



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

School business manager learning programmes evaluation

**Case study report - school business
manager programme**

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Preface

Since this research was completed and the reports finalised, proposals for how school business management (SBM) programmes will run in the future have changed. They will not move to a licensed approach as set out previously.

This new approach brings the SBM programmes into line with the ambition to create a self-improving, school-led system. It represents an exciting opportunity for the profession to take ownership of its leadership development and ensure that the role of school business managers remains as a critical element of effective school leadership and school improvement.

Content from the Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM), Diploma of School Business Management (DSBM) and Advanced Diploma of School Business Management (ADSBM) will be made freely available with the expectation that a number of training providers will run the programmes independently. NCTL will no longer manage the programmes and accreditation will be overseen by the Institute of Leadership and Management.

NCTL used the findings of the evaluation to further develop the school business manager programmes prior to the decision to make the materials freely available. The reports are now being published in order to share the findings with potential training providers.

Structure of reports

This document is one of a set of reports from the school business manager learning programmes evaluation.

This report includes three case studies focused on the impact of the programmes upon the participants and their role in school or college.

We recommend that you read all the reports to understand the research fully. These documents are available from gov.uk. The complete set of reports includes the following:

- **Final summary report**
Reviews the evidence from all the research in the light of 3 key questions: the impact on participant development; the impact on participants' schools, and the delivery strengths and weaknesses.
- **Case study report – School Business Director (SBD) Pilot Programme**
Four case studies aimed at providing a cross-section of early experiences in the pilot SBD programme.
- **Case study report - School Business Directors (SBD) in Schools/ Federations in Receipt of a Primary Partnership Grant**

Four case studies aimed at supplementing the early case studies by focussing on those undergoing development as SBDs but also within school collaborations awarded primary partnership grants.

- **Technical annexe – Primary Partnership Data**

High level analysis of the NCTL survey of recipients of primary partnership funding focusing on the understanding the impact of the primary partnership grants.

- **Technical Annexe - Review of SBM/D end of programme satisfaction surveys**

Overview of the end of programme satisfaction surveys administered by NCTL and training providers, completed by participants of the Diploma of School Business Management (DSBM), the Advanced Diploma of School Business Management (ADSBM) and the School Business Director (SBD) programmes.

- **Technical Annexe – Interim report on the evaluation of the school business management (SBM) programme**

The first of the interim analyses from the research, originally written in 2011 and published now to provide supporting information to the final report.

- **Technical Annexe – Final evaluation report of the school business directors pilot**

The final evaluation of the school business directors pilot, written in 2011, focusing on the experience of the two entry cohorts of the SBD pilot programme.

- **Technical Annexe – Impact Assessment**

An assessment of the impact of the Certificate (CSBM), Diploma (DSBM) and Advanced Diploma for School Business Managers (ADSBM) and the School Business Directors (SBD) Programme on the individuals that had undertaken the learning and on their employing institutions.

Summary of case study evidence for SBM: School Business Manager Programmes

The case studies: These covered participants who had recently undertaken SBM programmes:

- Rose Budge, School Business Manager, Pilton Community College, Barnstaple completed the DSBM in October 2011; previously completed CSBM.
- Shirley McGowan, Finance Officer, Little Heath School, Romford completed DSBM in May 2012, having previously completed CSBM.
- Alan Brown, Finance Director, Allerton Grange School, Leeds completed ADSBM in summer 2012; previously completed CSBM and DSBM.

The three reports were based upon initial face-to-face interviews in January 2012 with the participants and colleagues. The reports also draw upon two follow-up interviews in January 2013 and September 2013 with the participants.

Aim of the final case studies: The sequence of interviews focused on the impact of the programmes upon the participants and their role in school or college. More specifically the final interviews were looking to:

- Update participant context, role and responsibilities, including any current involvement with National College programmes
- Update school or college context and the evolving role of the SBM participant within that context
- Explore further the participants' experience of the SBM programmes against earlier expectations
- Establish participant views on improvement that might be made to the SBM programme(s).
- Provide a concluding assessment of the impact and evidence of impact on the participant's role and wider practice.

The focus throughout was on semi-structured interviews using 'a 'tracking back' and comparative approach over the evaluation period.

Scope and coverage: Interviews were held at the same times but participants were at different stages of their involvement with the CSBM, DSBM and ADSBM programmes. All interviews have been written up, verified and produced also as final (cumulative) case studies. There were initially six participants scheduled for longitudinal enquiry, but three were not available for subsequent interviews for a variety of reasons (maternity leave/left post as SBM/no response to contact from HOST Policy Research (HOST)).

SBM Programme Learning Issues: With a small sample of three case studies it is unwise to draw firm conclusions; however comments from participants can help to illustrate some of the issues surrounding learning.

- Support from other SBMs was a strength of the programme, which had helped participants to establish a network of peers and often an informal e-mail group to share learning and discuss the programme.
- The DSBM gave one SBM the confidence to go online for information and advice. *'There is information out there...Go out and search'*. Another spoke of the *fantastic* on-line support with often *almost immediate* replies to questions posted.
- However there were also criticisms of the programmes' on-line communities, which at times felt as if they were unsupported by the central team. Criticism was also made of the on-line materials and the user-unfriendly National College website. One previously positive commenter on the website felt that it had become *very awkward* to use after extensive change.
- A strong feature for participants was the face-to-face events, which provided opportunities for networking and shared learning through discussion.
- Some criticism of the use of WebEx for presentations and telephone interviews contrasted with the support for group activity at a central venue.
- School support was seen as an essential feature. As one participant indicated *'...you need school support [and] set times to talk with colleagues'*.

Impact of SBM Programme(s): Participants and their colleagues noted a positive impact in the following areas.

- The confidence and competence to undertake the SBM role as a result of the SBM programmes.
- Subsequent increasing involvement in aspects of senior leadership including the administrative and pedagogic life of the school.
- Support after the completion of programmes through the informal network of participants.
- Involvement in change/project management: for example the transition to academy status or in developing a new support staff structure.
- Involvement in the wider areas of teaching and learning practice in addition to financial aspects of business management.
- One Headteacher describes one SBM as bringing a new dimension to the leadership team after completing the SBM programmes. *'She is very forthcoming with ideas, thoughts, and concerns whereas before she would have been reluctant to do so'*.

- This breadth of involvement was summarised by one participant as follows. The programme had made redundant the 'but you're not an educationalist' staffroom argument.
- There can be an impact on other schools through informal discussions with other business managers.

After recognising that the SBM qualifications had had an impact on career opportunities, one participant noted that as a result it had become possible to make a difference to the whole college. When no such promotion or increased remuneration occurs disillusion may be the outcome and was evident in one of the case studies.

All commented on the impact of the programme(s) on their work-life balance and the need for support from their school. However the programmes were seen as having the potential to make a difference to individuals and to their working lives. In two of the case studies this potential had been realised within the same educational setting.

DSBM participant case study: Rose Budge, Pilton Community College

This integrated case study report is based upon the initial face-to-face interviews conducted with the participant in January 2012 (three months after her completing the DSBM), with her College Principal and with the former school business manager.

The report also draws upon the two follow-up interviews in January 2013 and September 2013.

Summary: The SBD Programme

For the participant there has been a significant impact with regard to the following.

- The demonstration of competence or ability to undertake the SBM role and responsibilities is evident in the way that Rose has moved from office manager to school business manager.
- Changing/extending the participant's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) role. Rose has been promoted to membership of the SLT and believes this is at least partly down to her successful involvement in the DSBM programme.
- Change or change management in the College. Rose has been very involved in the change to Academy status and in the development of other successful project proposals.
- Wider aspects of teaching and learning practice or performance in the College. Rose has been involved in all aspects of the work of the SLT including those related to teaching and learning as the College seeks to improve its Ofsted rating from good to outstanding. Her involvement within the SLT has developed since she completed the DSBM.
- The impact on Rose herself is a key feature:

Rose knowing the school as she does and having undergone the two programmes brings a new dimension to the leadership team. She is very forthcoming with ideas, thoughts, and concerns whereas before she would have been reluctant to do so.

The College Principal further noted in January 2012 on her inclusion within the SLT:

She's hit the ground running and is full of ideas. She can contribute and is very much one of the people in the forefront of the changes.

1. Participant and school background information

Pilton Community College: Key facts

Location: Pilton Community College, Barnstaple, Devon

Age range: 11-19 years

Size: Approximately 1,300 on roll

Pilton Community College (PCC) became an Academy in June 2011. It has approximately 1,300 pupils. Numbers have decreased recently in line with changes in the local area but there is an anticipated increase in numbers within the next four years. The community-based nature of the College means that there are lettings for adult education programmes but also private lettings for a wide range of local groups. The College aims to promote its community involvement further and that will become an increasingly significant element of Rose's role as School Business Manager. The College is in an association with other nearby primary schools and a special school. There is also a second secondary school in the town; this is of a similar size to Pilton Community College. Both schools are 11-16 secondary schools with post-16 education provided by the local FE College, Petroc College.

Barnstaple is a former market town, which still acts as a centre for the surrounding rural area. Locally there are a significant number who have seasonal employment in the holiday industry, but who will be unable to find employment outside of the holiday season. Free school meal numbers reflect that pattern of seasonal employment and there are areas of significant deprivation within Barnstaple. There is also a significant elderly population as 'people come here to retire'.

The College retains a specialism in languages with a wide range of languages taught including Spanish, German and French together with Greek, Italian, Japanese and Taiwanese. Because of Comenius Funding, students from these countries come to the College and offer teaching of their languages. This funding also supports College trips for PCC students and Rose is going on a trip to Vienna and other areas of Austria for skiing. Previously Rose has dealt with the Health and Safety aspects of trips to Taiwan, Egypt and other countries but not gone on the trips. Other British Council support has helped a student visiting from Martinique. Rose also helped to host an evening for the mayor of Sousa and a group of Pallo dancers. There will be a trip to Sousa as part of a twinning initiative. Barnstaple is seen as relatively isolated from other areas and these initiatives help to raise global awareness for students

Ofsted inspected the college most recently in June 2012. The overall judgement was good. The report includes the following comments related to leadership:

- This is a good college. Since her arrival, the principal has transformed the college in a short amount of time. The senior leadership team provides strong support to the principal and there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, the standard of behaviour and the achievement of students.
- The senior leadership team model good practice, high expectations and are working closely alongside middle leaders to coach them in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. Achievement data are rigorously monitored and interventions are timely and effective, with clear lines of accountability for any perceived underachievement. Performance management processes have been developed to maintain the continued improvement.

In December 2011, Rose Budge was interviewed and appointed as School Business Manager. This appointment became effective immediately, although she worked alongside the existing SBM until Easter 2012 when Jill Hurst retired after 16 years at the school. Although Jill had been on the senior leadership team from the outset, her role had become more strategic by 2012. The school had taken on its own personnel for cleaning, catering and maintenance and Jill had responsibility for the management of these internal services.

The principal, Louise Miller-Marshall took up the post in September 2009. There were changes planned to the role of the school business manager to reflect the change to Academy status and the change in personnel. It was intended that Rose should retain the same remit as that of her predecessor but would not be responsible for finance. She would keep her current overview of Health and Safety as the school's expert in this area. A part-time school finance officer was appointed to work closely with Rose, the school business manager. The finance officer, who is a qualified accountant, and Rose had at an early stage in 2012 worked together on preparing for the submission of project proposals. By January 2013 Rose had become established in her role as School Business Manager, which she had taken over as planned at Easter 2012. The Autumn Term of 2012 was quite difficult getting her head round roles and responsibilities and managing her own time. Reflecting on this over the Christmas 2012 period she realised that it was necessary to work smarter, more strategically rather than operationally. She resolved to delegate certain tasks and she became more confident with individual staff and groups of staff. She was also more confident in dealing with issues and calmer in approaching situations that arose. She was able to give herself time to think things through.

On her appointment to the SBM post, Rose became a member of the senior leadership team at the College. There were nine members of the College senior leadership team (SLT); this went down to eight at Easter 2012. Rose had already had a Term on the SLT in 2008 when the then Principal instituted an intern scheme whereby members of staff could join the SLT on a temporary basis. Rose was the first member of staff to get involved and felt at home within the team. During this time, Rose felt that: 'this is where I want to be'.

By January 2013 there were changes planned in the SLT. One of the Assistant Heads was to leave in the summer 2013. As planned from September 2013 there were now two Vice-Principals instead of one; others were taking on internship roles for a year as Rose had done earlier. These currently were the Head of English and the Head of the small unit specialising in Autism.

Initially Rose had responsibility for all (111) support staff including teaching assistants and line managed those with leadership roles within this team. She was to go on Child Protection Training in order to become one of the small team with this designated responsibility within the college. Her role then involved marketing, press and publicity, pupil voice and parent voice, child protection, Health and Safety plus other roles, which transferred to her from her role before the December 2011 promotion.

Rose's role had evolved by January 2013. It now involved her taking on greater responsibility. She continued to take on a leading role in Child Protection within a team of three. She was also to be extending her role in relation to Human Resources (HR) for support staff to overseeing the process for teachers as well. This would involve supporting Heads of Department ensuring that the HR process goes ahead and arranging training as appropriate. By September 2013 her role had therefore changed dramatically from that of the previous business manager, with Rose being involved with everything that happened as part of the SLT including discussion of the data on pupil performance. A full member of senior leadership, she is involved in lunchtime duties in that capacity. She has strategic development of HR functions within her role (September 2013), works with Heads of House by helping with key information for parents. She is aiming to establish a crèche for key school events so that (single) parents can attend, possibly through pupil premium funding.

In the year that she has been Business Manager with Sera the Finance Officer, there have been successful bids totalling just under £3 million. There had been a bid for funding to improve the infrastructure by rewiring the whole college and replacing windows through Academy funding: 'it now feels really safe'. The roof of the hub has been replaced and there is now an eco rainwater harvester. Ten new classrooms were to be built to replace huts put up in 1963. All funding was government funding since the College had become an Academy. The College had had the support of an architect on a 'no-win no fee' basis. 'We sent in the proposal and were ready to go straightaway.' Rose and her colleagues have further bids prepared to go in when funding becomes

available. Another impact on the college has been the refurbishment of the staffroom. This has changed dramatically and was the end product of a process of consultation by Rose with staff. The staff wanted it to be an environment separate in style from the rest of the college; the staff loved the result including a large table where all staff can work together whatever their department:

There are no computers there, no notice boards apart from the cover board. It has made the staff feel very valued. There were quite a few meetings... it was not easy managing everyone's wishes!

This was an example of how the DSBM had provided a good grounding in that it made her think carefully about how to approach tasks and listening to how others have tackled problems. It made her aware of the need to ask for help as 'you can't do everything yourself' and there is a recognition of the need for support from outside experts such as architects. 'It (the DSBM) has taught me to work smarter'. Another impact on Rose was how she had developed research skills and will now read up on any aspect of leadership for example change management. 'We were told about these books on the course and I am always eager to read something new'.

Rose also became fully involved aspects of the work of the SLT related to teaching and learning as the College seeks to improve its Ofsted rating from good to outstanding. There was a day set aside for the SLT to focus on the necessary improvements to be made and Rose was part of that day looking at all aspects of improvement:

There was a SWOT analysis for the new House system...I fully understood about the analysis because we had done that so often in our DSBM training. The exercises, on dealing with people for example, have proved to be very useful.

The SBM Certificate and Diploma were important also during Rose's interview for her current post. The programmes had a big impact on her work but also her whole life: 'I've a lot to be thankful for...the courses have been fantastic'. In 2005 prior to joining the SBM programmes, Rose had completed the Diploma in Business Management at North Devon (Petroc) College. This was a two year Higher Education Diploma. She has completed Health and Safety training at Plymouth and planned to take the higher level Health and Safety training. In 2011, the College still bought into some local authority training and also purchased from Devon certain central services; for example payroll and Health and Safety. The change to Academy status led to significant changes in relation to personnel and finance, which were to have an impact on Rose when she took over full responsibility in April 2012.

Rose's involvement with the National College programmes for SBM began in 2009 with the CSBM and then she went straight onto the DSBM without a gap. The change to Academy status and the change of leadership made it sensible for Rose to complete the DSBM while support was known to be available. Her motivation to undertake the programmes was partly a desire to get on in her chosen career but also fuelled by a love of learning:

It's totally different. When I was at school, I had to work really hard to keep up with my peers I always felt I was far more practical person. I did three years catering at College, worked in France and numerous other jobs but never thought I would end up in a school as it was not top of my agenda to work in an Admin role. When I started work in a school I suddenly thought 'I like this environment. I like being around children, working with a large team. I'm enjoying this I want to go further.

No day's ever the same and you are helping people. You are part of a community.

Rose listed the many ways she has been involved in the College community at all kinds of levels and she described future plans she has to take this further within the College and its local community. One example of this is her intention to establish stronger links with local charities in the community and involving the student charity captains in the school. During Health and Safety training at Plymouth, Rose became aware of the possibility of taking distance-learning courses in life coaching and performance coaching. The tutor there talked of his background and suggested that such training would be helpful. Rose completed the courses and finds that these skills have been of great help both in her personal and professional life. 'It helps dealing with people and with situations ... giving people the confidence to see a positive way forward, helping people to sort their life out'. Rose has been able to support staff members who come to her asking why they have not been as successful as they might have hoped to be in their careers to date. During her time at the school, Rose has consistently been involved with the Parent Forum group she helped to establish.

In January 2012, the College had others who had been involved with National College programmes; there were two other members of the SLT who had completed the National Professional Qualification for Head teachers (NPQH) programme. Rose and a colleague, Nicky were then currently on the Finance for Academies programme. By January 2013, there were no colleagues within the SLT currently participating in National College programmes leading to qualifications, although some have been involved recently in one-off conferences run by the National College. Use of the National College website remains an important feature however and people attend National College events.

Rose herself is intending to focus on the additional training required in Child Protection and in Human Resource Management rather going on to the ADSBM. She completed the DSBM in October 2011 and does not see herself having the time to obtain further qualifications at present. 'It's better for me to be training for what I need now here on the job'.

2. Participation context and impact expectations

Participation in the programme has had synergies with other developments affecting the College. The key recent change is of course the conversion to Academy status. The former business manager felt that the SBM programme could assist schools that have converted or are about to do so:

There needs to be much more available nationally rather than (schools) buying in the expertise of a firm of consultants for guidance.

Similarly there could be more to foster federation and partnership between schools, where there are 'huge economies to be made from working together'. Currently grounds maintenance is shared, but there could be further ways in which the local partnership could make efficient use of services, including financial advice.

There has been involvement in the international focus of the College with its language specialism and associated visits. There has also been a recent redevelopment of the office/reception area of the College and subsequent reallocation of staff to new roles. The management of these has been a key feature of Rose's responsibilities as she has line management responsibility through colleagues for all support staff; Rose herself is line managed by the Principal. She has had significant involvement in the catering side. The College consulted on changes to uniforms for September 2012 and decided to go with a local supplier. This approach reduced the burden on admin staff in the period prior to the new academic year and is a very direct means of supporting the local community.

Rose has a hunger for learning and now that her children are older she is able to spend more time on her work and career aspirations. For Rose these became clearer after Easter 2012 when she took over full responsibility from Jill. The College was then also in the first year of Academy status with a subsequently greater administrative responsibility. If Rose does apply for the ADSBM in future, this decision will be made in discussion with the Principal as there is a need to ensure success for the school during a period of rapid change.

Rose would like to gain a degree in the end. Her career aspirations were influenced recently by attending a course and meeting a former school business manager who was now a school vice principal:

Imagine getting to that stage in a school. That would be fantastic. He's come from where I am now...He went for the interview and got the job of (vice principal). He took his business management into the vice principal position. Schools are changing the way they structure their management.

When Rose started on the CSBM programme her expectation was that she would gain more knowledge of being a business manager, more insight into facilities, line management and staff recruitment. At the start she could have done the DSBM as she had previously gained her Diploma in Business Management. However she didn't want to take on too much while working in school:

It was still challenging at times (on the CSBM) but when I started the DSBM I looked back and thought 'Have I wasted a year?

Rose was not advised that entry at the Diploma stage might be possible. However she feels confident now in taking on further study and this may be partly caused by having started at CSBM level. DSBM was seen as a big step up however on the CSBM.

In terms of salary, in January 2012, Rose explained that for her this was not such a big issue. She reminds herself and other staff that more important factors are:

security, feeling part of a community, doing a job where you are making a difference is almost worth more than your salary. A sense of worth...the money is a bonus.

However the outcome expected by others within the school was more strategic and about succession management. As the retiring business manager explained:

The outcome we had at the beginning was the outcome we got, which was that Rose would be appointed as my successor, because we knew we had in her someone who was capable and who knew the school well...and is highly regarded within the school. Becoming an Academy allowed the opening to think creatively about the role, which had become too big for one person.

Rose's wider expectations for school improvement from participation in the SBM programme could be summarised by the ability to influence events, to make things happen. In Rose's view, things have indeed happened more quickly with the appointment of the current Principal. Lots of changes have been introduced, which Rose has supported. An example is the policy on student absence. Under the process known as Parent Call, parents are called if there are issues of non-attendance following school registration. A text is sent to parents if a pupil is absent without explanation. This improves attendance but also helps to keep children safe. A key element in the role of the SBM was Rose's future involvement in safeguarding children. The support staff team have a key role to play in terms of their being aware of what is happening outside the classroom.

Another initiative is the system whereby pupils in Year 8 spend time with the admin and reception team, observing and helping with routine administrative tasks. They will also conduct visitors around the College. At the end of their week they receive a certificate and are encouraged to use the experience they have gained within their subsequent attempts to find employment. It helps children to appreciate the admin team and be better aware of their roles.

Expectations have evolved over time. In considering change, Rose realised that she needs to be more cautious in making changes and have to allow for time to prepare colleagues for change, to plant ideas, give them time to think about it and then get things moving. Rose recognises that with some issues involving Health and Safety you have to move more quickly. Her colleagues, the former business manager and the Principal have all been extremely helpful.

There are a number of aspects in which there have been significant changes to the way in which the DSBM programme has influenced her work. In thinking through her role at the end of 2012 the thing that helped most was the way that the course had taught her to research online. In particular she was influenced by *monkey-management*. In managing the monkeys on her back, ie the tasks at the end of her day, she would think how to delegate elements of her work:

People actually enjoy something as they are learning and they are gaining more responsibility, doing something they would not have done before but with your guidance. It has worked well with the people I line manage.

The main thing for Rose though is her ability to research aspects of her role and put ideas into practice.

In the area of marketing she has worked with a creative designer who does a lot of work with the school. Rose has set up photo-shoots with staff and pupils; part of this has been connected with the new Prospectus for the Academy. There has been a move from a fairly relaxed approach to blazers and ties. This involved a consultation period, involving letters home and a fashion show. There were some parents who turned out to be very concerned and indeed angry about the change. The task of dealing with these parents fell to the Principal and Rose who managed to listen to them and explain the school's decision. No pupils left the school as a result of the change.

In January 2013, Rose was on a higher grade following her promotion to Business Manager. She felt then that she could well be on a higher grade and was indeed upgraded again in July 2013. Her intention is to stay at the college for the foreseeable future, certainly for the next five years.

In the final interview it was clear that a major change after the Diploma was the responsibility she now has across the college rather than being focussed on support staff and their roles. She still gets involved with the wider community through events at the college. 'Trying to bring the community in (to the college) is a big part of my role now. We are a community college and have to be seen that way.'

3. Content and added value of SBM to date

Rose completed the DSBM programme in October 2011 and there is no residual activity connected with this qualification. Key positive outcomes are the influence on her ability to think strategically and the developed skill to research matters of current importance.

One aspect of the programme that Rose emphasised in January 2012 was that the DSBM did not contain any significant element related to finance. In Rose's opinion the majority of people on the DSBM have a business background and therefore some previous training or experience in finance. There could be options to extend the DSBM by doing a module on finance; perhaps this module might be optional for those with previous experience. This module option would lead to increased confidence in dealing with finance. In a similar way there might be others who would want more on HR. Rose felt that perhaps the DSBM programme might be longer, say two years with the option modules perhaps lasting six months.

The biggest challenge of participation in the DSBM remained as before the time required to complete the programme. 'However you have to push through it'. Rose has advised in this way a number of people who have contacted her. These are people on the programme but also other business managers; in effect she is acting as an unofficial advocate for the programmes. 'I will talk it through with them; usually by just having a chat, they are on their way'. She can suggest practical ways to cope with the challenges they face in coping with their workload. For example:

You can talk to your line manager. Usually they will understand if it is going to be for the good of the school. Some people are frightened to ask, but I can say 'I've done it' and that can give them the confidence to ask.

Some of the contacts come through Rose's involvement with the Devon Bursars' Group or via others who pass on Rose's number. Rose may be interested in becoming an advocate for the College.

In conclusion she felt that one key feature was the workshops. 'I loved the workshop where we went away for two days. You could really relax and learn, rather than dashing away to get home. You can talk to people'.

The CSBM had contained work that Rose had covered previously in her Higher Education Diploma. She saw the DSBM as 'meatier'. It had given her the chance to think about the person she was and about her management style and associated skills.

'It wasn't a shock but certain things we did together (role play) made me realise that I might sit back and listen a bit more...small things, which have helped me'.

She also recognised the value of 'pregnant pauses' when you are talking to people to get them to open up and talk through their problems. The activities on the programme had helped her to see that when dealing with a member of staff with a problem, 'it is about the right question...to make them think themselves how they will deal with the problem. They sort it out themselves instead of you'.

Rose spoke very positively about the quality and availability of tutor support, describing Julia Harris her tutor on the DSBM as 'just amazing'. She would make Rose come out of her comfort zone and look for the answer herself. She would challenge Rose to go further. On the CSBM programme, Kerry Snell her tutor had been 'brilliant...a role model for me'. Kerry had recently become a business manager and a National College tutor, having started as an administrator¹.

Rose has found the on-line access and support most helpful:

I've found the forum/networking really useful...I'm always going on there, seeing what's on the chat rooms. You'll find the answer to things...it's just brilliant. You know that it's all sound stuff on there...it's not companies trying to sell you stuff. It's people like me and I have made such good friends on the programme with other business people, who ring me or I ring them.

The DSBM programme has given her the confidence to go online. Early on the Principal has sent around documentation about the new Ofsted Framework with lots to consider. Immediately Rose went on the National College website looking for information and advice.

'One of the biggest things (the programme) has taught me is that there is information out there, don't expect it will come to you. Go out and search'.

Her previous experience in catering and hotel work with line management for staff at an early age had taught her a lot about management and working in teams. However the programme had raised her confidence because of the interchange with other participants on the programme. Experienced and qualified business managers from other schools would seek her advice on work for the programme.

¹ Kerry Snell was also involved in this research as a case study for SBD.

The DSBM assignments were considered quite challenging as Rose had never done a lot of writing in her previous work, being more of a practical organiser. Her Higher Education Diploma she considered was more like the level of the CSBM. The challenge of the Diploma had opened up a whole new world of research and learning, in considering different learning styles for example.

A further benefit of the programme was the opportunity to visit other schools. With a fellow participant from Ilfracombe and their respective catering managers she visited a school in Harrogate to look at new software to analyse nutrition. She has visited other local schools (Teignmouth and Newton Abbot) and internally has promoted the CSBM to colleagues including the new finance manager. Following her Higher Education Diploma and prior to the CSBM, Rose had been approached to see whether she would lecture part-time at the local FE College on a business management course, although this was not followed up as Rose wanted full-time employment. Rose has taught adult education at Pilton and also does training within the school for caretakers in Health and Safety. She has learnt from her study on the SBM programmes the importance of teaching at the right level in order to gain attention. She achieves this through lots of practical activities and with well-planned presentations.

The main challenge of participation in the programme was the hard work, the need to balance work - study - life. Rose comments that at the start she 'was forever with her laptop on the table while cooking dinner'. She had an advantage in that her children were older; other participants deferred because of their childcare responsibilities. However things improved as Rose got more organised halfway through the DSBM. She researched, highlighted material, created her draft assignment and decided on what needed to be investigated in school. Then she had her base and wasn't sat in front of her laptop wondering what to research. Rose had to learn how to sift through and how to cut out material to achieve the right word-count. These challenges have been overcome. As a colleague explained about the demands of the programme: 'You have to be very self-motivated and I think she is'.

A second significant challenge was the process of writing, be it a report or a commentary on research. In her conversations with colleagues, it was clear that this had not been part of their training. Rose therefore considered this process to be particularly challenging. However these hard to acquire skills have turned out to be especially useful in preparing for meetings. The development of academic writing is therefore both strength and a challenge. Speaking also for the other people she has got to know well on the programme, Rose is clear that: 'this is one of the things that has helped us. The material they give you, all the books, all the links are very useful. It has encouraged me to carry on and now I am hungry to learn'. In particular Rose wants to look at conflict management and mediation.

Rose commented that a positive feature of the DSBM is that it teaches you about leadership and leadership styles. It gives you a greater understanding of how leadership

groups work in different schools. It enables you to analyse leadership styles in greater depth than in the CSBM. It teaches you how a large organisation works and how communication is important, how people can be missed out, not intentionally but because they don't have the resources. Rose spoke of how she intended to bring teams all together and enhance communication. Her Principal also recognised the greater understanding of the nature of leadership and the expectations of leadership of an organisation as a strong point of the DSBM programme.

Rose and the Director of Finance continue to work together on bid proposals contributing their different skills and experience. It is Rose's view that most primary administrators deal with finance; many of the secondary participants are school business managers, who are already bursars in their own right. Many participants would have an understanding of finance, but not of other aspects of school business management such as Health and Safety or catering. Rose therefore had skills and knowledge, which differed from many others on the course. However she felt that it would be an improvement if programmes contained more on finance particularly so as more schools convert to independent Academy status. Rose is involved in financial matters in relation to the reduction of expenditure; for example the College was reviewing its central heating provision with a view to reducing costs on oil.

The added value to the College comes in part from the added knowledge and confidence that Rose has obtained through being on the programmes. This has brought direct benefit through her role on the senior leadership team. Rose believes that she would not have been promoted without having completed the two SBM programmes:

This has really helped me in my career. I think people need to see you developing and learning. I could have taken courses elsewhere but this (programme) is a recognised qualification and one that is recognised by Headteachers.

I have had senior people in the school approaching me for advice asking: 'How do you think I should do this? How should I approach staff?' The whole school was aware of my study, because I let people know what I've been doing. The big change is in my confidence.

Other colleagues recognise the change in Rose since being involved in the SBM programmes:

The way she has progressed over the last three years has been astounding...When I see her give a presentation for example I think that's your training behind you. Her own ability has really grown and I can only put that down to the National College programmes she has been doing.

I can see Rose developing that steely edge that sometimes you need, working in a school and looking at things in the best interest of the school not necessarily in the best interests of the person. That shift is something the programme has done for her.

Key positive outcomes for Rose were the influence of the Diploma on her ability to think strategically and the skill she had developed to research matters of current importance.

In the final interview she felt that an additional element, which could add to the value of the DSBM, would be the possibility of shadowing another SBM in a similar way to the activity that is part of the Headteachers' NPQH qualification. This shadowing would be particularly useful for people who are not currently in a school but are on the DSBM programme.

4. Impact to date

The earlier sections of this report will have shown that there has been a significant impact for the participant on the following aspects.

- The demonstration of competence or ability to undertake their SBM role and responsibilities is evident in the way that Rose has moved from office manager to school business manager
- Changing/extending the participant's SMT role. As she indicates Rose has been promoted to School Business Manager and membership of the SLT and believes this is at least partly down to her successful involvement in the SBM programmes.
- Change or change management in the College. Rose has been very involved in the change to Academy status and in the development of other successful project proposals.
- Wider aspects of teaching and learning practice or performance in the College. Rose will be involved in all aspects of the work of the SLT including those related to teaching and learning as the College seeks to improve its Ofsted rating from good to outstanding. However her involvement within the SLT has developed since she completed the DSBM.
- The impact on Rose herself is a key feature. 'Rose knowing the school as she does and having undergone the two programmes brings a new dimension to the leadership team. She is very forthcoming with ideas, thoughts, and concerns whereas before she would have been reluctant to do so'.
- Her Principal noticed in January 2012 that on her inclusion within the SLT: 'She's hit the ground running and is full of ideas. She can contribute and is very much one of the people in the forefront of the changes we are making'.

A key impact for Rose early on was the changed role that she has in the College. 'It has got me to where I wanted to be and it has changed my role'. She has become involved in the catering side, in charity work and in developing parental engagement through the Parent Voice Forum. In January 2013 she explained:

When we are planning changes I want to consult with the Forum. A forthcoming change will be the new PE kit, which I want to bring to the Forum first to get their views. Parents' representatives on the Forum can also raise issues when they want to find out more about an aspect of the school. This includes for example the use of laptops for homework. The Forum is about the school engaging more with parents in addition to the meetings where teachers and parents discuss an individual pupil's progress. The Forum is more about seeking parents' views through their representatives.

There are a number of factors, which have helped Rose in moving ideas forward in this way. One factor is the support of her colleagues but she is now able to use her own initiative in order to research particular topics. As an example in setting up the Parents Forum she researched what other schools had done to engage parents. She found ideas on the National College website connected with her project; for example articles and advice on engaging with difficult to reach parents. She would then present her ideas to the Head for approval.

In putting on hold for now any further study with the College or elsewhere there is a recognition that Rose is pleased to have become a Business Manager and for the moment is concentrating on that role and on the demands it brings. If she had remained in an admin role she would have been more likely to go on to the ADSBM. Involvement with the National College will be largely through using the resources on the website including training resources for colleagues.

The key impact of involvement is the way in which Rose has developed into a role with the support of the SBM programmes in such a way that her colleagues feel able to maximise the use of her strengths through her key appointment as school business manager. As the college principal commented:

The courses (programmes) have really excited her and given her focus. They have inspired her to consider whole school issues in a much more strategic way than she would have done previously. She thinks about the impact we have on the local community, our relationship with the community, marketing the school...as well as the smooth internal organisation of the school.

However those interviewed in 2012 felt that the programmes should include more on finance now that schools have greater responsibility and independence in this area. The additional requirements of Academy status have meant that the role of school business manager could be split and this has meant that it was possible for a school finance director to be employed to cover this area.

Finally Rose commented that she had toughened up a bit because she now has on occasions to deliver difficult messages to individual staff. 'It's my job and I don't get personally attached...this is a big change for me as I would have worried before about how I came over'. Rose attributes this change to her gaining experience in post rather than a direct impact of the DSBM programme.

There is an impact on other schools through the discussions with other business managers. There is a tendency to look at the college and recognise its success in finding financial support for new initiatives and new building, through successful marketing and through an ability to attract new students. The DSBM programme was seen in retrospect as enjoyable and an opportunity to meet others in similar roles. There is also recognition of the positive impact it has had on Rose's career:

I wouldn't be where I am today...I would have still been an office manager...the qualifications are what employers are looking for...I'm making a difference to the whole college.

5. Other comments

None.

DSBM participant case study: Shirley McGowan, Finance Officer, Little Heath School, Romford

This integrated case study report is based upon the initial face-to-face interviews conducted with the participant in February 2012 and her Headteacher.

The report also draws upon the two follow-up interviews in January 2013 and September 2013.

Summary: The SBM Programme

The (then) Headteacher (in 2012) identified a number of impacts arising from the programme:

- Shirley's increased knowledge of schools, and school policy and practice and increased self-confidence.
- Shirley managing a very successful approach to succession planning for a new bursar
- Shirley increasing her knowledge of the bursar role
- Shirley developing material that has now formed the core of a new school prospectus (the Headteacher identified this as a key value-added outcome and one that was not expected at the start of Shirley's participation in the DSBM).

However, Shirley feels that there have been no personal or professional impacts arising from the DSBM, apart from improving her confidence and giving her:

...a really clear understanding of looking forward (and being) proactive not reactive... and a good understanding of the importance of 'working to the future.

1. Participant and school background information

Little Heath School, Romford, Essex: Key facts

Location: Little Heath School, Romford, Essex

Age range: 11-16 years

Size: 145

Other information: Little Heath School is a Foundation Special School

Little Heath Special School is situated to the east of London, near Romford, Essex. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of needs, from moderate to severe learning difficulties. The complexity of students' needs has increased over time and there are a significant number with autism and speech and language difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs and a small number have very specialist needs. Pupils come from a wide geographic area covering a number of local authorities. Pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few are from homes where English is not the main language spoken. The school has achieved a number of national awards including Sportsmark and the Spirited Arts award.

Little Heath had around 170 boys and girls on roll (including around 20 in sixth-form provision) in an 11–19 age range at the time of the first interview. The roll currently stands at 145. The school offers its pupils the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Additional needs are met by Personal and Social Education (PSE) and Social Use of Language (SULP) programmes. A 'leavers programme' assists pupils to move from school to further education, training or employment

Recording and reporting systems and procedures centre on the 2001 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. The school offers educational qualifications including the ASDAN Youth Award, a summative Record of Achievement, GCSEs in Art, ICT, Science and Maths, graduated assessment awards in Maths, and Entry Level Certificates in other subjects. The school is currently increasing the range of national qualifications available to pupils.

The last Ofsted inspection of Little Heath (in September 2010) concluded that it is a good school with:

...a number of outstanding features...Behaviour is good and students of all ages contribute exceptionally well to both the school and local community².

The inspection report also notes that all staff are fully involved in the school's self-review process so that there is clarity about strengths and of relative weaknesses. Whilst Little Heath has strong relationships with three other Special Schools there are no plans for Little Heath to become part of any federation or alliance of schools.

Shirley is the Finance Officer at Little Heath. Her role is split between responsibility for the day-to-day financial administration of the school, and Personal Assistant (PA) duties for the Headteacher. She is also responsible for the procedure and process related to new pupil admissions to the school, and has recently covered various school support and office roles due to a number of long-term absences due to illness.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of Little Heath comprises the Headteacher, supported by a Deputy Headteacher and an Assistant Headteacher. Three heads of department, a head of sixth form, a head of outreach, and a bursar, support the Deputy and Assistant Headteachers. In this structure, the finance officer reports to the bursar.

The school has recently changed Headteacher, but the management and reporting structure has remained unchanged.

Shirley has been in her current role for six years. Her early career was in retail banking, working in various finance-related, and customer service roles, being eventually promoted to bank manager.

Subsequent to this, Shirley wished to make a career-change that would allow her to devote more time to her family life. Following completion of her first degree (in English Literature and Cultural Studies) she took up her first role in a school; working as a Teaching Assistant in a primary school. After four years in this role, Shirley moved to a secondary school as the attendance officer in the school support team, with further responsibilities including medical room supervision. Following this role, Shirley joined Little Heath School as finance officer.

Shirley completed the CSBM in April/May 2010 and started the DSBM in autumn 2011, completing in May 2012. She has not engaged with any other National College for Teaching and Leadership programmes since completing the DSBM.

In terms of other National College for Teaching and Leadership programmes; the bursar completed the pre-SBM bursar qualification; the Assistant and Deputy Headteachers completed the Leading from the Middle qualification; and the Headteacher has completed NPQH and is one of the first mentors for the Equal Access to Promotion programme.

² www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/102878

2. Participation context and impact expectations

Whilst Shirley is of the opinion that the SBM programmes are 'unique' and specific to a finance or bursar role and therefore separate from other developments in the school, the Headteacher feels that the DSBM has been vital to Shirley's succession planning relating to the school's bursar role. Interruption to this role has the potential to cause extensive disruption to the life of the school. The Headteacher notes that Shirley has planned and prepared to effectively mitigate this risk, and has used the CSBM and DSBM to develop herself into a '...good candidate for the role', should she wish to apply.

Shirley's participation in the CSBM and DSBM has built on her extensive portfolio of career development activities and qualifications. She characterises her attitude as being '...always hungry for learning'. Shirley has '...exhausted all the courses' at her local college, and is a prior holder of the South East Adult Learner of the Year award.

Shirley was made aware of the CSBM programmes by a colleague from her banking career that had moved into training delivery. Her move to the DSBM programme, (with the Headteacher's support), was prompted by governor-level discussions regarding succession planning for Little Heath's bursar role, as Shirley will be responsible for the training of the new incumbent.

In terms of initial expectations of the benefits of the DSBM programme, Shirley felt that '...it would hopefully help the school', but had no expectations that successful completion of the programme would have an effect on her salary or career progression. Indeed, Shirley recalls her surprise at the content of one of the first CSBM seminars which suggested that the programme could improve participants' '...pay and status' and provided examples of SBMs successfully challenging their salary. However, Shirley feels '...that's not right for special schools; they are different to mainstream schools'.

Shirley had no initial expectation that the DSBM programme would improve her business management, financial, or staff management skills as she has very extensive experience and expertise in these areas developed in her earlier career. She did however, have an expectation that the programme would increase her knowledge of education policy and '...the government's expectation of how schools should behave and be run'. This expectation was met by the programme, as was her expectation that she would develop a greater understanding of school policies and school development plans.

Shirley had no expectation that the programme would improve her understanding of quality assurance and evaluation. This expectation changed during the programme and Shirley feels that she '...learnt a lot'. However, this learning:

...is hard to bring on board in a special school. As much as you want to be proactive and evaluate, much of what we do is reactive, due to the students. Just because an evaluation says that something went well, the nature of the children means that it won't necessarily work next time.

The Headteacher had an initial expectation that the DSBM programme would increase Shirley's '...professional knowledge and awareness'. The Headteacher had no initial expectations for whole-school improvement as Shirley is not currently in a role where she can apply her learning at that level. However, the Headteacher does point to value-added outcomes arising from participation in the programme (see Section 4, below).

3. Content and added value of SBM to date

Shirley's view on the content of the CSBM and DSBM programmes is that whilst she enjoyed a number of the modules and developed her learning in some areas, the content, tasks, and projects are:

...so structured that if you learn how to do a module write-up you can then manipulate that one for all the others. You can very easily just regurgitate the content without having really learnt it.

Shirley points to her experience of the sustainability module, which was her highest-scoring assessment and one where a comparative lack of structure led to her completing '...some real learning'. In general, the CSBM programme '...had no challenge' but that the DSBM was welcomed in terms of having content that was more challenging.

The blended approach to delivery is seen by Shirley as being too heavily weighted towards electronic and virtual methods, and feels that the most enriching learning experiences within the programme were the face-to-face facilitator led sessions.

Shirley questions the effectiveness of the programme's on-line communities. She feels that these facilities were not effectively monitored or verified by the assessors, with participant misunderstandings and errors not being challenged or corrected, leaving the participants liable to '*...incorrect learning*'. Shirley notes that the participant engagement with these facilities was low.

Similarly Shirley feels that the assessment and feedback on the programme was inconsistent and below her expectations, with assessors not always being available and a lack of support. This situation led to a complaint to the National College for Teaching and Leadership from one of Shirley's senior colleagues. In addition, Shirley found herself in a situation where;

...I was getting emails from SBMs that earn three times as much as me, in a panic asking for advice because they weren't getting any answers from the assessors. I had to give up my personal time to deal with them and I'm not an assessor. It was a really difficult position to be in.

The Headteacher and Shirley are in agreement that the on-line access to the programme materials and facilities are '...really very poor', with the National College for Teaching and Leadership website being described as;

...so user-unfriendly that if it was my first access to on-line learning, I'd be put off.

The key change in Shirley's theoretical understanding arising from the DSBM is described as greater understanding of education practice and theory. This has led to an increased ability to, as the Headteacher observes, '...challenge the head and bring reflection to forward-planning'. This has also led to Shirley developing the current school prospectus (see Section 4, below).

In addition, the Headteacher points to an increased self-confidence, which Shirley attributes in part to the self-improvement units of the programme. The Headteacher offers the example of Shirley taking the master of ceremonies role at a recent sports day, and her professional discussions with staff and governors, describing her in this respect as being '...a completely different person'.

The key challenge to participation in a SBM programme identified by the Shirley and the Headteacher is the need to balance the time required by the programme with a full-time job and family/personal commitments. Shirley highlights a close working relationship between herself and the Headteacher that has helped her in striking this balance. The Headteacher cautions that this kind of relationship may not be the case in, for example, a large mainstream secondary, and that there may be a gap between the participant's and the Headteacher's understanding of the demands of the programme.

In considering the relative weaknesses of the CSBM and DSBM programmes, Shirley and the Headteacher return to the accessibility of the National College for Teaching and Leadership website, describing it as the '...first port of call and therefore a major weakness'.

Linked to issues relating to on-line access Shirley and the Headteacher also refer to poor relationships with, and the availability of, assessors/facilitators. To illustrate this, Shirley observes that the programme is '...difficult to take part in if you don't have a knowledgeable guide'.

Whilst Shirley feels that the CSBM was too structured, a strength of the DSBM is that it '...allows you to choose what would benefit your school in your assignments'. The Headteacher feels this to be appropriate for an SBM working in a special school where the programme can be adapted to special school terminology and context.

The Headteacher also feels that the DSBM is a useful source of current information on education and teaching and learning theory and practice, observing that:

...where else do others in Shirley's position get that kind of information?

Shirley and the Headteacher identify a gap in the CSBM and DSBM coverage of ‘...micro-level budgeting and the mechanics behind it’. Whilst the SBM programme covers the effective school-level management of budgets, both feel that the programmes would benefit from consideration of how schools develop micro-level budgets and cost headings, and how funds are allocated to these.

Shirley feels that whilst schools use various different IT tools and approaches, the National College for Teaching and Leadership could develop examples of ‘model’ applications that would allow participants to develop a familiarity with practice in schools. Looking back on the DSBM, Shirley highlights the need for participants to be supported by their school. She notes that some of her fellow participants were given time for learning, but Shirley ‘had to do it all in the evenings’. Shirley feels that work/life balance can be difficult for participants without support from their school.

In terms of strengths of the DSBM, Shirley feels that ‘...unlike the CSM, you go away and develop your own projects’. She reiterates her view from her initial interview that the CSM is ‘format-driven’, the DSBM units all have different and distinct arrangements. Shirley feels that this can be challenging but it ‘...produces higher quality work, and is rewarding’. In addition, Shirley appreciates the recognition of her efforts by the assessors.

In terms of weaknesses of the DSBM, Shirley feels that whilst the generalities of school budgeting are well covered by the programme, it would be useful for the programme to share with participants:

...a typical school budget that you can work with and unpick, so you can physically see it and explore how to improve it.

4. Impact to date

The Headteacher stresses that Shirley’s current role is not one where she is well placed to have a wide impact on the school. However, the following impacts and value-added outcomes are identified:

- Shirley’s increased knowledge of schools, and school policy and practice, and increased self-confidence.
- A very successful approach to succession planning for a new bursar.
- Shirley increasing her knowledge of the bursar role and strengthening any potential application that she might make concerning the bursar role.
- Shirley developing as part of one of her assignments, material that has now formed the core of a new school prospectus. The Headteacher identifies this as a key value-added outcome and one that was not expected at the start of Shirley’s participation in the DSBM.

Shirley's DSBM facilitators have suggested on a number of occasions that she would be extremely suitable to move onto the ADSBM programme. She is currently considering her future training options, but has no plans to embark on the ADSBM in the near future.

In considering the cost to schools of the SBM programmes, the Headteacher is of the view that a bursar or School Business Manager with a CSBM will always be a valuable investment for the school, and that the CSBM represents a '...definite end product' that can be understood and appreciated by other colleagues and governors. However, should the cost of the programme rise further Headteachers will '...think twice about the value' of the DSBM. However, the Headteacher also notes that the higher costing DSBM or ADSBM programmes may continue to be attractive for federated schools.

However, Shirley's view differs from that of the Headteacher. Shirley feels that there have been no personal or professional impacts arising from the DSBM, apart from improving her confidence and giving her:

...a really clear understanding of looking forward (and being) proactive not reactive... and a good understanding of the importance of 'working to the future'.

When Shirley began the DSBM, she was told that the programme would improve career options. However, having completed the programme, Shirley '...didn't get a pay rise, didn't get an uplift, didn't get more responsibility. I've asked for these but they've not been given'. Now she feels 'let down but I can't blame the course as the people I am in contact with (other participants) have got pay rises or more responsibility'.

Shirley notes that her school has very rigid roles and responsibilities that are adhered to '...regardless of your qualifications', and that her qualifications are 'not recognised' by the Senior Leadership Team or governing body.

Shirley explained in her initial interview that she was a keen and dedicated learner. However, her experience of the DSBM not leading to changes in her role or remuneration has '...left me very disillusioned ...I've not got anywhere so I've stopped doing any other learning'.

Shirley adds, whilst she identifies no impact on the school arising from the DSBM, '...that's not to say that it wouldn't have if my skills had been utilised'. However, she notes that were she a School Business Manager in a different setting:

...I would do everything I could to encourage my team to do an NCSL course. I would want my team to become more able, and find new qualities and use them. I have been adequately trained and I'd like to spread the word. If my team wanted to progress I'd be behind them every step of the way.

5. Other comments

None.

ADSBM participant case study: Alan Brown, Finance Director, Allerton Grange School, Leeds

This integrated case study report is based upon the initial face-to-face interviews conducted with the participant in February 2012 and his Headteacher.

The report also draws upon the two follow-up interviews in January 2013 and September 2013.

Summary: The SBD Programme

- Alan has extensively developed his competence to undertake the SBM role as a result of the SBM programmes. This has led to Alan (and his role) becoming embedded into the administrative *and* pedagogic day-to-day life of the school.
- Alan's role in the Senior Leadership Team has developed as he has progressed through the programmes; leading to him taking the finance lead in the local Extended Services cluster, and mentoring school support colleagues in their professional development.

In terms of change management, the SBM(D) programmes have supported Alan in developing new support staff structure and performance management process (at a previous school) whilst completing the CSBM, and the recent successful implementation of new finance arrangements and systems (at Allerton Grange).

1. Participant and school background information

Allerton Grange School, Talbot Avenue, Leeds, West Yorkshire: Key facts

Location: Allerton Grange School, Talbot Avenue, Leeds, West Yorkshire

Age range: 11-18 years

Size: 1,431

Allerton Grange is much larger than most secondary schools, with 1,431 students on roll, including around 270 students in the sixth form. The school moved into a new building in 2009, is a specialist Arts College, and has achieved the Artsmark Gold Award.

The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average, as is the percentage for whom English is an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and disabilities is higher than average, but notably; the number with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school hosts specialist provision for hearing impaired students.

The most recent Ofsted inspection (March 2011) judged Allerton Grange to be a 'satisfactory but improving school with some notable strengths'. Sixth form provision was judged to be 'good'. However, the school's approach to community cohesion and student care, support and guidance was judged to be 'outstanding'. As the inspection report stated:

The school has purposefully created, developed and nurtured a climate of mutual respect regardless of ethnic background, religion or socio-economic status. The diversity of cultures and backgrounds within the school is celebrated..There are highly effective links with community groups. The historic underachievement of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has been addressed effectively and contributes to the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity.

Ofsted Inspection Report, March 2011

The inspection report also noted that at Key Stage 4, results have shown steady improvement over recent years and that attainment is broadly average when compared with national figures. It should be noted that subsequent to this inspection, summer 2011 results showed a 20% increase in the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE and A Level results placed the school in the top 10% of A Level providers nationally.

In the period since the first interview, the school has been inspected by Ofsted (September 2012), and was judged to be Good.

The school is considering academy status but is '...not ready yet, if we become an academy we'll do it in our own way', additionally, the school is not yet at the minimum level of GCSE results required for conversion.

The 2009/2010 pupil intake reduced from 300 to 240 due to the move to the new school building. This reduction in capacity from 1,800 to 1,450-1,500 was requested by the local authority and agreed by the Governing Body. However, Alan notes that this has a '...knock-on effect of lower than previously achieved income'.

The new school building poses new challenges. The school is still adjusting to the move from an '...old community school' to a new Public Finance Initiative (PFI) building with emergent and new demands on the finance manager to effectively contract-manage a range of service and premises service agreements.

In describing the school, Alan highlights the '*...positivity*' of the head, Senior Leadership Team, teachers, and support staff. He notes that this positivity was evident even at his interview for the role, and was a key factor in Alan accepting his post at Allerton Grange despite a 30-mile daily commute.

Alan's role as Finance director sits within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Headteacher notes that Alan is a '*...full member of the SLT*', and that the role was one of the first recruitment decisions that the Headteacher made when appointed to his post.

In the period between the second and third interviews, three of the SLT retired and a number of changes to the SLT have taken place.

Initially, the Headteacher was supported by two Deputy Headteachers. An Inclusion Leader (whose responsibilities include all aspects of inclusion, student well-being, and learning support and Teaching Assistant staff) and four Assistant Headteachers (comprising Curriculum Leaders) supported one of the Deputy Headteachers. Alan (as Finance Director) and a School Business Manager supported the second Deputy Headteacher.

The new structure now includes two 'associate members' of SLT, taking with responsibility for (1) 'the student side' of the school, and (2) external relationships. Two new posts have been established (Directors of English, and Director of Mathematics). The retirement of the SBM has led to Alan's role expanding to take on the responsibilities of the SBM post.

At the time of the initial interview, the roles of Finance Director and School Business Manager were clearly differentiated. The School Business Manager was responsible for:

- Health and Safety (shared with the Finance Director).
- Risk assessment.
- Damage to the building and general premises issues.
- Management of team.

The Finance Director role was responsible for:

- Budget preparation and monitoring.
- Payroll.
- Financial reporting to Senior Leadership Team and Governors.
- School funding and income generation.
- Financial returns.
- Orders and invoices.
- Contract management of the PFI contract.

- Changes and additions to the school building and equipment.
- Asset management and insurance.
- Health and safety (shared with the School Business Manager)
- Management of finance team.
- Policy management and updating.

Alan is now responsible for all of these functions.

In addition, Alan is also a member of the lead duty team (carrying out duties before school, during breaks, at lunchtime, and after school) and takes on a number of pastoral roles. Allerton Grange is part of an Extended Services cluster (which also includes two Children's Centres), and Alan is responsible for the finances for the cluster.

In addition, Alan convenes the North East Leeds Finance Officer/SBM group. In general, Alan reports to the Headteacher but '...work(s) closely with both deputies and all SLT colleagues'.

The Headteacher notes that Alan is '...brings specific views to the SLT ... his 'status' is left at the door'. The Headteacher observes that one of the school's four principles is value for money, and that Alan takes a strategic role in using resources and finance effectively '...to improve learning and the lives of the pupils'. Prior to Alan's appointment, finance and business responsibility had been split across a number of roles, which had worked against '...anyone taking a strategic role'. Alan's contributions to the school are described by the Headteacher as '...strategic, with impact, and invaluable'.

Alan has been in his current role since March 2009.

Prior to joining Allerton Grange, Alan was the SBM at a secondary school in Doncaster. This school also transferred to a new PFI building whilst Alan was in post, and he was responsible for re-organising the SBM role to suit the emergent needs of the school in a new building, and organised the decant from the old site to new. This was accomplished whilst Alan was completing the CSBM. Alan was in this position for nine months and was responsible for restructuring and motivating the school support team (as part of his performance management role) and developing new systems and lines of reporting.

Before taking up the SBM role in Doncaster, Alan held various roles over eleven years in the Education Finance Team at Barnsley MBC. Alan was responsible for identifying and securing external funding (including from the European Social Fund), leading training courses, and acting as the Principal Financial Advisor to schools.

During this period, Alan was the sole Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) assessor for schools in the Local Authority. This role, in parallel with Alan's role as a school governor widened Alan's experience of school practice, and directly led to Alan's move to the SBM role in Doncaster. Prior to taking up his first SBM role, Alan enrolled in the CSBM programme to '...show commitment to working in a school'.

Across the school, the Headteacher completed the fast-track NPQH in 2002, and was involved in the Head for the Future initiative in 2006/2007. The two Deputy Headteachers have completed NPQH, and many of the middle leaders in the school completed the Leading from the Middle programme. Looking forward, two of the Assistant Headteachers are looking to starting NPQH in 2012. In terms of other school staff taking part in other NCSL programme, one Assistant Headteacher is enrolled on the NPQH. Two of the finance team are enrolled in the CSBM.

Alan completed the ADSBM in summer 2012 having previously completed the CSBM and the DSBM. Alan is interested in the School Business Director (SBD) Programme. He did not apply in the current round, but is considering applying in 2014.

2. Participation context and impact expectations

Alan does not feel that participation in the CSBM or the DSBM programme had any particular synergies with other developments in the school. However, the ADSBM did display some synergies, being well timed to intersect with curriculum development and enabling Alan to learn about how '...the curriculum is developed and the importance of good Data Management structures, as the first two modules certainly did that'. Alan notes that the latter two DSBM modules have provided him with '...a structured approach to managing projects and programmes' and how to apply that learning to practical situations.

However, both the CSBM and the DSBM are felt to have built on the financially orientated training and experience that Alan had completed in previous roles especially in terms of 'linking the role to school improvement and school performance'.

In terms of starting expectations of improvement arising from his taking part in the SBM programme, Alan notes that he expected the CSBM to unpick '...how the job worked' and that the structured and modular nature of the programme would serve to break-down and illustrate the 'life of a school', its structures, and allow Alan to '...get to the heart of' how support staff work within a school. Alan feels that;

'...without that structure, it would have been more of a struggle for me. I cannot play down how much the CSBM helped me learn that first role'.

Looking back in September 2013, Alan reflects that he had 'high expectations for the CSBM and they were probably exceeded'.

Starting expectations of improvements that would arise from taking part in the DSBM (which Alan undertook at Allerton Grange) were more focused. Alan expected that the change management, school performance, and strategic management elements of the DSBM would deepen his strategic skills and their application, and his management of staff and staff development.

This expectation was met, especially in the case of the strategic management module and task, the learning from which was ‘...applied straightaway’ to the school’s budget deficit. The application of this learning is identified as a key factor in Alan’s management within of transforming a notable budget deficit into a projected surplus within just more than two academic years.

This is endorsed by the Headteacher who notes that the local authority was ‘astounded’ that the school had met its budgetary targets in 2010. The head also observes that this underlines his view that ‘...we have better systems now, but what’s important is what they allow us to do’.

Alan’s expectations of his current ADSBM programme were clear. It was predicted that this programme would ‘...link together (the SBM role and) ...the other roles in the school’, thereby deepening Alan’s understanding of the whole school, including curriculum, pedagogy and pupil attainment.

This expectation has been met. As an example, Alan’s first project for the ADSBM programme related to raising the attainment of pupils in Mathematics. This project included in-depth dialogue with numerous colleagues, engaging with the school improvement plan, designing (and analysing the responses to) a questionnaire to teaching staff, and making structured feedback to the mathematics department. Alan highlights that he was obliged to ‘...ask questions that I didn’t have the background for’, which required him to undertake a programme of self-directed research, background reading, and in-depth work with the Headteacher and curriculum leader. The deep engagement with pupil achievement required by this project was challenging, but was ‘...rewarding, linked to success criteria, and I passed it!’

The Headteacher notes that Alan’s work on raising attainment in Mathematics was also of benefit to the teaching staff as it was useful for them to ‘...hear the non-teaching view and understand how changing resources and systems can lead to better teaching and learning and outcomes’.

Other expectations of improvement arising from the ADSBM included increased communication skills. Alan feels that this expectation is being met; for example, he feels that programme has equipped him to better proof-read, sense-check, and quality assure, reports and spreadsheets , and to present and précis data and findings to teaching colleagues in such a way that relates to their ‘...professional language’ and experience.

In terms of expectations of increased salary or career progression, Alan did not see this as a personal priority, but feels that the SBM programmes ‘...marks you as an attractive employee’. Whilst Alan’s view is that perceptions of the SBM programme are not uniform across schools and school leaders, they do potentially ‘...offer progression opportunities’. Alan is also of the opinion that a prospective employer’s view of the SBM programme can ‘...tell you a lot about that employer’.

In terms of wider expectations for school improvement from participation in the SBM programme, Alan and the Headteacher agree that they felt that the ADSM would enable Alan to engage with colleagues in schools in professional dialogue and debate in whole-school improvement, planning, and teaching and learning. This would also assist Alan in his role on the Senior Leadership team and in engaging with other schools, the local authority, and other partners.

Both Alan and the Headteacher are in agreement that this expectation is being met during the course of the ADSBM programme, with the Headteacher observing that the programme is allowing Alan ‘...deep reflection on whole school issues and space and tools for strategic thought’.

In this respect, Alan points to the Understanding Leadership module. This module has helped Alan to balance a reflective style of strategic working with the day-to-day requirement for instant decisions.

Alan feels that he can ‘...now step back and make quick but effective decisions’ that contribute to the overall success of the school. Similarly, Alan concludes that the programme also serves to build awareness in school leaders and teachers of the role of School Business Managers in raising pupil achievement and attainment, as ‘...without properly managed systems, budgets, and money, we can’t educate the kids’.

In conclusion, the Headteacher states that he was ‘confident that there would be further development (in Alan’s skills and knowledge)... and I haven’t been disappointed’.

3. Content and added value of SBM to date

The overall content and utility of the SBM programmes is described by Alan as excellent. In the case of the CSBM, the breakdown of the modules allowed detailed insight into the workings of school. As Alan observes; ‘...it’s one of the best qualifications I’ve ever done’, and feels that the focused nature of the CSBM allows the participant to ‘...work in, and understand, areas which you wouldn’t see in your day-to-day job’.

Alan describes all of the programmes as being ‘very detailed’. Alan feels that: ‘...when we started, we were spoon-fed, but (then) the independence in the learning increased’.

The Headteacher feels that the programme content gives Alan an opportunity to reflect on whole-school issues, share practice and ideas with peers and allows the school to ‘...look at new practice’.

In terms of the blended approach to delivery of the SBM programme, Alan liked in general the approach, (including the required reading before the DBSM face-to-face sessions), but found that:

...As a group, we tended to be constantly on the move, jumping up and down into little groups to discuss and write things on flip-charts. I found this method of learning more difficult, as I prefer the teacher/facilitator discussing a topic. I just felt we were on the move too much.

In this context, Alan notes that '...groups of people are good at confusing each other' and whilst misunderstandings were corrected during the face-to-face sessions, but that after the sessions, '...there was still the confusion as different participants heard things in different ways and communicated their interpretation of what was said'.

Similarly, the TalktoLearn facility and online discussion groups were often effective, but often lacked moderation of participant's misconceptions and errors, which could breed confusion.

Alan feels that a particular strength of the programmes has been in establishing a group or network of peers '...that we can call on...brilliant support'. This group set up an 'informal email group' to share learning and discuss the programme.

In considering the face-to-face sessions, Alan feels that whilst the venues were of a high quality, he notes that the National College cannot satisfy the travel needs of all participants on the programme and recognises that some participants will have to travel some distance.

The on-line support aspects of the programmes are regarded by Alan as 'fantastic'; with often, 'almost immediate' replies to questions. However, during his DSBM the website underwent extensive change, and was often 'very awkward to use'. Similarly, tutor support has been appropriate for the level of the programme; '...the CSBM had hand-holding, the DSBM had a lighter touch, and the AD is lighter still'.

Alan feels that a balance was struck between the face-to-face and the on-line aspects of the programme. An on-line-only programme would '...be more difficult... the face-to-face (elements) set you on the right path'.

Assessment provision in the SBM programmes is described as good. The assessment procedures, overall, moved forward learning but some of the approaches were 'off-putting'; such as the use of WebEx presentations or telephone interviews, when a group or face-to-face activity would have been preferred.

Whilst Alan acknowledges the cost of setting up one-to-one presentations, he feels that '...my mark would have been higher had the presentation been delivered in the normal manner, rather than WebEx'.

Alan offers the example of his apprehension at the twenty-minute telephone interview as part of the Transforming Organisations module, due to not being able to look at someone whilst taking part in the interview.

Alan suggests that the use of webcams may improve the interviews, but notes that not all participants will have access to this technology. Alan feels that changes to these approaches should be '...about getting the best, whilst bearing in mind not raising costs'.

Assessment on the DSBM was 'useful', and included a progressive assessment approach that gave '...useful guidance on theory; it worked well for those unused to theory'. In the case of the CSBM programme, assessment was '...appropriate and more relaxed'.

However, Alan notes that formative comments from the tutors could be 'a little bit inconsistent' when compared across the group of participants, but that in general he was 'pleased' with the assessments. Alan understands why facilitators and tutors are reluctant to supply exemplar past projects to participants, but suggests that participants would value a list of topics that past participants have addressed in their projects.

Improvement in Alan's theoretical understanding of strategic planning and management is seen as a key outcome of participation in the SBM programmes. In this, Alan was able to applied tested theory to meeting the challenge of the school's budget deficit, an approach that he credits with the school's trajectory towards a budget surplus.

Alan identifies the following as the main challenges of participation in the SBM programmes:

- 'Having to get used to a new way of learning'. This is especially relevant to participants that may not have undertaken a learning project for many years, or who had not previously critically engaged with theory.
- 'Sticking with it'. Alan suggests that this is '...not easy, as you have to be very professional in a very intense learning environment'.
- 'Tight timelines'. Alan feels that the deadlines that fell during the summer were '...not so bad', but that the deadlines that fell during term times require the participant to devote evenings or weekends to the programme, with attendant risks to a participant's work/life/learning balance.

Alan recognises that he signed-up to the programme in full awareness that '...there was a lot of work to be done. I didn't think I could just 'wing it''. Alan feels that full participation in the programme will lead to an effect on work/life/learning balance, but '...it will certainly be worth all the hard work to be successful'. Alan also observes that:

If you don't have a school background it can be difficult to engage... [and] some employers won't value the time needed...you need school support [and] set times to speak to colleagues.

Reflecting back on the DSBM and the ADSBM, Alan feels that there is a lack of pre-course materials and preparation for the participant. He suggests that a taster day for the programmes may be useful, but acknowledges that this would represent a cost. In general, Alan feels that '...it can be a shock moving from one level to the next'.

In terms of characterising the strengths of the SBM programmes, Alan suggests that the programme develops the participant's professional and personal skills and knowledge, leading to increased confidence in their abilities and decisions. Alan also notes the social aspect of the programme; where the participants '...build up contacts, and laugh together'; both of which further add to growing confidence.

The Headteacher poses a question about the strengths of the programme; '...Alan's reach is surprising and really understands the school and mentoring, but is that due to the course or the individual?'

Whilst Alan does not identify any significant weaknesses in the programme, he notes that the format of the face-to-face sessions may not be suitable for all participants, and is not his preferred learning style. However, Alan feels that '...as I have been successful in the past, it works. I have just adapted my learning'.

In terms of general strengths and weaknesses of the programme, Alan notes that he gave 'honest feedback' to the National College. He feels that 'the content is great' and feels that the 'pace and interaction' of the sessions was good. Looking back in 2013, Alan observes that delivery of face-to-face sessions would have suited him better if they were based on a lecture format rather than a 'stand-up, sit-down' task-based approach.

The Headteacher identifies no 'obvious weaknesses' in the programme, and notes that:

...if I was working in a different school, or if Alan moved on, I would do it again.

The growing number of Academies, Free Schools, Teaching Schools, and other models of schools with increasing independence and autonomy is felt by Alan to be an emerging gap in the content of the SBM programmes. Alan feels that increasing school autonomy is having an effect on the expectations, practice, and scope, of the SBM role, and as such, Alan suggests that the CSBM should include, as a priority, content related to the SBM role in, for example, an academy.

Alan feels that the information provided on the SBM programmes on the National College website may benefit from more detail. He suggests that comments from previous participants could be included and the information presented on the modules could be expanded beyond the module focus.

It may also be of use to include details of the types of module submissions that other participants have made. This could take the form of ‘...projects submitted as part of this module include ‘Improving the quality of Teaching and Learning in the Maths Department’’, which may serve to provide new participants with ideas about what their own focus for the modules could be. Whilst it is likely that information of this kind circulates via word of mouth, Alan wonders how ‘...do you get to know what is included if you do not know anyone who has gone before you?’

The key value-added aspect of the programmes so far has been the development of Alan into a knowledgeable member of the school staff whose opinion and insight on the wider school is trusted by teaching colleagues. The programme has made redundant ‘the ‘but you’re not an educationalist’ staffroom argument’.

4. Impact to date

Alan feels that he has extensively developed his competence to undertake the SBM role as a result of the SBM programmes. This has led to Alan (and his role) becoming embedded into the administrative and pedagogic day-to-day life of the school.

Similarly, Alan’s role in the Senior Leadership Team has developed as he has progressed through the programmes; leading to him taking the finance lead in the local Extended Services cluster, and mentoring school support colleagues in their professional development.

The Headteacher feels that Alan has always had an impact in school improvement but that he has now ‘...a wider perspective and more confidence’ and is supporting an number of senior colleagues in various aspects of the school and that further impact will be likely to arise in the future.

Change management is a further area of impact. In Alan’s previous school, he developed a new support staff structure and performance management process whilst completing the CSBM. These developments were drawn from Alan’s end-of-programme Case Study for CSBM, which fitted well ‘...with what needed to be done in school’.

More recently, Alan was able to apply his learning to the successful implementation of new finance arrangements and systems, including bank account autonomy (that had previously been held by the Local Authority), and attendant new finance systems within the school.

Alan adds that a further key (unquantifiable) impact would be the peer network of participants that the participants can draw upon for advice and support.

Alan considers the SBM programmes to be ‘...well worth the cost, and value for money for taxpayers’. One of the Allerton Grange governors has suggested that Alan’s experience and training may make it suitable for him to be ‘...hired out’ to other schools; representing a new income stream for the school.

Alan further observes that this arrangement, if it went ahead, would be carried out in a spirit of partnership with other schools, but that it would not be necessarily a scenario that would be favoured by the local authority, which ‘...very much sees the schools as ‘theirs’ and which regards reciprocal school partnerships and traded services with ‘...culture shock’.

In conclusion, Alan feels that ‘...any school would see the benefit [arising from SBM(D) programmes]... but is it quantifiable? I don’t know’.

The Headteacher feels that his first consideration in placing a colleague on an SBM programme would not be cost, as Allerton Grange is of a size where the cost of the programme is offset by how ‘...an effective school business manager can save you hundreds of thousands of pounds’. The Headteacher also observes that there are possibilities for ‘entrepreneurial’ use of SBMs through leasing out the SBMs to primary schools that are ‘...certainly feeling the pinch as they lose local authority support’.

5. Other comments

Alan appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of the programmes in which he had participated. He wonders whether the National College could consider expanding the evaluation of the SBM programmes to allow more participants to feedback further on the programme and their experiences.

He concludes that:

...I would recommend the SBM programme to anyone looking to develop their role in the school business management arena.



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