

A photograph of four young men wearing lacrosse helmets and jerseys, holding their lacrosse sticks. They are standing outdoors with green foliage in the background. The image is partially covered by a large green circle in the bottom left corner.

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Welcome

*from Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*



Welcome to the second edition of the new format of SSAT's termly journal, which sets out to celebrate and share the outstanding practice, strategies and innovations in our schools, for the benefit of all the schools in our networks.

The self-improving system, long espoused by school leaders and more recently promoted by government, is thriving. The focus is on collaboration and on building formal school partnerships, driven by a desire to raise standards, by a response to financial constraints, and by a deeply held moral imperative to make a difference to the lives of all young people.

There is a growing interest in the importance of character education and the government has recently rewarded a number of SSAT schools for their excellent work in this field – see the King's Leadership Academy article on page 23. The **Mind the Gap Conference** on 22 April this year will bring together leaders from the schools and business sectors, as well as exceptional practitioners, to support the development of our work further, ensuring that the importance of non-cognitive skills in cognitive learning is widely understood.

While policymakers debate the critical questions about where and when to open new schools – whether to address the system capacity shortage, or to increase community choice and the variety of provision, or to address a need for a specialised, technical curriculum, or to maximise the strengths and outreach impact of outstanding schools – it is agreed that one incontestable factor is the requirement to get it right from the start, when establishing a new school. You will have received a new publication on the subject this spring: another example of schools working together and sharing what works well for the benefit of all. The government has published detailed guidance about the new accountability measures (Progress 8 and Attainment 8) for secondary schools,

but there is still some way to go before we can be reassured that schools that serve less able cohorts will not be at a disadvantage in the new measures.

The new measures present an opportunity to shift the accountability spotlight away from attainment and onto progress, but we must be sure that the progress of all pupils is appropriately recognised. What is undeniable is the importance of excellent teaching and classroom practice and, to this end, this year's **Achievement Show** on 26 June will be an invaluable opportunity to engage with hundreds of the most skilled practitioners and to build a rich portfolio of ideas and solutions to take back to your school. And, of course, SSAT's annual **National Conference**, 3-4 December, will see the network coming together again, this year to explore at a system level how we can lead together to close the gaps.

This year's Educational Outcomes database has now been published. There is a KS2 version and a KS4 version. Each one allows you to analyse your school's performance against a wealth of criteria and in comparison with similar schools across the country. Widely recognised to be the data tool for schools, it is SSAT members' most popular resource. It is Educational Outcomes that is used to identify the winning schools in SSAT's forthcoming annual awards. And it is Educational Outcomes that allows schools to take a nuanced approach to working successfully with the right schools in the right way.

We are very grateful to Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP for their support in the production of this journal.



General election

Chris Smith, Student Leadership Coordinator, SSAT

As a result of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 we have known for some time that the next general election will take place on 7 May 2015. Far less certain however is the likely outcome of the election and the consequences for schools.

Of course, it will not be until the publication of the main political parties' manifestos that we will be able to say for certain what their plans for schools are. However, the parties have given us some clues:

- » Labour have announced that they would focus on improving and overhauling teacher CPD as well as recoupling A- and AS-levels following their decoupling under Michael Gove.
- » The Liberal Democrats (who have released a 'pre-manifesto') have suggested that local authorities will play a far larger role in selecting new school sponsors and may even be able to act as sponsors themselves.
- » The Conservatives are likely to concentrate on seeing through the many already far-advanced reforms they have implemented under the coalition but have also suggested that they would make the EBacc compulsory.

These are just a few of the policies each party is likely to suggest and many are subject to change. Keeping on top of the direction education policy is likely to take after the election is important if schools are to have enough time to plan and ensure they are prepared for

every eventuality. Over the coming months, SSAT will be keeping tabs on all of the latest developments and ensuring member schools are kept up to date.

Chris Smith

CASE STUDY: ORMISTON VENTURE ACADEMY

While the looming general election may leave schools uncertain about the future, it does provide them with an opportunity to engage their students in political discussion. David Richards, Assistant Principal at Ormiston Venture Academy, is planning to do just that.

Ormiston Venture Academy, located in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, has a predominantly white British intake and a very high proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium. It was rated as 'outstanding' in its first full Ofsted inspection in May 2013 having opened in 2010, taking over from a predecessor school that had been rated 'satisfactory' under the old Ofsted framework.

The transformation has been underpinned by the academy's focus on the student and has included an expansion and improvement of their student voice activities. The academy now boasts a thriving student union as well as a range of other innovative student-led activities. Yet despite the fact that the students are regularly involved in democratic decision-making through the structures of student voice, their awareness of politics outside the academy is not strong.



David Richards, who oversees student voice activities at the academy, is conscious that although none of the academy's students will be able to vote in the upcoming general election, many of them will be able to in the one following that. He believes it is important to get them interested now and to get them thinking about policies – not just about parties and personalities. Too often they form opinions based on things they have heard or read in the media, not on an understanding of actual policies and the differences between the parties.

With this in mind David is planning on running an academy election parallel to the general election. The academy will use tutor time to cover some of the key topics in the election and get the students to start thinking about what they believe should be done. For example, that might mean some discussion about education, the economy or immigration. After some discussion the main parties' policies on the topic would then be debated. The plan involves getting students thinking not only about their own views but about what options are available to them and who they might vote for if they had the chance.

Following on from this David envisages a mini-general election at Venture with students representing each party and everybody in the student population having a vote. Students would have the chance to lead each party and would have to stick to the policies laid out in their manifestos as they hit the campaign trail. Throughout, the focus would be on the policies of each party rather than the individuals involved. As

part of the campaigning process David would like to invite the local candidates for the general election to a Question Time style debate held at the academy. Here the prospective candidates for both Venture's own election and the general election itself would sit side-by-side and receive a grilling from the student body. After this David is keen to open the doors to the local community and let them quiz the politicians too. It would be a great opportunity to further improve community relations as well as provide a chance for some of the students' parents who live locally to embrace the election and improve their own political literacy. The conversations and debates held in the academy may well then carry on in the home.

After all the campaigning the academy would run its very own election on the same day as the general election. Hopefully the students will have had time, through the tutor time sessions, in-school campaigning and general coverage to have formed an opinion about who their ideas most closely align with. David is particularly keen to then compare the result of the academy's student election to that of the real election. Any difference could be analysed and then provide potential for further discussion and activities.

Of course, just like policies, plans may well change. David is conscious that the plans as they are rely on the local candidates choosing to attend the school's question time event and this can't be guaranteed, although an audience with the school's local community might be a big enough carrot to tempt them in. The plans also raise some questions about which political parties and views should be represented – a question he is yet to resolve. However, David is keen to be as objective as possible in reference to party representation.

He hopes that, if successful, the project will begin to enthuse students about politics and help them to see its relevance to them. Furthermore it should help them begin to form their own opinions and appreciate where they fit on the political spectrum and what party their principles most closely align with. As well as this, it will help them to understand the political process in this country and how their voice will always be important.



Education and the general election 2015: how the main parties compare

	SCHOOL STRUCTURES	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	CURRICULUM & EXAM REFORM	HIGHER EDUCATION & CIAG
CONSERVATIVES	Continue support for free schools Continued support for UTCs and studio schools Allow the enforced conversion to academy status of schools rated as 'requires improvement'	Deliver 3 million apprenticeships in the next parliament A focus on improving the quality and reputation of vocational education	Seeing current exam and curriculum reform through (linear GCSEs, revised GCSE content, decoupling of AS- and A-levels)	Creation of a company to broker relationships between employers, school etc. to help schools provide a 'package' of careers support
LABOUR	Prevent the opening of new free schools but protect those in existence Extend academy freedoms to all schools Continued support for UTCs and studio schools	Introduce 16-19 Technical Baccalaureate, institutes of technical education & technical degrees Reform apprenticeships to improve their quality and scale	Recouple AS- and A-levels Revisions to GCSEs likely to stay in place Proposals to establish a national baccalaureate made up by existing qualifications Plans to deny schools an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating if the curriculum is not 'creative and cultural'	Reduction of tuition fees to £6000 A promise to reform CIAG Introduction of technical degrees Guarantee a job for every young person who has been out of work for more than a year and access to training to develop the skills they need
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	Prevent free schools opening in areas where new schools are not needed Develop national colleges as centres of expertise Continued support for UTCs and studio schools	Increase the number of apprenticeships by extending the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers	A core curriculum, to replace the national curriculum, in every school Independent body created to monitor curriculum and exams Revisions to GCSEs likely to stay in place	Improve provision of independent careers information, advice and guidance for all Review higher education finances Encourage more part-time study and ease transfer between institutions Expand two-year foundation degrees
GREEN PARTY	Bring free schools and academies under local authority control	Creation of assessments that ensure vocational education is just as valued as academic study	National curriculum will be replaced with a set of learning entitlements	Scrap university tuition fees From the age of 14 education may be provided through a variety of contexts including, vocational placements and at youth schools
UKIP	Support the principle of free schools Existing schools allowed to apply to become grammar schools	Introduce an option for students to take an apprenticeship qualification instead of four non-core GCSEs	Introduce an option for students to take an apprenticeship qualification (instead of four non-core GCSEs) that can be carried on to A-level One exam board for GCSEs and one for A-levels offering only one course per subject	Scrap the 50% target of school leavers going to university Remove tuition fees for students taking STEM subjects, subject to them meeting certain criteria

	SUPPORT FOR A ROYAL COLLEGE OF TEACHING	SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATION	PROMOTION OF EVIDENCE INFORMED-PRACTICE AND RESEARCH	REFORM OF OFSTED
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ACCOUNTABILITY & OFSTED	CHARACTER	THE TEACHING PROFESSION	FINANCE
Implementation of the Regional Schools Commissioners policy The potential for reform of Ofsted	Establishment of character awards and character innovation fund Money made available for extra-curricular activities in schools	Support the establishment of a profession-led college of teaching Addressing teacher workload with a recently released six point action plan	'Flat cash' per pupil spending protected representing a real-terms fall in the next parliament
Plan for 'radical reform' to Ofsted to 'move beyond box-ticking and data dependence' Introduce local directors of school standards	Support for the furthering of character education in schools and inclusion in ITT	Support the establishment of a profession-led college of teaching Improve CPD pathways and ensure teachers are exposed to CPD throughout their careers Ensure all practising teachers have QTS or are working towards it	Protect the education budget at least in real terms from early years to age 16 Ringfence budgets for FE, sixth forms and apprenticeships
Abolish regional schools commissioners and introduce a democratically accountable middle-tier Ofsted to inspect academy chains and LEAs	Support for the furthering of character education in schools	Support the establishment of a profession-led college of teaching Ensure all practising teachers have QTS or are working towards it All teachers must have B in English and maths GCSE Clear entitlement to CPD Addressing teacher workload with a recently released six point action plan	Protect the education budget in real terms from early years to age 19 Increase the early years pupil premium Consider extension of schools' pupil premium
Replace Ofsted with an independent National Council of Educational Excellence which would have regional officers tasked to work closely with local authorities	Believe education should provide everyone with the knowledge and full range of skills they require to participate fully in society and lead a fulfilled life	Protect the pay, conditions and status of teachers Oppose performance related pay Ensure all practising teachers have QTS or are working towards it	Fund schools equitably based on need (e.g. schools with large minority and excluded populations)
Schools to be investigated by Ofsted if DfE is presented with a petition signed by 25% of parents or governors	No position stated	No position stated	No position stated currently - previous support for reinstating the student grant and educational maintenance allowance

CONTINUATION OF FREE SCHOOLS POLICY	CLOSING THE ATTAINMENT GAP	ALL TEACHERS TO HAVE QTS	TACKLING TEACHER WORKLOAD
  	    	  	   
			
 			



GCSE reform transition: problems and possible solutions

*Alex Galvin, Head of Curriculum, SSAT
& the Leading Edge Steering Group*

Some of the government's planned reforms to assessment and accountability arrangements have created significant concerns for schools. This article has been prepared by the headteachers of the Leading Edge Steering Group, to address some of those concerns.

Leading Edge is the national network for high performing schools. The network has existed since 2003 and was previously a high performing specialist school (HPSS) option. Since 2010, Leading Edge has operated as an independent network supported by SSAT. It is led by a steering group of 25 headteachers from within the programme and offers participating schools the opportunity to share practice, to establish links with similar schools across the country and to showcase their work within the wider SSAT network.

The Leading Edge schools are helping to develop excellent practice for the benefit of the system as a whole and are often at the forefront of innovation in both structural and policy reform as well as the school improvement agenda.

The Leading Edge network is now larger than it has ever been, with 312 member schools this year. If you are interested in joining this vibrant network, get in touch to find out more by emailing us at leading.edge@ssatuk.co.uk or visit our webpage: www.ssatuk.co.uk/leadingedge.

Alex Galvin

GCSE REFORM - SOME PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

Introduction

It may be possible to argue the case that GCSE warranted reform. It is even possible to make a case for the direction of travel in which reform is moving. No reform, however, can be justified unless it clearly provides a better education for all – or at the very least ensures that improvement for some students is not at the expense of others.

The thrust of this paper is that the implementation of the reform programme significantly falls short of securing a coherent transition plan that meets the needs of students and is easily understood by employers, universities and parents.

The period of reform planning has been marked by:

- » A pace of change that consistently sets unrealistic timescales for the reforms, and a disregard for the consequent difficulties that schools would face in delivering new subject specifications and for the challenges that examination boards face in framing new specification and appropriate models of assessment.
- » A failure to recognise that in many subjects GCSE is not a two-year course but a five-year programme. Changes in subjects such as mathematics, English, sciences, and modern foreign languages have a profound impact on how children are taught in the early years of secondary school.

- » A fragmented approach, with reforms to the primary phases, key stage 3, key stage 4 and A-level working separately so that it is difficult to see how they match.
- » Constant volatility, such as the reform of GCSE, both content and assessment, the focus on EBacc, and then new performance measures. The narrow planning timescales have been further compromised by uncertainty arising from sudden announcements that have often been at odds with previous decisions. This has been a major factor in the very large increase in the number of schools that have adopted IGCSE.
- » A disregard for the problems that arise from a three-year transition period before all subjects have converted to new GCSE.
- » A failure to consider how the transition period integrates with accountability reform.

THE CONSEQUENCES THAT STEM FROM A FLAWED TRANSITION PLAN

1. Problems arising from a mixed provision of old and new GCSE

The assessment systems deployed by schools aim to provide coherent information about progress both within and across subjects. Any system will aim at providing coherent feedback on progress together with an indicator of potential performance at GCSE. From next year schools will be teaching both old and new GCSE, with their different ranges of grades. The reform timescales have provided no time for piloting new programmes, making it difficult for teachers to accurately assess performance relative to the new GCSE standards. Decisions about the second and third tranches of GCSE will operate to similar planning timescales. The combination of old and new GCSE will mean that:

- » There will be an extended period of uncertainty and confusion until 2019 when all examinations will be graded to the same 1-9 assessment scale.
- » Students will have a confusing process of one grading system for new GCSE and another for old GCSE. And some subjects will have greater challenge than others.
- » Where available, key stage 4 option subjects include a mix of new and old GCSE subjects; choice may be dictated either by the assumed status of one subject over another or a perception that one will lead to a better grade than the other.



- » It will be very difficult for students to make choices about post-16 pathways or the choice of subjects on A-level programmes, as deciding relative strengths will be far more difficult to determine.
- » Parents of transition year students will face the same difficulties in understanding a child's relative performance.

2. Curriculum and staffing

The curriculum of a school is not planned on a year-by-year basis, but as a five-year programme subdivided into years. The rushed timescales and frequent policy changes of reform mean that schools have not been able to make appropriate adjustments. Students in the early years of new specifications are likely to be disadvantaged.

Ofqual will claim that its policy of managing comparable outcomes will avoid the problem. Experience of managing comparable outcomes has been mixed. In 2012, when facing relatively smaller changes in English language, the system failed. This summer Ofqual claimed that the process had worked well (despite volatility for individual schools) as there were fewer year 10 entries in mathematics and English. In reaching its conclusion Ofqual ignored the very significant increase in students that had

switched to IGCSE (i.e. the GCSE cohort was not a like-for-like comparison with previous years). The following factors will impact on student experience and achievement:

- » Mathematics and probably English will need increased teaching time (not necessarily restricted to years 10 and 11). Changes to post-16 education, such as mandatory mathematics for those without a level 2 qualification, and the possible advent of core mathematics, are creating a demand for additional mathematics teachers which cannot be met within the implementation timescales.
- » Groups such as RSA have expressed concern that new GCSE mathematics has added content at the expense of depth. The Science Community Representing Education (SCORE) has similarly stated that the science specifications have been written for those progressing to science A-level, but this is not the majority route. NFER fears that so-called greater challenge in science and mathematics will be at the expense of engagement and could reduce post-16 STEM uptake. If there had been adequate time to prepare, teachers have consistently shown they can ensure that reforms are not at the expense of engagement.

3. Universities

The three-year mix of new and old GCSE will make it very difficult for universities to objectively judge the profile and potential of applicants – more so as AS take-up will be greatly reduced in state schools. Students with mixed GCSE are likely to suffer long-term disadvantage in terms of the currency of their qualifications.

4. Employers

There is always a challenge for employers in understanding any major qualification reform, but never before have they had the challenge of distinguishing between individual students with concurrent GCSE qualifications that are expressed in different currencies.

5. Examination boards

Evidence has shown that boards struggle to cope with minor changes and that marking does not inspire confidence. Given that all the boards have expressed concern about the speed of developments, it is

difficult to have confidence that the transition will operate smoothly.

There is also concern that many students will have the negative experience of having to follow a one-size-fits-all testing regime which places a priority on uniformity above that of securing valid and reliable assessment evidence with a proportionate increase in the time required for examinations. The problem of significantly increased examination time is particularly acute for SEN students.

Boards already struggle to find sufficient examiners. A single season of linear examinations at both key stage 4 and key stage 5 will only exacerbate the problem and increase the likelihood of errors in a system that is already struggling to retain the confidence of educationalists.

6. Accountability reform

The principles of Progress 8 are generally supported. The fact remains though that the rushed timetable of reform erodes the effectiveness of the new accountability measures in the following ways:

- » The number of old and new GCSEs taken will vary from student to student. The value that can be added on the 9-1 scale is not comparable to the A*-G scale of old GCSE or equivalent qualifications, and the relative standards may be different.
- » The same problem will work through to the baseline measure used for judging value added at key stage 5.
- » Schools determine their programmes to meet the needs of individual students. Some schools have traditionally entered able students in year 10 for some (or even all) GCSE subjects, and particularly mathematics. The current rule is that only first entry counts. A student taking mathematics or English a year early in 2016 will be taking legacy GCSEs which will not be counted in the 2017 performance tables. This decision is illogical, for the comparative performance of students with similar prior attainment is likely to be constant whether the examination was taken in 2016 or 2017.
- » While the principles of Progress 8 are sound, there are methodological flaws. There will be no genuine pilot period during which the model can be evaluated. The official measurement of



prior attainment of students is fine-tuned for the prior attainment baseline, determined by their key stage 2 test mark. In contrast, GCSE is a detuned score with achievement rounded down to a grade threshold. A student may achieve a GCSE English mark at the very top end of GCSE level 4 but that achievement is rounded down as though the student has attained the lowest mark needed to achieve the grade. The model means that students with prior attainment that places them close to the lower end of the target grade have more chance of losing value. In contrast those with prior attainment that places them high on the target grade scale have more chance of adding and considerably less chance of losing value.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The options for a new government elected in May 2015 are narrower than those open to the government at this point in time. Ideally it would be better now to delay reforms by a year to tackle all the issues above and to allow time for schools to both adjust provision, and to provide adequate CPD. By the next summer it

will be too late to delay the introduction of new GCSE English and mathematics. The following could reduce the confusion that any new administration will have to manage:

- » as an interim measure, either retain A*-G for all subjects until all subjects are following new GCSE specifications or use equivalent outcomes to award 9-1 grades in all subjects
- » commit to an early review of assessment so that the time involved in sitting examinations is proportionate to the requirement of securing valid and reliable outcomes
- » there is a case for considering dividing GCSE into part one (taken at the end of year 10) and part two taken at the end of year 11
- » remove the prescription that penalises early entry of legacy GCSEs in English and maths in the 2017 performance tables
- » continue to express GCSE performance as a grade but use the standardised mark achieved in each subject to calculate value added measures.



Seeking best practice in tackling persistent absence

Jan Tallis, Chief Executive, School-Home Support

Nearly 300,000 children are persistently absent in schools across England, leading to an annual loss of over 8.4 million school days – the equivalent of 50 secondary schools standing empty.

Unsurprisingly there is a clear link between attendance and attainment. Pupils who are

persistently absent are four times less likely to achieve 5 A*-C grades in their GCSEs.

Crucially, poor attendance is a factor in the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. Over 10% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) are persistently absent, compared to 4% of pupils not eligible for FSM.

There are many different reasons for low attendance. In some cases, the child may be a young carer and staying off school to care for someone in their family. Other children miss school because their parents lose focus on their learning while trying to cope with a range of complex issues, such as mental or physical health issues, domestic violence or a housing crisis.

To close the gap in attainment, we must address these root causes of poor attendance, because if children are not in school, they will not be able to benefit from any other programmes or interventions schools provide. SHS does this by recruiting practitioners to work directly with parents in school, in their homes and within the community.

Here's how one SHS practitioner approached the issues one student was facing, working with him, the school and the family to resolve them.

A service to help schools reduce persistent absence

School-Home Support (SHS) is a charity working with children and families to maximise educational opportunities and improve quality of life. It has a long history of working with schools and families to address the underlying issues that cause poor attendance or behavioural issues so that children can maximise their educational opportunities. In 2013/14, 77% of children SHS practitioners worked with increased their attendance by seven weeks during the year.

Schools commission SHS to recruit and support a practitioner to provide a flexible link between the school and home, working closely with parents to engage them in their child's learning and addressing whatever issues may be preventing their child from reaching their potential.

One of the key issues our practitioners work to address is persistent absence, where a child misses 15% of school sessions or, as is often the case, much more.



Helping Ray – and his mum – to get value from his school experience

Ray's attendance was erratic and his numeracy and literacy skills were well below the national average. When he was in class he found it extremely difficult to keep up with the work, so was disrupting lessons. He was also bullying other children, getting into fights and increasingly becoming a challenge for his teachers. Ray's mum, Sarah, didn't have a good relationship with the school, as she felt they weren't supporting her child's needs.

Nicky, the school's SHS practitioner, spent time building a relationship with Sarah and developing a routine for Ray to stop him from staying out too late. As Nicky built up this trust, Sarah disclosed that she was in a lot of debt and being threatened with eviction. With all these issues going on, she was also suffering

from depression. Nicky helped Sarah to access the local welfare rights centre and get expert advice on her housing situation.

Nicky had weekly one-to-one sessions with Ray to give him space to talk about his anger and equip him with the skills to manage it effectively. Ray joined the school's homework club at the library to improve his literacy and numeracy. Following support from Nicky, Sarah secured a part-time job which increased her confidence and helped to reduce her debts. Ray's attendance and punctuality improved and he now has much better control of his emotions.

Identify the specific needs

All families are different, so it is important to give them the support that is tailored to their needs and circumstances. SHS practitioners have the freedom to identify the needs of the child and

put in place a targeted strategy to overcome them. This may be providing highly intensive support over a short period, or working with families in a lighter way over an extended period of time.

SHS practitioners work with school staff to identify the pupils in most need of support. In many cases families can also ask for help directly. Once a pupil is identified, our practitioners begin to engage with the parents and wider family to identify their specific needs and to develop an action plan that they can work through together.

Increasing parents' involvement in their children's learning helps to improve the child's attainment. When parents are not engaging with school it may well be due to fears of what might happen if they do, which is often linked to their own negative experiences at school. To overcome these difficulties, parents often are ►



encouraged to begin engaging with the school in an informal way, for example through coffee mornings or book clubs. Once they become more comfortable and understand that the school wants to work with them, they are much more likely to engage in other activities such as family learning and parent evenings.

In their homes, we enable parents to actively get involved in their child's learning, for example by reading with their children and discussing what happened at school and what they learnt.

SHS practitioners are trained to use a range of techniques and interventions, including one-to-one mentoring, group sessions and workshops. This includes delivering recognised programmes, such as the Triple P parenting programme, or providing more informal sessions where parents can share their own

experiences and build networks of support.

They also work directly with groups of children in school who may be struggling to make friendships, and with individual children to improve their confidence and self-esteem so they can develop healthy relationships.

Easing transition

As was highlighted in the latest Ofsted annual review, the transition phase between primary and secondary school is vital. This is a key focus of our practitioners' work, helping children to understand and feel comfortable with the changes that are happening. We have also developed a toolkit to help schools provide effective support to children during these transition phases.

Schools recognise the impact that this support has on their pupils'

lives. Sue Harte, headteacher from John Stainer Community Primary School said: 'I can sleep at night now knowing my most vulnerable children are being looked after brilliantly.'

We want all children who face barriers to education because of their home circumstances to have access to these services. However, we also know that many schools already have designated members of staff responsible for attendance and parental engagement. In order to ensure that they are able to deliver effective interventions we have established a training service to share best practice, so that all schools can provide this vital support to their students.

For further information on services offered by SHS, visit www.shs.org.uk.



How school governors' role is changing – and how it should change

*Dr Andrew Wilkins, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies
at the University of East London*

One of the key challenges facing the current education system is ensuring schools govern themselves in ways that are transparent, efficient and equitable. With the growth of academies and free schools, large numbers of schools now operate outside the control and oversight of local government. Hence the spotlight today is on school governors – volunteers charged with the responsibility of holding senior leadership to account for the financial and educational performance of schools.

At the heart of current education policy is the vision of a self-sustaining, self-managing education system in which school leaders and governors adopt financial and legal responsibility for schools. Concurrent with these trends are changes to local government and the relationship between public and private organisations. The changing role of local government from deliverer to commissioner of education services has created new spaces for greater public-private partnerships in education. This includes the outsourcing of public contracts to private bidders (consider academy sponsors) and the increasing demand for consultants in the review of governance and performance.

In addition, the government and Ofsted now require school governors to supplement and even supplant

the formal authority of local government as part of enhancing local accountability. This has forced a shift in the culture of school governance, from one that was (relatively) comfortable and shaped in the main by lay administration and day-to-day concerns, to one that is skills-based, professionally driven and directed by the demands of site-based management and the new legal framework for schools.

We don't need to look very far to uncover evidence of this shift. In 2013 the parliamentary under-secretary of state for schools, Lord Nash, in addressing the Independent Academies Association (IAA), said:

'I'm certainly not opposed to parents and staff being on the governing body, but people should be appointed on a clear prospectus and because of their skills and expertise as governors; not simply because they represent particular interest groups.... Running a school is in many ways like running a business, so we need more business people coming forward to become governors.'

Gov.UK, 2013

Similar rhetoric can be discerned through an oral submission to the education select committee in 2014 when chief inspector of schools Sir Michael Wilshaw said 'the role of governors must be re-examined' and that 'there's a need for professional governance to move beyond the current "amateurish" approach to overseeing schools' (Cross 2014).





This shift towards a focus on experts and expertise is considered essential at a time when large numbers of schools are converting to academy status. Essentially, many of these schools are undergoing reconstitution, reorientation and reculturing in order to govern themselves effectively and efficiently. So what has been the impact of these trends on the dynamics and interaction of governing bodies?

Dr Wilkins, with Dr Anna Mazenod, investigated aspects of school governance in England between 2012 and 2015 in a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The research included interviews with 102 school governors, senior leaders and parents, and observations of 42 full governing body and committee meetings. The participating schools included two free schools, three converter and sponsor academies, one foundation school and three LA maintained schools. Documentary evidence was also collected from each school: this included school improvement plans, governor induction packs, annual budget reports, governor school visit reports, minutes from meetings, headteachers' reports to governors, articles of association and assessment data.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Qualitative research I recently conducted at the University of Roehampton was aimed at understanding and analysing the impact of recent education reforms – increased decentralisation and deregulation – on the changing role and responsibilities of school

governors. The following observations highlight some key findings and draw out their implications for thinking about the role of school governors and of school governance more generally.

OLD HIERARCHIES

At the heart of a governing body is usually a group of three to four core school governors who tend to lead strategic planning and exercise disproportionate influence over decision-making. This was fairly consistent across all the schools that participated in the study, regardless of school type, legal or governance setup. Referred to variously as the 'senior clique', 'core of governors', 'Big Four' and the 'mainstay of the governing body', these school governors were often considered necessary to any effective governing body. These schools' experience shows that governor involvement in key decisions is not limited to skills and experience. Commitment to the role often translates into greater involvement in key decision-making.

NEW HIERARCHIES

This ERC research found evidence of a drive to recruit school governors who possess skills and experience deemed relevant to enhancing accountability, which in practice means responding to directives set by the Department for Education, the Education Funding Agency and Ofsted. In effect some volunteers are more sought after than others. Their capacity to make schools intelligible and accountable as businesses is particularly valued.

Desirable volunteers in this new environment included those with a background in marketing, finance, legal aspects, data analysis and risk management, as well as volunteers with skills in negotiation, brokering, communication and networking. This makes a lot of sense when we consider what school governors today actually do, much of which concerns the specification, codification and evaluation of procedures. This may include issues relating to premises management, target setting, succession planning, budget control, resource allocation, employment disputes, contractual issues, payroll and legal advice. Of course, the 'old hierarchies' in governing bodies also had to address these issues, but to nothing like the same extent or in the same detail as they do now.

CONSENSUS AND CONSULTATION

There was evidence to suggest that many school governors were frustrated with the way meetings were conducted and decisions were made. Key decisions were typically made through committee groups rather than consulted and voted on through full governing body meetings, so decisions were sometimes sewn up in advance of any public deliberation.

From the point of view of senior leaders and chairs of governors, a big concern is that full governing body meetings are often unwieldy and impractical. The chair and senior leaders then have to mediate too many voices, often some with a hobby horse or axe to grind. Such discussions lack impartiality and objectivity, making them ineffective and inefficient.

The scope for value conflicts – potentially productive deliberations about priorities or preferences, so important to linking school direction to the needs and aspirations of the community and to the wider public – in effect becomes eclipsed by concerns about time-management and efficiency.

LESS BUREAUCRACY WOULD LIBERATE GOVERNORS TO DO A BETTER JOB FOR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

We need to consider in whose interests school governance is exercised. If the role of school governors is simply to apply rigorous checks and balances in order to enhance accountability to external authorities, we will need to rethink the role of school governors. Volunteers whose major concerns are the pupils, the school and the community would no longer be relevant.

This is not to say we don't need checks and balances matched by robust oversight, monitoring and transparency. We do. And we always will so long as we want a cost-effective, equitable and efficiently-run



education system. But wouldn't these checks and balances be better re-centralised and carried out through a local or regional body?

This would mean less bureaucracy for schools and greater scope for volunteers to engage in open, democratic dialogue with the local community; dialogue unencumbered by the technical demands of appraisals, performance reviews and pedagogies of management which serve to control rather than liberate or empower school governors.

Dr Andrew Wilkins is senior lecturer in education studies at the University of East London. He was principal investigator on an ESRC-funded project during 2012-15 investigating aspects of school governance in England. Dr Wilkins is currently writing a book based on the project's findings, tentatively entitled *Modernising School Governance* which is due to be published by Routledge.

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Female headteachers - reflections on the glass ceiling

Jan Shadick, Principal, Lambeth Academy

The debate around why women are over-represented in teaching yet under-represented at headship or senior leadership level is not new. However, it is a real issue and now, more than at any other time, we need to confront it. We must reflect critically on what we can do to ensure that we enable the very best leaders, regardless of gender, to succeed in our schools.

In writing this I do so with the following beliefs:

1. Leadership matters – it is *the* determining factor in whether our schools succeed or fail, particularly in times of change and uncertainty.
2. Men and women lead differently – there is nothing wrong in stating this and there is no value judgement attached to it. Each is socialised and behaves differently but both have

strengths, so it is wrong that one is unintentionally excluded.

3. Effective leadership is, in my view, about understanding three things: people, influence and context. What limited research there is on female leadership tells us that these things are particular strengths for women, which makes the issue more pressing than ever. In the middle of an unprecedented period of turbulence in education we need the very best leaders at the helm. At the moment we are not utilising the skills of a group who have much to offer in such a climate – women – and we may find the journey more difficult as a result.

During my formative years in the education profession, I was privileged to be led by strong, positive female role models. It was natural for me to see women as leaders in education. I did not consider that my journey into headship would be any tougher than anyone else's and as far as I am aware it was not. Reflecting on this now, I know that my own role models subconsciously

inspired me to strive for leadership positions. Without them, the thought of becoming a principal would not have crossed my mind. For women who don't have these positive role models, the leadership journey is perceived to be a tough one – some find the thought of such a journey exciting, many however do not. Leadership, and headship in particular, are simply not on their radar because of this and that is potentially a great loss.

The education landscape has changed beyond recognition over the past 20 years and with it so too have the skills required of its leaders. In the current climate, and in the years that follow, these skills need to evolve yet further.

We are entering a six-year transition period as new accountability measures and a new curriculum are phased in. While the changes are potentially exciting, our system is vulnerable. Now more than ever we need the very best leaders to steer us. We cannot afford to inadvertently close the door on half of them.



Some research undertaken in this area points to women's significant leadership strengths. Indeed, Zenger and Folkman (2012), in a study of over 7000 leaders of both genders, found that women were rated better than men in 15 of 16 leadership traits, significantly so in 12 of them. Even in the traditionally male preserves of 'taking the initiative' and 'driving for results', women outscored men in this study. Sherwin (2014) has built further on this research, arguing that it is women's ability to self-reflect and work collaboratively that makes them most effective when they reach the age of 40.

We have a responsibility as education leaders – both men and women – to take such research seriously, reflect on it and commit to actively developing our female leaders. This is no easy task and

I offer no solution, just thoughts to start a debate. We must first acknowledge that a challenge exists, and then work consciously to ensure that there are no barriers for women in accepting an invitation to sit at the leadership table in our own schools.

Encourage confidence

We must find ways to help women exercise their 'confidence muscle' – it can be developed and we need to pay attention to it. I am not convinced that women lack confidence per se but rather that women do not feel as able to express their confidence as readily as men. As a result they are often reluctant to put themselves forward for opportunities – they may need to be encouraged to do so.

Tackle recruitment barriers

In our schools we should investigate whether there are any recruitment barriers for women and, if there are, we should commit to removing them. Those who make a decision not to apply for a post sometimes do so because they have a misguided perception of the hiring process, not because they don't think they can fulfil a role. Girls are generally socialised to 'follow the rules' and women will therefore follow the exact rules of the recruitment process, paying particular attention to the required qualifications. During the last century formal qualifications were a woman's ticket into the professional world, a way of proving she could do a job without having had experience of it. Women had no 'old boys' network' to rely on for a helping hand. Instead, argues Tara Mohr ➤

(2014), they put their faith in formal training – overestimating its importance.

Added to this, a McKinsey Report (2007) found that men are generally promoted on the basis of their perceived potential but women for their experience and track record. It is no wonder that women feel they have to prove themselves first. If they see this in their own workplace they will only apply for a post if they meet the qualifications in full. As a result women tend to remain in a post for longer – which leads to a perceived lack of drive or ambition. This may mean that they do not even make the long list.

Avoid discriminating against mothers

We need to ensure that our workplace systems enable mothers to succeed in leadership roles. Flexible working in schools is difficult to manage, no matter how much you want to accommodate a request. Education is not a 'work from home' profession and not a naturally flexible one so there is no easy solution to this and we often find ourselves having to say

no. We need to be prepared to be more creative. The same is true in achieving a work-life balance. This is a significant issue for teachers at the moment and is unlikely to go away. For working mothers it will be an even greater one.

Unintended consequences

Our senior team carry the burden of command and must act accordingly – that is why they are paid more and have more non-contact time – but how do we model our expectations of them? Do we insist on an early arrival for a morning briefing or a catch-up at the end of the day? What are the unintended consequences of this for some of our team? Are our expectations easier for some to meet than others, for reasons other than capability? When does the informal 'power networking' happen? Are all invited? We can inadvertently alienate some members of our team simply by how and when we hold our informal interactions.

Public speaking

Once at the table women face the challenge of public speaking. They are often interrupted (yes they are!) and also accused of being

aggressive or emotional when in fact they are being assertive and passionate (Sandberg and Grant 2014). They tend to stay silent for fear of a backlash and they believe, sometimes correctly, that having a lot to say counts against them, yet it gives men credibility when they do the same. All of this leads women to be reluctant to contribute publicly and as such it deprives teams of valuable ideas and suggestions. Make sure we offer women the floor.

Education is one of the most important functions of our society. It is critical that we have highly effective education leaders to ensure that this function is the best that it can be. We want our very best leaders at the fore. Many of these are women. As the number of headship vacancies increases and times become more turbulent, this becomes a national imperative. All of us should own the challenge of ensuring our female leaders take their place at the table.

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First headship, first inspection: leading a school to an ‘outstanding’ Ofsted report

*Kat Pugh, Headteacher,
The St Marylebone CE School, Westminster*

‘Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire.’ There is a lot of talk of buckets in secondary education at the moment. This is because one of the new performance measures, the Progress 8 measure, is described in terms of qualifications which fill (or do not fill) the eight required buckets. In all our discussions about Progress 8 at St Marylebone, I am reminded of these words, attributed variously to W.B Yeats, Socrates or Plutarch (depending on which scholar you follow).

This chimes very much with the approach we take to education at St Marylebone – and, given the opportunity, the approach we took to Ofsted. The thoughts I share here represent only one view, one particular context and experience; what works for us is not the only recipe nor is right for all schools. But, in discussion of first headship ‘Ofsted readiness’, my purpose is to illuminate – to even be incendiary – rather than simply fill buckets.

To put the experience in context: The St Marylebone CE School is a high-performing, non-selective, inclusive and comprehensive secondary school, serving pupils of Christian faith, any other faith and no faith at all. We serve a very diverse, multi-faith and multi-cultural inner London community, with 47% of our cohort on free school meals and 49% with

English as an additional language. Our performing arts specialist status is at the heart of the school’s energy and aspiration, placing great emphasis on what the arts contribute to the development of young people – not as leading stage stars, but as curious, confident, skilled, spiritually aware and socially attuned, independent thinkers and citizens. As one of the first schools to become a National Teaching School, we take a leading role in developing and sharing best practice and shaping the teachers and education leaders of today and tomorrow. As one former HMI recently remarked: ‘At St Marylebone, possibility is everything.’

Our last full inspection, in which we sustained an ‘outstanding’ judgement, was in 2007. At the time, I was a head of years 8 and 9 and a teacher of English. Since then, Ofsted has made a number of low-profile visits resulting in good practice case studies in areas such as employer engagement and assessment for learning. We had, in the meantime, become a National Teaching School, an ‘Outstanding’ converter academy and opened an affiliate special free school (more on this below). By 2014, Ofsted was due, even for a school with a strong record of excellent results. Following the retirement of our former headteacher, Elizabeth Phillips OBE, who’d served for twenty years, effecting extraordinary transformation and influence across London education, I became headteacher in January 2014. Ofsted called on 1 April 2014. It was not an April Fool.





In September 2013, The St Marylebone CE Bridge School opened. At a formal ceremony, a group of GCSE music scholars accompanied a group of year 7 pupils with special educational needs, singing in harmony, conducted by an Oxford-trained music teacher. Three of these year 7s had never sung before that month. Two had never performed in front of an audience. One had been, until two weeks before, a selective mute. The speaker of the house, Sir John Bercow, spoke of his own experiences of special educational needs and heralded the opening of the first specialised provision in Westminster for secondary-age pupils with special educational needs in speech, language and communication.

The school is an affiliate to St Marylebone; it is its own trust and company, with its own governing body – but it is born out of the same zeal, vision and sense of possibility which fuels our 'outstanding' mainstream secondary. It is a special free school – one of the first in the country. Now in its second year of operation, with 12 pupils in each year, The St Marylebone CE Bridge School (SMBS) is in its own (temporary) premises with a flourishing team of educators and specialists. It is doing what we set out to do: supply a gap in local provision for pupils with these needs, so that they do not get lost in mainstream nor limited by a special school experience which does not recognise their individuality. Getting this far has taken stamina and resilience worthy of a 'learning character' article in itself.

Now let's rewind the clock: one of the questions I was asked in interview for this post was, 'How would you ensure that the school is Ofsted-ready?' I replied (with my heart in my mouth) that I would not run the school according to Ofsted criteria. We lead schools, in my view at least, motivated by a love of learning and by a vision of what is possible for all young people. We don't think, dream and aspire under headings and criteria. Indeed, the best Ofsted inspectors understand this. As the former HMI and education consultant Frank Knowles says, 'Write about the school, not about the criteria.'

As such, at St Marylebone, we don't pursue ways to tick boxes. We pursue excellence. This whole school ethos, summarised as 'a love of learning' and 'the pursuit of excellence' has been tangible here for a long time. However, with a new head, a new Ofsted framework, a lot of new or trainee staff (the usual inner-London turnover), we set about making sure that it was really felt and understood by everyone – and that it was, demonstrably, having the impact desired. Furthermore, we wanted to ensure that we had not only the structures in place to support this, but the energy, zeal and fire to deliver and articulate it.

There were a number of activities, both implicit and explicit, undertaken by the leadership team, to make this happen. In no particular order:

We centred our entire, year-long Teaching and Learning programme on three questions:

- » What does excellent teaching and learning look and sound like in our school/department?
- » Where do we know we can see this today?
- » How can we see this more frequently, more widely, tomorrow?

These questions underpinned Inset for the senior leadership team and then our heads of learning, who then took the same questions back to department meetings. Discussions were informed by data about quality of teaching, student attainment and progress and appraisal objectives – but the real value in this was the active investment in talking about teaching, evaluating and honing our experiences and deciding how, creatively, to capture the best practice.

We championed our Aspiration and Challenge programme

This programme is, in one sense, our answer to gifted and talented, and in another sense, our answer to a whole-school upward trajectory. Aspiration and Challenge is the 'yes and' factor, providing stretch and challenge in lessons, weekly Bright Ideas speaker seminars, targeted Careers Ideas talks from visiting professionals, a Scholars' programme which nurtures talent and leadership, a High Achievers programme which engages high-achievers and ought-to-be high achievers in the 'yes and'; the next step, the exciting sixth dimension beyond the school timetable. Importantly, Aspiration and Challenge is for everyone; its branding is radiant and high profile: its message is 'yes and you too'.

We challenged opinion with fact

We produced a (rather large) spreadsheet which recorded all relevant evaluative information about all teachers. Data was drawn from external reviews, appraisal data, results and lesson observation records. Importantly, for this purpose, it was all colour coded. While our deputy head held the colour-coded copy (i.e. the teachers' scores), the executive senior leadership team (a team of four) were quizzed on what we would expect to see in each teacher's lesson in terms of the quality of teaching, achievement and behaviour for learning. Done privately as it was, and over two or three meetings, it required us to challenge our opinions and become much more rigorously

informed about the strengths of our teachers – using facts to substantiate opinion. Department-specific equivalents of this were produced to support heads of learning. No information was collated nor shared that did not contribute to a firmer understanding of the quality of our teaching.

Talking teaching

The school has for a couple years now run a series of drop-in sessions called Coach-Couch. The name evolved from the nature of the sessions themselves: teachers attended voluntarily after school in a relaxed and conversational, non-judgemental forum. Usually this resulted in a group of 10 to 20 people. Ahead of the session, a theme-difficulty would be suggested, usually framed as a question, such as, 'How can I make sure all pupils are actively learning in class discussion?', or 'How do I decipher complicated texts for my year 10 EAL learners, without disempowering them?' – in other words, questions which continue to have relevance no matter the stage of one's teaching career.

The sessions were aimed at teachers no longer on a training programme, since already our many NQTs, School Directs or Teach First teachers had a very full calendar of CPD events. The idea was to inspire self-generated dialogue and collaboration, in a non-judgemental, cross-departmental and wholly voluntary forum. As a result, teachers were encouraged that their passion for teaching and pedagogy was valued and nurtured. This has now evolved into a family of teacher-led focus groups which enable conversation and collaboration linked to individuals' CPD and school improvement priorities.

One-to-ones and department lunches

As a new head, I met each of the senior leadership team, all heads of department and curriculum leaders, one-to-one, to hear their outlook on their area of responsibility, challenges ahead and how they felt they would like to contribute further to the school's vision and ethos. This was a really valuable experience in listening; it enriched my sense of how others articulate and view the school, its strengths and challenges. Moreover, the people talking to me had a rare rehearsal in articulating their educational vision and identifying their professional challenges – in the context of our whole-school aims.





We also began holding weekly department lunches in my office. It is very unusual for teams to have the time to sit and enjoy lunch together – and enables me to hear their news and views while establishing a firmer insight into the group dynamics.

All these opportunities for dialogue were an active investment by us as leaders in teachers' ideas and experiences: a further demonstration of our love of learning. By default, this also prepared us for Ofsted: just like pupils practising for the French oral exams or an essay paper. It meant we knew ourselves, our staff, our students and our school better.

Finally, since the call from Ofsted was likely, there were a number of practical, systematic and structural things we did in advance with a view to not having to do them between the midday notice of inspection and 8am the next morning. These included:

- » collating and categorising essential paperwork
- » drafting a 3.30pm message to pupils to inform and inspire them about the inspection
- » planning our staff briefing

- » producing a one-page 'golden rules' guidance sheet for teachers about what they did and did not need to do
- » deciding who our joint observation team would be
- » demystifying Ofsted for non-teaching staff: what would we require on-demand from the data team? For what should the site keepers be extra vigilant? How can reception be best supported and resourced? How confident is HR about presenting the single central record?

It was (and still is) so important to know that everyone was (is) pulling in the same direction. How would this be apparent? For me, the answer is not that 'they all agree' or 'they all have uniform answers'. Common purpose comes about through active engagement in questions of what that purpose is. The result of all this activity was, gladly, the outcome we felt we deserved: 'outstanding' in all categories and a report which really sings the spirit of the school. Not every school is at the same stage of development. But, since Ofsted is a reality for all of us, I think one maxim holds true: 'You can't beat the ocean, but you can learn to surf.'



A free school that focuses on character and leadership

*Sir Iain Hall, Chair of Governors, King's Leadership Academy,
& CEO, Great Schools Trust*

King's Leadership Academy opened as a free school in Warrington in 2012 with just 39 students. It is now heavily oversubscribed, with over 160 applications for 120 places this year.

Ethos: character education and leadership

The founders of the academy, the Great Schools Trust, firmly believe that if young people come to a school where they feel valued, safe and that teachers have their best interests at heart, then they will commit themselves. They will work harder, suffer fewer distractions, become more motivated and achieve more. Research showed that a character-driven approach to education based on a firm set of values could be the lever that would produce such an ethos.

We also considered how our young people could be advantaged in developing a career path in their early years of employment or higher education. Among the skills they would need to be

successful were those of positively influencing those around them, including 'upwardly managing'. Leadership was chosen as the academy's specialism in order to help our young people develop such influencing skills.

Developing a character building culture

Our mission is to develop the academic skills, intellectual habits, qualities of character and leadership traits necessary for every child to succeed at all levels and become successful citizens in tomorrow's world. That permeates everything we do. Character development is both taught and caught through lessons and the constant modelling of our seven pillars of character:

1. aspiration
2. achievement
3. self-awareness
4. professionalism
5. integrity
6. respect
7. endeavour.

These are held together through the use of the acronym **ASPIRE**.

At the start of each academic year pupils revisit the pillars through the delivery of specific in-house character education programmes, as well as the work of Covey and Dweck, to reignite motivation before formal studies start. From these introductory programmes each pupil develops an annual aspirational 'flight path' with personalised success criteria. This is continually revisited throughout the year to ensure that the pupil is on track to meet his/her targets.

Following this introductory programme, each day starts with an assembly, or lesson, focused on one of the seven pillars. To further reinforce this approach staff focus in depth on one ASPIRE trait every five weeks as well as holding a super learning day for each pillar during the course of the year.

Each week students have a leadership lesson focused on a famous leader whose actions epitomised one of the pillars. Rewards and behaviour modification strategies are all





formulated around the seven pillars.

The King's Experience

The 'King's Experience' pledge to all pupils is a wide variety of character-forming experiences from Y7 to Y11. These include cultural, sporting, and leadership activities to enhance their personal development.

The cultural pledge includes annual visits to universities to enhance aspiration; museums to foster curiosity; plays to gain greater understanding of other people's views and, for Y7/8 students, weekly participation in our brass orchestra to reinforce our belief in the development of mastery through continuous practice.

The sporting pledge ensures pupils have three hours each week: formal team games, to develop team spirit; and individual sports such as swimming, rowing, fencing and ju-jitsu, led by

professional coaches, to reinforce perseverance, resilience and grit.

The leadership pledge ensures weekly lessons of accredited leadership training and an annual outdoor pursuits residential to encourage the development of personal leadership, self-confidence and growth mindsets. Through this programme all students will undertake the Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) Bronze award in Y9 and Silver Award in Y10/11.

The personal development pledge is the delivery of weekly lessons in public speaking, philosophy and ethics (PPE) to frame students' personal development in British values.

Wider aspects of academy life

Character education permeates academy life in that it is intentional, planned and reflected in every aspect of the school day. Each day pupils will take turns at leading our formal line-ups, without teacher assistance,

to foster confidence, self-belief, community spirit and mutual respect. Assemblies reinforce the character pillars. Each classroom is named after a top university, to encourage aspiration, and teachers greet students at the door with a handshake to further reinforce mutual respect and community spirit.

Lessons start with the recitation of a character-based mantra aimed at encouraging focus and personal drive, followed by a challenging hypothesis to which all students have to respond by the end of the lesson so as to foster curiosity, motivation and drive. Visitors to the lesson are met at the door by a 'greeter', a post that changes daily, who outlines the objectives and progress being made before entry to the lesson. Each of these activities is specifically designed to encourage character development and secure academic excellence.

Measuring the impact

King's Academy maintains that one effective way of determining the impact of its character education programme is by monitoring pupils' behaviour traits. Evidence captured so far shows that, despite the school day being longer than normal (finishing at 4.30pm), attendance last term was 97.6%. Since opening in 2012 it has had no fixed term or permanent exclusions and, on average, fewer than five pupils (2%) are on daily report for minor infractions. Its annual pupil satisfaction survey (PASS) indicates that over 80% of pupils have strong positive feelings about these educational programmes, their safety in school, and the progress they are making.

Eighty-five percent of pupils regularly take part in extracurricular activities, and 25% of each year group join the CCF (combined cadet force) from year 8.

In terms of accreditation:

- » One hundred per cent of Y7/8 students have either completed or are on target to complete their awards in fencing, ju-jitsu, first aid, life-saving or sports leadership.
- » All Y9 students are on target to complete the DoE Bronze Award by the end of this school year.
- » More than 90% of parents say they would strongly recommend the school to other parents.
- » Ofsted's report on the school in 2014 commented on its 'outstanding behaviour.



Integrity, respect and endeavour have become learned behaviours, leading to a strong and intrinsic motivation to succeed.... The vision to create a community where future leaders are made...is becoming well established.'

- » More than 96% of King's Academy pupils make progress in line with national expectations, and 80% exceed these expectations.

Staff recruitment, selection and induction

The academy very rarely has to advertise for new staff; newspaper adverts are a last resort. The main sources of recruitment are queries about possible vacancies from teachers who have visited the academy, adverts on its website and work with universities. Existing staff receive a finder's fee if they recommend anyone who is subsequently recruited.

When selecting new staff we are not necessarily looking for the best classroom practitioner. As long as the successful applicant shows promise, we are confident that, through our CPD programme,

we can help them become outstanding practitioners. Much more important to us is that their personal values align with the ASPIRE code. Formal interviews concentrate on teasing out each applicant's personal values, hopes and aspirations.

Towards the end of the summer term the academy takes all staff, including new recruits, to its residential outdoor centre to induct new staff, reinforce its values and build an effective team. CPD strategies throughout the year are not restricted to the improvement of classroom practice but include the ability to develop students' curiosity, conscientiousness, perseverance and resilience so as to foster growth mindsets, enhance character growth and gain outstanding outcomes.

Character Award

On 16 March 2015 education secretary Nicky Morgan announced that King's Leadership Academy had won the £35,000 national Character Award, 'for its outstanding work in promoting virtue in pupils.'



Life after levels at Meols Cop High School

*Leon Walker, Assistant Headteacher &
David Jones, Deputy Headteacher,
Meols Cop High School*

The news that national curriculum levels were not going to be replaced caused much wringing of hands and navel-gazing at Meols Cop! The big question was: What was our assessment structure going to look like, going forward?

INITIAL DISCUSSIONS

We made the firm decision that we wanted to develop our own unique assessment structure. This was a golden opportunity to shape assessment in a way that would work for our staff and students. We considered that we needed to encourage our staff to think about three key points:

- » What does good assessment look like?
- » What are the key skills and knowledge needed to master your subject?
- » How will assessment fit into schemes of learning and maximise 'making learning stick'?

Before setting up the system we developed a list of key priorities that our assessment system should meet. It should be:

- » easily understood by parents and students
- » able to identify key skills and knowledge that develop mastery in each subject area
- » able to give information about how a student can progress to the next learning target
- » able to prepare students for GCSEs
- » able to quickly identify when a student is underperforming.

HOW OUR NEW ASSESSMENT SYSTEM WOULD WORK

We looked at how we could divide our students into meaningful groups to develop challenging targets for them. We decided to use prior KS2 data as a means to subdivide our students. Using RAISEonline as our guide we grouped them in the following way.

Average KS2	Band
Level 5 or above	1
Level 4	2
Below level 4	3

These bands are not set in stone and students can move up a band if they develop faster than others.

As we wanted to keep the assessment system as simple as possible we decided to give all students the same named target based on a five-year plan while they studied at Meols Cop High School. Students would be targeted to achieve a gold standard based on their academic ability. The skills/knowledge required to achieve gold for a band 1 student would be more challenging than for a band 2 and 3 student, but will all be aspirational and appropriate for the individual student.

During the summer term each department was given time to write a set of skills/knowledge that each band of students should be able to demonstrate by the end of the year. Departments were encouraged to look at the skills required in year 11 to achieve a particular

The Meols Cop five-year assessment plan

Year 6 achieved	Year 7 target	Year 8 target	Year 9 target	Year 10 target	Year 11 target
Level 5 or above	Gold	Gold	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A/A*
Level 4	Gold	Gold	Grade D	Grade C	Grade B
Below level 4	Gold	Gold	Grade E	Grade D	Grade C

grade and work back to what they would want that student to be able to demonstrate at the end of years 7, 8 and 9.

To give students information about how this could be achieved, departments set out the skills/knowledge needed to achieve bronze, silver and gold skills in their subject. It was expected that the majority of the bronze skills should be achieved after the first term, silver by Easter, with gold finally achieved by the end of the year.

Each department decided on the number of skills that they wished to assess throughout the year. To make this process manageable the majority of departments decided to assess six or seven key skills for each year, with English, maths and science assessing around 12 as they have more curriculum time.

An example of a bronze, silver and gold skill in history for a band 1 student:

BRONZE

You can describe several characteristic features of past societies and periods

SILVER

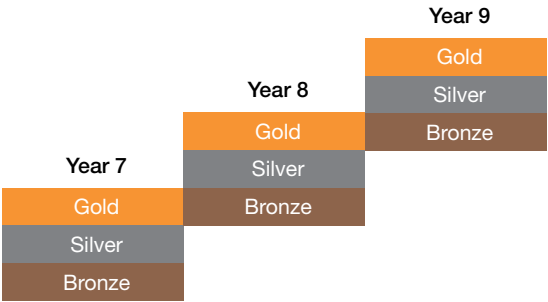
You can describe in more detail characteristic features of past societies and periods

GOLD

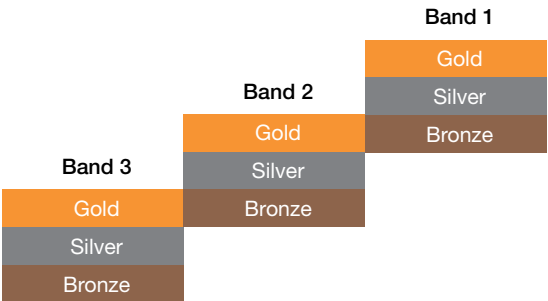
You can describe in depth several characteristic features of past societies and periods

Departments agreed that there should be some overlap from year to year as this would allow students to become secure in a skill area before moving on to a more complex aspect the following year.

The majority of departments decided on the following model for how the skills overlapped from year to year.



We also wanted to ensure that students could move up to a higher band if they progressed through the skills quickly. To ensure that this was possible departments wrote their skills ensuring that there was overlap between the bands.



We also have a set of overarching skills that students should aim for in all their subjects. These included bronze, silver and gold targets for attendance; attitude to learning, etc.

PARENTS

As we realised that this form of assessment was radically different to what parents and students had seen before we decided to hold information evenings where we explained the system and how parents could tell if their child was making good progress.

Parents receive reports three times a year. In these reports each subject area identifies which skills have been achieved, which skills have not yet been mastered, and awards an overall grade based on the student's performance.

SUCCESSSES

The most successful aspect of this initiative was that subject leaders were talking to their staff about what good assessment looks like and what skills are needed to master their particular discipline.

The project was launched as a trial. We encouraged staff to experiment and gave them the flexibility to try new ideas. We knew that we would not get everything right the first time but felt that the process of trying would be as valuable as the final outcome. The setting up of our own system meant that all departments had to review how they were assessing student progress. As the grading criteria have progression built in to them we are finding that peer and self-assessment is becoming more specific and students are becoming more skilled at describing what improvements are needed.

See our student voice blog - <http://bit.ly/1857GsG>.

STILL WORK TO DO

We know that there is a need for more internal moderation to ensure that members of staff are awarding skills consistently in their subject area and have built in directed time to allow this. We are planning on building up a bank of resources that demonstrate the standard required to achieve a particular skill.

Some departments have already found that some skills have been either too challenging or have not stretched the students adequately, so they will be revisiting them later in the year.



Although the initial feedback from parents was generally positive we know that there was concern from some parents that they did not fully understand what their child was aiming for by the end of year 11. To accommodate this we are looking to introduce a flight path into our reports so parents can relate where their child is now to where they should be by the end of their journey through Meols Cop High School.

Our biggest challenge has been how we communicate this structure to outside agencies. When they ask for a target of a particular child in year 7 we cannot just say they are aiming for gold. We therefore use the set of skills that they should be able to demonstrate by the end of the year.

This assessment structure is by no means the finished article. However the experience and dialogue that it has sparked throughout the school has been invaluable.

Will bronze, silver and gold still be here in a few years' time? We don't know, but our drive for aspirational skill-based targets will remain.



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Chloe Brunton
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Best practice in education

The Educational Outcomes database

This year's edition out now

All member schools have been contacted this term to give them access to their free copy of SSAT's Educational Outcomes. The database is a 'must have' for school leaders for its one-page display and analysis of their own KS4 or KS2 data with that of every other school in the country.

It is exclusive to SSAT members and is available on our new online Exchange: www.ssatuk.co.uk/theexchange.

The profile page presents a school's context, performance, attendance and Ofsted data as well as an analysis of their pupil premium gaps and the achievement of prior attaining groups compared with national. This year we have included both 'first' and 'best' entry for 5 ACEM.

The accompanying charts show a school's position compared with every other in the country with similar levels of prior attainment.

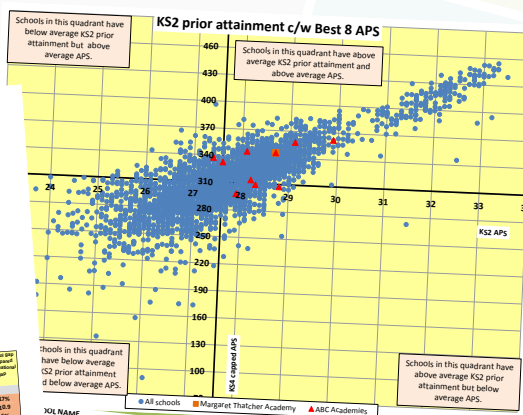
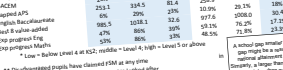
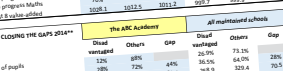
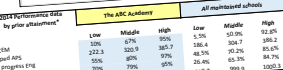
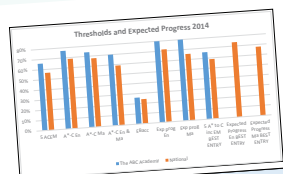
New for this year is a chart showing the 'pupil premium' gap compared with the overall

percentage of pupil premium students. Also new this year is an option to enter your own data for your selection of student groups which is then displayed as a chart comparing your gaps with those nationally.

What really helps schools to collaborate, however, is the searchable database of all schools in the country with over 40 fields showing characteristics, performance data and contact details.

All member headteachers have been sent a joining link to the Exchange, but if you don't think you've received yours, please contact membership@ssatuk.co.uk.

And if you haven't yet registered to attend the next series of free regional SSAT network evenings – at which there will be lively discussion around the changes to curriculum and Educational Outcomes certificates will be presented to winning schools – please do so today: www.ssatuk.co.uk/edu-outcomes.



		DASHBOARD SUMMARY										
		AREA		BELOW FLOOR 3 ACMT?	BELOW FLOOR EXPECTED PROGRESS ENGLISH?	BELOW FLOOR PROGRESS MATH?	BELOW FLOOR ALL?	5 ACMT PUPIL PREMIUM GAP GREATER THAN NATIONAL?	CAPED APS PUPIL PREMIUM GAP GREATER THAN NATIONAL?	VALUE ADDED PROGRESS SIGNIFICANCE	OFSTD OVERALL EFFECTIVE NEWS GRADE (as at 31.12.14)	OFSTD CATEGORY IF 4
	Birmingham	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Liverpool	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Portsmouth	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Manchester	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	London	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Leeds	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Average	2	2
	Bristol	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	Average	2	2
	Swindon	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Southampton	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Newcastle	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Cardiff	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	Sign +	2	2
	Corby	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	Average	2	2
										Average	2	2
										Average	2	2

Finally, as you would expect, there is a searchable database with 40+ indicators

For more information, contact Colin Logan,
Head of Data and Accountability, at
colin.logan@ssatuk.co.uk.



How the other half live

*Mike Milner, Executive Principal,
Wellington College Academy Trust*

In an era that has seen the rise of collaborative groups of schools, such as academy chains, the boundaries between state and independent education are more blurred than they have ever been. Developments such as academies and free schools have led to increased diversity in state education, and strong partnerships hold the key to sharing good practice and sustaining long-term improvement in the system.

It is always interesting to read the comments that readers leave at the end of any online articles written about state independent partnerships. Based on my experience, seeing such polarised opinions on paper feels strangely at odds with the reality of working in the two sectors and they are, of course, driven by politics rather than pedagogy. Nevertheless, these prejudices exist and the

only way to break down this barrier to progress is by facilitating learning from each other. It is a shame that doing so becomes a political football, when in fact partnerships, diversity and the resultant creativity in education should be encouraged to push teaching and learning further into the 21st century.

There are many examples, some long established, of independent and state schools collaborating and forming local partnerships. In some cases, the nature of the relationship may be more one sided but is nevertheless productive and beneficial; for example, sharing sport facilities and expertise in particular subjects. I believe that we are at the beginning of a new era where independent schools will be able to learn a great deal from successful academy chains and clusters of state schools and they will seek out more collaborative opportunities. An obvious example of possible need for this is teacher training, where recent significant changes will mean that all schools, regardless of

sector, are looking for new ways of recruiting, training and retaining the best teachers.

Wellington College, under Sir Anthony Seldon, took the bold step of setting up a sponsored academy in 2009 with its own name above the door: The Wellington Academy. The two schools are not close geographically (50 minutes in a car), but this is still close enough to allow staff to visit each other. In terms of demographic and opportunities, it would be tempting to suggest that the two are polar opposites. Wellington Academy is based near Tidworth in Wiltshire, an army garrison town on the edge of Salisbury Plain with the resulting issues of family mobility and instability. The predecessor school, Castledown, was knocked down to build the school's state-of-the-art new buildings, opened in 2010/11. The school has both boarding and a large sixth form, making it a very different institution from the one it replaced. Wellington College, founded in 1859, has become the most improved independent



school in the country and secured impressive results and demand for places. The collaboration between the two remains a project of great interest to many in education and although we have had our fair share of negative publicity, the reality is far more interesting than the headlines.

It is my genuine belief that there are far more similarities than differences between the two schools. Fundamentally, we all know this to be true: everyone is born being unable to read and write, attends lessons somewhere, takes the same sorts of exams and enters the same adult world. There are both good and underperforming schools in both sectors, so we should be looking to identify the differences that make most impact on longer term outcomes, regardless of sector. Many of

these are entirely replicable in any school; for example, seeking to create a more aspirational culture, providing a broad and enriching school experience, creating clear pathways to higher education or employment. However it is recognised in some contexts, including our own, that these cultural changes can take time and involve working closely with the school's broader community as well as the young people themselves. If the discussion about what is good about the independent sector focuses only on preconceptions about class sizes being smaller on average (possibly true but evidence of impact is not clear) and more financial clout (not all independent schools have huge endowments), then we are missing the more interesting learning points.

In the past year and a half,

Wellington College has changed its approach to academy sponsorship, becoming even more involved at both the strategic and operational levels. I became principal in September 2013 from the senior leadership team at the college and the governance has been completely restructured, creating a multi-academy trust in 2014. We have just opened Wellington Primary Academy in Tidworth as part of our commitment to support education in the local community and there is a greater clarity of vision for the academies. Since opening, substantial ground work has been put in to developing the relationship between the schools, but we admit that the academic outcomes have proven harder to secure than perhaps was first envisaged. This has not dampened the enthusiasm of the college's stakeholders for the



project, in fact it has hardened their resolve to see it through.

One of the most powerful demonstrations of why the relationship works has been when we have given our students the opportunity to work together with their peers at the college. Bringing together whole year groups is an amazing experience, as that simple activity shows most dramatically how similar the two cohorts are: in the age of social media and online gaming, young people connect with others across the world effortlessly. Concerns about mixing with those from a different type of school or with a perceived difference in personal wealth seems very 20th century and certainly not the world into which this generation is growing up.

Both sets of staff know each other well, and that relationship has been developing strongly over the past few years. There are well established links in many subjects and the academy has changed its curriculum to bring things into ever closer alignment, e.g. choice of subjects and exam boards. It is commonly written that independent school teachers 'don't understand the problems with difficult students'. I believe this is patently wrong for two reasons. Firstly, many of them either attended state schools or have taught already in that sector and secondly, as professional practitioners, it is perfectly possible to acquire the necessary experience given the right opportunities. I would welcome anyone who still thinks there is a gulf to visit us and see



staff who have joined us from the college or those that travel over to work with our most vulnerable and challenging learners.

As the college's state school operations have grown in confidence, we are simultaneously starting to see the relationship become more symbiotic. We have been able to showcase initiatives and systems, which have been tried in the academies, to the college and they have been receptive to these. A recent example is when we had the chance to describe our new learning observation process (having removed graded lesson observations) at a joint Inset day. We have also started sharing our performance review management system and our staff have been involved with Wellington College's Teaching School Partnership,

as leaders rather than recipients of training. We are now even more linked closely with our IT infrastructure.

As with all partnerships, individual organisations can learn much from others. Although the received wisdom is that it is more beneficial if there is significant ground in common, I challenge that view. Learning from differences may be the key to cracking some of the more stubborn problems we face and embracing new initiatives for which there is no rule book – character education and well-being stand out as recent examples promoted by the government. Our developing trust aims not only to bridge the divide, but also to make the education provided in all the schools greater than the sum of its parts.



Building character through a resilience curriculum

*Andy Percival, Deputy Headteacher,
The Rodillian Academy*

I am sure we have all heard the cries; those chilling cries that crush our spirits as teachers: 'I don't get it!' 'I am rubbish at maths' and the old favourite, 'I can't do it', issued when they have actually only committed two seconds of their life to trying to master whatever challenge you have just put in front of them. Like many others, we have been working hard at The Rodillian Academy to combat these detrimental mindsets through innovative curriculum design.

We now place the development of character, resilience and growth mindset at the centre of our ethos and way of working; this development is the foundation of everything we do, and has significantly contributed to the transformation of the school itself from 19% five A*-C including English and maths in 2007, to 76% in 2014.

Where did it come from?

The resilience curriculum evolved from an already successful learning to learn curriculum which explored the '6 Rs' of responsibility, reasoning, respect, reflection, resourcefulness and resilience. Two years ago, we decided to refine the focus to solely look at resilience, as the pivotal part of the year 7 curriculum. Much has been written on the desirability of this trait: sticking at it especially when things get difficult, coupled with that positive attitude to studies, essential

for success in school and life. If we could develop this at the early stages of our students' secondary school life, imagine what they could achieve?

Who delivers it?

The resilience curriculum is delivered by a carefully selected group of staff including subject leaders, directors of learning and senior teachers, who have all engaged in joint planning and review sessions throughout the last two years to ensure that we maintain a purposeful curriculum that builds resilient learners with transferable skills to support all curriculum areas. Students are taught by the same teacher all five lessons, which enables strong relationships to be formed and provides a safe learning environment whereby students feel more confident in taking risks.

How do we begin?

The resilience curriculum is first launched in year 6 at the prospective parents' evening, where it is explained, by the headteacher in his keynote address, that the development of character and resilience are central to our ethos and our way of working. Parents/carers understand that it is our belief that the development of these skills is fundamental to success within educational settings as well as throughout life. This programme is then reinforced as part of the transition programme. Students join The Rodillian Academy for two weeks before the summer holidays for the transition programme which is centred, unsurprisingly, on resilience. Students are given a challenge to complete over the summer; preparing a presentation about a mistake they have made in ►►



the past, which is then delivered to the rest of their class within the first week of year 7.

What does the year look like?

The areas of resilience we promote in our students are: academic, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual, endurance, behavioural and cognitive. The curriculum revolves around four individual schemes of work. The first scheme of work is called *The big question*. Throughout this scheme of work we focus on building positive relationships between students, with staff and with parents/carers. We introduce the concept of resilience through teaching Carol Dweck's mindsets. Students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses through class presentations and are set individual targets. We take the entire year group on a compulsory three-day camping trip in their third week at the academy where they have an intensive introduction to resilience skills and challenges, including water sports, survival challenges, and of course, the challenge of being away from home. They have to put up their own tents, cook their own meals alongside these other activities. A challenge for the staff and students alike!

The second scheme of work develops their

abilities to look beyond themselves and consider the work of others. *In their shoes* looks at how others show resilience and have overcome barriers with a particular focus on key figures in history. Inspirational figures such as Nelson Mandela are explored together with more current issues such as the terror attacks in Paris.

We move onto *Operation new planet*; problem-solving tasks, working in small teams. Students use their resilience to plan the move to a brand new planet while having opportunities to reflect on their own lifestyles and ways in which they may improve the way we treat our planet.

The final scheme of work is aptly called *The big reflection* and provides students with opportunities to evaluate the impact of their progress in resilience this year and set targets for next year. Throughout the course staff and students also develop practical skills which require resilience such as learning how to play the ukulele and juggle; powerful tasks where staff and students learn alongside each other. How does the teacher respond when the class are getting better than they are? Staff modelling responses to failure - resilience in action - has been an inspirational addition to this process.



Do we assess?

We monitor progress in resilience using the bronze, silver and gold set of criteria, which gives broad categories of progress in resilience. The results of the resilience curriculum monitoring are communicated with all staff so that they have an understanding of the resilient capabilities of students in their classes, allowing this information to inform their planning in lessons. As this becomes an embedded part of the culture of the school, we are now seeing an increase in subject staff talking to resilience teachers to understand how individual students work so that they can better support them in their lessons.

The future

So what next? We are looking to extend our transition programme to work with key feeder schools to develop core values, mindset, literacy and numeracy at KS1 and KS2. We recognise that we will need to provide a robust CPD programme building a whole-school culture of growth mindset, to support staff across the schools and the key stages and also a programme to support our parents so that they can better support their child throughout their education. This programme will need to educate parents; parents who may not

have had positive experiences within education themselves. We are looking to develop opportunities for cross-phase sharing of good practice so that teachers can better understand the learning journey and character development that a child experiences throughout their time in education. As part of this cross-phase sharing we are looking to develop opportunities for students to lead the learning, an opportunity for year 7 resilience students to teach key stage 1 and 2 the character and resilience skills that will support their learning.

Our goal

Ultimately we desire resilient learners who have the right mindset that will support them as they prepare for linear exams at the end of key stage 4, key stage 5 and beyond into the world of work. Hearing our year 7 cheering the rugby team on recently, when they were losing in a match, with the war cry of 'be resilient', gives us hope that this is not as ambitious as it first seems. And yes - they came back and won!

Rodillian will be presenting their work at SSAT's national **Mind the Gap Conference** on character education this spring.

www.ssatuk.co.uk/mind-the-gap

Developing literacy skills: passionate about progress

*Jo Eldridge, Assistant Headteacher (Teaching and Learning),
The Fernwood School*

The Fernwood School in Nottingham is on a mission to improve the literacy skills of all its pupils. A sophisticated range of interventions, delivered by a skilled team of staff, are having a positive impact on levels of progress for struggling readers.

At The Fernwood School, our approach to developing and enhancing pupils' literacy skills is systematic, simple to implement and successful. We are passionate about promoting and developing literacy skills for all our learners. A pupil who has effective literacy skills has the ability to gain understanding from texts and learn the skills they need to become adept communicators. The developmental processes we have put in place provide a sophisticated understanding of each individual pupil and allow for a personalised approach to intervention.

The Literacy Hub

To enhance the delivery of the interventions we offer, we have recently created a specialist Literacy Hub which is dedicated to promoting and developing literacy skills for all pupils. The Literacy Hub's team of specialists use various skills and programmes to assess and target specific areas for development and provide support tailored to each individual pupil's needs and requirements. This is achieved through a range of interventions, delivered in small groups, or during one-to-one sessions. Ongoing monitoring is used to check when targets are reached, or new ones need to be set. This monitoring ensures that pupils continue to be stretched and challenged so that they achieve their full potential.

The Literacy Hub also offers lunchtime clubs which aim to develop pupils' social skills alongside their literacy skills. The activities and clubs offered are inclusive of all abilities and promote life skills such as



interpersonal development, team building and leadership qualities through activities and discussion. The Literacy Hub provides a happy and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe, supported and confident.

As you read this you may be wondering about the cost implications of setting up a dedicated area for literacy development and, more importantly, the cost of staffing it. The Literacy Hub isn't a large area; in fact it was created from what was once an unused space in the humanities faculty. Glass



partitioning was used to define the space, existing furniture was repurposed and the literacy team finally had a 'home'. The impact of a dedicated space is not to be underestimated. Previously, our intervention had taken place in stolen corners of the school, an image we are sure will resonate with many of you.

The Literacy Hub is staffed by two full-time learning support leaders who are highly skilled teaching assistants specialising in literacy development. The learning support leaders are responsible for the literacy development timetabling, analysis of need and the implementation of all literacy intervention. They are supported by an English and SEN specialist teacher, one of the school's specialist leaders of education and the work of the team is directed by the assistant headteacher responsible for teaching and learning.

The impact

We believe the cost of staffing and resourcing The Literacy Hub is an effective use of school and catch-up premium funding. In 2013/14, 100 per cent of the pupils who received literacy intervention made accelerated progress in reading. The expected rate of progress for all pupils in one academic year would be an improved reading age of +12 months from the baseline test score. All pupils who received intervention improved by more than 12 months, with 60 per cent of pupils improving their reading age by 18 months or more.

Improving the reading skills of an 11-year-old who has been struggling to learn to read for at least seven years when they start secondary school is challenging. A struggling reader often has negative feelings about reading, low self-esteem and a complex set of learning needs. We

believe that the success of our intervention strategies relies on our knowledge of each learner's needs. Once we understand the needs of the learner, we are then able to activate a personalised intervention programme. We are confident that the data from 2013/14 shows that the reading interventions are successful and will lead to long-term improved attainment and achievement for all pupils involved.

The intervention process

The process begins in year 6. Working closely with our feeder schools we identify the pupils who need intervention and conduct a detailed analysis of need for each pupil. We group the pupils according to their reading age scores into six categories that we use throughout their time at secondary school to determine the impact of, and any future need for, intervention.





Reading competency	Reading age range
A* Gifted reader	>14.6 years
A Reading above expected level	13–14.6 years
B Reading at expected level	11–12.11 years
C Reading below expected level	9.6–10.11 years
D Reading significantly below expected level	8–9.5 years
D* Very high level of reading support required	<8 years

The analysis is then used to determine the intervention requirements of each pupil and a timeline for delivery and implementation is created. Where possible, intervention starts in the summer term of year 6 and continues into year 7. Each of the intervention programmes includes a clear exit strategy so that pupils remain supported throughout their time at The Fernwood School. We intervene as required with pupils throughout key stage 3 and in some cases into key stage 4.

We use a range of interventions that include:

- » 1-2-1 intervention using Catch Up™ Literacy
- » intensive small-group tuition (phonics or text based)
- » interactive learning resources linked to group reading texts and Catch Up™ Literacy
- » paired reading with older pupils.

Consistent and regular monitoring and evaluation of all interventions, alongside annual testing of reading ages, allow us to track the progress of all our learners. We test annually in years 6-9 to ensure that the interventions have lasting impact. Regular testing also enables us to check that we haven't missed any pupils that may need additional intervention as the demands of the curriculum become increasingly challenging.

In addition to the reading development, we run handwriting, spelling and writing intervention sessions. All our interventions are targeted, closely monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure our work is impacting on learning and progress.

Involving all staff

To complement and enhance the range of literacy interventions taking place, we have also worked

hard to share the expertise and knowledge that exists with all our staff. Improving literacy pedagogy and practice will ensure that all teachers are capable of dealing with the literacy issues that impact upon standards in their subject. By improving the literacy skills of all pupils, standards across the curriculum will rise. The implicit and explicit teaching of literacy skills is an essential part of every teacher's professional toolkit. We believe that we can transform learning in the classroom by ensuring that the development of literacy skills is a central part of lesson planning, classroom delivery, the school planning cycles and the monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching. Only when literacy permeates all aspects of school life, and moves beyond being an 'add-on' ingredient to lessons, will impact become visible in the classroom.

In many respects, we are still at the early stages of our journey to improve the literacy skills of our learners, and the impact of the intervention and support long term cannot yet be quantified. However, we are confident that we are doing the right things for the right reasons.



Pastoral care

Clare Costello, Head of Subjects, SSAT

✠ Pete Radcliffe, Assistant Headteacher, Longdean School

Pastoral care is central in every truly successful school.

In our role as teachers, we have the utmost responsibility to support, protect and guide the young people in our care to achieve everything they possibly can. Not many staff in schools would disagree with that as a principle. However it is clear that, in the current times, many of us are struggling to uphold our responsibilities as the pressure of attainment and reduced budget builds. We have a plethora of issues to contend with in schools, from the pressure of external influences on our young people, all the way through to the realities and challenges of supporting young carers. The support that we now access is dwindling, as is our time and capacity to manage these key problems. Here, Pete Radcliffe of Longdean School kindly shares with us a range of insights and strategies that they put in place to ensure that their young people achieve everything they should.

Clare Costello

A CASE STUDY OF PASTORAL CARE, PETE RADCLIFFE, LONGDEAN SCHOOL

At Longdean we run a vertical tutoring system, whereby pastoral care lies with a head of house rather than a head of year, as is typically the case with a horizontal system. Initially, this did present challenges, given students' natural affiliation to their own year groups and the default instinct to gravitate towards age-related peers. Over time, though, this has lessened and we really don't come across any

grumbles or pleas for a return to a horizontal system anymore. Like any new system, it's really a case of gritting your teeth and working through the bedding-in process.

Once that process has taken place, you begin to see evidence of a more integrated student body. For me, one of the nicest features of the vertical system has been the way in which sixth form students converse with their younger peers on the basis of relationships that were formed in class. This simply wouldn't happen with a horizontal system.

The key to embedding the system properly lies in having a clearly-defined tutor time programme that everybody buys into. Our vertical groups meet for twenty minutes every morning and they undertake a variety of activities during the course of a week. I give our directors of house autonomy in the way they organise their programmes, but there are certain non-negotiables. Typically, a weekly programme will incorporate an assembly, a house quiz, a numeracy quiz, planner signing and anything else that the director of house deems appropriate. It's really important to make sure that the structure is realistic – form time is twenty minutes long and you'll lose the goodwill of colleagues if you just overload them. There is a high level of accountability in following the framework, but we believe strongly in giving form tutors space to talk to their tutees. Whatever changes sweep through education, form time can still be the cornerstone of a positive start to the day. ➡

Research suggests that a fixed registration period does have a positive impact upon attendance, which is why we have stuck with it. Attendance has risen steadily at Longdean over the course of the past four years. I'd love to say that this is down to the existence of some magic silver bullet, but the truth is that it's driven by tight, simple systems and rigour in the way things are followed up. We're lucky to have a fantastic attendance officer, who is the first line of defence in securing good attendance. She responds immediately to any absences, picking up very quickly on the rare cases of truancy that emerge. I've come across some schools that deal with truancy on a case-by-case basis, but to me, it's not an area that you can really tackle without a consistent sanction – in our case, this comes in the form of a Saturday detention.

Beyond the first day response mechanisms, my team is great when it comes to having weekly meetings with our attendance officer for students in their house who fall into the 85-95 per cent attendance category. Having said that, they often dip into the sub-85 per cent bracket, which is my area. My philosophy is that for every child with a below target attendance figure, there needs to be some sort of story to tell. In the case of the least 'at risk' students, it may simply be that their director of house is aware of the fact that they've had a few days off with tonsillitis. As the figures descend, though, you'll find that there is a vast array of meetings, phone calls, letters and other measures that surround each child. It's not an area where you can ever say the job is done; maintaining that rigour around the follow-up is what's important. If it comes to the uncomfortable point where you have to work with the local authority to administer fixed penalty notices (FPNs), then that shouldn't be shirked. Building positive relationships with families is important, but sometimes, parents simply have to be told to get their children into school.

On the positive side, you could say that our vast array of house competitions provides an extra incentive for children to attend school. I'm very lucky to have a great member of staff who oversees inter-house competitions; this year, he has managed to take things to a whole new level. Perhaps in the past, competitions have focused too sharply on sporting endeavour. While this clearly has its place, there are so many other competitive avenues to explore! This



year, we have introduced house speed chess and house online gaming, to name but two. We're also set to see students compete in a house Masterchef competition, with the winning dish set to grace our canteen menu! All of these competitions – as well as tutor time quizzes – contribute towards our annual 'Race to Thorpe Park', where the house with the highest overall points total gets a day off timetable in the summer when they spend a day at Thorpe Park.

We also have a tightly structured behaviour management system, with clear behaviour 'stages' that relate to the scale of each misdemeanour. Stage 1 gives the teacher the scope to use their discretion to deliver, adapt and, if necessary, withdraw sanctions. Once the behaviour progresses beyond stage 1, it is entered into a whole-school system of escalating sanctions. I like the fact that we still allow scope for teachers to be discretionary, but I do think it's important that a structured whole-school system is in place beyond that.

In 2016, we move to a brand new building and with that, we'll be introducing a 'school colours' reward system, which we're really excited about. This will reward excellence in a number of different areas and have the aspirational quality that we're trying so hard to promote – the rewards that come with earning 'full colours' won't be easy to attain! I actually want it to operate outside the parameters of the house system – while house identity is important, whole school identity still comes first.



Governance of multi-academy trusts

Sylvia King, Head of Post-16 and Vocational, SSAT

The growth in multi-academy trusts (MATs) of all sizes has been rapid in the last five years. Individual MAT's have adopted a range of leadership and governance models to suit their own unique circumstances in order to best manage and govern their academies. The following case studies were produced by DfE and illustrate a range of approaches to leadership and governance for medium and large MATs.

Each case study concludes with a list of 'top tips' that a newly forming MAT might consider to ensure that they put in place a structure that supports the individual academies while ensuring that leadership and governance are robust.

Common factors include ensuring that leadership and governance are not overly burdened with bureaucracy, to facilitate timely decision-making, and to ensure

that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

Sylvia King

CASE STUDY 1: BROOKE WESTERN TRUST

A case study showing a streamlined multi-academy trust with a strong central board and community-focused local governing bodies with responsibilities clearly set out and communicated throughout the organisation.

Background

Brooke Weston Trust is a medium-sized multi-academy trust which has grown from its origins as one of the early City Technology Colleges established in 1991. They are a business-based, sponsored academy trust set up in 2007 operating in the East of England and East Midlands. The trust comprises of nine schools: three primaries and four secondaries including a free school and one all-through academy. Their academies are a mix of sponsored and converter schools.

Due to the historic development of Brooke Weston, the trust has always had a very strong and senior business presence on the board; its members include, amongst others, the CEO and group performance director of Associated British Foods (a FTSE 100 company), the chairman of London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, a director of Vanneck Capital, and a partner from Withers LLP. The board retains a seat for a senior independent educationalist to advise and challenge its work and that of the executive. Members are extremely experienced in providing robust professional challenge and together have a range of business, legal and financial skills. As a result the trust wanted to ensure that the local governing bodies (LGBs) supplemented their existing business skills with governors who have clear links to the community and the constituent schools.

Structure

In addition to its powerful board of directors, Brooke Weston Trust is governed by two small ►►

and focused area-specific sub committees and LGBs for each of their schools. The responsibilities at each level are:

- » Board of directors – responsible for the effective operation of the trust and the performance of each academy and free school. It provides ongoing challenge and support to the executive team and LGBs.
Meets three times a year.

Sub-committees:

- » Finance and audit committee – responsible for the financial administration of the trust with some powers reserved for the board of directors and executive principals.¹
Meets five times a year.
- » Remuneration committee – responsible for reviewing pay scales used by the trust, pay awards and performance management.
Meets annually.
- » Local governing bodies responsible for community matters in each location and for supporting and strengthening their principal's leadership and holding them accountable for the performance of students and staff.
Meets a minimum of three times a year.
- » Local governing body chairs' forum – new body established this year to enable wide-ranging discussion of issues of governance, training and skill requirements, strategic developments within the trust, individual academies and administrative issues. This is the mechanism for ensuring good communications across levels of governance.
Meets bi-annually.

Governors at LGB level are recruited purposefully for the links they can bring to the local community. For example, the trust looked for a governor from the Portuguese community to reflect the catchment area of one of their schools, or local government officials and business people reflecting the employment and social context of the area. The LGBs don't have any financial responsibility but are updated on financial matters by the finance director on a calendared basis as a standing item on LGB agendas.

Clear divisions of responsibilities and evaluation

To ensure efficiency and to prevent duplication of work the trust has clearly set out the responsibilities of each governance layer and, crucially, the methods for evaluating effectiveness at every level. Two key documents set these out: the scheme of governance paper which sets out the responsibilities, objectives and key measures of effectiveness of the trust, the board of directors, the executive principals, CEOs and the LGBs and secondly, the RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) matrix (Annex A).

The trust has established an audit process to monitor and review its governance which is carried out at least once a year. The evaluation looks at the leadership of the individual LGB chairs, the LGBs effectiveness and the effectiveness of the board in meeting compliance and good governance targets, as well as their delivery of academic standards. In addition, minutes of LGB meetings and discussions are read and agendas scrutinised in

advance to ensure the right trust employees are made available to LGBs to facilitate discussions and report back to the CEO where further actions/decisions are required.

People

The trust has clear expectations of local governors set out in the *Charter for Members of Local Governing Bodies*. Although the focus of LGB membership is on representation, the trust ensures governors have the skills they need to effectively challenge the headteacher. The trust offers a suite of comprehensive training and expects members to undertake refreshers annually. Documenting the expectations on governors gives the chair the legitimacy to have clear conversations with anyone falling short of this guidance and enables them to take action when necessary.

Key learning points:

Conduct regular auditing of the effectiveness of the governance structure, set out the role of local governors and hold people accountable to this standard.

Ensure you clearly set out where responsibility lies to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Recruit people with strong business experience onto your board to provide effective challenge and bring professional sector-specific knowledge and expertise.

Charter for Members of Local Governing Bodies extract

Annex A

As soon as possible after appointment, attend a trust governor induction session.

Undertake annual update training operated by the trust covering the following:

- understanding of student progress data including all 'groups' (pupil premium, EAL, SEN etc.), the academy's SEF/scorecard and the Ofsted data dashboard for governors
- quality assurance including: impact of strategies to improve student outcomes e.g. pupil premium funding; strengths and weaknesses of teaching; capacity of leadership and management; impact of teaching and leadership and management on learning and progress in different subjects and groups (year groups, EAL, SEN, etc.)
- robustness of the academy's performance management; use of the trust's teacher standards/ career stage expectations and the link to pay progression
- measuring the satisfaction, engagement and confidence of students and parents
- scope, relevance and planned changes to the curriculum
- attendance, behaviour and exclusions
- the academy development plan
- overview of budget
- Ofsted expectations of governors
- role of the local governing body in monitoring quality, safeguarding, and promoting community engagement.

In the event an individual governor's attendance falls below 75 per cent attendance, their ability to effectively discharge their duties as a governor will be reviewed with them by the chair of the local governing body.

Make at least two visits to the school during teaching time each year to meet students and staff and gain direct experience of specific aspects of the academy agreed with the local governing body chair and principal. Talk with parents during the visit wherever possible.

Make an active contribution to local governing body meetings.

Champion the common purpose of the Brooke Weston Trust and goals of the local governing body outside of meetings and within the community.

Aim to remain current with the national agenda on education, including reading relevant update literature issued by the trust and/or the DfE.

Read and remain aware of the requirements and obligations under academy policies, comply with relevant obligations and ensure regular review to ensure practice reflects policy.

Take a proactive role in an at least annual review of local governing body effectiveness as required by the board of directors.

Seek further support where necessary from the trust's governor advice line.



CASE STUDY 2: OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST

A case study showing a small, powerful and responsive central board with two advisory sub-committees and academy councils for each school providing a vital link to the community.

Background

‘The whole point of schools is that children come first and everything we do must reflect this single goal. If you put children first in your decision-making you very rarely make a bad decision.’

*Sir Michael Wilkins,
Academy Principal and
Chief Executive*

Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) is a medium-sized multi-academy trust based in the North, from Nottinghamshire to Teesside. It has grown from Outwood Grange Academy, an outstanding school and one of the first converter academies and teaching schools in the country. The academy started by

supporting a school in special measures in Doncaster and has grown to consist of 13 secondary and three primary schools, mainly sponsored academies. The trust has grown very slowly and carefully and operates in a tight geographical area of 75-minutes travel time. OGAT believe their unwavering focus on the interests of the pupils helps them stay focused and enables them to take difficult decisions confidently.

Structure

‘Don’t feel you have to build a big infrastructure, remain very tightly focused on standards. Keep power in the centre, have a tight scheme of delegation and do things at pace and in the right order.’

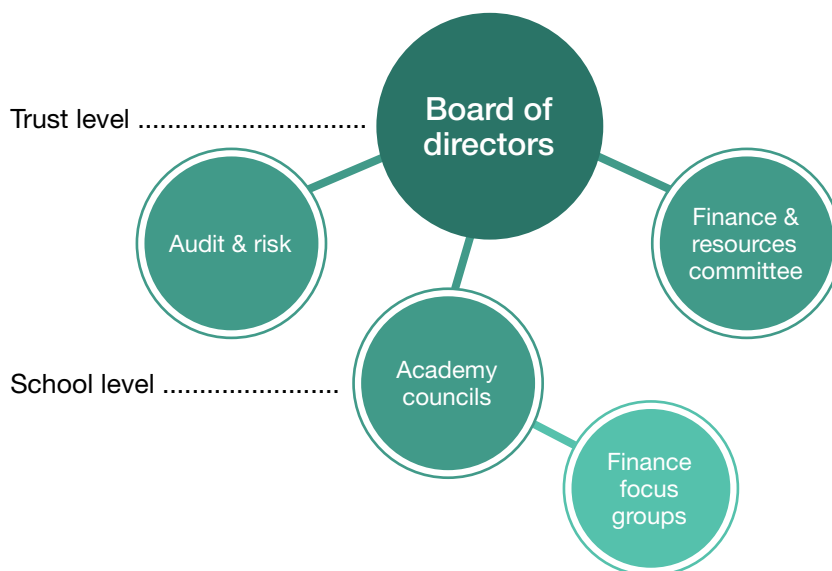
Sir Michael Wilkins

OGAT’s governance structure consists of the board of directors working alongside the executive and senior leadership teams and the academy councils. Academy councils are made up of local stakeholders from

the community, who can make recommendations to the trust board. The title also reflects their status as a predominately advisory group. Sir Michael Wilkins has very purposefully kept power at the centre to ensure that improvements can be delivered quickly, unhindered by layers of bureaucracy.

The central board of directors is very small, consisting of six people who meet six times a year. The chair of the board, David Earnshaw, is an experienced former headteacher with a background in business. The other board members have a range of skills and backgrounds; from running their own companies to working in the NHS improvement and redesign programmes. The majority of the board are also long-standing and experienced school governors. The board is purposefully small and powerful, to ensure they are agile and decisive. Sir Michael Wilkins believes this is a crucial factor in enabling them to transform schools quickly, illustrated by Outwood Primary Academy

OUTWOOD GRANGE ACADEMIES TRUST MEMBERS



Kirkhamgate, which recently went from special measures to an outstanding Ofsted judgement in just four terms.

The board is responsible for setting the general policies, adopting an annual plan and budget, monitoring the trust's performance both educationally and financially and making major decisions about the direction of the trust, capital expenditure and HR.

In 2013, OGAT set up two advisory subcommittees of the main board, finance and resources and audit and risk, who meet at least quarterly. These boards have clear terms of reference with each board having at least one member with recent and relevant financial experience. The audit and risk committee's remit is predominately to monitor and review procedures, assisting and managing external audits. The finance and general purposes

committee considers the finances of the trust and its member schools in detail.

Academy councils are larger, with a maximum of 15 members, and meet six times a year. These are predominately advisory bodies with very limited powers. They offer support to the academy and act as a critical friend to the principal. Principals are appointed by a recruitment panel which includes the chief executive and another representative from the board and the chair, or vice chair, of the academy council. The councils act as a key link between the academy, parents or carers and the local community, championing the academy's work in the local community. The board meets with the chairs of the academy councils termly to listen to their views and review communication, decision-making and governance. Sir Michael Wilkins or an executive principal also sits on each of the academy

council boards to ensure they are kept abreast of key issues in each academy. Although a substantial commitment, this avoids the need for additional layers of reporting.

Finance focus splinter groups were set up in 2011 and are, in essence, working groups which enable more detailed financial work to take place outside the main academy council but reporting to them. The group is small but consists of key personnel including the finance director and two members from the academy council to appropriately challenge and critique employees. They then report into the council and up to the main board.

People and training

OGAT expect board level members to have a broad area of expertise in one of the following areas: finance, risk management, business, human resource, education, land or buildings matters or law.



At academy council level the trust looks for people within the community to work with the schools. They ask for expressions of interest from local people who have a stake in the reputation of the school, then carefully interview and select candidates. When schools join the trust, local governors can often feel demotivated when a school goes into 'Special measures', so the trust seeks to regalanise and motivate the local governing body by working alongside them on key documents, for example the finance and curriculum plan. This makes them feel empowered to be part of positive improvements at the school. Although the councils don't have many financial powers, they do have the power to decide how to invest any income generated by the academy by recommendation to the board.

The trust also ensures that academy council governors have the right skills to be effective in their roles and provide a variety of training courses to this end. In addition, they ensure that governors have a good knowledge of educational standards, investing time in ensuring familiarity with the data available on their school and what it means.

Due to the clear strategic direction and framework set by OGAT, each academy has improved rapidly under the same chair as its predecessor local governing body.

Sir Michael Wilkins believes academy trusts can be most effective if its schools are within 75-minutes of each other. OGAT



also does not believe in splitting up existing families of schools or destabilising existing school catchment areas. As such, they will only enter into discussions with primary schools who sit within the pyramid of an OGAT secondary academy. To enable rapid school improvement, the central board have an improvement model centred on seven core principles. All employees from vice principal level upwards are appointed to the family of schools, rather than individual schools, to enable them to be deployed quickly to the schools with the most need. It is because of the trust's tight areas of operation that this rapid response to schools in need is possible. In addition, the trust has a scheme for staff called *The deep* whereby they appoint people on a one-year basis, who can act up temporarily when needed to allow development and career progression.

Key learning points:

Keep power in the central board to allow speed of decision-making by an experienced and diverse board.

Ensure the effectiveness of the organisation and easy deployment of resources by remaining very tightly geographically focused.

Ensure that all local governors have bought into the vision of the trust and support this over and above all else in their decision-making.

Experienced executive principals, who are steeped in the school improvement model, driving standards with the principals in a cluster of three or four schools.



Using the Global Learning Programme themes to shape the new curriculum

Reena Merali, GLP Coordinator, Argyle Primary School

The Global Learning Programme (GLP) is a ground-breaking programme which is building a national network of like-minded schools, committed to equipping their students to make a positive contribution to a globalised world. The GLP helps teachers in primary, secondary and special schools to deliver effective teaching and learning about development and global issues at key stages 2 and 3.

GLP schools are experiencing the positive impact that global learning can have on pupils' knowledge, skills and values, and on the teaching and learning practice of staff across the whole school. The GLP also helps schools develop an ethos promoting tolerance, fairness and respect. Teachers involved in the GLP are working with colleagues in local schools to drive forward global learning across the curriculum, share best practice and engage in funded CPD opportunities.

SSAT is a partner in the consortium of organisations leading GLP and is looking forward to sharing the work from some of the 2000 schools already engaged in the programme over the years ahead.

CASE STUDY - ARGYLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Global learning is really important to Argyle School because we have such a varied community. We have families from all around the world. It's important that the children know that we respect their religions and their beliefs, and understand where they came from. It's important that we teach them about the countries they came from as well as this country.'

Jackie Gwatkin, Chair of Governors

Argyle Primary School is a GLP Expert Centre based in the borough of Camden, London. In the year 2000, we, as a school, really looked at the cohort of children that we had and thought about how we were going to enable active and independent citizenship – how we were going to really capture the interests of the children. We believed that the best way to engage the children would be to talk about the world around them, and as the majority of children were from diverse backgrounds, they were able to bring prior knowledge and understanding to the classroom (if not their own then at least their parents') and we found that some topics really captured the children's understanding and interest. Since then, education for sustainable development (ESD) and global learning has been integrated across the whole-school curriculum.



The Global Learning Programme and our new curriculum

This year at Argyle we have focused on embedding the GLP themes into the new curriculum. As a GLP Expert Centre, we have made this a focus for our GLP network sessions with our 16 partner schools who we have enjoyed sharing our practice with.

‘It’s absolutely exciting for the children to be looking at the world at large. They are the centre of their own universe, but when you talk to them about their place in the world, and they get to explore different communities and different cultures, that’s when they really come alive.’

Reena Merali, GLP Coordinator

We have already embedded a number of topics that taught the children about sustainability, e.g. learning about how to protect the rainforest and the impact that it has on the wider world. However as the curriculum changed we knew that this would be a good opportunity to ensure that we covered a range of GLP themes across the new whole-school curriculum. Some of the opportunities where we have found ways to link the GLP themes are:

Year 2 history

Lives of significant people: the children learn about different people who have stood up for human rights and they learn to write a recount in literacy, and develop their ICT skills by researching these people.

Year 2 geography

Forests in the UK and Brazil: the children learn about deforestation and consider how they can make a difference. In literacy they make a leaflet informing parents about how actions can make a difference.

Year 3 geography

Earthquakes and volcanoes: the children consider the impact of earthquakes, e.g. in Haiti. They consider whether charities are the right solution to solve some of the issues created by natural disasters. The children can then write explanation texts in literacy.

Year 3 science

Plants: the children learn about the Floating Garden Challenge in Bangladesh.



Year 5 history

Tudors: the children learn about the difference between the rich and the poor, looking at relative and absolute poverty. They can then create an information book in literacy.

Year 6 history

War and conflict in Baghdad: the children learn about the impact of war on adults’ and children’s human rights.

We shared our new curriculum with the network in summer 2014, and some of our partner schools have also started to use some of the GLP themes to shape their new curriculum.

‘The session that stands out the most as specifically helping to shape the curriculum was the twilight in March where this was the focus of the session. I found it particularly helpful as Argyle Primary gave real, practical examples of how they had linked the GLP to the topics at their school. It was really helpful to be able to see how the GLP can be linked to topics in a meaningful way. Following this session, after I plotted the new curriculum topics for this year, I went on to add potential GLP links in our long-term planning. I have now developed a document where I have placed links to the lesson resources on the Global Dimension website, so that where there are GLP links there are a number of examples of lessons/resources teachers can use.’

*Simone Wright,
Kingsbury Green Primary School
(former partner school and now an Expert Centre)*



The GLP is currently being used by over 2000 schools across the country. These schools are all benefiting from the free school-led training, guidance, resources, local school network support and £500 worth of funded CPD provided by the GLP.*

The GLP provides the tools to help teaching staff deliver a richer and more relevant curriculum by embedding engaging and globally themed content into their teaching. In addition to reinforcing pupils' curriculum knowledge and understanding, and strengthening their independent enquiry and critical thinking skills, schools are using the GLP to promote the SMSC development of their pupils.

The GLP offers a choice of ways for schools to get involved – relevant to their prior global learning experience – simply by registering for free at www.glp-e.org.uk.

*The GLP is funded by the UK government. Funding is available to key stages 2 and 3 in state schools in England. The GLP is managed by a consortium: Pearson (lead), Geographical Association, Institute of Education, Oxfam UK, Royal Geographical Society, Think Global and SSAT.

Useful links

Argyle Primary School website
www.argyle.camden.sch.uk/curriculum-a-learning/global-learning-curriculum

The Global Learning Programme
www.glp-e.org.uk

The Global Dimension website
www.globaldimension.org.uk

GLP themes and curriculum framework
<http://globaldimension.org.uk/glp/page/10706>

GLP pupil outcomes
<http://globaldimension.org.uk/glp/page/10724>

Practical Action 'Floating Garden' activity
http://practicalaction.org/climatechange_floatinggardens

GLP science resource
http://clients.squareeye.net/uploads/glp/GLP_pdfs/Subjects/Science/Science_Exemplification_Case_Studies.pdf

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Admissions, exclusions and SEN: an update

In this edition, our lawyers take you through the latest developments in education law.

ADMISSIONS

On 19 December 2014 the DfE published a revised school admissions code.

The new code allows schools the freedom to give priority to all children attracting the pupil, the early years and the service premiums. There is no requirement for admission authorities to include such a priority in their admission arrangements, but this is now an option which admission authorities may choose to adopt to reflect local requirements, subject to consultation.

Admission authorities of primary schools which have a nursery are able to give priority to disadvantaged children who attend the nursery. This is expressly to provide continuity of education for those children most in need of such stability and support, while providing an implicit limit on the proportion of children who may be prioritised, so that reception places remain open to local children.

The most important change for all admission authorities are the changes to the admissions timetable; the detail of which is contained in *The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014*. These regulations came into force at the same time as the revised code. In particular:

- Regulation 10 amends the frequency with which an admission authority is required to consult to at least once every seven years, where they have not consulted in the previous six years.
- Regulation 11 amends the dates by which an admission authority must consult. For admission arrangements for the school year 2017/18 and in subsequent years, an admission authority must consult for a minimum of six weeks between 1 October and 31 January and determine their admission ➤



We are always pleased to hear about the legal topics that interest you. If you have a particular concern that you would like us to write about, please get in touch. We will ensure that all case studies are suitably anonymous.

To discuss your topic, please contact VVW partner Yvonne Spencer, at yspencer@vvw.co.uk or 0117 314 5202.

Admissions, exclusions and SEN: an update

arrangements by 28 February in the determination year. Previously this ran from 1 November to 31 March for a minimum of eight weeks.

The timetable changes will come into force in 2015/16, for admission in September 2017.

The time for making objections to the school adjudicator will change from 30 June to 15 May from 2016. This is to enable unlawful admission arrangements to be changed more quickly, by the introduction of a two-month rolling deadline for compliance with a determination of the school adjudicator.

The code also introduces changes to dates relating to local authorities' duties.

EXCLUSIONS

Many of you may be wondering 'Where are we now?' in terms of the exclusions guidance. On 5 January 2015 new exclusions guidance came into force. The guidance reflected the amendments made by the *Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (Amendment) Regulations 2014*.

The guidance was withdrawn on 2 February 2015 due to a threat of judicial review against the DfE, which means the 2012 exclusions guidance is still current. However,

the 2015 regulations still apply to the provision of education.

Provision of education

These regulations and the guidance clarified that the duty of the governing body to arrange education from the sixth day of a fixed term exclusion is now triggered by **consecutive** fixed periods of exclusion totalling more than five days. Previously this duty only arose on the sixth day of a single period of a fixed term exclusion. The provision of education must be suitable full-time education.

Lower threshold for permanent exclusions on hold

The 2015 guidance was also updated to provide 'greater confidence to headteachers on their use of exclusion'. Whereas the 2012 guidance states that the child should only be permanently excluded if allowing them to remain would seriously harm the education or welfare of others, the 2015 guidance lowered this threshold from seriously harmful to detrimental. This is a very different position from the 2012 guidance which makes it clear that permanent exclusion should be a matter of last resort, this was omitted from the 2015 guidance.

In making the decision to exclude, headteachers were encouraged to weigh up the seriousness or persistence of the pupil's behaviour





with the impact of not excluding the pupil on the school as a whole.

Underpinning this development was the DfE's recognition that good discipline in schools is essential to ensure that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education. Exclusion should therefore reflect the importance of good behaviour for the education and welfare of all pupils.

However, on 2 February this guidance, dated January 2015, was withdrawn. There is now a link on the DfE website to the 2012 guidance and for now, it is the threshold set out in the 2012 guidance that must be used.

SEN AND DISABILITY

The Children and Families Act 2014 received royal assent on 13 March 2014, with the new '*Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*' finally being approved by Parliament on 29 July, and has now been updated on two occasions, the last being in January 2015.

For schools this is probably the most important document concerning the new framework for SEN, which came into force on 1 September 2014.

The new system introduces the 'graduated approach' of assess, plan, do, review.

Assess

The class or subject teacher, working with the SENCo, should carry out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs.

Plan

Agree in consultation with the parent and pupil the adjustments, interventions and support to be put in place as well as the expected impact on progress, development or behaviour, along with a review date.

Do

The class or subject teacher remains responsible for working with the pupil. The SENCo will support the main class/subject teacher in the further assessment of the pupil's particular strengths and weaknesses, problem-solving and advising on the implementation of support.

Review

The effectiveness of the support and interventions and their impact on the pupil's progress should be reviewed; an evaluation of the impact and quality of the support and interventions, along with the views of the pupil and their parents; the support should be revised in light of the pupil's progress and development in consultation with the pupil and parents.



Tips for implementation

1. Understand part 6 of the code of practice.
2. Understand the Local Offer and ensure that your school has 'fed into' this.
3. Publish the school's SEN information report on the website. This must include information about the kinds of SEN provided for; the name and contact details of the SENCo and policies for identifying children with SEN; arrangements for consulting parents and including them; arrangements for supporting moves between phases; the approach to teaching children with SEN; how adaptations are made to the curriculum and learning environment; the expertise and training of staff; evaluating the effectiveness of provision; how children are encouraged to engage in activities; support for improving social and emotional development; how the school involves outside bodies; arrangements for handling complaints; information on where the Local Offer is published and the school's contribution.
4. Train staff covering the 'graduated approach'; areas of need identified in the code; targeted support and differentiation; efficient record keeping.
5. Ensure all staff are aware of the school's approach to comprehensive recording and record-keeping for children with SEN.
6. Develop a comprehensive support, plan and review system across the school.
7. Update the school's SEN policy to take account of the new statutory framework and language used in the code.
8. Appoint a member of the governing body or a sub-committee to be responsible for SEN and disability.
9. Prepare a policy and ensure arrangements are in place for supporting pupils with medical conditions, a specific duty placed on schools by the Children and Families Act.
10. Involve parents, children and young people in the development of a whole-school approach to SEN and disability.



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