupils would find it interesting and engage. However, in some occasions, it was difficult to secure even these initial few minutes. In fact, some of our trainers have given up for this reason. As one summarised, 'it felt like being thrown into a lions' den'.

In conversation with our colleagues involved in comparable projects, it transpired that this was a common problem. We noticed though that it was somewhat easier to maintain discipline when an in-house member of staff was involved. This was probably because school teachers had higher status, already knew the students, and had greater leverage. So we first experimented with having a member of staff to deal with behavioural issues while our trainer was delivering. This worked much better, but appeared not to be cost effective for schools.

So, even if delivering the programme by our own trainers had many advantages, we decided to switch to training the teachers who are already in the school to do so. This, however, created a new challenge.

Many teachers didn't feel confident to deliver a programme that is not in their field – and almost all reported that they didn't have enough time for preparation. We therefore had to adapt the materials to minimise preparation time: in the latest version a teacher's presentation never takes more than five minutes and is followed by an activity that would usually give them enough time to quickly go through what they need to say next. This does not mean that no preparation is needed at all, but it is substantially reduced.

Addressing teachers' lack of confidence to engage with 'psychological' topics, we assured them that they did not need to be all-knowing. If somebody has a question, they could ask other students what they think and encourage them to share their experiences. The point is not necessarily to come up with the right answer, but to consider various possibilities. For example, if the issue is dealing with anger, the teacher may bring up some suggestions from the materials, but it's equally important to discuss with students what has already worked for them in this respect and examine suggestions that they may have.

In the political climate that sees education as a primarily instrumental activity (as a means to an end) it is not surprising that most young people are largely motivated by instrumental aims, namely, passing their exams. Consequently, those subjects that are not examined acquire lesser status, and motivating students can be a challenge. To counter this, we have tried to employ all the major categories of motivation on the intrinsic-extrinsic spectrum: ➤



enjoyment, competence, relevance and reward. So, the materials are designed to include activities that young people generally enjoy and that appeal to their sense of competence. Each topic starts with discussing with students why it matters, why it may be relevant to their everyday lives. At the University of East London we also introduced extrinsic motivation. Upon the completion of the course and their personal development journal, students received 30 credits. This was received well and the module was consistently one of the most popular among undergraduate students.

In conclusion, the above strategies appeared helpful, but we are mindful that vigilance is needed. Modifying and improving the materials has been an ongoing process for the last several years.

It was easier to maintain discipline when an in-house member of staff was involved

What has been learned from the experience?

Education rather than crisis prevention

The main lesson we have learned is that programmes of this kind should primarily be about education rather than 'crisis prevention'. Learning about how to handle one's emotions, how to resolve conflicts with others and motivate oneself is certainly no less, indeed perhaps more important and relevant than other things that young people learn in schools. Such education should be for all students, not just 'vulnerable' ones or low achievers. And it deserves its own time in the school timetable. PSE (personal and social education) often has low status among pupils and teachers because it is treated like the Cinderella of the curriculum: there is no justification for that.

Autonomy rather than wellbeing

So we need to re-examine our assumptions, aims and practices, and most importantly to shift focus from an end goal to the process. Focusing on an end goal would go against the grain of liberal education as a whole (Suisa, 2008).

When we teach literacy and numeracy we do not have an end goal in mind. We are not concerned whether the pupils will use their knowledge or skills to write books or 'cook the books'. We simply believe that every child has a right to learn to read, write and count. The same should apply to PSE.

To give a somewhat crude analogy, learning to drive is about learning to drive well, safely and with consideration for other drivers. It is not about a destination. No driving instructor is concerned with where you will drive once you learn how to do it. The point is to learn to drive well enough so that you can go anywhere you want. Young people have a right to learn how to be, so to speak, in the driving seat of their own lives, without imposing on them where they should end up (which is implied in wellbeing or happiness goals).

Of course, such programmes should, as everything else, contribute to their wellbeing, but this cannot be the goal. Rather, the focus should primarily be on developing autonomy or self-regulation – helping students to gain greater control over their psychological processes and behaviour. If this point is taken, namely that we should teach students how to navigate through their lives rather than where to arrive, such lessons may appear more relevant and less indoctrinatory. We use the term personal development education (PDE) in order to emphasise the process. The specific time designated for pupils and students' personal development can be immensely beneficial as long as it is about the happiness of pursuit rather than the pursuit of happiness.

A systematic and comprehensive approach

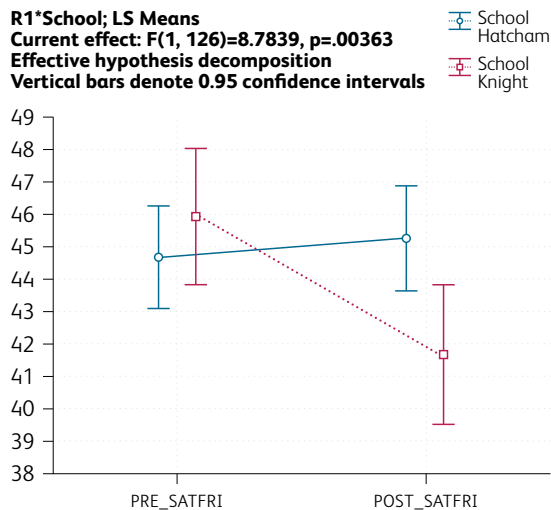
In order to provide proper education in this respect and achieve the above goal, projects need to be comprehensive and systematic, rather than a hotchpotch of unrelated topics. Our programme for secondary schools and sixth form colleges, for example, has 224 lessons that can be delivered across the span of seven years. In years 7-9 we focus on contributors to a flourishing life (such as character strengths and emotional intelligence), while in years 10-13 we cover all the major topics relevant to personal and social development, from self-awareness to intimate relationships.

We are well aware though that it is not possible for all schools to implement such a programme in its entirety. Thus, we have been working hard to develop packages of shorter duration while still keeping to the ideal of a systematic and comprehensive approach as much as we could. So we now have blocks lasting 4 years, 3 years and 1 year, as well as intensive short-term interventions spanning from 6 weeks to one school term.

Young people can deal with complex issues if we help them with the building blocks.

In our experience, we cannot deal successfully with complex issues and challenges if their components are not addressed. To give just one example, the attitude of young people towards drugs involves several basic areas: the relation to one's body, courage, pleasure, assertiveness, susceptibility to influence, etc. Education on drug abuse will have a minimal effect if they are not all tackled. We conjecture that forming bad habits are widespread among adolescents, despite numerous initiatives in this respect, because these underlying building blocks are not addressed. It is clear that only one weak link is often enough for failure.

Example of results from Haberdashers Askes research: pilot year results – satisfaction with friends (blue: participants; red: control group)



How schools might benefit from following a similar course

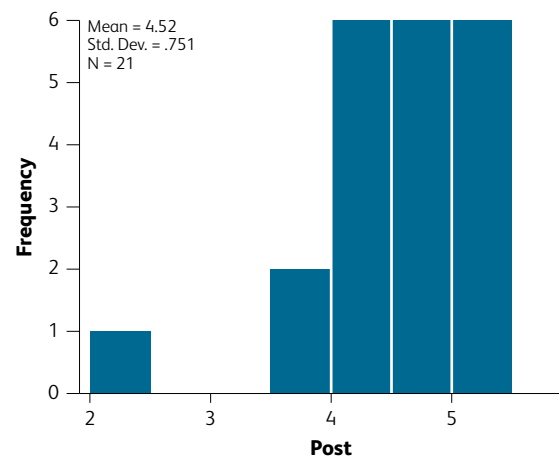
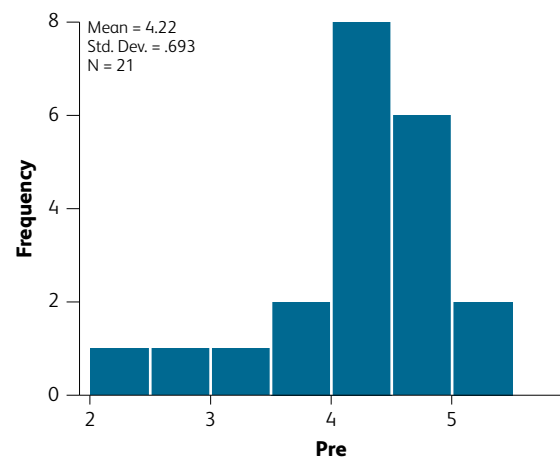
Even with all the challenges outlined above, our research has consistently showed positive effects of the programme. In a study at Tower Hamlets College (N = 58) the biggest improvements were observed in positive outlook, confidence and emotional control scores. Although these results were very encouraging, it is not possible to attribute them solely to the programme, due to the lack of a control group. Our research at Haberdashers Askes schools demonstrated positive difference in comparison with a control group in self-actualisation and satisfaction with friends as well as significant increases in life satisfaction.

More recently, a one-year programme in a secondary school in Belgrade (Serbia) produced statistically significant results (see appendix).

There is no doubt that other subjects and the school as a whole would also benefit if their students could be more in charge of their emotions, could deal constructively with intra-personal and interpersonal conflicts, and could focus better. For example, many students told us that it is not that they do not want to focus in their lessons and achieve more, but that they don't know how. If we do not provide education in this respect, we are failing young people, no matter how successful the other aspects of education might appear to be.

We have an ongoing commitment to work with schools that recognise the value of this sort of education, and are keen to work in partnership on further research into its benefits and the quality of delivery. For further information: info@personallwellbeingcentre.org ■

Aggregate results for one-year pilot in a secondary school in Belgrade (Including controlling emotions, recognising emotions of others, satisfaction with life)



Apprenticeships in schools: why bother? For some very good reasons

*Ray Henshaw,
Minsthorpe Community College*

Headteacher Ray Henshaw explains how Minsthorpe Community College is developing to the advantage of the individuals and the school

An apprenticeship is a combination of employment and training for anyone above the age of 16. Employers train individuals within the context of their organisation, so apprentices contribute to the organisation's productivity while developing their own skills. There are more than 240 apprenticeship frameworks across the UK, covering most occupations and sectors. So for schools and colleges, apprenticeships are a perfect fit as places of both learning and employment.

Growing our own workforce

At Minsthorpe Community College we see apprenticeships as a unique way to grow our own workforce; they combine on-the-job training in our organisation with off-the-job learning. The learning takes place in context and provides a real understanding of the working world, combining practical skills with theoretical knowledge. They thus offer a career route and an invaluable opportunity to grow the skills we need, now and in the future.

Apprenticeships can also help to improve our organisation's staff



retention and engagement, as they can be used to further develop our existing workforce. Apprenticeships are for employees of any age and we use them to upskill our staff, putting those who we see as future leaders through a Level 5 team leading apprenticeship.

From April 2017 schools, colleges and academy chains with a wage bill of over £3m will be required to pay in to the new Apprenticeship Levy and to employ more apprentices. Some schools are simply viewing this as an extra tax and have no plans to develop an apprenticeship programme. At Minsthorpe, while we appreciate the problems that the levy might cause, we also see this as an opportunity to use a planned apprenticeship programme to enhance the college – both educationally and in terms of workforce development.

Apprenticeships offer learning a profession in the workplace, with the benefit of acquiring knowledge from experts. For Minsthorpe this means we can pass down the skills and knowledge

from our most able workers to incoming or existing members of staff, keeping our skills in-house and passing them from one generation to the next. Apprentices are fully employed, so at the same time we can entrust them with tasks that contribute to our organisation's productivity and success.

Of course, this means that we have to adjust some of our normal employment practices. Apprentices rarely come with the developed skillset of more experienced candidates; so we look to employ them in roles that they can grow into, while developing themselves. For example, two years ago we took on a business admin apprentice to provide support in our general office. However, within weeks it became clear that she had a real aptitude with numbers and data, so we decided to redeploy her in our data management team. She has never looked back and we took her on as a permanent employee once she had completed her apprenticeship. This illustrates the value that apprenticeships offer the college: the big advantage for us is that we can inculcate the workplace habits that we



want in the apprentice from day one, and can truly grow our own.

What we look for in an apprentice

We look for potential in candidates and appreciate that they will be a work in progress in the early days, not the finished article. Thus we have to bear in mind during the interview that the apprentice has a dual status: learner and junior employee. We look for a willingness to learn and for a skill set that can be developed as opposed to one that has already been demonstrated, so we look for examples of character skills- resilience, team working, problem solving through the apprentice's school history, work experience and hobbies.

Minsthorpe is also part of the steering group that is looking to develop the new QTS Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship. We are working with City & Guilds, ILM, Kineo, The Oxford Group, Digitalme, e3Learning and the Buckinghamshire Consortium of Schools on the new apprenticeship standard. If the standard gets the green light, we intend to incorporate it into the school-centred initial teacher training provision that is centred at the college.

It is also an opportunity for us to develop our post-16 offer. Schools are significant employers in their own right. Minsthorpe aims to work with schools and colleges in the Wakefield area in order to develop a pool of apprenticeship talent designed by schools, for schools. These will include:

- » teaching assistants
- » PE and school sport
- » office administration
- » IT support
- » receptionists
- » premises support.

We intend to develop this area first, but not just for schools and colleges. Many of these areas are also suitable for businesses as well. For us, this is a way that we can extend our post-16 provision and offer alternative progression routes for our students, in addition to the traditional academic and vocational ones. ■





How 'No pen Friday' is easing workload issues

*Steve Taylor,
Robin Hood MAT*

Nurturing team spirit and collective ethos helps to tackle workload-related stress, as Steve Taylor, Executive Headteacher, Robin Hood MAT, explains

There is no finer or better career to go into than education. Teaching is not a job, it's a vocation, a way of life,

a calling. Many jobs offer better financial rewards but there is no job quite like teaching that ticks the moral compass side of things. Influencing children's lives is an absolute honour and pleasure and the ultimate reason that people head into education.

Yet we are in the middle of a crisis within the profession.

Last year more teachers headed abroad than passed through the teacher training route. This means only one thing... a shortage of teachers and a strain on schools.

So, if teaching is such a fantastic career, why are we in the position that teachers are leaving the profession, or heading off to foreign lands to ply their trades? It really comes down to one main and unavoidable reason – workload. You see, there has never been a tougher time to work in education be it as a teacher, senior leader, deputy or headteacher. Whatever the role, the reality is that increased accountability, pressures on schools to achieve improved data, and a tougher curriculum all flow directly into one outlet – increased workload.

At Robin Hood Multi-Academy Trust we have been looking for some time at the issue of high workload among the teaching staff and the negative affects it has had on our culture and ethos. When you have a collective staff who are dedicated, talented and extremely hard working, the great downside can be



that if you aren't careful that team ethos and spirit within the group can begin to erode.

This isn't because people don't get on. It isn't because people aren't valued. Quite simply, as workload increases small things start to take hold; staff stop going to the staffroom, they eat their lunch in class while marking, they arrive earlier, stay later, have less free time in the evenings. This naturally begins to erode morale and the very fabric of the organisation.

It's at times like these that new thinking is required.

When thinking about workload, we looked at several key factors to determine how we could make a change to have a positive impact on staff. We considered:

- » How do we ease workload without compromising standards?
- » How do we maintain our ethos and culture?
- » What elements of reduced workload would teachers value the most?

- » How can we cut workload but increase the educational experience for our children?
- » How can we consistently work towards reducing workload: one step at a time?

On 'No pen Fridays', the staffroom is a hub of activity and there is a buzz and energy about the school

We thought long and hard about these questions and how we could improve the organisation as whole while recognising that in many ways the last 20 years have institutionalised us within the profession. Ofsted now don't have an opinion on marking – they did. Ofsted now don't judge lessons – boy, they did do in the past. When you've been working to such rigid systems as ever-changing Ofsted frameworks, behaviour and actions become deeply engrained. Shifting the focus within an organisation takes time and careful planning.

Mindfulness and mental health

Our first steps along the workload journey have taken two phases. The first is beginning to tackle work-related pressures through mindfulness and mental health.

We've been fortunate to partner with a number of universities in the West Midlands to tap into their expertise in this area. And we are also lucky to have one of our staff who is not only a teacher but in her previous job was an assistant psychologist. This has enabled us to deliver mindfulness and mental health training to the staff to help with their own wellbeing and also that of the students.

We are only at the start of the journey, but we have already created a mindfulness/mental health team of dedicated professionals across our schools who want to make a difference. Over the course of the next year we aim to ensure that the mental health of our pupils and staff remains at the forefront of what we do. By creating a dedicated team we are committing to driving change in this area.

'No pen Friday'

The second phase for us was to look closely at workload and link this directly to staff morale. We sampled and tried a number of initiatives but in the end the one that we committed fully to was 'No Pen Friday' which takes place on the second Friday after the start of a new term and the penultimate Friday before the end of a term. We chose these Fridays carefully to ensure that they are at the right points during





a half term to reduce stress and workload. During 'No pen Friday' we have an expectation on staff that they do not record any work in their books; we expect them to think outside of the box and create learning experiences for the children that tap into a different learning style and approach. We still expect staff to teach maths and English, and to deliver great lessons on these days. But we want them to think differently about how they take the learning to the children.

The benefits for the staff are that in not having to formally record the work, they do not have to mark and so, twice each half term, they have a greatly reduced workload. Naturally, as you can imagine, the children also gain hugely from the experience because they are able to learn in a different way and apply key skills in a more fluid manner. Make no mistake, we do not expect children to get an easy learning ride



on these Fridays or that they are simply given tasks to mark time. We expect children to be inspired, motivated and to soak up new learning experiences.

After we considered the actual workload aspect of 'No Pen Friday' we then began to consider how we could use it to nurture team spirit and further develop our collective ethos and culture. Over the past two years we have seen the number of staff visiting the staffroom drop off hugely at

lunchtimes and so, on 'No pen Fridays', we lay on a lunch for the staff. This is no gourmet banquet, but it is a lunch covered by the school that the staff don't have to prepare or bring in. We simply insist that all staff spend their lunchtimes on 'No pen Fridays' in the staffroom socialising and getting to know their colleagues that little bit better. On these days the staffroom is a hub of activity and there is a buzz and energy about the school.





Enforced early closure

The final piece of the 'No pen Friday' jigsaw is that of an enforced closure time of the school. Staff within Robin Hood MAT are notorious for staying late so on these Fridays we've put in place a very basic rule: all staff are to vacate the premises by no later than 4pm. This is non-negotiable and means that for two Fridays a half term staff are guaranteed to get their weekend started that little bit earlier than normal.

The multi-academy trust has seen huge benefits with this initiative. Staff have more time for each other, children get to learn in a different way and the collective morale and spirit of the group is vastly improved. We would, however, be lying if we were to say that this incentive for staff hasn't come without its challenges – some of which we simply could not have predicted.

One element that surprised us was that a proportion of the staff actually found 'No pen Friday' more stress-

ful to plan for at the start than a normal day – because they had to think in a different way about how they would cater for the children and structure the day. This led to an initial period of anxiety for some people that we had to work through. For the first few cycles, we still had staff insisting that children recorded their learning in their books. It took a concerted team approach to ensure that staff thought differently about learning experiences for the children. Just because a child is not recording their learning in a book does not mean that they are not learning.

The final challenge that we encountered was in actually getting staff out of the door at 4pm. Some staff take a lot of comfort in getting their rooms set up for the next day of teaching and actually found this deadline more stressful. If we are honest, this is something we've had to be a little bit flexible over and on some occasions, even though it is a non-negotiable, we've had to compromise and put the time back to 4:30pm for the odd individual or two. After all, our aim is to reduce their stress and not add to it!

Improving staff workload and reducing stress is an ongoing issue across schools and needs a long term, nationwide strategy. At Robin Hood we cannot claim that we are where we want to be, yet, but we are making an effort to step in the right direction and make changes that have a positive impact on staff. After all, as Mother Teresa once said, 'I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.'

The more schools work to tackle these issues together, the greater our chance of invoking meaningful and long-lasting change. ■



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