



SSAT Journal 13

Winter 2018

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Welcome

*Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*



Welcome to the winter edition of the SSAT Journal. All school terms are busy, but this one seems busier than usual. It has also been a mixture of celebration and anger. The anger has been over school funding, and I was pleased that Tom Middlehurst and I were able to join the headteachers' march to Downing Street in September to deliver a letter to the Chancellor urgently requesting sufficient and fair funding for schools. The response was the promise of £400 million for 'little extras.' As Tom writes in his blog (<http://bit.ly/2StRpGh>) this shows a complete contempt for school leaders and a wilful ignorance of the real challenge schools are facing. SSAT will continue to campaign on this critical issue.

I never cease to be amazed about the quality and creativity of the work that goes on in schools. The 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1 gave schools the licence to be creative with the commemorative activities in schools and their communities. Across the country students gave voice to the impact of the war in their locality and the national and international implications. Performances, artwork, poetry, textiles, pottery and film were all used to thank the fallen for their sacrifice. Nationally we saw the realisation of Danny Boyle's vision for beach art, and the awesome Peter Jackson film on the life of the soldier before, during and after the war. 'They Shall Not Grow Old' is an invaluable resource for teachers.

I will never forget meeting Weston Favell's 'War Horse' – a magnificent replica that inspired a cross-curricular project. The arts are integral to individual students' flourishing and development. At SSAT we believe that schools should think imaginatively about their curriculum and do what is right for the young people and communities they serve. That is why we made it a core theme of this year's National Conference – Pure Imagination where BBC arts editor Will Gompertz spoke of being an imaginative leader and Charlotte Church, educational campaigner and singer, invited us to imagine if... we were truly creative about the curriculum.

The conference gives schools and teachers the opportunity to showcase their work, and I am very proud of the quality of the profession they display. The quality of work going on in the vast majority of schools is outstanding and we have to keep telling this to politicians and stakeholders. We know the education secretary keeps a copy of this journal in his office – the articles always show the breadth of work going on in schools.

Enjoy the journal, and if you would like to contribute please email your Relationship Manager on rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk.

**Sue Williamson,
SSAT**



How peer visits foster a collaborative professional learning culture

Abi King,
City of London Academy Islington



Abi King, assistant principal, City of London Academy Islington, explains how peer drop-ins to lessons give staff greater ownership of their professional development.

As a school, we have a total commitment to the development of our staff as outstanding practitioners to provide a world-class education for all of young people. Our executive principal, Clare Verga, believes in the importance of developing every single member of staff – ensuring that everyone has the opportunities to progress and has

a sense of worth. Staff are supported in achieving their career goals, even if that means moving to promotion elsewhere.

Senior leaders rotate roles and responsibilities to allow them all to build expertise within a variety of remits and develop a wide skillset. This has contributed to five members of staff gaining headships in the last few years. CPD provision is carefully mapped for all staff including support staff and governors, and is linked to career stage to ensure all needs are met.

Expert teaching requires...	Challenge So that...	Explanation So that...	Modelling So that...
	Students have high expectations of what they can achieve	Students acquire new knowledge and skills	Students know how to apply the knowledge and skills
What does this mean to us?	• Challenge is understood by teachers as providing relative challenge to all, and not challenging the most able. Teachers consider individual students' starting points when planning and pitch their lessons appropriately. • Teachers do not give 'easy work' and incremental challenge is a hallmark of all lessons. Some lessons will engage students in deliberate practice, during which the level of challenge will, and should, fall. • Teachers facilitate 'deep thinking' and resist 'content coverage' over depth. • Students are not in left in their 'comfort zone', nor are they left to panic, instead, students are required to struggle. Their brains should hurt during the lesson because they are required to think, engage with challenging material and concepts, and do something differently. Students are left just long enough to struggle before teachers intervene. • Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and up-to-date. Teachers inspire students through the passion in their subject and excellent resources and stimuli.	• Teachers anchor new concepts to ones that their students already know. • Teachers provide just enough explanation before students are left to practise something new. Teachers avoid explaining too much, so as to avoid confusing and overwhelming students. • Teachers make complex and often abstract ideas clear and simple, without losing their complexity. • Teachers carefully anticipate likely misconceptions that might arise, and plan their explanation carefully to address these as, or before, they arise. • Teachers' explanations of new concepts are reinforced with wide-ranging and challenging stimuli that get students thinking. • Explanation leads to modelling, so that students know what they are expected to be able to do with newly acquired knowledge. • By the end of a lesson, students are able to explain a new concept themselves.	• Teachers use modelling in all lessons to inspire, support and assess students on their deliberate practice of new skills and content. • Teachers study worked examples and models with their students, often before deliberate practice, to help break down models and build criteria for what good looks like. • Teachers create models of differing quality, including a model of excellence, which reinforces the challenge set in the lesson. • Teachers might create models in advance, but are also able to build models in class with their students, so that they can demonstrate the steps required to achieve excellence. • Teachers build models that are informed by assessment objectives, subject specifications and curricula. • Models enable students to practise with confidence, without limiting their creativity.

Link to T&L

This year, we have given even greater focus to providing more personalised development and giving staff greater ownership over their development. The teaching and learning team work with teaching staff to ensure the quality of professional learning is high, so as to drive the standards of teaching and learning. Pedagogical principles of teaching and learning have been co-constructed with staff and underpin the CPD of teaching staff and teaching assistants. Feedback from lesson observations is linked to a teaching principle, and staff receive personalised CPD based around that target – but they decide what activity would be best for the development of their practice. This could be joint planning, in-lesson coaching, an enquiry focus visit⁷ (peer drop-in), etc.

All staff complete a CPD audit which gives them the opportunity to identify a particular principle they feel they need to focus on, based on previous feedback and their self-review of their practice. The CPD audits, feedback targets from observations, and other self-evaluation work around the teaching principles inform the careful mapping of CPD opportunities to ensure all staff have a wide range of personalised and collaborative opportunities.

What is particularly useful is the feedback, which can often inform you of something you had not previously noticed in the class you are teaching. A second pair of eyes can be very enlightening

There is a strong emphasis on learning from each other and sharing good practice. The comprehensive whole-academy internal CPD programme includes half-termly CPD groups, twilights, middle leadership development, an academic reading group and weekly TeachMeet briefings. The TeachMeets foster the collaborative culture, as they involve staff at all levels disseminating excellent practice linked to the teaching principles, encouraging them to feel confident about recognising and sharing their expertise. Although each briefing is only 10 minutes, these sessions are highly valued by staff as a great opportunity to encourage reflection, creativity and innovation. The teaching principles keep everything focused on effective teaching and learning.



Scaffolding			
Students engage in deliberate practice	Questioning So that... Students are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy	Feedback So that... Students think about and further develop their knowledge and skills	Conditions for learning So that... All students are effective learners
- Students are given time to practise new skills and newly acquired knowledge. - Teachers and students are prepared, and willing, for mistakes to happen. - Teachers know when, and how, to support students, and can move from providing heavy guidance to some, to providing autonomy to others.	- Teachers use questioning throughout the lesson, from start to finish, to help students think harder, with greater depth and accuracy. - Students regularly ask questions in order to find out more or to seek further explanation. Questions form part of the culture of learning within the classroom. - Questions are rarely isolated and are part of a series of questions that dig deeper. Students give several responses to increasingly challenging questions that form a 'chain of questions'. - Teachers often ask 'why...?' and 'how do you know...?' to encourage deeper thinking and developed responses. - While teachers might plan challenging questions, teachers seek to pose questions that are responsive to the learning taking place in the moment. - Teachers give students time to consider a question and to provide an answer.	- Teachers use feedback to highlight success and how to achieve excellence for students. - Feedback is timely and takes many forms: written, verbal, teacher-led, self-led and peer-led. - Feedback is clear and based on success criteria and the modelling that has already taken place. - Teachers design DIRT (dedicated improvement and reflection time) tasks for students to use to improve their work. - Because of feedback, students are able to articulate what they need to do to get better. - Teachers use feedback and assessment to inform future planning.	- Teachers have clear routines and these are understood and followed by their students. - The behaviour policy is followed accurately and effectively to maintain standards of behaviour in lesson. - Teachers ensure that equipment is out on tables and that students engage in a Do Now as soon as they enter the classroom. - Students stand behind chairs at the end of lesson and are dismissed in small groups on the instruction of the teacher. - The classroom environment, including presentation and displays, screams excellence. - Expectations of literacy, oracy and numeracy are high and modelled excellently. Support is given to aid this. - Teachers and students adopt a growth mindset and negative self-perceptions are challenged.

Peer drop-ins

Our enquiry focus visits have been fundamental in creating this culture of collaboration and sharing. These are short, targeted visits to other colleagues' classes, sharing a particular area of practice to stimulate professional dialogue about teaching and learning. This was introduced as an optional professional learning opportunity, but it has developed organically as staff have recognised the value of seeing colleagues' work. Although it is still voluntary, every member of teaching staff has been involved over the last two years. Staff are proud to be recognised for their expertise in applying particular teaching principles and providing formative feedback after their visits. As one teacher put it, "What is particularly useful is the feedback, which can often inform you of something you had not previously noticed in the class you are teaching. A second pair of eyes can be very enlightening."

The clear message is that these visits are not observations, but a study of practice, and an opportunity to provide and receive feedback. The feedback form, co-constructed with staff, continues to develop based on an ongoing dialogue on how it helps reflect upon and improve practice. It was beginner teachers who suggested adding the examples of our teaching principles to enable them to focus on what they look like in practice; but this has been embraced by all staff, and helps

to maintain that focused dialogue around effective teaching and learning.

These visits are not just about feedback: they provide regular opportunities for staff to work collaboratively such as sharing challenges, joint planning, and coaching and mentoring – but on an informal basis. Visits are mutually arranged at specific times and last for approximately 10 minutes; we have found that even in this short time they provide powerful images of teaching and learning. The weekly visits take place both within a teacher's own curriculum areas, to develop their own subject specific pedagogy, and across departments to share practice of our teaching principles.

There is a culture of mutual respect among staff, in which everyone feels honest about their areas for development as they know they will also be recognised for their areas of expertise

Beginner teachers and NQTs are building their experiences from visiting other staff, as enquiry focus visits form part of their CPD induction. They are encouraged to visit other staff each week to support their development. The first 10 minutes of CPD induction sessions is always a reflection of their enquiry focus visits from the week, what they have seen and tried and the impact it has had on student learning.

Feedback from staff has shown that the professional learning opportunities provided here are greatly valued. There is a culture of mutual respect among staff, in which everyone feels honest about their areas for development as they know they will also be recognised for their areas of expertise. The school leaders are genuinely committed to staff development and to enabling every staff member to work at their best. Dylan Wiliam was one of the sources of valuable expertise that led to the school being accredited by the SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education in Professional Learning. As he put it, we strive to create a culture where we believe all teachers need to improve, not because they aren't good enough, but because they can be even better.

City of London Academy Islington | Enquiry Focus Visit

Walker(s):	Class:	Focus:	Date & time:
Teacher	Class	Subject	
Conditions for learning Entry and exit routines Resources and stimuli organised to support learning Student equipment on desks	Do Now activity (promotes 'every minute of learning counts') Students answer in full sentences, both verbal and written Efficient use of learning time	Growth mindset is encouraged Students taking an active role in their own learning Pace is appropriate for learning	
Challenge Challenge is incremental Teacher subject knowledge is excellent and is used to challenge students AFL techniques to identify the appropriate level of challenge (pitch)	Students are made to think deeply Students are left just long enough to struggle Students have high expectations of what they can achieve	Support for those who need it to access tasks Challenge is personalised to the needs of individual students and groups of students (differentiated) such as high achievers Students have the opportunity to discuss and make mistakes	
Teacher input New concepts are anchored to ones students already know Abstract ideas are made clear and simple, without losing their complexity	Tasks are clearly explained so students know what they have to do Misconceptions identified and addressed	Wide-ranging and challenging stimuli used to get students thinking Students are able to explain a new concept themselves	
Modelling Success criteria or exemplar shared so students know what success looks like	Scaffolding / demonstration (live modelling)	Models enable students to practise with confidence	
Deliberate practice Students have time to practise new skills	Students demonstrate resilience	Teacher identifies when to move students on to more challenging work or support them	
Questioning 'Why' and 'how' encourage deeper thinking Students are asked to defend their answers	Series of questions to dig deeper Students are asked if they agree / disagree with responses	Students ask their own questions Targeted so all students are expected to respond	
Feedback Success and how to achieve excellence are highlighted Based on success criteria and modelling	Evidence of DfE trials, which are used to improve students' work Staff peer assessment	Students are able to articulate what they need to do to improve Feedback on literacy	
Conversations with students, students' work, learning environment, student-teacher interaction I saw... I heard... I noticed... From this visit, something I would like to try is...			
Feedback What went well... Have you considered...? Staff reflection...			

4 Respect – Responsibility – Integrity

Classroom formative assessment: the most cost-effective way to improve education – but how do we know?

*Dylan Wiliam,
University College London*

Dylan Wiliam, emeritus professor of educational assessment at UCL, explains the evidence for the cost-effectiveness of formative assessment.

Twenty years ago, Paul Black and I published an article on the impact of classroom assessment practices on student learning. We began by looking at the effects that tests, exams, grades, and other ways of reporting student achievement had on students' motivation and attitudes to learning. Predictably, we found that such reports often

had a demotivating effect, which tended to lower achievement. However, when we looked more deeply, we found that assessment could also enhance learning, especially when it was used by teachers, students, and their peers, to make decisions about how to adjust what was happening in the classroom to better meet students' learning needs. We wrote up our findings in a rather dense 35,000 word academic journal article¹, but we thought the findings would also be of interest to teachers, school leaders, and educational policymakers, so we also

produced a short booklet that drew out the implications of this research for classroom practice. We called the booklet *Inside the black box*², drawing attention to the fact that too much educational policy-making treated the classroom rather like a 'black box' in engineering: focusing on outputs, and sometimes inputs, but paying little attention to what actually happened in between – in classrooms.

Of course, while the research suggested that using formative assessment, minute-by-minute





and day-by-day, might be helpful for student learning, it was not clear that it would be as effective in real classrooms, and whether the effects would extend to increased scores on national curriculum tests and school examinations such as the GCSE. To explore this, Paul Black and I, together with Christine Harrison and Clare Lee, worked with maths and science teachers in Kent and Oxfordshire. We found that when teachers were supported in improving their use of formative assessment, their students did better than other students in the same schools, even when performance was measured using national curriculum tests and public examinations.³

The work with teachers in Kent and Oxfordshire showed that supporting teachers to develop their use of formative assessment did improve student achievement, but there were two other issues that we needed to explore. The first was that it could be that the 24 teachers

who worked with us happened, by chance, to be more effective than other teachers in the school at the outset. We needed some sort of randomised controlled trial. The second was that even if we could show that our model worked with randomly selected teachers, it was not scalable. We and our colleagues, even if we spent all our time supporting teachers, could not work with every teacher in the country.

For the next few years, I and my colleagues at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey – Joe Ciofalo, Shauna Cooper, Siobhan Leahy, Dawn Leusner, Christine Lyon, Marnie Thompson, and Caroline Wylie – explored a number of models that might be used to support teachers in their use of formative assessment. We knew that such work would be easier if schools received support from an external facilitator or coach, but we also knew that this would make the programme much more expensive, and much more vulnerable to changes in

funding. We knew that what makes formative assessment work in maths would be very different from what would work in art, but we also believed that having the same model for all the teachers in the school would make the experiences of students more coherent.

When my partner, Siobhan Leahy, and I returned to the UK in 2006, we wanted to find out whether what had worked in the US would be equally applicable in England. So Siobhan, by then headteacher of Edmonton County School in Enfield, developed some materials for supporting monthly meetings of teachers – what we called teacher learning communities' (TLC) – in which teachers would meet monthly, to hold each other accountable for trying new ideas, and get support from like-minded colleagues.

She trialled the materials in the school and shared them with other schools in England, who provided feedback. After another

year of development work with SSAT, the materials were published as a set of two DVDs, titled *Embedding Formative Assessment* (EFA). The pack included videos of teachers using various formative assessment techniques, interviews with students, leaders and teachers, and everything a school would need to run 18 monthly TLC meetings.

Since the publication of *EFA* in 2007, the materials have been used all over the world, in dozens of countries and on every continent (except Antarctica), and teachers have told us that they find the materials useful. However, while the feedback was positive, it was hard to know whether the use of the *Embedding Formative Assessment* pack had actually raised achievement. Even if student achievement was higher in schools using the materials, it could just be selection bias – the schools where things are going well might have more time to use the materials.

To get a clear indication of the impact of the EFA programme on student achievement, in 2015, SSAT applied to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) for a grant to evaluate the effectiveness of the EFA pack with a randomised controlled trial, and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) was given the contract to conduct the trial.

In 2015, a total of 140 secondary schools were recruited, and by the toss of a coin were allocated to either the experimental group (getting the EFA materials) or

the control group (who just got the cash equivalent). After the randomisation, it was discovered that 16 of the schools recruited (12 in the control group and 4 in the experimental group) had previously collaborated with SSAT on the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Project (TEEP) – a programme developed by SSAT that had several elements in common with the EFA programme. The evaluators therefore decided that the GCSE achievement of students beginning year 10 in September 2015 in the 66 schools that had not been involved in TEEP but were given the EFA materials should be compared to that of students beginning Y10 in the 58 schools in the control group that had not been involved in TEEP. The measure of achievement they used was the government's Attainment 8 measure in the summer of 2017, being the average GCSE attainment of students in English, maths, their three best English Baccalaureate subjects (from science, computer science, history, geography, languages) and their best three other GCSEs, with the scores for English and maths being double weighted.⁴ The full details of their analysis can be found in the EEF report⁵, but the main effect observed was to increase the achievement of the students in the schools given the EFA materials by 0.13 standard deviations.

The EEF estimates that this increase in achievement is equivalent to one extra month's learning, but this estimate is misleading, because the EEF assumes that one year's learning is the same for students of all

ages. In fact, as students get older, the achievement of the students becomes more spread out, because some students learn faster than others, and so the older they are, the more time they have to pull ahead. Howard Bloom and his colleagues estimate that one year's learning for 15 and 16 year olds on a range of standardised tests is around 0.2 standard deviations⁶, while one year's progress for Y9 students on the mathematics tests used by the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is 0.36 standard deviations⁷. Other estimates can be obtained by looking at how many students who retake maths and English GCSEs in Y12 gain a higher grade, and by looking at the evidence generated when students of different ages take the same test. From all these data sources, it seems not unreasonable to conclude that one year's progress in Y10 and Y11 is equivalent to 0.3 standard deviations.

From this assumption, we can make an estimate of the progress we would expect over the two years of key stage 4 for the students in the control group schools. Assuming that they would retain 90% of what they learn in Y10, and taking account of the fact that the GCSEs are taken half-way through the summer term, total progress over KS4 would be 90% of 0.3 (for year 10) plus five-sixths of 0.3 (for year 11) or roughly 0.52 standard deviations. The fact that the students in the schools given the EFA materials made 0.13 standard deviations more progress suggests that the rate of learning in the EFA schools was



25% greater, at a cost of around £1.20 per student per year.

Obviously more work needs to be done to refine these estimates. But the significant and substantial increase in the rate of learning, and the very modest cost, suggests that supporting teachers to develop their practice of classroom formative assessment through the use of school-based teacher learning

communities is perhaps the single most cost-effective way of improving student achievement that we know of.

Until there is evidence that other approaches to improving student achievement might be as effective, classroom formative assessment really does need to be a priority for every teacher and every school.

How SSAT can support you in embedding formative assessment across your school

SSAT have been working with Dylan Wiliam for over 15 years to introduce the Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA) programme into schools, so we know what works. To complement the recently-updated EFA resource, we also offer tailored training and consultancy support to help implement the programme across your school to maximise its impact and make it a sustainable feature.

For more information, contact your Relationship Manager by emailing rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk or visit ssatuk.co.uk/efa.

Embedding Formative Assessment

A two-year professional development pack for schools and colleges: teacher learning communities in action

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¹ Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). *Assessment and classroom learning. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5(1), 7-74.

² Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). *Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment*. London, UK: King's College London School of Education.

³ Wiliam, D., Lee, C., Harrison, C., & Black, P. J. (2004). Teachers developing assessment for learning: impact on student achievement. *Assessment in Education: Principles Policy and Practice*, 11(1), 49-65.

⁴ In fact, the English score is double-weighted only if the student takes both English Language and English Literature.

⁵ Speckesser, S., Runge, J., Foliano, F., Bursnall, M., Hudson-Sharp, N., Rolfe, H., & Anders, J. (2018). *Embedding Formative Assessment: Evaluation report and executive summary*. London, UK: Education Endowment Foundation.

⁶ Bloom, H. S., Hill, C. J., Black, A. R., & Lipsey, M. W. (2008). Performance trajectories and performance gaps as achievement effect-size benchmarks for educational interventions. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 1(4), 289-328.

⁷ Rodriguez, M. C. (2004). The role of classroom assessment in student performance on TIMSS. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 17(1), 1-24.

Focus on personal effectiveness boosts students' engagement and motivation

Martina Veale,
ASDAN

The new generation of GCSEs with the introduction of the 9–1 grades and more challenging specifications are likely to stretch the brightest students. Our economy needs young people who are able to compete with the very best internationally.

But helping young people reach their potential is about more than academic study. It is about providing a broad and balanced education that enables them to experience success in the classroom and develop the essential skills that will enable them to thrive in education, training and the workplace.

For more than a decade, ASDAN's Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) qualification (see box right) has been helping schools add breadth to their curriculum. By offering learners a diverse course of study that can be tailored to their interests, CoPE provides a creative outlet for young people and has been shown to boost students' engagement and motivation

Engaging alternative at GCSE

One of our registered centres, Hockerill Anglo-European College, has been delivering CoPE to great effect in recent years. Students at Hockerill study two languages at GCSE as part of the international dimension of the organisation. Not everyone enjoys or thrives at languages and the college recognised the need for a high-quality alternative offer for students. So this Ofsted-rated outstanding school in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, registered with ASDAN in

2010 to deliver CoPE at Level 2 as a replacement for a second language GCSE.

Undertaken by students in years 10 and 11, CoPE is timetabled for five lessons a fortnight, with each lesson lasting an hour.



What is CoPE?

The Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, available at levels 1 and 2, involves engaging challenges across a choice of 12 diverse modules including:

- communication
- independent living
- science and technology
- health and fitness
- work-related learning and enterprise.

Learners develop six skills:

- teamwork
- independent learning
- problem solving
- research
- discussion
- oral presentation.

Students compile a portfolio evidencing their achievements and must complete 120 hours of work.

Alison McCulloch, assistant principal at Hockerill, teaches CoPE in collaboration with a colleague. "Where students may have failed in a second GCSE language, they are succeeding in CoPE," she says.

"The personalised learning element of the course is very important to students. In all the years we have been delivering this qualification, I have never had a student who did not want to come to their CoPE class. The choice they have about their learning engages and motivates them. CoPE isn't just for those struggling with a second language, we have also had highly academic students undertaking the qualification. All our students have greatly benefited from it and have found it challenging and rewarding."

Developing and accrediting skills

Alison says students gain many skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively and give good oral presentations. They also start to realise how they already have skills and knowledge from experiences outside school that they can accredit through the course.

"We cover careers guidance, which helps students consider their options after school," says Alison. "CoPE boosts the learners' ability to write CVs because they are able to articulate the importance of essential skills, having discussed and developed

them through the course. Our students can talk about skills in interviews, whereas those who have not taken the course might struggle in this regard because they have not had the same skills development experience."

Portfolio of evidence

Alison says the CoPE method of formative assessment through the building of a portfolio of evidence boosts students' self-esteem, enabling them to achieve and experience success.

"The creation of the portfolio is a great way of working for our learners. It helps them improve their organisational ability in particular, a skill which benefits them in other subjects as well as when they go on to college and further study elsewhere. The students take great pride in their portfolios."

Confidence boost

With the new GCSEs, the introduction of assessment through final summer exams has placed greater pressure on students. Hockerill plan to enter their year 11 CoPE students for moderation in December so that, provided they pass, they will receive an important confidence boost mid-year. "We hope this lift will benefit them across all their subjects," says Alison.

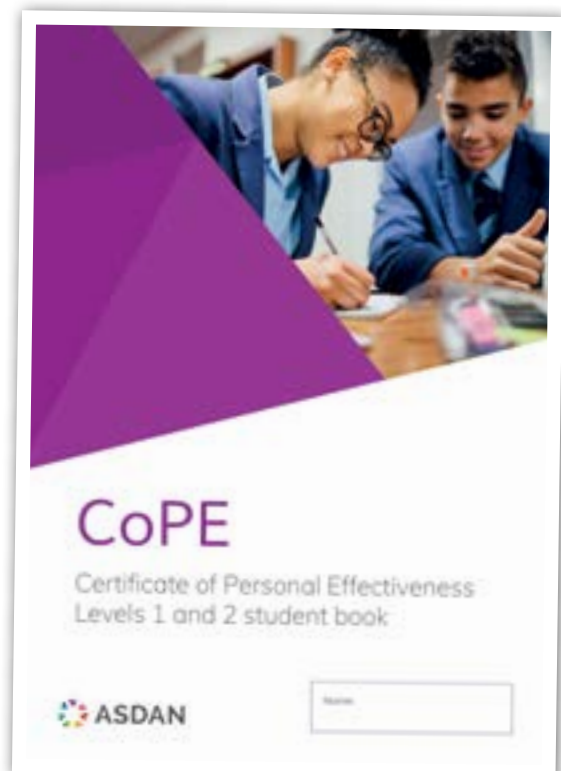
When the students get their certificates at the end of the course, the headteacher invites them to a special reception to mark their achievements. "It's amazing how eloquently the learners speak about their CoPE experience and the skills they've developed. They are thrilled to have this recognition of their success."

Popularity of CoPE

Hockerill find that parents request for their children to do CoPE because they can see the holistic benefits of the course and how it complements academic learning. "The headteacher and curriculum director support CoPE, and it is a respected part of the curriculum." Alison concludes, "We have discussions every year about the appropriateness of the curriculum and what's best for the students, but the place of CoPE has never been questioned. Staff, students and parents all see its value."

Supporting academic progress

Cleeve School in Bishops Cleeve, Gloucestershire, has been delivering CoPE for even longer than





Hockerill. Many of the students undertaking CoPE at the school are at the 3 to 4 grade boundary at GCSE. Because they would struggle with a large number of academic subjects, the students are given the option of undertaking CoPE in year 10 and 11 in place of a course such as history, geography or a language. CoPE is timetabled for two classes of 50 minutes per week for the year 10s and 11s.

“CoPE fits in really nicely with the students’ GCSEs, giving them the option to learn in a different way as well as experiencing success in the classroom,” explains Carol Wallace, teaching assistant and behaviour inclusion unit manager.

Carol, who teaches CoPE in collaboration with her assistant principal Liam Edwards, adds: “CoPE complements students’ academic learning by helping them develop new skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. The independent living module prepares them to survive on their own two feet once they leave home.

“I tell my students that undertaking CoPE has given them an edge over their peers who have not done this course. This is because of the opportunities they

have to develop important core skills that are not necessarily developed elsewhere in the curriculum.

“The skills and personal development gained through CoPE also help the learners in other subjects. We have seen improvements in the students’ literacy in particular, which has arisen through the building of the CoPE portfolio. We have the portfolios on display in class and the students are very proud of their folders – they can see the evidence of their accomplishments and this leads to a great sense of achievement.”

What’s next for Carol’s learners? “Many of our CoPE students progress to college and sixth form. I have no doubt that CoPE plays a huge role in boosting the students’ ambitions and facilitating this progression.”

More information

Fitting CoPE into your curriculum:

Call **0117 941 1126**, or email
qualifications@asdan.org.uk.

Find out more: **www.asdan.org.uk/CoPE**

Helping your students make the best career choices for them

*Peter Chambers,
SSAT*

A vast amount of information and opinion is currently doing the rounds about career education in schools. SSAT publications editor Peter Chambers picks out some of the more useful work, focusing on employer engagement.

To start with a few basics that are, to most in education, valid though not necessarily welcome facts. The government has introduced a requirement that every school must ensure that all pupils are provided with independent careers guidance from year 8 onwards. Since September, all schools in England have been legally required to appoint a senior careers leader and publish their strategy for providing students with careers guidance. Projections by the Careers & Enterprise Company, which was set up by the government to strengthen students' transition to working life, show that about 3.3m work experience placements, workplace visits and presentations by employers are being offered each year to children — far fewer than the 5m deemed necessary to meet official targets for each child to have seven 'encounters' during their schooling.

A DfE report published in July covers the Winter 2017 findings of the first wave of the School Snapshot Survey, for which interviews were conducted with 800 senior leaders and 909 classroom teachers. The report highlighted ways in which secondary schools were delivering careers education. Schools most commonly had visits from external specialists (89%), followed by general

Key ingredients of good CIAG are probably best summarised in the Gatsby benchmarks:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance.

teaching staff without specialist qualifications in career education (70%), staff with non-teaching roles that have specialist qualifications in careers education (52%) and teaching staff with specialist qualifications in careers education (41%).

While teachers have an important role to play in inspiring pupils' future careers, it's wrongheaded to claim they should replace trained careers advisers, Denise Bertuchi, UNISON's assistant national officer, wrote in Schools Week in May. Many pupils find teachers a good source of advice, but teachers shouldn't be expected to take on the role of a careers adviser, she noted. Rather, they should be complementing the work done by good careers professionals.

Careers advisers are a separate profession, who use their knowledge of the labour market to help young

people navigate an often complex journey through life. Teachers are not trained to advise pupils on careers – how can they possibly be expected to offer well-rounded advice on the full range of pathways available to young people?

Another issue: the government's new strategy seems to assume every secondary school has a team of dedicated careers experts. Where is the money for all this to come from? There no increased core funding for schools to deliver the strategy. So it is crucial to make full use of employers' potential contribution, as well as any free or low-cost support from government organisations and charities, such as those listed at the end of this article.

Employer support

A useful review of the evidence on how employers can support schools to improve pupils' outcomes has been published by Education and Employers, supported by Education Endowment Foundation. The researchers identified four broad areas of employer engagement in education that could benefit young people:

- Boosting young people's understanding of jobs and careers: broadening and raising career aspirations and enabling them to make decisions on what, where (and how hard) to study.
- Providing the knowledge and skills demanded by the contemporary labour market, such as creative problem-solving and team-working.
- Giving young people relevant work experiences and practical insights into how recruitment processes work and contemporary workplaces operate.
- Using employers to support class teaching resources and helping young people to see the connection between what they learn at school and employment outcomes.

Another Education and Employers report, published jointly with Barclays' LifeSkills programme, found in a typical year group 20% of pupils have positively benefited from business-led interactions at school. The students most likely to benefit were those who were uncertain about their future, and borderline achievers. Teachers also felt that the impact was more noticeable with girls than boys. Incidentally, a high proportion of teachers (93%) reported that

work experience and employer engagement have a direct impact on improving exam results. Dr Elnaz Kashefpakdel, head of research at Education and Employers, says: "Over half of teachers felt that employer engagement helped students understand the relevance of education to their future careers. For many students, making a connection between the world of work and what they are learning motivates them to study harder. This translates into better exam results. We often get asked whether there is a link to better academic achievement. This study indicates that there most definitely is a meaningful link."

Previous research found students are 86% less likely to become NEET if they experience four or more contacts with employers before leaving school. The same research showed young people with higher volumes of encounters with the world of work will benefit from wage premiums of up to £3,500pa.

Research has found students are 86% less likely to become NEET if they experience four or more contacts with employers before leaving school

Which activities work best?

Successful work experience placements are believed to have the greatest impact on improving academic attainment, with over a quarter of teachers ranking it as their first choice. This is followed closely by employer-led sessions such as career events with employee volunteers.

Working it out, an OECD report published in July, showed that the highest proportion of young people doing work shadowing was in Finland, with 80% of boys and nearly 70% of girls (UK countries were not represented in this comparison). The highest proportion undertaking internships was 69%, in Denmark. The highest proportion attending job fairs was in Canada, where nearly 90% of boys and 80% of girls took part.

When students are choosing a school track, or a particular school or vocational programme, there should be a compulsory one-to-one interview with a career guidance professional, according to OECD. It is important that career guidance



services inform all young people who might benefit about vocational education and training options alongside the other options available to them.

Some schools' initiatives

A number of SSAT publications have featured the actions that schools in this country are taking along these lines. At High Arcal school (now Beacon Hill Academy) in Dudley, 50-60 students have work placements each year, in addition to all year 10s undertaking one week's work experience at the end of the summer term. The KS4 open evening finds the school hall and corridor full of stands for employers and training providers. High Arcal takes advantage of open days at colleges, and tells parents about them. Also part of its careers programme are life skills classes in, for example: cooking; shopping; washing; ironing; and managing gas, electricity and water services.

A taster of the education-business links activities at New Heys Business and Enterprise College (now Enterprise South Liverpool Academy): a number of year 9 students took part in a students' middle managers course provided by a number of local businesses. The training looked at how key skills are used, and involved a range of problem-solving activities. For example, staff at the New

Mersey Shopping Park discussed a series of real-life business problems and issues they were experiencing (litter, vandalism and abuse of disabled parking spaces). Students were split into teams and asked to consider solutions to these problems. The challenge made the students aware of business issues, got them working outside their friendship groups, allowed them to improve their team working skills and showed them how to work within set limits. The business gained by getting new perspectives on the issues and new ideas for solving them.

Aspects of this programme that had an educational impact on the students include:

- experience of completing an application in a competitive selection process
- insight into the workings of a local business, including the variety of career opportunities
- opportunity to work with local employers and develop awareness of employer expectations
- opportunity to develop key skills in a real-life context
- opportunity to gain motivation, for students who sometimes failed to recognise the relevance of school work to employment.



Key message: start early

Many teachers believe careers activities come too late to alter the attitudes of the young people involved. Such encounters may have the best impact if they take place earlier in a student's school career, potentially before they make key decisions about their futures (e.g. at age 14 and 16). Career expectations in early adolescent years (after about 13 years old) are increasingly good predictors of actual career choices. Research has shown career interests become more realistic during upper-secondary education. For example, at age 13 to 14 the most popular job is actor. By the age of 17-18, this preference has fallen to number 11 of their occupational choices.

So perhaps career guidance interventions need to start before secondary education, when career thinking is emerging. That can help prevent the stereotypical perceptions of certain educational and career paths. Early interventions can have lasting impact on children's development and perceptions of different occupations and of the subjects enabling access to them. The OECD report cites UK research showing high levels of interest and engagement among 8-9 year olds, and high receptiveness to learning about employment opportunities and skills. And 90% of primary school teachers surveyed by Education and Employers thought that volunteers from the world of work coming into schools can help challenge children's gender stereotypes about the jobs that people do and the subjects they study.

How primaries get involved

In a programme started some years ago Sawston Village College, Cambridgeshire, brought together 140 year 6 pupils from four rural and city primary schools, supported by 36 year 10 students from Sawston Village College and Manor Community College, for a conference. This was to 'give young people an understanding that what they do now connects with what they might do in the future'.

At every stage in this full and varied programme the vast majority of the year 6 pupils – and of their year 10 facilitators – showed great interest and engagement. As one girl in year 6 said afterwards, "It was really good to understand what other people do and to have an idea of what jobs will be available to us for work experience in year 10. I'd quite like

to be a visual designer in retail, designing shop windows."

A focus on disadvantaged students

A key part of High Arcal school's approach has been to devote particular attention to students with difficulties when it comes to GCSE options and careers advice and support. When choosing their options in year 8 (for the three-year GCSE) every student has a bespoke interview. And looked-after children get special attention when it comes to advice on creating their CVs for life after school. Student support staff target potential NEETs in years 9 and 10 with a red/amber/green process, which determines how often they have a personal chat with their careers teacher. In years 10 and 11 every student has a Connexions (now National Careers Service) interview – and those who are most unsure get their interviews first.

All these efforts are designed to promote independence and resilience. The emphasis is on helping students make their own decisions, not deciding for them or pushing them into a course of action the teacher thinks desirable.

Practical curriculum

For those young people who are not set for higher education, many schools provide a strong focus on practical skills and links with relevant companies. The Academy of Central Bedfordshire has a 'practical curriculum', recognising that many of its students, some of whom are in the academy's pupil referral unit, engage more readily with practical lessons. Schemes of work enable students to develop their core skills in all subjects through practical lessons.

For example in maths, students are taught the ratios necessary for a wide variety of occupations including hair and beauty, construction and motor vehicle engineering. The academy forged links with Vauxhall Motors in nearby Luton, which donated two cars and two engines to the school to help develop young engineers – with associated work experience opportunities.

Higher education

As well as employers, of course, higher education is an important consideration for many young people, which needs to accompany their developing plans



over their aimed-for careers. Education Ossett Community Trust includes HEI as well as industry partners for its schools. Leeds Metropolitan University has been a very active supporter, hosting regular visits by sixth formers, who among other things take part in lectures on key themes they are studying. The school asks the university to identify things they are doing that are relevant to school students' work. The university also hosts learning walks for year 6 students, to give them a feel for what a university is.

Particularly relevant to Ossett Academy's technology specialism is the trust's association with the Leeds branch of Jacobs Engineering, an international technical, professional and construction services organisation. The company has supported an annual 'big build', a cross-phase engineering project involving students from age 5 to 15. The projects involve pre-planning, problem-solving exercises and the sourcing of materials,

all leading up to the one-day build itself, which is then publicly displayed. One example was a model of new facilities along the lines of an Olympic park, which would be built in a village in Malawi, southern Africa.

One school's dedicated careers adviser

One school that has a particularly thorough approach to careers education is Gloucester's Crypt School, one of the oldest established grammar schools in the country. It invests significantly in careers education and guidance, among other things directly employing a careers adviser/leader, Andrew Lloyd, who coordinates the school's approach. The school is working towards achievement of the Quality in Careers Standard and the Gatsby benchmarks.

Employers are frequent visitors to the school – to take part in an employability award, provide mock interviews and contribute to curriculum learning.



The school has a careers and higher education fair each January, attended by over 100 organisations covering sectors that include business, law, health, and local and central government. All year groups attend this marketplace-style event during the school day, after preparation in tutor groups, with priming questions to help their learning. Parents and carers are also invited if they wish during lunchtime. A programme of career insight talks arranged as part of Crypt's year 12 enrichment programme takes place over eight weeks in the summer term. Planning begins with scrutiny of student vocational interests. STEM features highly, but with a diverse range of other professions. This year they had 24 visitors from more than a dozen sectors.

While catering for individual interests, the school also challenges learners to explore new areas. This year an expert in cyber security proved a massive interest to learners, and female visitors provided insights into the engineering and construction sectors.

Andrew Lloyd comments: "many learners are at the contemplation stage, so are encouraged to attend as many sessions as possible. Our employers routinely comment on how well they have been received and many offer to return."

You can do it, without breaking the bank

It's clear that employer engagement can play a key part in helping young people make the most appropriate career choices, at school and later. It can also boost their motivation when they see the potential value of school work for their future lives. Some schools have been implementing successful programmes to achieve this without further stretching their already beleaguered funds and staff, through exploiting the willingness and ability of commercial and voluntary organisations to support a range of suitable interactions.

We hope this article will help schools to take advantage of this willingness.

Useful links

Careers and Enterprise Company has worked closely with the Gatsby Foundation to develop detailed explanations of the eight Gatsby benchmarks, along with practical tips and examples of best practice. <http://bit.ly/2PQ7AiU>

Inspiring the future, an **Education and Employers** programme, is a free way for thousands of schools and colleges to connect with volunteers from the world of work. It also offers teacher guides and schemes of work, and runs *Primary Futures* from the same website. <http://bit.ly/2AQHjs6>

National Careers Service offers information and advice on job profiles, skills 'health check', how to find a course or contact an adviser, and help to get a job. <http://bit.ly/2F92fis>

Personal Guidance Fund from **CEC** will support the development of innovative, cost-effective models for delivering personal careers guidance in schools and colleges. **Government's Careers Strategy** highlights the importance of personal guidance. <http://bit.ly/2FcaLgv>

The Prince's Trust website offers brief descriptions and links to services including All About School leavers, British Youth Council, GetMyFirstJob, Not Going to Uni, The Shaw Trust for disabled and disadvantaged young people, UK Youth and the National Youth Agency. It also offers information about apprenticeships, grants and funding. <http://bit.ly/2PKnFGC>

UCAS Careers Advice includes information about exploring different jobs and career pathways, finding out about the skills needed for particular jobs, avoiding scams and a careers quiz. <http://bit.ly/2JKFZKr>.

Young Enterprise has programmes for both secondary and primary students, including the company programme, in which students set up and run a business throughout one academic year; and the team programme, to aid the transition into independent living for SEN students. <http://bit.ly/2PHjMCo>



Early intervention for young children with additional needs and disabilities

*Zoë Wells,
Whitefield Academy Trust*

Zoë Wells, Whitefield Academy Trust, describes the approach and early success of an integrated provision to meet the wide range of needs of children with SEND – and their families.

As an early years professional with over 20 years' experience in SEND, I have developed an interest in the importance and benefits of early intervention for both the child and family. In September 2016, Whitefield Academy Trust in Walthamstow, East London, committed to me leading a research project to improve early intervention services for very young children with disabilities and their families, while generating resilience and competence for their future. This has resulted in setting up a local provision for 0-3 year olds.

Whitefield Academy Trust comprises Whitefield Schools and Joseph Clarke School, which collectively cater for 450 children aged 2-19 with SEND

Using an appreciative enquiry approach, I gained parental perspectives, exploring feelings and insights about what characteristics were most valued from the past and current services they received during their child's first three years.

What the parents wanted

The parents I interviewed reported that they would value a robust, sustainable provision that is parent- and child-led, family centered, local, accessible and fun. They preferred early intervention that not only improves the child's wellbeing and development, but also looks at the benefits of interventions and support for the whole family. The families wanted a service with a multi-agency team with excellent communication so that they would only need to tell their story once.

One mother with positive memories of when her child was very young had accessed a small specialist playgroup where parents were not only supported professionally but also met other parents and children in

similar circumstances. Another parent described a specialist play session she attended as 'a life saver': somewhere she could be without worrying about her child's challenging behaviour, where she did not feel bad or embarrassed.

The parents in my research liked the idea of a provision in one place where experienced and knowledgeable professionals could work with parents to provide inclusive activities. They wanted the staff members to be welcoming, with an understanding of disability. They commented that staff should be open-minded, creative professionals who were able to start with the child's strengths, rather than trying to fit the child into mainstream planning.

The parents highlighted that co-location of services would be progressive and time saving. An integrated service would be ideal, where professionals support known children in a holistic way, including assessments. One parent highlighted that flexibility should allow each

family to 'get there in their own time'. So it became clear to me that it would be essential to tailor the provision to meet individual child and family needs.

Private space, where families could talk to a professional without the worry of others hearing, was also referred to as essential. One participant described this as 'not segregating, but being imaginative; to create an inclusive but exclusive service.'

Advocacy was another area valued by families, as was professionals being able to work together across agencies, putting families in touch with appropriate sources of support. Specialist play sessions were suggested as somewhere families could access regularly, meet other parents and children in similar circumstances and give families the opportunity to share problems and possible solutions.

I asked the participants to give their reasons as to why

they did not access particular services or activities in the initial years. They recalled being embarrassed to talk about their experiences and not being given the opportunity to build trusting relationships with practitioners in mainstream settings. A participant described worrying about other parents' attitudes and perceptions of her child with SEND, which prevented attendance.

Feeling uncomfortable and not fitting in was a collective theme when the participants remembered mainstream activities in the early days, both pre and post diagnosis. Most of the participants had initially been keen to access mainstream activities but found explaining why their child looked or presented differently from 'normal' a challenge.

Professional opinion

I also talked to local professionals about what constitutes an ideal service for children under age three. Many emphasised that provision should welcome

families, encourage them with sensitivity and make sure that their concerns are taken seriously. A service that is needs-led, with experienced and specialist workers across health, social care and education, was valued.

The professionals suggested introducing an early years provision, with experienced SEND leadership and strong partnerships with key agencies, creating smooth pathways. The service would have experienced and specialist workers who understand the requirements of families with children with additional needs and would provide a range of activities, equitable with non-disabled siblings and peers.

An optimistic starting point suggested by some would be a provision that starts with early identification followed by meaningful early intervention.

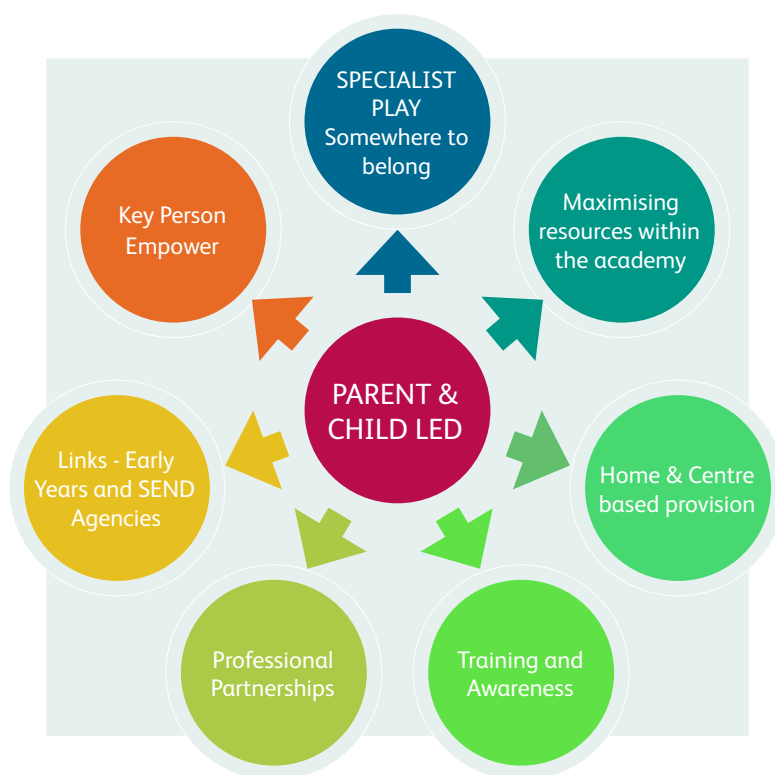
Research themes

This data collection led to common themes (see diagram on page 20). On further reading and reflection, I discovered that these areas related very closely to the work of Carolyn Blackburn.

Early intervention

In her search for evidence based international best practice, Blackburn (2016) identified the Champion Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand as a positive early intervention facility. The provision is based on the principle that delivery is "relational, family-centred, strengths-based, ecological and reflective". These are founded on Bronfenbrenner's social





ecology model. The Champion Centre focuses on bringing together key agencies and allowing families to get together with professionals to plan for their child, thus building trusting relationships. This multi-agency, family centered approach improves service delivery and coordination. I agreed wholeheartedly with this approach and so planned to use this model as a starting point for intervention.

Provision

Lloyd Park Children's Charity in Waltham Forest, which currently delivers all the universal activities for the children and family centres in our local authority, was interested in my findings and we set up an initial pilot based on what the parents and families said they wanted. We adapted the New Zealand Champion Centre 'carousel model' to fit our offer.

This pilot was successful, so we then introduced the new child and family focused play groups in the LA's four neighbourhood children and family centre hubs.

In one of the research interviews, a parent had said she was looking for 'somewhere to belong' and everyone agreed that this should be the title of our provision.

The groups have now been running since February 2018. The play sessions run on a six-week cycle, attended by a different professional each week. The children and family centres make available four play areas and resources within the neighbourhood centres. They provide two early years practitioners for each session and a family support worker for the first session. Speech and language therapists attend a session in each cycle. Whitefield Academy Trust provides professional advice

and assessments on child development.

A maximum of 10 families have attended each group, to make it as personalised as possible and to enable siblings to join in. Each session has been set up with accessible activities and equipment. A group singing session ends each group.

I believe the approach has provided effective early intervention, enabling the children to reach their potential, and supported effective partnership working with parents. One of the practitioners in the group stated having different professionals was useful as it really benefited the parents. It allowed them to raise the relevant concerns with the relevant professionals within a safe environment while their child was engaged in activities."

Following the success of this project, the groups will now continue with the next cohort of children. Plans for the future include developing a transition process for children moving into early years educational provision.

Further information: z.wells@whitefield.waltham.sch.uk

Reference

Blackburn, C (2016)
Relationship-based early intervention services for children with complex needs: lessons from New Zealand. Available at <http://bit.ly/2F80IaE>

‘University Challenge’ – in a primary school

*Julia Moxon,
Robin Hood Primary Academy*

Julia Moxon, headteacher, Robin Hood Primary Academy, describes the implementation of her radical ideas on how to give teachers and pupils choices in teaching and learning.

Have you ever gone on a learning walk late on a Friday afternoon? Having done this I felt disappointed: I saw a mixture of ‘golden time’, activities and finishing off. The children were clock watching, as were the tired staff, all waiting for that 3:15pm bell which signalled the end of the school week and the beginning of the anticipated weekend.

My aim was to change this culture. What if Friday afternoon was the best part of the week? What could be introduced that could link quality learning and this time to our SIP and school values? I wanted pure interest-driven learning, devised by teachers to enthuse and aim high.

At the time my eldest son was completing applications to go to university. He was lucky because this option had always been discussed with him, but I thought about some of our children who could potentially be the first person in their family to achieve this. I am not saying that university is the only option, but it should be an option. Let’s give them the information so that they can decide for themselves.

How to make them aspirational?

At Robin Hood Academy we have always discussed careers with our wonderful pupils – including

options like ‘being a mum’ (there is nothing wrong with this). Yet there should be more than this. How could we make children’s answers aspirational? For children to decide the courses that best fit their interests or that stimulate their curiosity. They can all then be made aware of university as an option for their own future.

School context

Robin Hood Academy, part of Robin Hood MAT, is a three-form entry school for pupils aged 3-11 with a high proportion of EAL pupils (76%). It sits in the middle of a large estate, Hall Green in Birmingham, with a high deprivation index rating. There is some mobility in infant classes but very little in junior classes. At key stage 1 it performs at national levels; at key stage 2 just above or in line with national levels.

This was an opportunity to address the gender imbalance, the stereotypes and the socioeconomic differences that present themselves if you teach in a deprived area.

When I get an idea in my head I want to go with it straight away. However my CEO thought it was a great idea, but told me to introduce it gradually. He sold the idea to staff for me. They had questions – not surprisingly when we were proposing a ‘university’ course for primary pupils. These included: what about fitting it in an already tight timetable? What if children don’t like my course?





What can I deliver? Won't something else need to give? Will I get a budget?

Staff all bought into it – after they had half a term to think about it. In January 2017 they sent me an overview of the courses they would deliver. In the first round these ranged from German to forensic science.

Staff sent me an overview of the courses they would deliver. In the first round these ranged from German to forensic science

I really wanted buy-in from universities too, and so I wrote to a number of them, explaining the concept and asking if we could use their logo and affiliate them to the course. Some offered resources, others just thought it was an interesting concept.

Every teacher had to complete their own 'prospectus', stating what the course was about, the aim/objectives and future employment ideas. Here is the one for German: <http://bit.ly/2PGcRu3>.

Buy-in from pupils

At the presentation to pupils, all entered the hall and every teacher delivering the course had a two-minute pitch to say why children should pick

them and their university. They had slide shows to highlight what was being taught. Seventeen more of the courses are featured here <http://bit.ly/2DuG43G>.

This was the longest assembly ever... Half way through I remember saying to the children: "Shall we have a break and come back in a minute?" They all shouted, "No!" Pupils were crammed in, but loved what they were hearing. We carried on until every course was discussed.

Then the clearing process began. Every child went back to the classroom and decided, using the pitch PowerPoint as a prompt, on their favourite 10 courses. The aim was and still is to give every child one subject from their top three.

The next week we started University Challenge. We still start every round in the same way. We go to the school hall and as each group leave we give them a drum roll (provided by a crazy teacher) and then they go in their vertical groupings [year 3-6] with a teacher to 'university'. The sessions run from 2-3pm. When children return to their own classes they are always buzzing and want to tell their own teacher all about the experience.

At the end of the six weeks the teachers give out their fledgling certificates which signal that each child has a 'degree'.

Buy-in from parents

We keep parents informed about what is happening in school through regular newsletters, such as this one from February 2017. <http://bit.ly/2QSEtsf>

We aim to make it exciting and dynamic. Our University Challenge is a wonderful way of ensuring that pupils know about universities. They also learn about employment prospects and hard work. And we have found that they relish being able to choose subjects and courses for themselves.

The project met its objectives: pure interest-driven learning, devised by teachers to enthuse and aim high. It has given me further thoughts for future development across our school and MAT.

Pupils love University Challenge, so do parents who recognise the breadth of learning that we offer children which, we believe, is unique to our school.

You need to ensure your staff have the buy-in from the onset. I think the success was down to the time factor – introducing the concept but allowing staff to mull over what they were going to deliver.

I think the success was down to the time factor – introducing the concept but allowing staff to mull over what they were going to deliver

For the future, I want to develop the university side of the concept more, with visits to and from university staff to ensure children understand fully what choices they may have.

Innovation is one of our core values, so we will have to deliver on it! My overriding conclusion: take a leap of faith – try something new, if you believe in it totally it will succeed.





Raising attainment of disadvantaged youngsters

Sarah Glover,
The de Ferrers Academy



Sarah Glover, groups achievement leader, The de Ferrers Academy, explains what they have done to give disadvantaged students the best possible opportunities.

Just over three years ago I was asked to oversee the RADY (raising attainment of disadvantaged youngsters) initiative after members of the academy leadership team

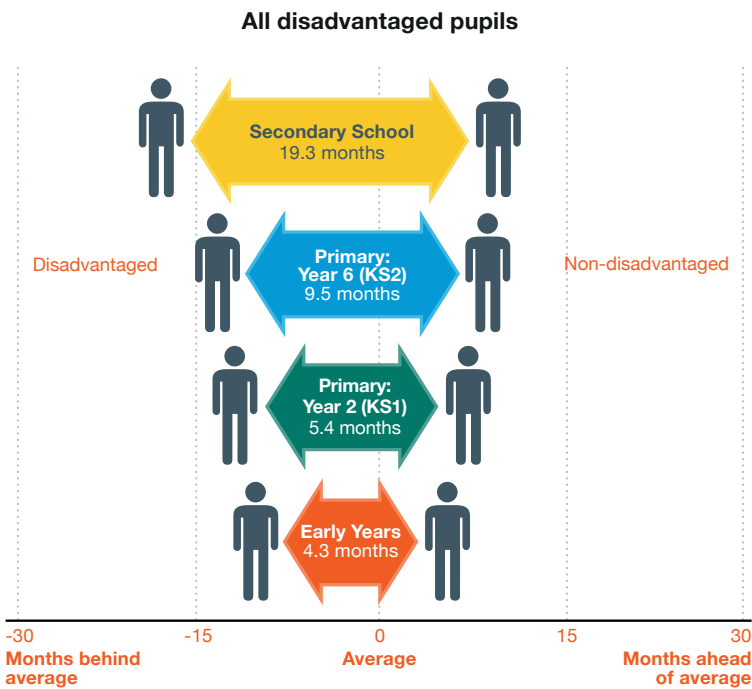
attended a presentation run by the LA. This was originally launched in the Wirral by Dave Hollomby and has since been taken on by Challenging Education.

Nationally, the picture for students from a disadvantaged background can be quite bleak in comparison to their peers. This diagram from the EEF¹ shows how the gap in attainment can

widen from early years through to the end of secondary school.

The aim of RADY at secondary level is to narrow this gap through intervention from year 7 onwards to give disadvantaged students the best possible opportunity to gain the same level of qualifications as other students at GCSE and beyond. It is not a quick fix – it is a five-year programme. Many of these students will have suffered from some form of trauma at some point in their lives, whereby school has not been important for them. They may have been totally disengaged, absent or just missed out on vital learning in their very early years. Without the gaps in their learning being addressed, they will certainly fall further behind as the years go on.

Dr Rebecca Allen² sums up the situation: What matters to children from low-income families is that a school enables them to achieve a qualification to get on in life.” No one asks about their P8 score; employers and further education institutions



are often simply interested in the final examination grades.

There are then other factors to consider, such as parents not having had a good experience of schooling themselves, not having the connections to help with creating networks for work experience etc., or simply not having the funds to allow their children to have additional experiences via extracurricular activities.

If I were to describe RADY in simple terms, it is for teachers to know their students and to have high aspirations for them.

First steps

The first step was to move KS2 SATs results in line for PP and non-PP students for the new Y7 cohort so that GCSE targets would be on a par. It worked for us to add 4 points for all PP students. This is known as the 'uplift'. It is from here that GCSE predictions are created. If this uplifted score put them in a higher set, then that is where they were placed (although we did use MidYIS to verify innate ability here).

The diagrams below help to show how this uplift causes some of the PP students to look at if they are working below target straight away in year 7, causing interventions for gaps in learning to be put in place at KS3, rather than waiting until the attainment gap has potentially widened at KS4.

We then talked to all staff and asked for the following strategies to be put in place for all PP students.

1. Know who the PP students in your classes are – we completed a 'knowing your groups' sheet for this so we are aware of high prior attainers, SEN, EAL, late-entry students, etc.
2. Think about where to sit them in your classroom to get the most effective work out of them.
3. Mark their books first (while you are still fresh), giving them detailed next steps to raise their attainment.
4. Ask them questions at the start of the lessons (not to mention throughout) to engage them fully.
5. Check their understanding of tasks/homework.
6. Give suitable praise – some students prefer this to be done subtly, while others like an audience.
7. Identify gaps in learning and think about differentiation and support to scaffold their learning.
8. Discuss issues with homework (they possibly don't have the internet, or are unable to complete work on occasion due to caring for siblings, etc.).

Although we had some resistance from some members of staff initially, this lessened as the students became more engaged and attainment gradually started to equalise in some groups. It wasn't long before the word RADY became a staple of the staff room as teachers discussed with each other strategies that were working for certain students.

We also looked at the QLA for the

KS2 SATs papers, and all relevant teachers were given a copy of the data relating to their PP students so gaps in understanding could be identified at an early stage.

With each passing year, we have worked hard to develop this initiative, never sitting back and taking our results for granted. I (along with at least one member of the academy leadership team) attend three networking meetings every academic year. I have spoken at several of these, sharing our own results, but I also come back with a to-do-list of how we can make things even better for our students.

Getting students / parents involved

We work closely with Challenging Education as a matter of course, but we now also have strong links with the virtual school and some of our foster carers. We initially started to offer extra opportunities to the PP students in order to improve their cultural capital (such as theatre trips, extracurricular clubs), but over time we have realised that by so doing we were labelling these students as a group. This wasn't the path we wanted to take.

We are now trying to achieve proportional representation, where possible, with all activities and trips. So, if our PP cohort is 25% we are trying to make sure that PP students form 25% of the uptake. This is not easy, but before trips open we are trying to ensure that the relevant PP students can have their place funded, or a reduction applied. Parents are then contacted to invite them to take up a place



for their child before the trip is offered to the remainder of the cohort.

As a matter of course, PP students who would like to learn music are given free instrumental tuition. Revision materials are usually also provided. But as an academy we are looking at the experiences students need to fully access the curriculum, as we can often unintentionally disadvantage students by assuming they have come across certain situations or elements of language that are required to succeed in examinations. How can a student write an effective English essay describing a train ride if they have never been on a train?

Praise postcards are sent home as often as possible when PP students deserve it. This allows the parents to see that we value the contributions of their children and helps to build the school-parent relationship.

Careers

PP students often don't have the necessary connections to actively think about what they want to do later in life. One organisation suggested to us at a network meeting was Speakers4Schools. The website offers speakers who are willing to come into school for no fee. We recently hosted the journalist John Sweeney, who spoke about his career and the importance of school in helping him to develop skills for life.

We are also lucky enough to have a careers advisor within school who is very proactive with our PP students. She has realised

they often don't request careers advice and so is targeting them much earlier in the school year. Alongside this she is tailoring support to those within the sixth form and looking at bringing more career advice into KS3. All our PP students will have Y10 work experience; we are trying to connect them through the Inspiring Futures programme, where suitable placements can be procured. Students at risk of permanent exclusion can be offered part-time work placements.

20-day questionnaire

At a recent network meeting we were lucky enough to be spoken to by professor Mick Waters. He suggested giving a '20-day questionnaire' to all PP students in Y7. This is a questionnaire given after four weeks of term to gauge their feelings about their transition to secondary education; and informs future transition work. Questions include how many times they had answered a question in lessons, how many times they had received praise, how many times they had felt told-off, etc. We have adapted this to use with all our students in years 7-11. We can then analyse responses between PP, non-PP and year groups to help us try to work more effectively with some of our students and check that RADY strategies are being put in place.

Attachment training

This has been invaluable to opening staff's eyes to the biological effects trauma has on the brain and learning. Before attachment training, I think a number of staff failed to

comprehend some of the ordeals our students have been through or are currently going through. They began to understand why a number of our students need additional support and reasonable adjustments need to be made when applying the behaviour policy.

Transition

After speaking with the virtual school, we looked into providing an extra-transition day for the most vulnerable students from our biggest feeder schools. In our case this totalled over 100 students who were PP, SEN or both, for whom we arranged transport and lunch. The aim of the day was to enable them to be more confident when they attended the main transition day a few weeks later.

I visited all the students beforehand and asked them to complete some basic sheets about themselves and their expectations/fears where moving schools was concerned. I also spoke to the relevant staff to get an overview of as many of them as possible. This information was not only utilised on the transition day but could also be shared with heads of year and progress mentors.

The day itself was spent making friends, teambuilding and experiencing lessons. We ran four sessions and created groups containing students from different primaries. Some of the activities:

- Drama: games to explore relationships, learning that failure was ok as that's how we learn and trust.

- English: all students were given a book to read over the summer and created their own bookmark. Several students volunteered to read out loud, even in front of students they hadn't met before.
- PE: a game of rounders and team-building activities
- Maths: students experienced a 'proper' maths lesson, where having a go was more important than getting everything right.

Everyone was able to take something away from this day. Our staff were able to see the potential of many of the students who might otherwise have been hidden on their arrival. Primary staff could see their students interacting with others and know that they would be able to cope in the bigger environment they were moving into (ISAs – individual support assistants, or TAs – could also share information on the students needing particular support). The students themselves were much more confident when they attended the actual transition day, as they knew several key members of staff and had already started building friendships. We also had a foster carer who works with the virtual school with us for the day in order to support the LAC students.

The future

We still have a long way to go. Our initial RADY cohort has now moved into Y10 and we need to embed RADY initiatives into the teaching there. As this is a split-site school, many of the staff who had previously taught predominantly at KS4 and 5 had



heard about RADY but hadn't actually been monitored on their application of the strategies. This is now not the case and whole-staff training was given on expectations at the start of the year.

Although we do provide external activities, most of the work should be done within the classroom, via differentiation, and everyone is held accountable for the PP students that they teach. If everyone is working to inspire students and fill in gaps in their learning, or is helping to increase their confidence in learning, then the results are sure to follow. Staff need to believe that they can make a difference; a number of our staff have taken great pleasure in seeing students move up through teaching sets, or just engage more in their learning.

Last year's PP GCSE results were an improvement on the year before, so we know we are on the right lines. The APS (average point scores) for the current Y10 at the end of Y9 showed students were performing at two thirds of a grade higher than the previous cohort in a number of

subjects (including maths and English). We are hoping that this has set the foundations for an even better set of exam results in 2020. It should also hopefully have a knock-on effect for next year's results.

As an academy we often try new initiatives, some of which last a few years before education moves on. The RADY project is now in its fourth year and we are pleased that our staff have got on board and are not planning to put it to one side. PP attainment is high on the academy agenda and management plays a large role in ensuring RADY strategies are used within the classroom and form a focus for faculty progress review meetings.

RADY essentially boils down to knowing your students and building good relationships to allow them to achieve.

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² Dr Rebecca Allen, Director, Education Datalab *Pupil Premium - Next Steps*, Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation 2015

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The impact of technology on underachieving high ability male learners

*Hayley Symington-Briggs,
Thomas Estley Community College*

Hayley Symington-Briggs, SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow and Head of English at Thomas Estley Community College, discusses her in-school research on the extent to which technology can improve these learners' attitudes and approaches to learning.

The gender gap, particularly in extended writing subjects, is significant, with English being the subject where boys demonstrate the most significant underachievement (Bradford and Noble, 2000:107). Seeking out approaches to 'narrow the gap' is a significant concern, and research has shown that 'what happens in the classroom makes the biggest difference' (Education Endowment Foundation 2017:16).

But while boys' writing has been a subject for decades of research, much of this has been largely focused on the outcomes of male learners (Daly, 2003: 4). This study will instead look at the use of technology and explore the impact that this has on pupils' attitudes and approaches. Quality of outcomes might be expected to correlate with these attitudes and approaches, but that was not directly examined in this piece.

Male learners, particularly in the older age ranges, often express their discontent when faced with writing tasks, as shown in one study, in which a greater number of boys than girls agreed with the statement 'I hate writing' (Millard, 1997: 15).

In 16-year-olds, the gap in average attainment 8 has been found to be 2.6 months for males compared to females (Educational Endowment Fund, 2017: 5).

A range of issues have been identified with boys and writing, such as social pressures, vocabulary and imagination (Bradford and Noble 2000, Daly 2003, Millard 1997). Interventions to overcome these issues have been researched. Ofsted's *Yes He Can* paper (2003) looked at schools where the attainment gap is narrowest, and drew out conclusions to enhance the teaching of boys. These suggestions included chunking, oral work as a prelude to writing and the role of choice. More recently the use of social media in writing lessons has been researched, provoked by the fact that 11% of online time is spent in this way. However, the use of social media is sometimes to the detriment of traditional writing expectations (Kaufer, Gunawardena, Tan and Cheek, 2011).

Lack of research

Researchers identified in the late 90s the absence of research into classroom teaching of writing for boys (Epstein, Elwood, Hey and Maw, 1998). Although more recently there have been efforts such as those by Ofsted to tackle this, there is still a void in the research connecting writing to technology, aside from work on social media (Kaufer, et al). Contemporary research focusing on this type of intervention should help teachers to resist the often broad expectations of male learners that have developed over time (Bleach, 1998: 1).

The Educational Endowment Foundation (2018) has very recently suggested that using technology to supplement teaching results in 'moderate learning gains', largely by improving motivation. Similarly, Morphy and Graham (2012), in their study of low-ability pupils, suggest that word processing may have a positive impact on a student's motivation to write. This study seeks to test this hypothesis in a classroom with high ability learners.

Methods

The highest ability boys' English group in the sample school were selected due to significant underperformance in the area of creative writing. They were provided with two questionnaires, pre-intervention and post-intervention. The intervention task was designed in response to feedback from the pupils seen in the pre-intervention questionnaire. The post-intervention questionnaire then analysed the resulting impact.

The pre-task questionnaire collected data on the pupils' attitudes and approaches towards various aspects of their study, so pupil responses were not skewed by an obvious focus on the creative writing element. For the purposes of supporting the pupils in responding, and in being more specific in measuring impact, the concept of 'approaches and attitudes' was broken down into more specific areas and skillsets: effort, confidence, willingness to invest time, and enjoyment.

Pupils were also explicitly asked if they felt that a range of different teaching and learning strategies (specific and named in the questionnaire) would improve their approaches and attitudes to their outcomes in different topic areas. This element of the questionnaire included a question on technology as a teaching tool.

The questionnaire was developed using the Harvey Balls method which demonstrates an 'at a glance' (Albert and Tullis, 2010: 203) response from a pupil. The method involves using circles which pupils completed in response to their perception of competency in that area. These circles were then converted into percentages for data analysis purposes (e.g., a circle shaded to three-quarters indicated a response of 75%). This method of data collection was selected due to its speed; pupils responded based on their initial reaction

to the question and did not have to decipher the options. The freedom and simplicity of the Harvey Balls process should enable a more realistic data capture. Further, this method would not have been previously experienced by pupils, so the freshness of the task would hopefully increase interest and engagement, reducing negative or passive responses.

In the pre-intervention questionnaires, 80% of pupils in the sample said that they felt that using technology to develop their responses would have a positive impact on their work. Only 20% of pupils sampled had a very negative response (less than 50%) when considering their enjoyment of creative writing in the pre-intervention questionnaire, even though all previous creative writing tasks had been undertaken by hand. The classroom teacher reported that technology is rarely, if ever, used with that group. The intervention therefore was designed to see if there is a correlation between the use of technology and the attitudes and approaches (effort, confidence, willingness to invest time, enjoyment) towards a subject area.

Pupils were also provided with a qualitative data capture method in the post-intervention questionnaire, whereby three questions were posed to encourage further feedback.

Intervention

The boys were posed a familiar style of creative writing task, one which mimics that provided at GCSE. This time, however, pupils were permitted to use word processing software to develop their responses. Pupils were allocated the same amount of time (45 minutes) for the task as they have when handwriting. The usual exam style conditions were implemented to ensure consistency against the handwritten tasks of this type which had also been undertaken. This was intended to control variables and ensure results could be attributed to the intervention itself.

Following this intervention, pupils were then provided with a similar questionnaire to that done before the task, assessing their effort, confidence, willingness to invest time, and enjoyment. They were also asked some more open questions.



Outcomes – discussion

The intervention demonstrated a generally neutral impact overall in terms of the approaches and attitudes of pupils to creative writing, as demonstrated in the appendix.

The two most significant areas of positive impact were on effort and willingness to invest time: 35% of the sample demonstrated an increase in effort levels when using word processing software. However, 25% suggested a decrease in effort levels. This suggests it is important for teachers to be conscious of potential misconceptions about the impact of technology in the classroom on male learners.

In terms of willingness to invest time, 30% of the sample demonstrated an increase in their approach. This area also showed the least amount of decrease in approaches and attitude, with only 10% of the sample (2 pupils) suggesting there was

a negative correlation. Similarly to the confidence and enjoyment factors, this area saw a neutral impact of 60% of the sample.

Anecdotally, the teacher noted that focus and effort seemed significantly improved when computers were being used. However, this observation could be attributed to expected impact from the sample (and the Hawthorne effect). Bleach (1998) has discussed the broad expectations developed over time, which in this case may have led the teacher to anticipate certain responses.

It is also important to consider other factors which may have had an impact on this research. For example, the pupils were given the questionnaire at different points in the lesson: the pre-intervention questionnaire at the beginning of the lesson, the post-intervention questionnaire directly after the intervention, at the very end of the lesson. Therefore, a pupil's feeling towards the specific question

Student	Effort	Confidence	Willingness to invest time	Enjoyment	Avg.
A	-0.5	0	0	0	-0.17
B	0	0	0.25	0	0.08
C	0	0	0	0	0.00
D	0.25	0	0	-0.25	0.08
E	0.25	0	0.25	0	0.17
F	-0.25	-0.25	0.25	-0.25	-0.08
G	0	0	0	-0.5	0.00
H	0	0	0.5	-0.25	0.17
I	0	-0.25	0	0	-0.08
J	-0.5	0	-0.25	0	-0.25
K	0	0.25	0.25	-0.25	0.17
L	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.5	0.25
M	0.25	0	0	-0.5	0.08
N	0	0	0	0	0.00
O	0	0.25	0	0	0.08
P	0.25	0	-0.25	-0.25	0.00
Q	0.25	-0.25	0	0	0.00
R	-0.25	0.5	0	0	0.08
S	-0.5	-0.5	0	0	-0.33
T	0.25	0	0	0	0.08
Percentage increase	35	20	30	5	
Percentage decline	25	20	10	35	
No change	40	60	60	60	

Appendix The opportunity to use word processing for creative writing tasks led to modest improvements in students' effort and willingness to invest time

they had attempted in the intervention and how well they thought they had performed could have influenced their responses. Additionally, due to the complex nature of teaching the atmosphere of the classroom could not be controlled: pupils had been corrected for poor behaviour before the pre-intervention questionnaire, which also may have influenced responses.

Conclusion

Results of this study suggest that the seeming link between technology and male writers is not as clearly positive as had been anticipated. The use of technology to word process rather than handwriting appears to have statistically little impact on students' approaches and attitudes. However, in some of the specific areas of approaches and attitudes, namely effort and willingness to invest time, it can have a positive impact.

Negative impact of this intervention is low, so the intervention is low risk; the potential gains are marginally greater than the risk of detrimental impact. However, this intervention could be more effectively considered on a pupil-by-pupil basis rather than as a general intervention for high ability boys. Pupils who are frequently unwilling to undertake creative writing tasks would particularly be likely to benefit from this as an intervention.

Furthermore, the qualitative responses from the post-intervention questionnaire did demonstrate a theme of finding the physical process of word-processing easier than that of physical handwriting.

This study was conducted with only a small sample from one school, so although the findings are interesting, more rigorous research would be required to draw out clearly which students benefit most from technology as an intervention.

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Does interleaving have a positive impact on students' recall of knowledge?

Dan Barclay,
Cockshut Hill School

Dan Barclay, SSAT Leadership Fellow and history subject leader, Cockshut Hill School, describes his ongoing research comparing two year groups.

As a subject leader for history, every September I complete analysis of the GCSE summer results and attempt to understand why students got the grades they did, and more importantly how to improve them. For the last three years there was a trend: that pupils performed better on one of their exams than the other two. This was always the topic that they had studied in year 11, as opposed to the two topics they had studied in year 10. For a while I believed this was unavoidable: other than focusing revision and intervention on those past topics, what else could you do? There had to be one topic that was studied first.

The idea for change was several months in the making. The seed was first planted in September 2016 by a passing comment by my vice principal; had I thought of teaching the topics simultaneously? She mentioned that she knew a geography department doing this in another school. I was immediately hostile to the idea. It might work for geography but how can you teach history simultaneously? It has happened in an order and therefore it should be taught in order. Topic one for four months, topic two for four months and so on. I dismissed the idea.

However, over the Christmas break several months later I read *Making Every Lesson Count* by Shaun Allison and I came across what they called

interleaving. It was the exact idea that my vice principal had suggested. Rather than spending months on one topic, topics should be broken up and constantly revisited. Looking further, I came across several good blogs:

TES - *The benefits of spaced practice in the classroom: four tips for teachers*
<http://bit.ly/2RV31KB>

Michael Tidd - *Curriculum Design 2: Spaced Practice vs Spiral Curriculum*
<http://bit.ly/2yUIJ4M>

Learning Scientists - *How Teachers Implement Interleaving In Their Curriculum*
<http://bit.ly/2PJ43B>

I was becoming increasingly convinced it was a good idea, especially with the new history GCSE that now had four topics and not three. However, it took a practical reason to force me to make the change in the department. During the academic year 2016-17 there were only two members of staff in my department, and the only other member was part time. There were four year 10 classes, so it made sense to take two each and teach our topics in four month blocks.

However, from 2017-2018 two members of the history department were returning from maternity leave, part time. Furthermore, there were only three year 10 classes. I had no idea how to organise the timetable: one member of staff would have been

left with no key stage 4 at all and I knew that would create tension. In order to equally distribute key stage 4 classes there would have to have been two split classes, especially due to part-time staff.

It was while faced with this dilemma – and having just attended the SSAT opening conference on the Leadership Legacy Project that challenged us to make bold and courageous decisions – that the idea sprung. There are four GCSE topics, four teachers and classes must be split. Why not split each class four ways, each teacher teaches one topic – so pupils will be learning all four topics simultaneously? Not only would this solve the timetable dilemma, it would provide an opportunity to see if this could solve the problem of pupils forgetting a whole topic.

What was the change?

The academic year of 2017-2018 therefore began with three GCSE classes learning all four GCSE topics at the same time. I believed that by using four teachers, in four rooms, each with their own class books for their topic, this would alleviate possible confusion from the pupils and help them to relate the key facts for each teacher. Spacing out the topics by two weeks also made it essential to start every lesson with short recall tests and constant quizzing of pupils to ensure they hadn't forgotten anything. A CPD session by Chris Moyse (<http://bit.ly/2AS3wpO>) refers to research strongly suggesting that this constant low-stakes quizzing

helps improve knowledge recall. We also rolled out constant quizzing with key stage 3.

How did I plan to judge the impact?

Year 11 meanwhile carried on learning their topics in blocks. I hoped that this would provide a good way to evaluate the impact of the change, allowing comparisons to be made between year 11 recall versus year 10 recall. This comparison and control group is clearly not perfect: one year could be academically more able, or show greater motivation to study at home, than the other. Furthermore, it is difficult to prove any success until real GCSE results in the summer of 2018 and 2019. Even then, a difference could be explained by many factors. Yet it made sense to see how Y10 compared to Y11 in similar tests. This is especially true as Y11 were already demonstrating the same trend as previous years in the two mocks that they had sat: the average grade for medicine (their latest topic) was 14/40, while for conflict (their first topic) it was 11/40. This gap widened further by the time of their second mocks in November 2017: conflict had fallen to 10/40 average grade, while Germany, their latest topic, was at 17/40.

First test of impact

By December 2017 I wanted to see how Y10 and Y11 were comparing in terms of their recall of knowledge. So I gave both year groups an identical 45 questions, 15 per three topics as Y11 had not



yet learnt their fourth topic. While this does not mirror the GCSE exam they will be expected to sit, knowledge is such an important prerequisite to do well in exams that I believed it would provide a good opportunity to test how well each year group are doing. The results are below.

Topic	Year 10 average mark /15	Year 11 average mark /15
Conflict (Y11 topic 1)	6	6
Medicine (Y11 topic 2)	7	3
Germany (Y11 topic 3)	7	10

What this demonstrated was a great consistency from Y10 and not the dip in knowledge that Y11 clearly showed by forgetting a lot of their topic 2. It seems to suggest that interleaving does improve student recall across all three topics with no weak topic. However, it also shows that Y11 have better knowledge in topic 3. This could be down to their increased motivation in Y10, a whole extra year of homework and revision or because blocks help recall more in the short term. Certainly, teaching topics in blocks allows for greater depth in teaching, more GCSE exam practice, and ability to carry on a lesson into another or address a misconception earlier. This thinking led to a recent change in my approach which will be discussed in the conclusion.

Second test of impact

However, the history GCSE is not tested on short knowledge questions, so I wanted to compare year 10 with Y11 on GCSE questions. With this in mind, in January 2018 I gave Y10 two GCSE questions to do as a practice exam that Y11 completed in January of their Y10. With all classes being mixed ability this would be a good indicator. This would also enable be to see if Y10 do better or worse at a similar point in the course, thus removing the fact that Y11 might be more motivated than Y10. Unfortunately, this is where the impact starts to show a negative result.

This suggests that despite having (slightly) more consistent knowledge, the current Y10 perform worse in exam questions.

Third test of impact

I also wanted to gauge pupils' perspectives of the change, so I gave out a questionnaire to two classes of Y10 and Y11. There were equal number of Y10 and Y11. Below are the results.

Year group	Class 1	Class 2
Year 10 2017 (current Y11)	48% average	33% average
Year 10 in 2018 (current Y10)	30% average	20% average

This suggests that Y10 were getting confused more often and did not feel they were remembering more, since the sole purpose of changing had been for the students to learn all four topics at once.

Question	Agree Y10	Disagree Y10	Agree Y11	Disagree Y11
I enjoy learning all four topics at once	12	9	n/a	n/a
I can remember all four topics equally	8	10	15	5
I get confused in lessons	10	8	5	15
I forget facts from topics	21	1	28	1

What next? Conclusion and future plans

This led to an investigation as to why Y10 may be performing worse in GCSE questions and why pupils got confused. Through work scrutiny of Y10 books and conversation with pupils, I made two discoveries. Firstly, pupils did not always know which teacher they had and were becoming anxious due to different teaching styles. Secondly, Y10 pupils were not doing exam questions as often as Y11, who would do one question at least every week. Due to teachers only seeing their class once a fortnight they became more focused on teaching knowledge and not testing. This would explain why Y10s' knowledge was more consistent across all four topics, but also why they were underachieving in exam conditions.



I knew I wanted to keep the element of interleaving, but realised studying all four topics in a fortnight with four teachers was too extreme. Again, my decision-making was affected by practical factors as well, with two members of staff leaving on maternity in February 2018. I decided to change the setup, so all classes were taught by the same member of staff. Furthermore, pupils would learn one topic for two weeks, doing an exam question practice once a week, before doing exam tests for a lesson on that topic. The following two weeks would then be on a new topic. This would carry on for eight weeks until all topics had been covered.

By the end of March, I wanted to judge the impact of this tweak. Again, Y10 were given an identical GCSE exam practice questions to Y11. Below are the results.

Year group	Class 1	Class 2
Year 10 2017 (current Y11)	51% average	28% average
Year 10 2018 (current Y10)	48% average	36% average

This was much more positive and demonstrated the impact that exam practice every week can have on improving pupils' ability in exams. Another pupil voice survey also said that 17 pupils preferred this new way, with only 5 preferring the old way.

It is also hoped that this change, while it allows teachers to put greater depth into topics and

exam practice, keeps the elements of interleaving that worked well, such as the constant repetitive quizzing on past topics that kept Y10 fresh on all four topics.

What this highlighted is that interleaving can have a positive impact to ensure that no pupil ends up with a weak topic due to too long a gap between teaching and testing.

Applying interleaving to current Y11

With another set of mocks on the horizon for Y11 in February I wanted to use some of these techniques with Y11. All Y11 lessons started with 15 minutes of low stakes testing and revision on Conflict and Medicine while they were learning their fourth topic, Elizabeth. Equally some lessons were not entirely focused on Elizabeth. There was a fear this could hamper pupils' achievement in Elizabeth, but their average grade was as usual, at 17/40. On the whole Y11 performed more consistently across all four topics and 55 pupils (out of 100) made progress.

The greatest test of this change will be seen in April when Y10 complete a whole mock GCSE paper, which Y11 also completed in Y10 at April. This will allow for greater comparison and if Y10 show similar results to Y11 it will be reassuring. This is something I will have to look at in April. But if Y10 go on to show an increased motivation in Y11, which so far has happened every year, their results should increase beyond where Y11 are currently, without showing dips in their knowledge of any one topic.



Harnessing in-house innovation to empower learners and inspire teachers

Michelle McLeod,
Preston Manor School



Michelle McLeod, associate SLT and lead practitioner, Preston Manor School, describes how they developed and are applying ‘learning identity’.

Preston Manor is a large all-through academy in Wembley, north-west London. The school believes in offering the same opportunities to all, promoting a feeling of belonging while celebrating the diversity of a multicultural community. ‘Learning identity’ is a core part of our commitment to equip our students with skills for lifelong learning, through a common understanding and shared language about learning.

Our work on learning identity began eight years ago, sparked by the expertise of a group of ASTs and the drive of senior leaders responsible for the strategic oversight of teaching and learning. Following a particularly lively exchange about the then current research into metacognition and off-the-shelf learning awareness programmes, the discussion

turned to how the school could develop its own bespoke teaching and learning framework.

It was agreed that before we could set about creating this framework, we would need to collect ideas and views from as many of our stakeholders as possible about their learning experience at Preston Manor. In doing so, we could gain support for our novel ideas about an explicit framework for teaching and learning.

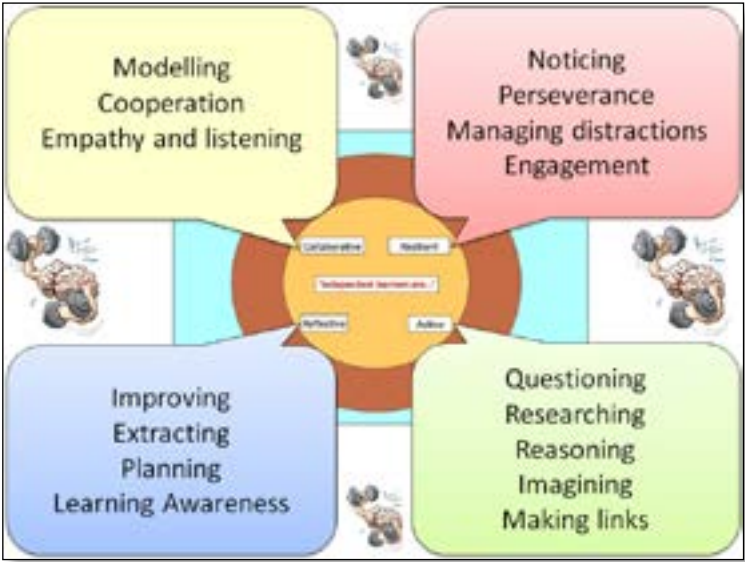
A teaching and learning working party, consisting of ASTs, middle and senior leaders, was set the challenge of formulating a teaching and learning identity. This would reflect our stakeholder views and core beliefs about learning, and make explicit essential learning skills that are transferable from subject to subject.

From this broad, ambitious brief, the working party produced the first version of the teaching and learning identity (Figure 1). Initial feedback from teachers



Figure 1

Figure 2



and students was neutral, so in principle, it seemed acceptable – but it clearly wasn't the transformative innovation aimed for, and hadn't been warmly endorsed by the school community.

However, the working party sought further feedback and responded by making a few key revisions. This modified version prioritised learning, providing

a clearer route to our shared language about learning.

The new teacher version featured enriched explanations, providing detail and clarity about what students might be doing in order to develop each of the core learning dispositions. This version (Figure 2) became our learning identity, and with its re-launch we had finally forged, and gained support for,

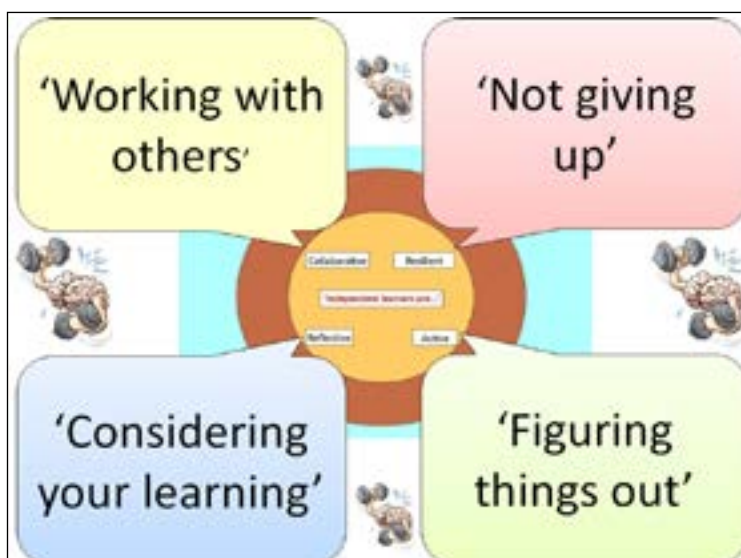
the 'tight but loose' framework that we could all embrace.

In order to make the real shift from tacit support to explicit change in day-to-day practice, it was, of course, essential to make a strategic investment in promoting and embedding the principles and practices represented by the learning identity. This included strategies employing learning events, such as the ever-popular year 7 challenge in which every year 7 student must demonstrate the four core learning dispositions in their lessons. They collect signatures from their class teachers on a challenge card and, once it is completed, they receive a letter and certificate as well as a chance to win a prize during the end of term reward assembly.

PSHE activities about specific learning skills, led by the ASTs supported by middle leaders and trialled in classrooms were mirrored by organisational changes such as an updated



Figure 3



lesson observation form, reminding teachers to consider which learning skills are being taught. The reports sent home incorporated the language of the learning identity; the student planner included its latest version; the praise point system rewards students for demonstrating specific learning skills; and praise postcards gave teachers another opportunity to recognise good learning habits.

Crucially, our head has been unwavering in her commitment to and pride in the learning identity project. By focusing on how we instil a love of learning and by paying attention to developing our students as leaders, first of their learning and of their school experiences, it has become one of the school's more distinctive innovations.

In the years since its launch, the ASTs (now lead practitioners) have continued to champion learning identity by being responsive to teacher and student needs and committed

to maintaining its profile and relevance across the school. In its third year, for example, learning identity evolved once more to include learning mottoes (Figure 3), three-word definitions for each of the core learning dispositions. This was well timed for the opening of our lower school – learning identity was key to building an all-through learning experience for our youngest students, while reflecting the values of the Co-operative Trust movement of which the school is a member: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. As a result, our students can speak confidently about their learning and the skills they need to develop as learners.

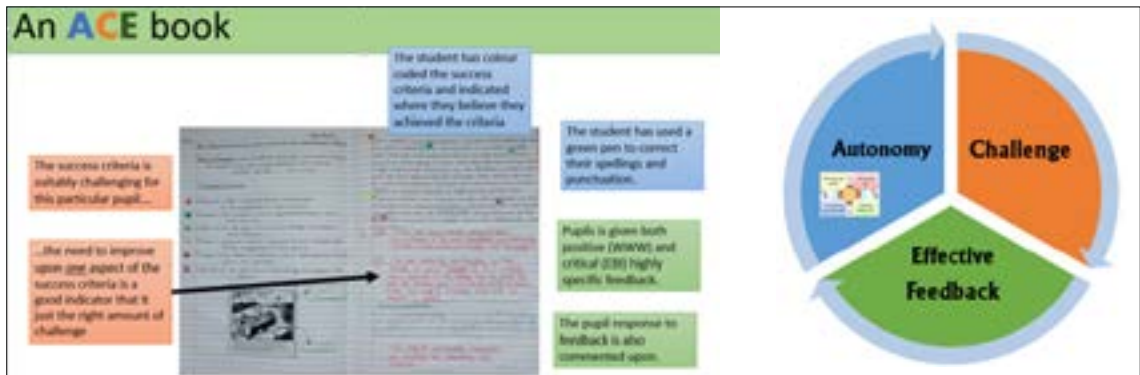
Gratifyingly, the project has continued to evolve and grow to include coordinating the development programme for lead learners (our KS3 student leaders of citizenship, numeracy and literacy); publishing a termly in-school teaching and

learning journal; using learning identity as an evaluative tool for monitoring teaching and learning through learning walks and 'pupil shadow days', and developing of the ACE (Figure 4) teaching identity, our framework for teaching.

ACE, which was developed by lead practitioners, adopted a similar framework to the learning identity. This time, utilising principles outlined in *Outstanding Teaching Backwards* and *The Perfect Lesson*, and by referencing other leading educational experts, the ACE framework represents our core approach to teaching at Preston Manor. **A = Autonomy**, incorporating the learning identity as one of the key strategies for developing student autonomy. **C = Challenge**, incorporating strategies such as modelling. **E = Effective** feedback, incorporating strategies such as DIRT (directed improvement and reflection time).

More recently, we have initiated several cross-phase lead learner projects to further extend the reach and impact of the learning identity. The aim of our first cross-phase maths project was to boost student autonomy and increase our students' resilience. In consultation with the lower school and upper school numeracy coordinators, we designed a short intervention project: matching our best year 7 numeracy lead learners with year 6 children. In weekly short morning sessions, year 6 children identified the types of exam-style questions they found trickiest, and worked

Figure 4



with the year 7 lead learners, supported by HLTAs, to improve their problem-solving skills. We were delighted that nearly all children involved achieved the expected standard in maths in their formal examinations.

The citizenship project aimed to revisit and embed knowledge about British values and give year 6 children the opportunity to develop positive citizenship, alongside teachers and citizenship lead learners from upper school. The sessions were very engaging and provided the ideal opportunity for different groups of students to work

together to demonstrate their understanding of mutual respect.

This year we're planning to revisit and update our PSHE lessons about metacognition and growth mindset. It was particularly inspiring to hear from senior leaders at Skipton Girls High School about the science in our learning: their presentation at the recent SSAT Leading Edge conference was fizzing with great ideas to unlock potential in students and teachers. I'm certainly keen to draw on their experiences. We also want to develop a distinct sixth-form strategy for using

learning identity to help our older students successfully navigate the demands of the new A-level courses, and prepare for future learning experiences.

We have used many metaphors over the years to describe what it is and why we value it. Perhaps one of the best is this from one of the ASTs, Jenni Watts: learning identity is something that steadies the ship and gives it direction". In these uncertain times, our learning identity continues to help us weather those educational storms.

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From 0 to 1047: the first five years of a true community school

*Claire Coates,
Cambourne Village College*



Claire Coates, principal, Cambourne Village College, charts the excitement and challenges of building a school from scratch.

'Cam VC' opened in 2013 as a new school with just 132 pupils in year 7. Over the next five years, the college grew by one cohort per annum. It has developed into a thriving community comprehensive school, picking up 915 more pupils, an Ofsted 'outstanding' rating, Teaching School designation, and a silver award in the 2018 Pearson School of the Year 'making a difference' category. This article attempts to convey the extraordinary experience of building a school from scratch, and some of the excitement and challenges of the venture.

The context

Cambourne is a rapidly expanding new community, six miles west of Cambridge. It consists of three 'villages' of new housing, and minimal facilities beyond functional amenities, the pub, church and sports centre. The highly successful Comberton Village College, rated outstanding by Ofsted at its last four inspections, was the settlement's original catchment secondary school, but as it became uneconomic and impractical to transport the swelling secondary population of Cambourne the eight miles to Comberton and back, the new college was planned and opened as a free school in 2013 by the then Comberton Academy Trust.

Our first challenge

While many parents welcomed the opening of their

own secondary school in the village, particularly as part of a respected local trust, one of our first hurdles was to win the confidence of the immediate local community. With a highly esteemed secondary school, now with vacancies, just eight miles away, not all families were willing to risk their child's education with a new organisation – particularly if they'd invested in a house in the Comberton VC catchment area. A significant number of children from the village, including a high proportion of the most able, were still sent to Comberton in our first year, and our first cohort was significantly below average ability on entry. That is what gave rise to our first serious challenge.

Our close relationship with Comberton VC, however, has been the cornerstone of our success. The foundation of a new school in conjunction with a successful partner, within a small and established trust, has proved an extremely effective model.

Hearts and minds

Naturally, we had no school ready to show our prospective pupils and parents in the autumn before opening, so our first open evening, held at Comberton, was a slide-show of building plans and curriculum maps. But there was a sense of excitement alongside the scepticism as we unveiled the architect's glossy school designs, and over the year before opening we began to establish a rapport with our first set of parents. We aimed to emphasise the many ways in which our pupils would have a comparable experience to that offered

at Comberton, while enjoying creating our own identity, traditions and ethos. We took a multi-pronged approach:

- A temporary website was set up, frequently updated with photographs of the rapidly rising building.
- We visited the year 6 pupils regularly, and rotated monthly briefings for parents between the primary schools of our newly created catchment area.
- Parents and pupils were consulted about uniform design, logos and colour schemes, and kept informed as staff were appointed.
- Monthly updates were written for the local paper, the *Cambourne Crier*, and interest maintained in the *Cambridge press*.
- The school still being a building site in July, we took our first intake to Anglesey Abbey, a nearby National Trust property, for their new intake day.
- We held a summer school for disadvantaged pupils.

The sense of anticipation at having their own, brand new school grew palpably among the year 6 pupils in the year before we opened, and most of their parents were gradually coming on board too. When the building was finally handed over, the paint literally still wet, there was huge local interest. On a Saturday afternoon early in October, we held an open afternoon for the local community, and hundreds of people visited, to be shown round by

our proud year 7s. Similar crowds attended our first formal open evening, many from out of catchment. By half term, we felt we were on our way, and for a number of years have been oversubscribed, as local parents realised the advantages for their children of living within walking, cycling or scooting distance of a modern, lively, extremely well-equipped school, which in many respects was a much smaller replica of its successful parent.

Community support

A unique factor behind Cam VC's success has been its relationship with the local community. Those unfamiliar with the Cambridgeshire education system may be puzzled by the 'village college' designation: it was created by Henry Morris, Secretary of Education for Cambridgeshire from the 1920s. Put simply, it's the philosophy that the secondary school should be at the heart of the community, supporting lifelong education 'from the cradle to the grave'.

Having been granted the 'village college' title by the Henry Morris Trust, we sought to fulfil this ideal from the outset, at first managing to offer just the gym, sports hall and drama studio for hire on two evenings a week, alongside a smattering of adult education classes. The college is now open until 10pm every night of the week, and on both days at weekends, with over 30 clubs and societies running regularly. The logistical demands this creates are immense – but so are the benefits to school and community, exemplified by a shared project with the parish council to build an additional



performance hall on site that can also provide community cinema. This has led in turn to the foundation of the CamVC Charitable Trust, with both school and community trustees fundraising together to furnish and equip it.

Educational partnership

In the first years our curriculum, pastoral system, and almost our entire teaching staff were imported directly from Comberton. This process created considerable pressure for the original school, but the generosity of many individuals there, and existing strong relationships, particularly across the senior teams of the two schools, meant that much of the administrative burden that accompanies setting up a new school was lifted. Cam VC was gifted an experienced team of governors, a shared timetable, and a full set of policies and structures.

With the timings of the two school days carefully co-ordinated, we opened ready to share our teaching staff across the two sites. This not only gave us a stable starting point from which to start establishing our own identity, but most importantly an exceptional group of teachers. As Mark Yeates, head of art, puts it: "Exporting a framework from a trust school of course gave us benefits, but in my opinion exporting a staff group who knew each other well was more fundamental to success at Cam VC. We had candid, efficient meetings about where we could experiment, modify and adapt to cater for the differing needs of the new school. There was fantastic energy and equality between SLG and middle leaders."

Staffing

The ability to recruit our first team of teaching staff from within Comberton gave us a tremendous initial boost. Opening a new secondary school with only six forms of year 7 pupils would usually involve a 'primary' model, with a small number of staff each teaching a range of subjects. We avoided this by having almost all our subject-specialist teachers commute the eight miles to and from Comberton, with only a skeleton staff remaining permanently in place at the school. This arrangement lasted for two years until we had grown enough to be self-sufficient. It was great for teaching and learning, although it created unforeseen pressures, such as finding tutors and enough staff to cover break and lunchtime duties.

The phrase 'flexible and adaptable' became, and has remained, something of a mantra. At first, many teachers even made the journey between sites twice a day in order to offer after-school activities. But despite the workload, there was a dynamic of mutual support and shared purpose, as shown by an anonymous middle leader comment from the staff survey of 2016: "There is a camaraderie between the staff which is incredibly strong. Being part of building up the school, and seeing it develop, has been a privilege."

Management structures

Working across two sites isn't easy for staff. Part of the initial 'buy-in' from Comberton staff came from internally advertising the teaching positions at Cambourne as 'subject leader' posts, with a view to



these becoming head of department positions from the third year of opening. This was probably the most significant decision we ever made: the posts attracted a team of ambitious, skilful and relatively young teachers, all tremendously motivated by the opportunity to create their own departments.

Probably the most significant decision we made was to recruit to 'subject leader' posts, with a view to these becoming heads of department

Geoff Page, head of music, comments: "It was really exciting to be in the position where we had a basic model in place, and schemes of work, and resources readily available, but at the same time the freedom to rethink what we were doing, and experiment with new ideas. In our first year of music teaching we established the year 7 singing workshops, where once a fortnight we brought several classes together with a focus on group performance and singing. These have been really successful, and six years later, are still part of the curriculum."

As intended, these subject leaders were interviewed and almost all re-appointed as heads of department during our third year. Without a doubt, our middle leaders, academic and pastoral, have become one of the college's greatest strengths. A 'light-touch' approach to line management, borne of necessity as well as philosophy, has meant that HoDs have always worked with a high level of autonomy,

including in the area of departmental recruitment, and this is widely appreciated. Asked what they most valued about working in the school after three years, middle leaders' comments included: "The trust placed in HoDs to manage their subject areas;" and "I am trusted to make decisions about my curricular area." (Anonymous: Staff Survey 2016).

From the outset, alongside this relatively high level of departmental autonomy, decision-making at a whole school level has always been shared as widely as possible, so that staff feel able to comment: "new ideas are always open to being considered and implemented; Systems are developed with a great deal of staff consultation, with a drive to ensure that they are truly effective and not just box ticking for the sake of it." (Anonymous: Staff Survey 2016).

Increasing challenge

This consultative approach was relatively easy when the school was tiny and we shared the 'all-in-this-together' ethos. It becomes harder each year as the school grows larger, and with the appointment of an increasingly large senior team and many new staff. Our commitment to collaboration remains strong, however. This is made explicit in the leadership section of our ethos statement, produced collaboratively in the summer of 2017:

- We believe in devolved leadership; middle leaders are highly trusted and empowered to have impact.
- All staff have opportunities to contribute their expertise to strategic school decisions.



Open-access working parties continue to make recommendations on key development areas and indeed, to devise whole policies, as happened with assessment. The policy collaboratively created at Cambourne following the abolition of key stage 3 levels has now, in its turn, been largely adopted at Comberton. This was a sign of our school beginning to come of age.

Opportunities and threats

There are really significant opportunities for rapid staff career advancement when a school is expanding by hundreds of pupils each year. Of our current senior team, one deputy and three assistant principals were among the original subject leaders appointed in 2013. Our Teaching School designation, shared with Comberton, has delivered a range of training possibilities, as has the location of the Cambridgeshire maths hub at the college. Through this, we've developed an active research culture, and the SSAT Lead Practitioner programme is running successfully for teaching and support staff.

One policy collaboratively created at Cambourne has been largely adopted at [original parent school] Comberton – a sign of our school beginning to come of age

Such possibilities are exemplified by the experience of Warren Patrick, now head of year 8, who started with us as a TA in 2013, after working in this role at Comberton: "Being at CamVC from the beginning, as a TA, meant that I gained valuable experience and was exposed to more responsibilities than I would otherwise have had. This is primarily because Cambourne expanded the role of the TA to that of form tutor, maths specialist TA, and team teacher. These opportunities, along with support from department teachers and my HoD, encouraged me to apply for the SCITT."

Such opportunities also carry potential threats to staff wellbeing. Most teachers have thrived in their promoted positions, but we became quickly aware of the risk of burnout when super-dedicated professionals took on too much, at a time when many of the roles that exist in established schools



were yet to be formally created. And the rapid expansion of the college has created its own pressures. We've recruited more than 170 members of staff over the past six years: such growth could easily threaten the consolidation of ethos. But, intriguingly, this hasn't been the case – perhaps because so many of our founding teachers have remained with us, and our sense of direction remains very strong.

Cambourne Village College has now grown up. Last July, our special first cohort of pupils left us, having gained highly positive GCSE results, and our sixth intake arrived, bringing the roll to a staggering 1047. A further wing of the college is planned for 2019, a 900-place second campus for 2023, and we're hoping to open Cambourne's own sixth form in 2024, perhaps in collaboration with our enduring partners, Comberton VC.

There hasn't been the scope in this article to discuss our first pupils' unique experience of always being the oldest in the college, nor the way our pastoral system – a huge strength of the school – has developed, nor the slightly unusual position of the college seeming to be permanently seeking planning permission... But if any aspect of our experience of opening a new school can be of use to you – or if you'd just like to have a look around – please do get in touch. Our pupils will be as proud as ever to give you a tour.

Contact: CCoates@cambournevc.org

Implementing an academy ethos with a new pastoral care structure

*Tom Hutchinson,
St Edward's Church of England Academy*

Tom Hutchinson, principal at St Edward's Church of England Academy, Staffordshire, describes the development of an ethos and a pastoral care structure to meet the needs of today's learners and their families.

When I first arrived at the St Edward's 18 months ago, it was clear that the academy (9-13 years old) was in a state of flux. While there were many talented staff, a sense of cohesion and direction was lacking, which resulted in relationships sometimes becoming strained.

Furthermore, all the measures overwhelmingly indicated the need for rapid and sustained improvement. So, the initial question to grapple with was where to start?

It seemed prudent to begin with a grass-roots change of the ethos and values, as they are the very foundations upon which every school is built. These were newly developed in line with the Christian faith and encompassed by the acronym RESPECT. (Recognise and Encourage, Strive, Prepare, Empathise, Christian and Teamwork)

The launch of such a change is fraught with difficulty in an established school community, as it depends on engagement with, understanding of and belief in such ethos and values. With only a small team of leaders and governors initially supporting such a change, the courage to move forward regardless is of paramount importance.

Our policies, professional development, culture of learning, culture of pastoral care, collective worship, day to day conversations and interactions within our community were then



focused on this new identity. Moving away from the standard, traditional terminology to bespoke, in-house RESPECT related terms initially took some getting used to. However, despite a few bumps and grazes while ironing out the difficulties that change invariably brings, we are now reaping the rewards.



Pastoral structure

While embedding this crucial element of our identity, we also designed a new pastoral structure that moved away from pastoral leaders, who were working incredibly hard but could not meet the growing needs of our pupils, parents and community. Instead, a house system was implemented utilising three non-teaching house leaders and a separate inclusion officer. These individuals were line managed by a middle leader who was also a member of the teaching staff.

The house leaders' remit, although simple on paper, was a little more complex in reality: to coordinate and lead on the pastoral care of a third of the academy, vertically as opposed

to by year group. The benefit of this system is time: as non-teaching staff, they have the time to respond to need on an individual and rapid basis. This is particularly beneficial when considering disadvantaged learners and pupils who are displaying more complex mental health needs.

Front line in dealing with parents

The house leader team is, therefore, the front line for the academy when dealing with our parents, who traditionally have been a group relegated to the school gate and perhaps forgotten with regard to the vital role they play in the education of their children. The house leaders have bridged that gap and are forming strong and sustainable relationships by, for example, visiting every feeder first school for coffee morning drop-in sessions to alleviate the concerns and anxieties of year 4 parents as their children transition to a middle school context.

The impact of our RESPECT ethos and pastoral care

We look to base all strategic decisions to improve the academy on research. The EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) has been key in providing a guide to the allocation of resources and the effective deployment of staff.

After consultation with trustees, we decided to use some of the pupil premium funding to support the new pastoral system. Accompanying this decision was the ever-present challenge of how to measure

impact. There are of course the standard, key pastoral measures and national benchmarks, but the 'softer' side of pastoral care is hard to quantify. Indeed, how to measure the impact on mental health, happiness and resilience proved initially problematic.

After much research and discussion, we turned to GL Assessment's PASS (pupil attitudes to self and school) and additional pupil voice questionnaires.

Impact of attendance

In 2016-17, attendance in all year groups 5-8 was below secondary national and PA90% measures were almost double that of the local area average (well above national). However, by the end of the first year, academy attendance was above primary national at 96% - even after the impact of 'Aussie flu'.

PA90% had reduced to not only below national for secondary but close to national for primary with a year-end percentage of 9% highlighting a fall of 2.5% from the previous year.

Impact on behaviour

Prior to the application of the new pastoral system, the academy had a rather antiquated 'inclusion room'. In reality, there was very little that was inclusive about this space, rather it served as a holding facility for up to 12 pupils in a building that was completely separate from the rest of the school. Within three months of implementing the new ethos and values and introduction of a new pastoral system and team, we closed the inclusion room, turning it in to a

multi-gym for the benefit of all pupils and staff.

The pupils that required additional and different intervention due to their social and emotional needs were not simply moved into another area: the shift from reactive behaviour management to proactive behavioural change eradicated the need for such a space. This was coupled with a shift in teaching staff from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset which recognises everyone's potential and encourages them to strive to be the best that they can be (the first three elements of the RESPECT ethos). Significantly, fixed term exclusions, which had been commonplace, fell away and are now only used as a last resort.

The shift from reactive behaviour management to proactive behavioural change eradicated the need for an antiquated 'inclusion room'

Giving pupils time with an adult who has the resources to identify and break down the barriers of their individual needs is priceless. House leaders collate information provided by staff and other stakeholders, make prompt telephone calls or emails to parents/carers, and host those sometimes difficult meetings – regardless of location – to provide a consistent approach.

PASS analysis

We carried out PASS analysis

at the start of the year 2017-18 and at the end. Results gave the staff team a new insight into our pupils, and highlighted areas we had not intentionally aimed to miss but had in honesty assumed were not an issue.

Learner self-regard and resilience in learning stood out as areas of key concerns among a sea of generally 'happy' pupils' feedback. These areas are still a focus for us as an academy, for this year and beyond, as they are not just educationally focused but have wider societal links.

Impact on outcomes

With the improvements in attendance and behaviour came improved educational outcomes. Our year 6 SATs results have risen dramatically, particularly the greater depth measure, which had previously been an area of weakness within the academy. SEND and disadvantaged pupils' achievement has also risen considerably; a gap still exists, and this is a focus for phase 2 of our development plan.

For many of this target group of pupils, their barriers are not simply solved by an embedded ethos of RESPECT and pastoral care. Rather, a more complex and individualised plan to meet their needs is necessary. Indeed, the focus on ensuring parents and children are involved in the decisions made about their support in the current SEND code of practice emphasises the significance of mutually beneficial/supportive lines of communication to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. A focus on understanding the needs of this group of pupils

and ensuring that they are fully considered demonstrates an active participatory and collaborative partnership.

Conclusions, lessons learnt and next steps

Ultimately, the change in the pastoral system linked with a whole school ethos that underpins our decisions and attitudes has provided a reference point for the new direction in which our academy is travelling. It has also revolutionised how we meet the complex needs of our community.

The learning experience from this process has been intense, especially for the new pastoral team. However, we all agree that the proactive, problem-solving approach rooted in our values has given us more time to focus on our learners. It has allowed us to know them better.

The continual action of review and reflection is essential. As we have embarked on our second year of improvement, we are now undertaking a root and branch examination, streamlining processes and systems and removing those we thought we required but in reality, no longer need.

I would recommend that all senior and pastoral teams step back and assess their pastoral care in conjunction with the ethos and values it is based on. The process of radical and decisive change is never easy or without its difficulties. However, the impact on the lives of our pupils is dramatic and worthwhile.

A school that is 'a family with one voice'

*Zoe Pearce and Shanaz Hussain,
Blackburn Central High School*

Blackburn Central High School has built on its highly effective approach to community cohesion by developing in-house coaching and mentoring expertise and a 'heart curriculum'.

Upon assuming headship of Blackburn Central High School (BCHS) in 2013, Diane Atkinson prioritised the building of a passionate, exceptional team of staff who shared her vision of providing the very best academic and pastoral support for the complex students of her school.

This was vital as she was set the task of bringing two schools from diverse communities together under one roof – creating a brand new school. The

predecessor schools, one with a majority of white British students and the other predominantly Asian heritage students, were united on one site. Despite the complexity of the journey, Diane and her team have successfully created a school which Ofsted in 2017 recognised as 'a family with one voice'. The school has continued to grow in diversity and flourish: in the past six years, the number on roll has grown to beyond the original capacity; and the results have improved to achieve P8 of 0 in 2018.

Much of this success is down to the strategy and direction of deputy headteacher Shanaz Hussain, who led the development of teaching and learning and a CPD strategy to involve all staff. The belief that if students were engaged and challenged



by exceptional teaching, their achievement and progress would become the focus of school life, bore true.

Community cohesion strategy

The community cohesion strategy has played a significant part in the success of the amalgamation (the school was mentioned in the government's March 2018 Integrated Communities Strategy green paper, see right) and the school is set to host a conference on 'integrating communities' in January 2019. A day of workshops will equip delegates to understand the components of an integrated community, to gather best practice from group discussions, and to take away practical tools.

'In the last two years,' says Shanaz, 'we've had several visits from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, who were interested in what we're doing, especially through our community forum.' This has representatives from the local police, children's services, the mosque and the church, and other community organisations. Forty individuals habitually attend its monthly meetings to discuss and agree activities on improving social as well as academic outcomes for BCHS students and the community.

The school does much to compensate for, even overcome in some cases, the very high deprivation that is characteristic of its catchment area. Its enrichment fund provides a wide range of support including bereavement counselling, and basic supplies for families where a parent/carer has lost their job. It has regular interfaith events, such as Q&A sessions to help break down barriers and 'encourage tolerance and respect among all our young people.'

It helps to do so for their elders as well. For example, it holds an annual grandparent's day, including the school choir singing in a cross-community carol concert, with coffee and mince pies. One grandparent said after one such session: 'We don't normally socialise outside, but we all come together with one voice when we are in the school.'

BCHS students raise a significant amount each year in their fundraising to support activities for the local foodbank, The Salvation Army's Maundy Thursday, and YMCA appeals among others. This

From the government's Integrated Communities Strategy green paper:

Blackburn Central High School (BCHS) opened as a new school in 2012, bringing together children from a school in which 99% of the pupils were from a Muslim background and one where pupils were predominantly from a White British working class background, together with a school for children with special educational needs.

The merger has been highly successful. The school was awarded joint first *most improved school in the country* by the Department for Education in 2012 and in May 2017 it was given a Good rating by Ofsted. The school has shown an increasing trend in all key performance indicators and Progress 8 - which measures a student's progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4 across eight key subjects - is above the national average. The school is now oversubscribed: an endorsement from the local community of their confidence in the school. This success hasn't happened by accident. BCHS has put a lot of work into creating a highly successful and well integrated school. The school has reached out to community groups and businesses to support a programme of events for pupils and their families, including family days, adult literacy and numeracy training, and safeguarding workshops.

The headteacher has encouraged debates including discussions about difficult and challenging topics and staff members have been equipped with the confidence and knowledge to support these conversations.

Students are keen to understand each other's backgrounds and learn in a harmonious community. The school celebrates different religious and cultural events and has developed an understanding of the different cultures within the school and threaded this within the curriculum. The school also arranges events around music and the arts which encourage all pupils to come together around what unites us all.



has included providing Christmas gifts to the YMCA Refugee and Asylum Seekers party; every child who attended received a gift from a BCHS child.

Some other BCHS activities/events:

- Mums and Daughters Club, e.g. Saturday morning event including henna tattoos, nail painting and baking banana bread. Also a Dads and Lads club.
- Meditation assemblies conducted by a representative from the Interfaith Forum and Blackburn Buddhist Centre.
- Peace Charter workshops culminating in a youth conference where the students involved act as delegates.
- Interfaith Forum, recognising Interfaith week by holding a Q&A event for Y10 humanities students. Buddhist meditation assemblies for all year groups.
- Refugee Week: art exhibition showing work from refugee/asylum seekers who are BCHS students.
- Ongoing bid to attain School of Sanctuary status (the first in Blackburn with Darwen).
- Domestic Violence Focus Group. Students worked in a group with other schools in discussions on raising awareness of preventative measures against domestic violence.
- Holocaust Memorial Day at Council Chambers, Blackburn Town Hall: a student from each year group represented BCHS; a Y11 student laid flowers remembering his maternal great-grandmother who survived the Nazi death camps.
- Radicalisation and cohesion workshop: six students from years 8-9 took part in a roundtable discussion about radicalisation, extremism and cohesion at Witton Park School, following a successful Peace Charter project.

One sign of the success of BCHS' efforts to integrate the community was the students' outrage at what was seen as an inflammatory BBC Panorama programme in January 2018 that labelled Blackburn as an example of a 'kind of social segregation

[that] has been described as a national crisis.' The students recorded interviews and wrote articles rebutting those accusations which were published in the school newsletter and a local paper.

What should a BCHS lesson look like?

Closely connected with integrating the community is ensuring that within the new school community all students have access to a range of the same, rich, opportunities. To develop a culture where focus on learning was paramount, Shanaz designed a template for what a BCHS lesson looked like – defining all aspects in detail. Much the same as we would give students success criteria, teachers had a checklist to ensure clear, shared understanding of what good teaching and learning looked like in this context. She then created a range of bespoke training opportunities, and enabled all staff to share best practice.

The premise of training was to ensure that it was focused on practical T, L & A strategies that could be used effectively in classrooms. Mentors are trained to work with NQTs and ITTs within clear structures. Mentor training, delivered in-house annually, focuses on consistency of accurate lesson observation and feeding back with impact and coaching skills. Mentors have a toolkit of strategies to provide their mentees with a range of experiences, from peer observation to joint planning and team teaching. Bespoke provision was created for ITTs, NQTs & RQTs following work with an SLE. These programmes fostered a 'grow your own' culture which enabled staff to cyclically develop skills at a higher and higher level with each year of experience they gained (see Figure 1).

Personal professional improvement plans

Perhaps the biggest impact was in the creation of PPIPS (personal professional improvement plans): time was allocated on timetables for all staff for one year to develop a collegiate and professional approach to finding best practice, trialling it and reflecting on it together. The groups worked together on researching a question (driven by their own professional needs/interests) and came together fortnightly to unpick, discuss and further extend thinking and practice.

This high profile initiative was valued by teachers and enabled cross-curricular collaborations, a

Figure 1

BCHS ITT/NQT/RQT provision	
NQT	• Mentors trained & provided with structures for meetings and learning conversations – QA of mentor work • Weekly input led by need as identified by mentor and prof mentor observations • Half termly 'action research' project: focus on trialling the strategies from training alongside mentor and writing up findings to share with NQT cohort, developing independence and a model for problem solving
ITT	• Directly descended from NQT programme, using structures for mentor training, learning conversations and action research
RQT	• Need for continuation of challenge and development from NQT year: RQTs work in triads undertaking lesson study (they are fully trained in this is at the outset of the year), planning together, delivering lesson/observing and reflecting on impact of lesson plan; then adapting, improving and continuing the cycle with different members of the triad delivering the lesson plan. • Formal half termly meetings to feedback findings to all RQTs and to receive T&L input from professional development manager who coordinates and quality assures the training route.

cohesive model for action research. It also gave the opportunity for a celebration at the end of the academic year, where each group presented their findings and shared resources. The impact of this on whole-school quality of teaching (and student outcomes) was significant.

This process has evolved into ThinkTank Thursdays, where triads of cross-curricular staff research a question together in Thursday morning briefings in autumn term and the outcomes are shared via a weekly e-bulletin throughout spring term in order to ensure impact of professional learning during the school year.

In-house coaches trained

Another aspect of developing meaningful and bespoke CPD was the training of coaches among the staff. The headteacher employed a school improvement coach to lead on innovative development of T&L and to extend CPD provision. One of the initiatives introduced was the training of a cohort of 23 coaches (both teachers and support staff) who undertook a course in executive coaching – aimed at providing a model to enable those being coached to recognise the actual issues and to draw on a range of ideas to trial and evaluate in order to find solutions/improvements.

The coaching is a stand-alone process, not linked to appraisal or any aspect of quality assurance. Teachers/staff can choose to work with any coach on solving any problem, from 'how to teach an outstanding lesson' to 'how can I manage a particular student effectively?' or 'how do I build a team atmosphere in my department?' This opportunity to dedicate time to thinking about a problem with a colleague who is trained to guide one through the stages of solving it has enabled many staff to replicate the model for themselves and feel empowered, especially when approaching T&L issues. One classroom teacher commented: "Just having someone who can listen, clearly reflect my problem back to me and help me see it afresh was a real turning point for me."

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Middle leaders now have access to a bespoke leadership development course delivered in school. It breaks down the key aspects of leadership and enables any TLR holder to explore the skillset



needed to strategically lead a curriculum area, and to use a coaching model (for their own problems and to support their teams).

The appointment of a school improvement coach enabled the existing professional development to be taken to the next level, offering weekly 'drop ins' on aspects of T&L identified through whole-school quality assurance as areas for development. These sessions are short, snappy after-school voluntary presentations delivering practical strategies to trial immediately in the classroom.

A key drive for the school has been raising boys' attainment: a fortnightly bulletin which provides resources/strategies to engage and enthuse boys has given teachers another raft of ideas and practical strategies to trial.

T&L Forum is a carousel of five workshops which staff rotate around during the autumn term – they will all experience all workshops, which are based on key areas for focus in the SDP. The workshops this year are: assessment for learning, writing, engagement, behaviour for learning, and differentiation.

Quality assurance cycle

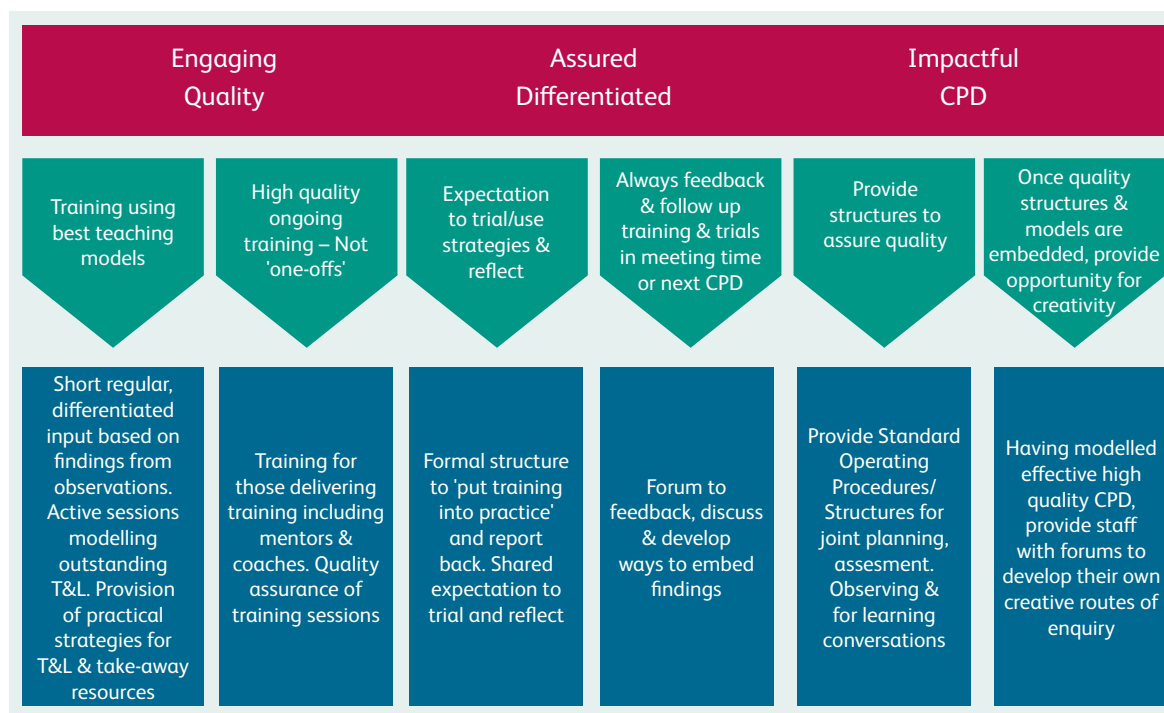
Directors of learning work with their SLT line manager to select relevant QA tools (such as learning

walk, book look, planning scrutiny, student voice). Every half term they use the outcomes to plan professional development opportunities bespoke to their individual teachers or the whole team. There are templates to support quality CPD, such as how to undertake joint assessment or planning, how to observe a peer, how to plan training for a department meeting. This means that all QA has immediate and relevant action that addresses areas for development and/or shares the best practice.

The philosophy of all professional development at BCHS has been that it must be immediately transferable to the classroom and provide practical resources and ideas relevant to each context.

The heart curriculum

As many schools are experiencing, the needs of pupils on a social and emotional level are growing. At BCHS the head's passion for providing the right therapeutic solutions for students, for pro-actively approaching SEMH, has led to the development of the 'heart curriculum' for year 7. A one-hour lesson per week (timetabled against technology lessons to provide small class sizes), introduced September 2017, was aimed to develop independence and resilience in learners and to enable them to become rounded members of the community who can be happy and fulfilled. There are two strands to the curriculum taught in heart lessons:



- Explicit teaching of a wide range of 'soft skills' – empathy, coaching, how to manage stress, being optimistic
- Learning skills such as revision, reading for understanding, organisation, note making, developing an argument.

The process of creating a whole new curriculum area started with an audit of staff, exploring what skills they felt students needed to cope with the demands of their subject and with 'life'. This audit provided a great starting point to collate the skills staff wanted to teach and then to map them out across the six half terms. For the initial trial run the heart lessons were led by the school's best teachers, ensuring that strong relationships with students were built quickly. This ensured some of the complex ideas and emotive issues being taught were effectively handled, and students could openly explore them.

CPD time is given each term for the heart team to share the strategy, gather staff voice on how delivery is working and train the team in the necessary skills. Lesson planning was initially modelled by the school improvement coach and the appointed 'heart curriculum leader', then planned and resourced every lesson to ensure consistency and quality. The lessons were primarily created to engage and enthuse the specific cohort of Y7 at BCHS, incorporating their interests and tailored to their needs. A weekly bulletin was sent out to Y7 teachers to tell them which skill was being worked on in the heart curriculum that week, to help them maximise on getting students to transfer the skills across the curriculum and use them regularly.

Assessment took the form of self-evaluations by the students at the end of each unit: they tracked their skills on a wheel which visually showed where strengths and/or areas of weakness lay.

In order to quality assure the heart curriculum and gauge its impact, leaders undertook learning walks of lessons, spoke to students and teachers, and looked at surrounding data. There was clear evidence that this curriculum impacted on the attainment and effort of the cohort:

- The active learning styles of most lessons engaged all students, especially boys.
- Effort levels were double that of the previous year 7 at the end of the year.
- Maths and English on track at the end of year was 20% higher than the previous Y7 (this is not due to heart curriculum alone, but staff believe it to be a strong influencing factor).

Rolling into year 2 of the heart curriculum, the subject leader reviewed and improved lesson plans using feedback from those teaching it and students. Although heart lessons do not appear on year 8 timetables, to ensure students did not lose the skills they had developed, the heart curriculum was included in progress time (30 mins once a week with tutors). The plan is to ensure that students who have participated in the heart curriculum will continue to receive heart lessons in progress time throughout their school career, and that with each year they will develop the skills at a higher and higher level.

BCHS' next target in this context is to look at metacognition and helping students to link their learning across the curriculum through a shared language.



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