



A Redesigning Schooling case study

#3: Hadley Learning Community

Learning community means more than school

Hadley Learning Community, a new 3-16 all-through school established in 2006, sees the community as an essential ingredient in children's education, and shares responsibility widely among staff, pupils and the community.

Key ingredients in this successful learning community are generous sharing of its huge range of facilities, mutually enriching cross-phase education, full commitment to a teacher learning community, and passionate attention to both behaviour management and pastoral care.

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1. Building design and use

Many education establishments seek to achieve inclusion; few do it as comprehensively as Hadley Learning Community (HLC), a 3-16 all-through school in Telford, Shropshire. True to its name, HLC is about supporting the whole community. This includes an extraordinarily full provision of facilities for parents, wider families and others in the local community.

School facilities open to the public mornings, evenings, weekends and during the holidays include a large library, swimming pool, fitness suite, coffee bar and large rooms equipped for dance and drama performances.

HLC opened in September 2006, replacing three formerly struggling establishments and providing a new home for a special school. The schools had been struggling partly because this part of Telford had suffered economically in recent years, with the closure or drastic reduction of many companies in the area, notably large engineering firms, although GKN still has a strong presence.

A dance and drama performance



The local authority, Telford & Wrekin, looked to merge these schools, and came up with a proposal to the then government's education department which showed, says principal Gill Eatough, 'fantastic vision'. This included not only the closure of two schools on the site and a secondary about four miles away, but incorporation of The Bridge – a special school on the other side of the borough. The Department of Education agreed to the £70 million PFI credits, and the LA implemented the process, with the main contractors being Interserve.

Gill Eatough was appointed principal in January 2005, just as construction started. She made all major decisions about the building design and layout (having managed building work in her previous school). 'I worked with the designers and builders throughout, I had everything to do with this building. Interserve had been building prisons until then – I taught them how to do schools!' she smiles. 'Every person on this site wanted to build a fantastic school. The camaraderie was amazing. I knew what I wanted, and they knew that one day I would be running it. Knowing what we wanted to create here, I loved every minute of it.'



Gill Eatough, principal

The building was completed in 18 months, on time and on budget. Hadley now has 1400 pupils (900 in secondary), and 350 staff. It was designed to be open '24/7' for the people of Hadley and beyond to use. 'And it's really worked. If I leave at 7pm, I can hardly get out through reception for the people coming in.'

Community focus

Why do HLC give the community so much prominence? In the principal's view, at this level the children's education is really around the engagement of families. 'There was nothing locally for young people and their families in the way of facilities for sports, swimming, theatre, library etc, and there was a lot of antisocial behaviour in the area. Through the LA we were able to provide something that would raise aspirations and let people feel that Telford was investing in Hadley on quite a large scale.' The main building includes the facilities available for the local community as well as for the children. 'If it's here they'll use it. We want to get families to invest in the legacy that those kids would be here from age 3 to 16. And that's good for them.'

The results of this community focus have not gone unnoticed. The 2010 Ofsted report on HLC included: 'The principal and (the) headteacher of the primary phase have a good working partnership and a good understanding of the needs of the local community.'

Secondary deputy head Dan Roycroft agrees that it is vital to engage the community in the school. 'I spoke to the shopkeepers in Hadley centre and took their concerns on board. We put a lot of effort into reducing student behaviour problems in the community, and invited community members into the school. A number of them were quite anxious at first about walking into the building, but the students took them round the schools, and gave them tea and cakes. We filmed the community reactions before and after to see how their perceptions had changed. I felt a sense of triumph when they showed they now felt the building – with its coffee shop, library, pool, fitness suite and theatre – was not just for teachers and students, but for the community too.'

The income from community use of the facilities is shared between the school and the construction firm, Interserve. Prices are kept deliberately low, allowing for low average incomes locally – and the fact that the primary aim of the community facilities is to gain and maintain community support for the school and the children's education.

'It's all about getting people to come in and to get to know us,' says Gill Eatough. 'Then they will work with us. Building relationships. Then, if you have to say to a parent, "your child is a pain..." [in the neck] they accept it and work with us to solve the problem.'



A pool for the school and the community

Glenn Bayliss, community and leisure manager, is supported by four duty managers, a full-time leisure assistant, and specialist coaches for different sports and activities. And they're kept busy: the sports hall is fully booked outside school hours and at weekends; 300 people from outside the school take part in the 10-week swimming programmes, from age 4 to adult; 50 children regularly take part in the sports club, which includes a dozen games and is run by leisure and sports assistants employed by HLC. (They all have national pool lifeguard qualifications.) The hydrotherapy pool is used for physiotherapists and for warm baby swims and also franchised out. It's booked out most evenings and over the weekends. School caterers provide food and drinks for all the visitors.

'My aim,' says Glenn Bayliss, 'is to ensure the site is used as much as possible; the income is secondary. The overall reputation of the school is enhanced by having third-party users on site. It's a fantastic place – we must get the most out of it.'

Facilities and events at Hadley Learning Community

- Library, theatre, swimming pool
- Large halls used for dance, boxing, gymnastics
- Dance suite, fitness suite and facilitated classes
- Private and local authority nurseries
- Clubs: football, swimming, boxing, holiday



Students enjoying the fitness suite

Events for families:

- The central circular area with small trees, called the Forum, is used for an annual community barbecue towards the end of the summer term.
- Every primary year group has an annual parents' lunch or 'family meal deal', for which the parents (or other carers, sometimes including aunts, grandparents or neighbours) come into the school, see their children's work and enjoy the fruits of the school's catering team.
- Secondary students also play a major part – gaining work experience in the café and helping in nursery and reception; year 11 students help put on a harvest lunch for reception children.

The multiagency early intervention team for this part of the Telford area, including CAMH (Child and Adolescent Mental Health), family support, early intervention workers and child protection, is also based here. This demonstrates the close relationship with the local authority as well as providing immediate services to Hadley pupils if needed.

The former organisation Creative Partnerships established a £60,000 iMedia suite at the school for filmmaking, drama, music and dance. It is used to develop creativity and confidence, as well as music and technology skills, such as in KS4 courses leading to Level 2 qualifications. Vulnerable students are enabled to access this facility to create their own videos or music, which helps them to engage with school.



The iMedia suite is valued as a resource where students can build skills and confidence for the creative industries



The music studio

'It supports students in their learning, and teachers in how to deliver teaching,' says secondary deputy head Dan Roycroft. After HLC, some students study film or photography at college. In four years there has been no vandalism of the expensive and fragile equipment in the suite – the resource is respected.

Multicultural community

Hadley works hard to develop and support community cohesion. The local population has a high proportion (about 20%) of people from East European and Asian countries, and high levels of deprivation. Many live in rented accommodation, and move frequently in their search for jobs. 'People think there are loads of issues (about education in a multicultural community) but actually there aren't,' says the principal. 'You just say, "That's what we're going to do," and then you get on with it. That said, we employ quite a few staff from the EAL community, and have some on the governing body, so we are responsive to their needs and those of their children.'

HLC recently hosted a major multicultural event for which a Birmingham restaurant chef taught the school chefs to do 'proper' Indian curries. The event included henna painting and Bhangra dances with the children taking part, and the Sikh leader of the local council was guest of honour. Relevant community leaders explained Divali, Eid and Ramadan. 'The kids adored it,' says Gill Eatough. 'Then, when we celebrated Christmas, Muslim parents come to our nativity play and were happy that their kids were taking part. Only one family objected; I can live with that.'

2. Cross-phase schooling, and then some

Hadley's 3-16 offer inevitably covers a wide range of subjects and approaches to cater for its wide age range. But the degree in overlap and integration between the phases is remarkable. There are deliberate efforts to spread the particular skills of primary and secondary between the phases. The same language teachers work across both phases. In whole-school phonic afternoons, a primary teacher works with secondary reading across all the schools. Secondary students have work experience in the primary school.

Children with special needs represent between 21% and 45% of the year groups. They too are fully integrated across the learning community. In a walk around the school, it's notable how many classes have one or more disabled students, many of them in wheelchairs and using specially adapted desks and equipment in class. Their peers seem to find their presence unremarkable, although they are always ready to help if needed.

Inclusion in action





Cross-phase work in the gym provides leadership opportunities for secondary students and builds a sense of community

The transfer of expertise between primary and secondary (in both directions) is a major strength of this all-through school, as secondary head Paul Roberts confirms: 'We have very close links with the primary school on site, that's a crucial element of the all-through policy. I have a good working relationship with Erica (Erica Aston, head of primary), and my deputies are very close to Nic (Nicola Scott-Worthington, deputy head of primary). This filters down to the rest of the staff in both schools. Following on from the School Sports Partnership last year, we continue to support all the primary students and teachers. They all know me and the head of year 7. This approach is not unique, but it is embedded at HLC. And we're working with the main feeder schools off-site to build a consistent approach including them too.'

A private provider, ABC Nursery (part of Sure Start), is on the same site. This offers whole-day care, whereas HLC's nursery offers half-days, with the children coming in either for mornings or for afternoons. Many of the school's staff use ABC.

The school aims to get the relationship with every new family off to the best start possible. Staff make a home visit to each family joining the school at nursery or reception. 'Seeing the kids for the next term's intake first in their homes helps them to settle in better,' explains Nicola Scott-Worthington. 'Quite often they say when they later come into school, "I saw you, you came to my house." We can see if there are any concerns, and the parents are more comfortable about coming into school later if they have met us already on their own territory.' This is particularly valuable with parents who may not have had a good experience in their own schooling.

Close links are fostered between nursery and reception classes. Sometimes the partitions between the two rooms are pulled back so all 90 children can be together.

The primary operates an open-door policy. Parents come into the school with their children, settle them, help with the register and help the child to choose their lunch menu. The establishment of good

relationships with children and parents at this stage is vital to HLC's success.

Before the end of the reception year, children are regularly given homework - 'little projects they can do with mum and dad.'

A high proportion of the primary children comes from the area's large Polish, Pakistani and Punjabi communities. (The catchment area for the secondary school is broader, both geographically and ethnically.) The primary has four multilingual staff members speaking one or more of Polish, Urdu, Punjabi, Russian and Lithuanian. This aids family liaison as well as communication with pupils, especially in the early stages when many of them speak little or even no English.

Teaching is always conducted in English, supported by pictures if necessary, and pupils who need it are given a key ring tagged with key words such as toilet, lunch, play, lost and ill.



Engaged families lead to happy classrooms: HLC staff forge close links with parents and children before they start at the school

Transition manager

A transition manager conducts an induction programme for children with little or no English. This nominally lasts six weeks, but continues until the child is making steady progress. The programme may include:

- parent visits to the school
- HLC staff visits to children's current schools
- whole-class discussions
- highlighting the best piece of work a child has done
- ensuring the children know what level they are at and what they need to do to progress
- and of course bilingual support.

'Many of the Polish children reach the baseline quite quickly,' Erica Aston notes. But it can take two years for a child who joins the school with little or no English to catch up in the language, though maths development tends to be quicker.

'After two years we hope they will be functioning pretty well. Much depends on whether the parents speak English at home. Some of the Polish parents are very well qualified, and working here in jobs well

below their capacity. It's different with some of the Pakistanis: some live here for many years without ever speaking English. We do extra with these children: hearing them read, which they can't do at home, giving small-group and bilingual support and after-school clubs.'

The staff put on workshops for parents who are struggling to help their year 6 children at home: 'We go through the work with the parents, so they can see what needs to be done and how they can help. We give them websites where they can get more information, as a lot of them have internet access at home.'

The two parent consultation days each year achieve 98-100% attendance from primary parents - 'we persist with non-attenders,' Erica Aston smiles.

Primary staff help secondary colleagues to raise expectations

Nicola Scott-Worthington describes a way in which the primary staff are helping their secondary colleagues, as well as each other. 'Some of the teachers used to have the attitude about certain children that they could not progress like their peers – "These children can't..." How did we change that? Walk, talk and expect. Every day, we say what we expect. If a teacher says a particular child is struggling, we say, "Why aren't they achieving? What's needed to get them there?" And we work with parents. It's a big journey.'

'We use the common Ofsted question "What have you been learning today?" all the time. We've tightened our vocabulary to focus on an expectation

of continuing achievement. All the children know their levels, which are written in the back of their exercise books and kept updated,' adds Erica. She shows a year 2 child's first writing book in which the pupil has written, 'I might now use question marks and exclamation marks.' And sure enough, a few pages on, she has.

From year 2, the teachers regularly ask children, 'What do you think you need to do your best?' 'Nine out of ten children know best about their own learning,' says Nicola. 'If a teacher says, "Is that your best work, then?" they'll answer honestly, yes or "... well, no...". They're fairly accurate about themselves, which is lovely. Our teachers are now very reflective, asking: what can we do better? They follow the process: change – reflect – improve – move forward.'



With individual attention where needed, even pupils who start with no English are usually working well after two years.

3. Teacher learning community and CPD

As a specialist engineering college, Hadley has invested £5 million in ICT for engineering design, focusing on technologies such as CAD/CAM. It seeks to ensure students qualify in the skills that engineering companies are seeking. The school's governing body includes engineers from local companies such as GKN and Aga-Rayburn, which actively support the school's engineering curriculum. A team of students is currently designing a remote-controlled car, with help from GKN manufacturing.

'We get students into companies and company representatives in here,' explains Gill Eatough: 'we're developing the workforce of the future. Some students – three in 2012 – go on to apprenticeships with local engineering companies. It's a big issue for

Engineering is a key focus of the curriculum - befitting of the industrial heritage of the West Midlands



Telford as a local authority and as a community to keep people in Telford.' HLC is a lead school in the area's STEM consortium.



The 'T-Birds' in HLC's production of *Grease*

However, the arts are not neglected. HLC's on-site theatre in the round recently put on *Oliver!*, following on from the previous year's *Grease*.

All students take drama or dance in KS3, with fully qualified dance and drama teachers, and their work is featured in RSC's Young Shakespeare project. Drama and dance arts are used to raise esteem as well as to develop particular skills and support academic achievement. Their scope extends beyond the obvious candidates, says the principal: 'You reach another group of children – we had some naughty girls: dance was the thing that engaged them. We have a boys' dance group too, and they love it.'

Academic results

Hadley's results at GCSE have improved dramatically: from 23% to 48% 5+A*-C with English and Maths in three years, and 39% to 95% 5+A*-C. In 2012 the secondary phase was in DfE's list of the 100 schools with most improved results. Its value-added score was 1012 in 2011, dropping to 1006 in 2012 with the GCSE English debacle.

In primary, the combined Level 4 average score for English and maths was 62% last year, up from 30% in 2008. After a massive focus on children's writing, which had been seen as a weakness, English progress in the last year was 96%.

'We should be well above floor in both phases in 2013,' says Gill Eatough '– as long as no more goal posts move!'

Teaching and learning community

Head of secondary Paul Roberts believes strongly in teaching and learning communities (TLCs), as developed by Professor Dylan Wiliam. 'Watching exemplar practice is the best CPD,' he says. 'We've built one hour per fortnight into every timetable for teachers to watch a colleague, with a particular focus. Ofsted in 2010 gave us good to outstanding learning in 86% of lessons. I think now it would be 95% or more.'

'Watching exemplar practice is the best CPD'

'We distributed a questionnaire to teachers to find out whether they felt they were operating at satisfactory, good or outstanding levels in different areas of pedagogy.' The teachers graded themselves, and then teachers who assessed themselves as satisfactory in, say, questioning, would arrange to watch a class led by a colleague who assessed themselves as outstanding. The school has established an open door culture in which 'There's no shock when someone walks into a class while you're teaching. It breeds success.'

In reviewing such observations, staff at Hadley use a template:

- What was done?
- What was the impact on learning?
- How did it bring learning forward?

Every half term the TLC meets to discuss what they have seen and learned, and how they are embedding it in their own practice. 'We don't use senior leadership team judgements or measure what levels people are at. It's a matter of confidence,' says Paul Roberts. 'And if the response by a visitor to an "outstanding" class is "I didn't see anything different from my own practice," that too is a good basis for discussion.'

English teacher Sally Ginder affirms this approach. 'The staff help each other – we all want to know how to become outstanding in teaching. We look at each other's lessons as part of the teaching and learning community. We give feedback after each session such as "I liked how you...", or "In my lesson, I might..." You can take lots from other subjects. And it's also very good to see how students you teach behave in other people's lessons. Another teacher taking the same class as me checked to see what I have done about seating plans – do they talk more if they're next to their mates? Do they stay on task without your assistance?'

She adds: 'I'm very proud of the improvement in results. With the TLC there's a bigger focus on teaching and learning. Paul Roberts isn't just keen on it – he's mad on it. We share lesson plan formats, we know what is good practice and how to achieve it. It takes time to develop the culture, and the commitment from students. Ofsted two years ago said over 80% of our lessons were good or outstanding. It really matters to staff that we are part of that improvement.'

In line with the belief in helping each other, teachers also take on a number of tasks that might not normally be considered part of their job, such as lunchtime supervision. This is not to save money for the school but to ensure consistency in behaviour standards inside and outside class.

Tracking student progress

The tracking of student progress is a big deal at HLC. As we have seen, even young primary children are expected to know their levels. At secondary it becomes more specifically associated with curriculum standards: 'Students understand that if they're on Level 4 they need to get on to Level 5,' says Gill Eatough. 'Kids stop me in the corridor to say, "I've got a Level 5!" or, "I've got a C and now I'm going for a B".' On a tour of the school, the visitor noted that the principal was frequently stopped in the corridor by students who wanted to ask or tell her something about their activities, achievements or challenges.

In a 'massive tracking exercise', an assistant head tracks all the students in their progress towards the minimum achievement of 5+A*-Cs at GCSE. Every Hadley student gains a grade 'of some sort' in GCSE English and maths, and some also gain functional skills qualifications in English and maths through bespoke timetables. The principal is proud to say: 'We had no NEETS last year.'

Secondary deputy head Dan Roycroft is responsible for standards of achievement. To achieve a 'significant and continuing upward trend', he insists on a focus on every student's needs and targets, and improving strategies for intervention and support. Among the measures used are learning mentors for KS3 and KS4, holiday and weekend interventions, and collapsed curriculum days with intensive support for particular groups, for example before a maths exam.

Students and teachers are all held accountable for raising standards, with frequent repetition of the mantra: it is the quality of teaching and learning that is most important. At KS4, students are assessed five times a year and their grades reported to parents, in addition to the traditional parents' evening and annual written report. The school conducts surgeries, at which parents can raise issues and staff help them to support their children in homework and revision. These are open to all – a recent one on homework, Dan Roycroft reports, was 'packed to the rafters.'

'The improvement in standards has come about through our absolute desire to provide outstanding teaching day in, day out, for all students,' he says. 'We focus on the data so the students know how they are doing, and what they need to do to get to where they want to be. We also raise expectations of the teachers – we want to have an outstanding school, which means showing continually improving standards. That's our focus and aim.'

Professional development in an all-through school

'It is the quality of teaching and learning that is most important'

No less than eight staff who started at HLC as teaching assistants less than seven years ago have achieved significant promotion through the community's professional development programmes. They

include a learning mentor, a qualified English teacher and a student support manager ('She's awesome with kids,' says Gill Eatough) – and they all started as TAs.

At senior levels, the multi-phase school has clear advantages. Gill Eatough spends at least half an hour after school daily in discussion with particular staff members who are being trained and developed for future roles. And each week there is a two-hour leadership development team meeting with a group of senior leaders. 'I try to be supportive, but also to push them to move things on. The first head of secondary we had here is now a secondary head in his own school.' The all-through learning community, she believes, 'is a great place to learn the job of headteacher. They [the heads of the individual schools] know I'm here to pick up the pieces.'

It has been a learning process for the principal, too. 'I've had to learn to support and coach but avoid undermining. I'm naturally a control freak and a fixer, I like to solve problems, so I have to be really careful. Now the organisation is more mature I can step back and let them do their jobs. I had to learn that! Two other headteachers are working to me. I must empower them. Paul and Erica and I have great discussions on teaching and learning.'

She recognises that recruiting from outside is also important, however. 'You need to refresh as well as to grow your staff talent from within.'

4. Comprehensive pastoral care

'We inherited a mixed bag of children, some with very challenging behaviours,' Gill Eatough recalls. 'Staff at the former school had just given up.' One boy who came from the former school into HLC proudly boasted that he had not been to a maths lesson for four years. 'Some of the kids had special needs which had not been identified, so nothing was done to help them. Many could not access the national curriculum. It took the first three years to sort them out. Now we have developed a programme with a range of vocational, academic and mixed pathways for KS4.'

And sort them out she did, with a consistent approach adopted by the whole staff team. Head girl Georgia Chadderton-Ward acknowledges:

Head girl and boy take pride in their responsible role: Georgia Chadderton-Ward and Laurie Chetwood



'Students have matured a lot. It's a lot more relaxed environment than when I came five years ago. It was very scary then.'

Big issues included the behaviour of students as seen by local shopkeepers. 'We had to work hard on the level of behaviour expected,' says Gill Eatough. 'There are no quick fixes with this stuff. The way you succeed is a bit like Chinese water torture – drip, drip drip. It takes time. You can't just have a new building, no matter how wonderful, and expect everything to be perfect. I've always gone for that steady, slow burn, which is sustainable into the future and won't fall back.'

Dave Bowyer, deputy head responsible for pastoral and behaviour issues, explains Hadley's approach. 'The system of detentions is absolutely rigid: you do this, that is the consequence. But yesterday we had no more than a dozen students in detention for the whole school. It's not just about punishments, but rewards as well – it's about the relationships between teachers and students, and students knowing where they can go when they need support. With Gill as principal and Paul Roberts as secondary headteacher, the students and teachers know exactly what is acceptable. If a youngster doesn't turn up for detention I phone their home.' Other unexplained absences from school also trigger at least a phone call home on the day, if not a visit from an HLC staff member.

'We use the C1, C2, and C3 consequence system. C1: misbehave and the teacher will write your name on the board; if the behaviour continues or they misbehave in another way, it's C2 – detention. It only works because the staff are prepared to tell me every time the procedure requires it: because we have 100% compliance.'

'The staff run the detentions: each department has one person available per night, if needed. Any absences, they tell me. If homework is not in on time – detention. If late for school (even two minutes) without a reasonable excuse – detention (I'm outside at the start of school every morning). Cigarettes in school – five one-hour detentions. Chewing gum – one hour. Taking a mobile phone out at any stage in the day – one hour (we must avoid sexting [sending sexually explicit text/images, which can amount to bullying and abuse]). Of course it's easy to install these rules: what's hard is implementing them with total consistency.'

It works. Attendance is around 95%, and Hadley has had two permanent exclusions in secondary, and one in primary, since it opened in 2006. One of the ways it has kept these figures low is through appropriate use of alternative curricula, such as hospitality and catering, or animal husbandry, with local off-site organisations.

The relationships between the kids and the staff are very good, says pastoral deputy head Dave Bowyer. 'This is hugely important when the catchment area we service in Telford has high levels of deprivation and some of these kids have difficult backgrounds (between 28% and 48% of each year group qualifies for free school meals). Ofsted in 2010 gave us an outstanding for safeguarding.' Primary head Erica Aston recalls that the inspectors were pleased to note the issues affecting the local area were not reflected in the school: "It's an oasis for the children," they commented. English teacher Sally Ginder concurs: 'We really care about individual students here. I've put a lot of myself into my students and I think all the teachers do. And their parents would agree.'

A student with any problem, from bullying to forgotten uniform, can see one of the student support managers (SSMs), who are all around

the school every break and lunch time. They are recruited from a variety of sources, including young offender institutes. Dave Bowyer says: 'Mrs Motley, who handles safeguarding issues, is like a dog with a bone: she won't let slip. Where necessary we have no hesitation involving social services and other outside organisations on behalf of individual kids.'

Senior managers are also available at all times. 'There's always a queue of kids at my office during break and lunch times,' says Dave Bowyer. 'Nine times out of ten it's nothing serious, and we can move on. But occasionally someone really does need help.'

Jayne Grant is one of the five student support managers; she is responsible for year 9. 'Our role is to make sure they are happy, safe and secure; and to build strong links with the community, especially parents. We're breaking down the barriers to learning, which can be anything from family arguments to illness or bereavement. I'm in touch with every one of the 160 students in my year group.'

'At any one time there are 20-25 students who need a little extra support. They are all going through the big emotional changes of puberty. Guidance, support, mentoring... you've got to be very persistent about the children you're working with. There's always something you can do to help a child – or their family, sometimes they're the ones who ask. I have weekly sessions with parents.'

The student support system, which may involve a number of resources within Hadley (see box next page) and outside agencies, has had some notable successes. A boy on the roll of the previous school had not been to school at all for three years, and had become involved in criminal activity. Hadley staff agreed with his parents and the court, which had become involved, that he should come into school, initially for just one hour a day. This was gradually increased, and as a result he was able to avoid being sent to a young offenders' institution.

Pastoral resources

Nurture room, where vulnerable students may go for one or more sessions a week. Every morning the children make each other breakfast. Staff focus on listening and counselling. One student who came to Hadley as a selective mute is now talking normally in year 10.

Rainbows provides security at lunch and break times if children want sanctuary from the hurly-burly of the playground. On our visit the children proudly told the visitor of the guinea pig, hamster and rabbit they were looking after. Rainbows has a programme of buddy reading three times a week. Sometimes staff find a queue of students keen to get in.

Other pastoral and learning support resources:

Welfare hub: the student support manager, family and child get together to try to iron out problems in school.

Learning support advisory team (LSAT) and educational psychologist, who work with children with special needs.

TAC – the Team Around the Child, works with families that are not coping. SSMs may go into the home and help the parents, foster-parents or guardians.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF), which covers a child's life from birth to the present, including family breakups, domestic abuse, etc.

CAMH – SSMs work with the local service to ensure relevant issues are identified. Jayne Grant finds that sometimes mental health issues (eg post traumatic stress following abuse) come out at puberty, long after the precipitating events.

RELATEEN, a children and young people's counselling service.

Learning support mentors: for children with learning difficulties.

Academic hub: staff have a number of options, including: modify the timetable, talk to the child's head of department, move the child to a different class or give them 1-1 tuition. Some are encouraged to join the achievement centre, which helps them to focus and finish their KS4 work (eg catching up coursework, quiet environment, avoid home disruptions).

Students' key roles in school community

An all-through school has the potential to use the wide ranges of students' age and maturity levels to advantage, and Hadley Learning Community exploits these opportunities. The primary school has its own entrance, which is opened at 8.35 each morning so older siblings can bring the children to school and still get to the secondary school entrance on time (85% of the pupils walk to school). Primary and secondary schools then finish at the same time. As mentioned, secondary students often have work experience in the primary setting.

Hadley's 2010 Ofsted report stated: 'Just as important to the success of the school is the growing aspirations of the students in a "can do" culture of high expectations, in which all students are valued, encouraged, nurtured and therefore empowered.'

The prefect system provides many examples of this. The 46 prefects in turn act as hall managers, stair managers, and monitors in the stationery office. Twice a week, year 11 prefects go into year 7 form rooms to talk to the students about any issues they wish to discuss.

'Because we interact with them regularly,' says head boy Laurie Chetwood, 'they're sometimes happier to talk to us – people more their own age – than to teachers about some problems they have. Then we take the issues to the student support managers, if needed.' Sally Ginder notes that the older students 'want that relationship with the younger kids – they take a real interest in their welfare, achievement and progress. Kids know when you're interested in them, don't they?'

To become a prefect a student has to submit an application letter; the headteacher and principal make the selections. The candidates for head girl and head boy are voted for by all staff, and have productive relations with them.

Georgia and Laurie chat in a relaxed way about the prefects' roles, but it's clear they carry quite a lot of responsibility. How are they rewarded? 'The reward

is being given the role of prefect,' says Laurie. 'And once a year we have a "prefect meal", which we organise but the school pays for, in a local restaurant. We vote on which one to go to each time. Tutors and senior staff come too.'

Georgia explains that the prefect system works because it is based on respect, 'which is a two-way street. We've always got respect for each other. If you're nice to people all the time, they know to respect you even when you're telling them off!'

How do they learn the skills? Georgia reckons that mature discussion between staff and children, and children with each other, plays an important part: 'Debate: everyone can have their say, but in a nice way.' Laurie agrees: 'It's how you say it. You can't go into discussion all bombastic. Going through the schools, and things like sports leadership which we can do in year 10, also helped us to learn about leadership. Citizenship can be very helpful too.'

The school and community library





Conversation in front of one of the school's graffiti walls

5. The future?

All in all, Hadley Learning Community seems to have reached a good place, from its beginnings only seven years ago. Where next? An obvious choice would seem to be adding 16+ to its 3-16 intake. Gill Eatough recognises there's a certain logic to such suggestions. 'There's a high dropout rate at 17 among students who go on to 16+ college from here,' she says. 'Perhaps we mollycoddle our students. One student who left here for a post-16 college told me: "At HLC if you're in trouble a teacher would help you. That help is not there where I am now. I asked a tutor when I got stuck with my work and he just said, 'Read up on it'. If you're struggling, that doesn't help."

'Parents want it. We have some vulnerable and some disabled kids. We could look at an adventurous solution: a sixth form including pastoral care and post-16 study.'

But she has concerns about adding a sixth form to the already very diverse facilities at Hadley. 'Government finance for school sixth forms is declining, and I wouldn't want to deprive the existing setup. Plus, small sixth forms don't work.'

'I think we need to be more strategic: what do we need to do next for this community? The local authority wants us to take on a private secondary special school, which has residential facilities...'

With many thanks to the staff and students of Hadley Learning Community, Telford, West Midlands

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